

**Australasian Association of Bioethics and Health Law**

**AGM Minutes**

**14:00 (Eastern Australian Daylight Savings Time) Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**Chair:** Bernadette Richards, (President)

**Minute Taker:** Lynn Woodward (Secretary)

**In Attendance:**

Bernadette Richards (President), Rachel Ankeny (Vice President), Lynn Woodward (Secretary), Jaklin Elliott (Treasurer), Malcolm Parker, Angus Dawson, Pat McConville, Camilla Scanlan, Cynthia Forlini, Wendy Lipworth, Ros McDougall, Ainsley Newson, Hudson Birden, Emma Tumilty, Edwina Light, Lisa Lehrer Dive, Tamra Lysaght, Lisa Eckstein, Courtney Hempton, Jackie Leach Scully, Jenny Kaldor, Dominique Martin

**Proxies** No proxies received

**1. Opening and Welcome**

Bernadette Richards opened the meeting with an acknowledgment of the traditional custodians of the land, and welcomed members.

**2. Apologies** had been received from: Justice Michael Kirby, Ben Gray, Hazel Irvine, Carolyn Ong, Neera Bhatia, Bek McWhirter

**3. Minutes of the previous AGM**

A minor grammatical error was noted in the minutes of the previous AGM, and will be corrected. Other than that the minutes were accepted as a correct record, moved by Malcolm Parker and seconded by Bernadette Richards.

**4. President's report**

Bernadette acknowledged the difficulties faced by AABHL members, and the wider community during 2020, but noted that the association had done well in supporting members and that many stream activities were able to continue during the year. She thanked Bek McWhirter and Lisa Eckstein for the hard work in organizing the 2020 conference, and then in dealing with having to postpone the conference and look at alternative ways of holding it in 2021.

**5. Secretary's report**

The Secretary, Lynn Woodward, reported that there had been 4 committee meetings held this year via teleconference. The main points discussed in the meetings had been around the Streams activities, the update of the AABHL website, and the AABHL conference and the impact of Covid on that event.

**6. Treasurer's report**

The Treasurer, Jaklin Elliott, presented the finance and membership numbers, see attached.

Overall, financially in a stronger position than previously. Jaklin explained the finance spreadsheet and noted that the new website accepted membership payments using a system called STRIPE, this system takes the payment and then at the end of each day forwards money to AABHL. However

there has been a problem with the system and the money was not getting forwarded on, this had been identified and all money is accounted for and will be transferred to AABHL. The transfer of money from JBI shares will occur early in 2021, and there will be a guaranteed income from them each year.

## **7. Membership report**

Total number of members was down slightly on similar time last year, but it was noted that there had been an increase in institutional membership, and some people who may have held an individual membership may now fall under this category.

## **8. Conferences**

Lisa discussed the conference organizing, and re-organizing in light of the Covid pandemic. The decision of postpone the 2020 conference was made relatively early, and was based on the risks associated with travel restrictions, budget impact on travel etc. There were financial ramifications with not going ahead with the conference, in particular the outlay to Conference Design (CD), for the work they had already undertaken. Other less significant costs were associated with venue deposits and flights for invited speakers. Discussions were held with CD and it was agreed that they would distribute the 2020 costs over the next 5 years, or 3 conferences, to minimize immediate impact on the association. Refunds or credits were received for other outlays.

Looking to 2021, CD believed there was considerable risk in planning a face to face conference for November 2021, due to uncertainty with travel restrictions, and universities and other institutions implementing strict budget restrictions on travel. This also presented issues around equity, with students, ECRs and others potentially not being able to afford to self-fund conference attendance. In light of this they suggested an online conference was the best option and demonstrated the platform they have on offer, and would be continuously updated and added to as new technology and ideas are available. CD are offering use of this platform at no cost, given that we had already engaged them for the Hobart conference. The platform does offer various options for networking opportunities to be built into the conference. Online conference could be partnered with local hubs, where people can gather in various locations to join online talks, but to also network and socialize in person.

Cost of online conference would be less than face to face; no venue costs, conference dinner etc. Agreed this would be reflected in lower registration fees for conference.

Original timing of 2020 conference, in November, was in part due to weather in Hobart. Given 2021 looking at online then was discussion around considering moving the conference to earlier in the year, all at the meeting agreed that this option should be looked into by the AABHL committee and they could make the decision on it at their first committee meeting for 2021. It was noted that the Asia Pacific Bioethics Education Network (APBEN) online conference will be held 27-30 May, so would wish to avoid clashing with that.

There was support for a future conference, 2022, to be held in Hobart. Given this, and the work involved in conference organization, it was decided that the AABHL membership would be asked for volunteers to help organize the 2021 online conference, rather than Lisa and Bek organizing both 2021 online and 2022 Hobart conferences.

## Action Points

- CD asked to provide a summary of financial risk of face to face 2021 conference
- CD to provide comment about accessibility of an online conference to those with visual or hearing impairments
- Email AABHL members asking for volunteers for 2021 conference organizing committee. – Bernadette/Jaklin
- Date of 2021 conference added to agenda for 1<sup>st</sup> AABHL 2021 meeting – Tamra
- 2020 guest speakers to be informed of change of 2021 conference format to online – Lisa/Bek

## 9. JBI Matters

Not much to report. As mentioned earlier funds from JBI will be dispersed in early 2021 – to AABHL and Otago group. Bernadette thanked Colin Thomson who has been looking after the JBI finances and transfer to AABHL, he is now stepping away from this work.

## 10. AABHL streams, activities and membership

Public Health Ethics, Law & Policy, in conjunction with Research Ethics stream, are holding a virtual workshop – Looking Forward/Looking Back: Law, Ethics and Policy in the Age of COVID-19 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of December.

Research Ethics – see above

Empirical Ethics – have held a series of webinars which have been well attended. If the 2021 conference goes ahead as an online event they noted they will not organize any more stream webinars so they can concentrate on the conference.

Health Law Ethics – no activities to report

Clinical Ethics Stream – no representative present

Student/ECR stream – plans for 2021 to reinvigorate mailing list, to try to capture students and ECR who are not stream members, or are not AABHL members, but who are working in the area. Suggestion to look into a mini-seminar type series, where students can practice their presentations to each other, building up skills and getting supportive advice on content and also career options.

The AABHL Executive Committee looks forward to receiving a short report from the Co-Leaders of each of the Empirical Bioethics and Clinical Ethics Streams, in due course.

Teaching Ethics Stream – not currently active

HEAL (Health, Ethics and Law) discussion group remains active in Queensland. Due to COVID has not had any activities recently, but plan to do so in near future.

## 11. Committee membership proposal

Proposal is to increase the current committee membership from maximum of 10 people to maximum of 14.

Outlined current restrictions are based on Constitution, but Constitution also allows, by resolution, for increase, or decrease in committee size.

Proposal was discussed, with acknowledgement of increasing size will help with getting new ideas to the committee, and with succession planning. Mal Parker supported the proposal, this was seconded by Jaklin, and all present agreed.

Outcome : AABHL committee to have a maximum of 14 members.

### **12. Election of committee members**

For 2020 current committee members standing down after 3 year term were Bernadette Richards, Jaklin Elliott, Lynn Woodward, Wendy Lipworth and Clare Delaney. Bernadette re-stood for President, unopposed and Jaklin re-stood for Treasurer position unopposed.

Lynn did not re-stand for Secretary position. She was thanked for her efforts over the years. Tamra Lysaght nominated for the Secretary position and was unopposed.

Committee member Clare did not restand for that position, she was thanked for her efforts.

There were 3 nominations for committee – Wendy Lipworth (re-standing), Hudson Birden and Shannon Greene. Given the expanded size of the committee no voting was required and all 3 nominees were welcomed to the committee.

### **13. Any other matters**

### **14. Next AGM**

To be decided. Was highlighted that AGM must be held within 12 months of the previous one, which would work for 2021 if the conference is brought forward. However if 2022 conference is held in November then there would be an issue with the time gap between 2021 AGM if held during the online conference and 2022 AGM if that was at a November Hobart conference.