

PRESIDENT'S REPORT AGM 1 SEPTEMBER 2020

Hello everybody and welcome to this very different Annual General Meeting of the Nirkoda Israeli Folk Dance Club – I think I'm safe in saying that there hasn't been a year quite like this one before..

The high spot of the past year was definitely the Workshop we ran at the Glen Eira Council Auditorium last November. Everything ran smoothly thanks to the work of teachers, committee and volunteers. We thank the City of Glen Eira for their support by awarding us a grant towards the hire of the venue.

Unfortunately, the year was marked by a couple of not so great events. The new financial year brought notification from St Aloysius that the school would close at the end of 2019 and we would be losing the hall where we had danced for the last 10 years. Classes continued into 2020 at St Anthonys and Birch Street while the huge job of finding another hall, that was both available and suitable, went on. We continued to negotiate with the Catholic Church and the new tenants of St Al's up until March but this dialogue broke down at about the same time as Covid arrived and is not being considered as an option currently.

We were looking at some more promising possibilities right up until the pandemic hit. Our expectation at this time is that dancing communally and indoors may not be possible for some time to come but you can be sure that our first priority will be finding a new home. Finding a hall that fits our requirements, and your expectations, is hard but we are confident that a post-Covid landscape may free up more possibilities. But of course we have to get past Covid first.

Which brings me to the state of affairs that has pre-occupied all of us over the last few months. On the 16 March all classes were cancelled in line with Government directives. I am so proud to take this opportunity to remind you that Nirkoda's utterly reliable bunch of teachers were so on the ball that the first Zoom class was offered on the following Sunday night – 21 March. That's five days later. We started with inadequate equipment and no experience running classes on Zoom. What the Club did have was a huge amount of passion to keep us all dancing and in contact with each other. We had crucial technical help from Martin in setting it all up and in sourcing the upgrade of equipment that very quickly became necessary. We thank Martin for all this, including the temporary use of his tennis court.

That first lockdown now looks like a picnic compared to the Stage 4 we are living through currently, making that early decision to go to Zoom extremely fortunate. Our teachers have run three classes a week for six months now, organized virtual guest appearances by choreographers we only usually see at workshops and participated globally with marathons across nations. So, to our teachers, on behalf of all our members, thank you for everything you do to keep our Club alive.

To my fellow Committee members – thanks for your always reliable co-operation, hard work and readiness to supply whatever is needed from a plate of fruit to catering meals for 150 people.

Thank you to you, our members, for showing your faith in the ongoing existence of the Club during these unprecedented times by your presence on Zoom and your renewal of your memberships. And could I also say how surprised and touched we were by those of you who have very generously contributed financially – it was very much appreciated.

So the recent drop in infections leads to a more optimistic outlook for all of us. I am sure everyone is hoping that the next AGM can be in person.