

EPPING AND DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB INC
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020-21

This report covers the period from April 2020 to March 2021. During this period the Management Committee comprised the following members:

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| • President | Michael Brinsden | |
| • Vice President | <i>vacant</i> | |
| • Treasurer | Leo Hart | |
| • Secretary | Ross Beattie | |
| • Welfare | Ray Palmer | |
| • Speakers | Ken Fletcher, Frank Hanlon taking over in | Nov. 2020 |
| • Outings | Michael Brinsden/ Russell Gough | |
| • Tours | Wal Gallagher | |
| • Other Activities | Ray Finch | |
| • Immediate Past President* | Ed Thurston | [* – <i>ex officio</i>] |

This committee was introduced at the March 2020 meeting, at which Retiring President Ed Thurston welcomed Michael Brinsden as the new President. A new Committee is to be elected and installed at the March 2021 A.G.M., when the Auditor and Public Officer will also be appointed.

Overview of Epping and District Probus Club activities during a difficult year

Between 15th and 18th March 2020 the Prime Minister announced health guidelines to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NSW Government giving immediate full support: these guidelines included social distancing and limits on transport and size of gatherings. Many social activities were curtailed, including by Probus clubs. Nevertheless, between April 2020 and February 2021, Epping and District Probus Club managed to conduct [live or via ZOOM videoconferencing] five (5) General Meetings with Guest Speakers, fourteen (14) Coffee Mornings, eleven (11) 'Old Codgers' music afternoons, seven (7) Rambles, two (2) Day Outings, three (3) 'By Opal card' outings, one (1) movie outing, eight (8) 'Wobblies' cycling days and three (3) Dining Group outings; no Tours or Theatre trips were possible. In addition, eleven (11) Club Newsletters were produced. Some of our nearby Probus Clubs halted their programs from mid-March for almost the whole year; some apparently closed completely.

Membership

No new members were inducted in 2021-22 as many Club activities, particularly 'live' General Meetings, were cancelled from March 2020 due to government health guidelines related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Active membership in March 2021 was 74, eight fewer than in March 2020. Our Active members are aged from 64 to 95¼ years (averaging 80½ years). Three Active members [Chris Staples, Martin Maguire and Colin Aspinall] and one Non-Active member [Don Marshall] resigned during the year. Four Active members were transferred to Non-Active status during the year: John Salmon (March 2020), John Steele-Smith (July 2020) and Philip Jones and Alf McDermott (March 2021). We currently have 14 Non-Active members, aged from 83½ to 96¼ years (averaging 90¼ years).

We record with sadness the passing during the year of five (5) Non-Active members – Gordon Lidgett (died 4 June 2020), Keith Butler (died 3 September 2020), John Webb (died 8 November 2020), Arthur Goswell (died 14 November 2020) and Ian Evans (died 20 December 2020) – and one (1) Active member, Bruce Cunningham (died 22 February 2021). We note also the death of Don Townsend on 30 January 2021: Don was not a member of our Probus club, but was the Rotary representative who in 1979 chaired the first two meetings of our club. Our Welfare Officer Ray Palmer continued to keep in touch with those of our members who were indisposed or no longer active and the recently bereaved. Ray has been a continuing support to members who have been sick and their families, regularly reporting back to the Committee and members. We thank Ray for his unstinting support for all who have been sick and bereaved, and for his willingness to continue in the task for another year. In January 2020 Ray was awarded an O.A.M. for assisting the people of Epping.

Our Joining Fee (\$20) remains unchanged from 2020, while the annual Membership Subscription has been reduced for 2021-22 from \$40 to \$30 as the 2020-21 fee included a \$10 levy to cover the annual cost of printed copies of PSPL's *Active Retirees* magazine: PSPL decided to produce only soft-copy editions of *Active Retirees* – at no charge to clubs – during 2020-21 COVID-19 pandemic.

Meetings and Attendance

Committee meetings were held throughout the year, with an Extraordinary Meeting on 17 March 2020 at the start of government-announced COVID-19 pandemic health guidelines, adherence to which impacted all our Club activities into 2021. Later Committee meetings were held by email in April, by 'ZOOM' videoconferencing in May and June, and in a committee member's house from July to November 2020 and in February and March 2021.

General Meetings, usually held each month excepting December and January at the Epping Presbyterian Hall, Rawson Street, Epping, were curtailed. The April General Meeting, when we routinely commemorate Anzac Day, was cancelled due the pandemic, as were the meetings of May, June and July. In August, September, October and November, abridged General Meetings featuring summary announcements and a 'guest speaker' sourced from club members were conducted *via* ZOOM video-conferencing. The December General Meeting, to be a Christmas / End-of-Year luncheon at North Ryde R.S.L. Community Club, could not be held due to the health guidelines: two casual lunches were arranged in lieu. Only in February 2021 were we able to resume 'live' meetings in the Epping Presbyterian Church Hall.

Attendance at General Meetings during our 2020-21 year [April to March] was obviously impacted by the government guidelines: no meetings were held from April to July 2020 inclusive, the ZOOM meetings held from August to November 2020 each attracted 19-25 participants [many members lacked the hardware or the desire to use ZOOM technology]. Our first 'live' meeting of the year, in February 2021 in the Epping Presbyterian Church Hall, drew 38 members and 10 guests [including the guest speaker] – 48 total [capacity was at the time capped at 53 attendees]; morning tea was served. In comparison, attendance Apr. 2019 – Feb. 2020 averaged 57 members; Apr. 2018 – Feb. 2019 averaged 61 and Apr. 2017 – Feb. 2018 averaged 58: in those years 11-12 guests also attended.

Anzac Observances and Annual Church Service

Local Anzac Day ceremonies were cancelled: many members acknowledged the day privately at home. The Club's annual church service was not held this year [COVID-19].

Initiatives 2020

Implementation of the Club's Five-Year Plan

With many activities curtailed or diminished during 2020-21 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, little progress on the Club's 2018 Five Year Plan was possible.

WebSite and Social Media

President Michael Brinsden's two applications (2019, 2020) for Federal grants to develop a new Club WebSite were unsuccessful: a third application has been submitted. Proposed by member Martin Maguire, a prototype WebSite was developed by Ross Beattie and others – <http://rnbt.id.au/edpci/index.html>: feedback is sought. It is hoped that the WebSite will keep members informed and eventually be able to attract new members. Keith Robinson continues to maintain the current text-based website, content of which is gradually being ported to the new WebSite. The Committee will later consider use of 'social media' platforms [Facebook et cetera]. Any member with appropriate Website or Facebook development skills [or has a skilled and willing family member] is encouraged to talk to the Committee.

Emailing of our Club Newsletter; PSPL's Active Retirees magazine and Staying Connected bulletin

Without 'live' General Meetings, email communication with members became more significant. The Club's monthly [February-December] *Newsletter* continued to be produced by editor Col Short with input from contributors. These were emailed as .pdf files to members where possible; copies were printed for mailing to Non-Active members who lack email.

PSPL issued regular *Staying Connected* bulletins and .pdfs of the *Active Retirees* magazine, these were also emailed to members where possible.

We have email addresses for 71 of our 74 Active members and 9 of our 14 Non-Active members.

E.F.T. [Direct Deposit] facility

The Committee thanks members for using the club's E.F.T. facility [i.e. 'direct deposit' into the Club's Westpac account] where possible to pay for subscriptions. et cetera. Members are asked to make individual transactions for separate events, with their name and event clearly identified in a Description field:

Bank – **Westpac** BSB – **032287** Account – **154993**

with a short description stating YOUR NAME and the event or reason for payment

[e.g. *Xmas Jones* (no hyphen, slashes etc)]

Activities

After an initial halting, the Club managed to conduct several of the regular activities between April 2020 and February 2021 – 13 General Meetings (with Guest Speakers) [4 via ZOOM, 1 live], 13 coffee mornings [3 via ZOOM, 10 live], 8 ‘Wobblies’ cycling days, 11 ‘Old Codgers’ music afternoons [8 via ZOOM, 2 live, 1 mixed mode], 7 Rambles, 2 day Outings, 3 Dining events, 3 ‘By Opal Card’ activities and 1 Movie event; no Theatre outings were permissible.

Guest Speakers [‘Guest Speaker’ Officer: Ken Fletcher / Frank Hanlon]

Ken Fletcher was Guest Speaker coordinator in 2020. After the introduction of COVID-19 related health guidelines in March, only four (4) more talks by ‘guest speakers’ were possible in calendar 2020, all by club members using ZOOM videoconferencing [the talks were recorded and made available on the Club’s ZOOM cloud-space]. In November 2020, Ken needed to hand the coordinator role back to Frank Hanlon. We were able to welcome back ‘live’ external Guest Speakers in February 2021.

Guest speakers March 2020 to March 2021 were:

- 9th Mar. 2020: Dilini Manthilaka – “*Treating Age-Related Macular Degeneration*”: a thought-provoking talk showing how to try and preserve our sight through some very simple techniques and lifestyle changes. Over the age of 50, 1/2 of the population are diagnosed with AMD population and 1/3 over the age of 80. [Vote of Thanks: Leo Glockemann]
- 10th Aug. 2020: Ross Beattie [ZOOM, also presented ‘live’ to Newport Probus on 31 August] – “*The HAPI Isles*” – a summary account of the history of the Solomon Islands up to the WW2 then focusing on the Guadalcanal Campaign and the sinking of HMAS *Canberra* by US ‘friendly fire’
- 14th Sep. 2020: Bill Thomson [ZOOM] – “*Fire, Fumes and Healthy Home Heating*”: the causes of indoor air pollution from home heating and the impact on human health
- 12th Oct. 2020: Ken Fletcher [ZOOM] – “*Nullarbor Surprises*” (part 1): Ken Fletcher reflected on several trips he and his wife made across Australia on (and off) the Eyre Highway, showing many interesting photographs. Michael Brinsden briefly detailed a trip he made from Perth to Sydney in a Valiant Charger, and Brian Haywood and Doug Carruthers added reflections of their own.
- 9th Nov. 2020: Ken Fletcher [ZOOM] – “*Nullarbor Surprises*” (part 2).
- 8th Feb. 2021: Rafael Joudry [‘live’] – “*Sound Therapy for Tinnitus*”: a listening therapy program to improve ear and brain health and relieve tinnitus. [Vote of Thanks: Russell Gough]
- 8th Mar. 2021: [scheduled]: John Donohoe [‘live’] – “*Bushrangers of the 1860s and 1870s*”.

The Club presented external guest speakers with a Certificate of Appreciation, a note of thanks and (when acceptable) a small monetary gift in acknowledgement that they give their own time at their own expense to speak at our meetings.

Five-minute Speakers

There were no ‘Five-minute Speakers’ this year; there were only two ‘live’ General Meetings.

Outside Activities

Outings – nominally 3rd Tuesday [Outings Officer: Russell Gough]

Only two Day Outings were possible between March 2020 and February 2021 inclusive:

- Mon. 16th November 2020; a 2½ hour “Journey Beyond Cruises” lunch cruise around Sydney Harbour: 13 members/partners from our club enjoyed an excellent 3-course lunch and drinks
- our Christmas Lunch, scheduled in lieu of our December General Meeting, had to be cancelled due to the limitations of the extant COVID-19 pandemic health guidelines: our Dining Group held two informal lunches at local sports clubs instead.
- Wed. 17th February 2021: 11 members and 5 guests met at Epping Station and travelled by train and ferry for a two-course lunch at the heritage Manly Pavilion, enjoying views of Sydney’s iconic harbour from both the ferry and the Pavilion.

Tours – [Tours Officer: Wal Gallagher]

No tours were possible after March 2020 due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

‘Other Activities’ – [‘Other Activities’ Officer: Ray Finch]

Ray Finch represented, coordinated and reported on the activities of the Club’s various special interest groups. Each activity excepting the Dining Group and Rambles had a Leader who organised the events.

The 'Other Activities' were:

- **Old Codgers' Music Circle** [Leader: Bob Cruikshank]
the "Old Codgers Music Circle" managed to hold twelve 'get-togethers' during the year – nine using ZOOM video-conferencing, two 'live' and one 'live'+ZOOM. Despite some technical difficulties, the ZOOM sessions allowed enjoyable times sharing music and fellowship; the 'live' events were of course better, the music followed by wonderful afternoon teas
- **President's Coffee Morning** [Leader: Ray Palmer]
the President's Coffee Morning group normally would meet at Carlingford Court on the Friday morning following the General Meeting, but COVID-19 restrictions sent things awry. With many other activities cancelled, fourteen Coffee Mornings were held – including three 'virtual' events via ZOOM video-conferencing [10th April, 16th May and 12th June]. We managed to hold 11 'live' coffee mornings on 13th March, 3rd and 31st July, 28th August, 11th September, 9th and 30th October, 13th November, 11th December 2020, 22nd January 2021 and 12th February 2021.
171 participants attended 11 'live' events [averaging 15½; 'ZOOM' events were slightly fewer]
- **"By Opal Card"** – nominally 4th Monday of the month [Leaders: Keith Robinson / Col Short]
'By Opal Card' founding Leader Keith Robinson handed over to Col Short in February 2021. We thank Keith for the outings he organised over the years. Due to COVID-19 government health guidelines only three trips were possible between April 2020 and February 2021 inclusive:
 - 16th Mar. 2020: plans to travel the new L3 light rail were cancelled: the opening was delayed
 - 20th Apr. 2020: Epping to Bargo and return by train; lunch at Bargo Hotel
 - 18th May 2020: Epping to Maitland and return by train; lunch at Maitland
 - 15th Feb. 2021: train Epping Dulwich Hill via Strathfield, Lidcombe and Bankstown, thence by L1 Light Rail to Capital Square, where we switched to the L2 Light Rail at Chinatown to go to Randwick for a Route 400 bus to Kingsford; after lunch at Churchill's Sports Bar Bistro, Kingsford, we took the L3 Light Rail to Central (Chalmers Street) Station for a train back to Epping; health guidelines were enforced [9 attendees]
- **Cycling** ["the Wobblies"] – nominally 3rd Friday of the month [Leader: Steve Drury]
with coffee/lunch stop; extra bicycles and helmets were available at each ride for people if needed.
 - Fri. 19th Jun. 2020: our first Club cycling event since the COVID-19 pandemic started – the first this Probus year: Mill Park Street, Rhodes through Meadowbank to Parramatta Wharf, returning *via* Silverwater Bridge to the Armoury for coffee, then back to Rhodes: ~21 km.
 - Fri. 17th Jul. 2020: two laps around Narrabeen Lagoon starting at Bilarong Reserve, Narrabeen: ~18 km. Coffee and hot chips lagoon-side at the H₂O Café. ~18 km.
 - Fri. 21st Aug. 2020: Fernleigh Track (Belmont–Adamstown Rail Trail) ~15 km each way passing through a tunnel, wetlands, woodlands, railway relics and old rail stations; non-cyclists wandered the wild-flower walks or wandered shops and supped; coffee and lunch followed on the Lake Macquarie foreshore in Belmont. A very windy day.
 - Fri. 25th Sept. 2020: Mill Park Street, Rhodes, *via* Meadowbank to Parramatta Park, returning *via* Silverwater Bridge, the Armoury and the wonderful Wetlands Rhodes for lunch. ~26 km.
 - Fri. 23rd Oct. 2020: Prospect Parklands ride along the Prospect Canal Reserve track, over the viaduct, then a short stint along the Cumberland Highway cycle path before turning into Prospect Creek and back to Prospect Reservoir (~20 km), then lunch at the Royal Cricketers Arms on Reservoir Road. The Parklands were at their best, an oasis in the middle of suburbia.
 - Fri. 20th Nov. 2020: the Wobblies cycled from Gosford to Woy Woy and return alongside Brisbane Water: ~26 km; pleasant despite some rain and temperatures nudging 31C; 7 cyclists and 3 non-cyclists lunched afterwards at Gosford Sailing Club on Masons Parade, Gosford.
 - Fri. 18th Dec. 2020: proposed ride at Narrabeen Lagoon cancelled (COVID-19 restrictions).
 - Thu. 14th Jan. 2021: having survived the Festive Season, the Wobblies burnt off some fat and got rid of cobwebs with an impromptu bicycle ride from Mill Park Street, Rhodes, along the Parramatta River cycle path, and return for lunch afterwards: 10 riders, 13 lunchers!
 - Fri. 19th Feb. 2021: ten Wobblies and one guest braved the prospect of rain and met at Bilarong Reserve, Narrabeen, to cycle two laps (~15 km) around Narrabeen Lagoon: in the event, there was no rain. Coffee, pancakes and hot chips at the H₂O Lakeside café.
- **Dining** – nominally 4th Wednesday but varied considerably [inaugurated by Greg Stone]
 - Tues. 10 Nov.: Wal Gallagher organised a lunch at Dooley's Waterview; health guidelines limited us to 30 people.
 - in lieu of our normal Christmas Function, two casual lunches were organised:
 - Thur. 26th Nov.: Greg Stone led a lunch at Wings Bistro, Eastwood Rugby Club
 - Thur. 10 December 2020: Ray Palmer organised a lunch at W.P.H. Sports Club

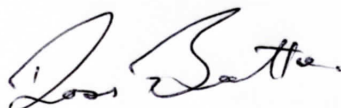
- **Movies** and lunch – nominally 4th Tuesday monthly [Leader: Dennis Druce/Andrew Davidson]
After several years leading the Film Group, Dennis Druce handed over to Andrew Davidson in February 2021. We thank Dennis for the movie outings he has organised over the years. Our movie outings, at either Macquarie Centre or Roseville Cinema, usually include an optional, always convivial, lunch at a nearby café (Chantilly's Café or James Café [was the Café Saluto]). Due to COVID-19 government health guidelines only one outing was possible during this year:
 - 23rd Feb.: *Penguin Bloom* [six attendees]
- **Theatre:** [Leader: Wal Gallagher]
Normally we would be able to attend three plays at Epping's '*Theatre on Chester*', two musicals at Eastwood Musical Society and perhaps a matinee performance at Shore School, North Sydney. This year no theatre or musical outings were possible due to government health guidelines in place to control the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Walks / Rambles** – nominally 4th Thursday of the month [no Leader]
though lacking a 'Leader', there remained a desire among members to continue this activity with short local Rambles: a very welcome activity allowing easy socially-distanced exercise; Ramblers could bring their own lunch to enjoy. We managed seven Rambles despite the pandemic:
 - July: Jack Lee led a short and thoroughly enjoyable two-way Ramble along Epping's Pioneers' Track between Midson Road and Roselea
 - 30th July: Col Jones took us from Blackburn Ave., North Rocks, to Statham Avenue for a walk east along Hunt's Creek to Balaka Falls, returning to Blackburn Ave. for an optional lunch
 - 27th August: Tony Chaine led us north from Chester St., Epping, for a stroll to Whale Rock, overlooking Devlin's Creek, returning with a lunch break at Epping Oval.
 - 24th September: Brian Haywood took us from Cheltenham Station to and down Byles Creek, returning via The Great North Walk and Sutherland Road for optional lunch at his house
 - 22nd October: John Peters took us on a Ramble along the creeks of Cheltenham, Beecroft and Roselea, returning to Cheltenham for the optional lunch
 - 19th November: Ross Beattie rambled a group from Carlingford Bowling Club to Mobb's Hill, descending the Pond's Walk through Galaringi Botanic Parkland to the diatreme in Dundas Valley and a coffee stop, continuing via Pond's Creek to Dundas and a bus back to Carlingford 'station' for lunch at the Bowling Club [17 participated: 14 Rambles, 15 lunched]
 - 27th February: Col Jones stepped up again to take us from Blackburn Avenue around the lesser-known western end of North Rocks, lunching afterwards [9 Ramblers]

This activity still needs a Leader.

We record our appreciation of those members who remained prepared to quietly undertake support roles:

- Morning Teas and Setting up the Hall – Mark Gibbs and rostered members.
- Sound, Screen and Security – John Goodman.
- Newsletter – Colin Short.
- Reception and attendance records – Gordon Crombie.
- Members Lists – Michael Brinsden.
- Auditor – Hugh Knight.
- Public Officer – Keith Robinson.
- Webmasters – (1) Keith Robinson; (2) Ross Beattie.
- Members Photographic Record – John Peters / Doug Carruthers.
- Anzac Regalia and Special Support – Bruce Frost.
- Publicity – Ray Palmer / Ray Finch / Ed Thurston.

On behalf of all Club members, thanks to our President Michael Brinsden for his leadership through a particularly difficult year.



Ross Beattie (Secretary), 7th March 2021.