

Issue 7, January 2020

Welcome to the 7th issue of *Footwork*, aiming to keep Orientation and Mobility (O&M) employers, employees, and other stakeholders informed of developments in the O&M Association of Australasia (OMAA).

# OMAA Membership Payments

Thank you for your patience as we transition into processing memberships using the new website.

Once payment has been made and a receipt issued you are able to log in and update all of your details. Please note that your username is your First Name and Last Name e.g. John Smith, and your temporary password is 123456.

Please let Karen Carrigan know if you cannot open the receipt in the format that it has been sent in at: [memberships@omaaustralasia.com](mailto:memberships@omaaustralasia.com)

# OMAA Council 2019 AGM Update

A very successful AGM was held on Thursday November 7th. Thirty five members were in attendance via Zoom. We received the annual report and approved the 2020 budget. Thanks were expressed to Carolyn Bates and Kelly Prentice who conducted the audit of the accounts and have agreed to operate in this function in 2020. We thanked and farewelled Gayle McPherson as Vice President and welcomed Nicola McDowell into that position. At the time there were no nominations for Secretary. Since the meeting we have welcomed Shiree Arrian who has agreed to take on the position as Secretary. At the meeting we also welcomed Peter McKenzie as a support to the Finance office and Metaxia Tsoukatos to liaise with Lil Deverell re grievance procedures. Subsequent to the meeting Maree Ingram was welcomed as the new Tasmania Rep, and Ella Peaty has volunteered for the role of Footwork Editor. We are still keen to hear from people who may be interested in acting as South Australia rep, OMAA Blogger and website content reviewer. We acknowledged that great moves had been made towards professionalisation in 2019 and that all the goals set for the year had been achieved. The following goals for 2020 were agreed upon:

* Complete and ratify the Scope of Practice.
* Establish Grievance policy, process and appoint a Grievance Officer.
* Continue work around training pathways in Australia.
* Secure Indemnity Insurance for the OMAA Executive Council.
* Complete processes to become NDIS ready.
* Continue working on Professional Development opportunities including Renwick courses.
* Launch Tom Blair Museum.
* Increase media presence of OMAA.
* Review Constitution to ensure it is fit for purpose.
* Register O&M as a recognised profession with different organisations.

Some other areas of general business were discussed including the need to ratify the Scope of Practice and the possible revision of the Constitution to bring it in line with current operation. The meeting was then closed.

# COMS (Certified O&M Specialists) Update

**Congratulations!** There are now 38 people from ANZ (31 Aussies and 7 Kiwis) who have passed the COMS exam and received their certification. You can check out the growing list at <https://www.acvrep.org/verify>. Narrow the search to “COMS” and “Outside of USA and Canada”. Many thanks to employers who have supported the COMS group submission with encouragement, fee-help, and time to study.

**Exam prep:** Many more have already had their eligibility application approved and booked to take the exam in the next few months. Teaming up with a study buddy is fun. A study guide can be purchased through ACVREP. The Quizlet app has also been highly recommended. You could contact a COMS from the ACVREP register online – while COMS are sworn to secrecy about the exam questions, they might have some good tips on preparing for the exam.

**If you failed the exam** and feel like Eeyore under your own personal raincloud, then don’t suffer in silence. There are many reasons why this might have happened. Contact Lil at [lil@deverell.net](mailto:lil@deverell.net) so we can identify the gaps and work out a plan to succeed.

# ROMSA (Registered O&M Specialists in Australasia)

Once you have passed your COMS exam, and are a member of OMAA, then email a scan of your COMS certificate to [standards@omaaustralasia.com](mailto:standards@omaaustralasia.com). The OMAA registrar will (1) activate your registration on the OMAA website, then (2) send you an email letting you know how you can tweak your profile online and (3) send your ROMSA certificate in the mail. There is no additional fee for ROMSA Registration – your OMAA Membership fee covers this.

# Conferences

## SPEVI conference

O&M professionals from Australia, New Zealand and Fiji joined with other South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment in Adelaide from 12-16 January, for some great professional development (and COMS points). Keynote speakers were Mike McLinden from the University of Birmingham and Emily White from Melbourne, with plenty of O&M presentations in the program to inspire and refresh professional practice.

## IMC17: International Mobility Conference 2020, Gothenburg Sweden

Sweden is the place to be from 22-26 June. The theme for IMC17 is “Challenges for an inclusive society”. More information can be found at the conference website at <https://ips.gu.se/english/cooperation/conferences/imc17>

The OMAA is once again offering two scholarships for IMC17 to cover early bird registration, with applications due Monday 17 February 2020. You can download more information from our website at <https://www.omaaustralasia.com/2020/02/03/conferences/>

## Vision2020 Conference, Dublin

This international conference is happening 12-16 July 2020 and is a great way to bookend your European adventure with some more professional development!

At this stage, Lil plans to go to both IMC and Vision2020, so if you are interested in sharing accommodation to reduce costs for either of these conferences, contact Lil at [lil@deverell.net](mailto:lil@deverell.net)

# Professional Standards Committee – new line-up for 2020

After the AGM in November 2019, the OMAA Professional Standards Committee has regrouped and now includes Lil Deverell (chair, VIC), Errol Ingram (NDIS liaison, NSW), Nancy Higgins (NZ), Brenda Harris (Qld), Metaxia Tsoutakis (NSW) and Sandy Holmes (SA). This group is responsible for negotiating O&M training pathways, supporting COMS applications, liaising with the NDIS and with the O&M industry in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, and investigating grievances.

# FIJI

The OMAA region includes South Pacific island nations. We need to find out more about the O&M knowledge, services, resources and capacity available in each country and the specific needs of service providers and clients. The last O&M professional development delivered in the islands was a one-month program in Suva, in 2010. It is time for another. Lil is looking for experienced O&M specialists interested in doing some international O&M work in 2020. We need to start from scratch to research, scope, fund and deliver some super-charged professional training that meets the needs of O&M workers and clients in the South Pacific. If you are interested in this project, have any advice to offer or a month to spare this year, then please contact Lil at [lil@deverell.net](mailto:lil@deverell.net) or join in an initial Zoom conversation to scope some possibilities on Tuesday 11 February at 1pm, Melbourne time <https://swinburne.zoom.us/j/454131755>

# FOaMS (Freelance O&M Specialists)

A number of freelance O&MSs and GDMIs are providing services within State/Territory metropolises, and regional settings, including one national company. The FOaMS discussion forum continues to provide a space for discourse, questions, queries, ideas, answers and updates, predominantly within spherical contexts of NDIS happenings. It is an effective medium for professional connectivity, in addition to being a platform where knowledge and experiences are shared, and encouragement is extended. The FOaMS discussion group also brings a sense of solidarity and understanding, including collective commonalities, and respectful acknowledgment of individuals’ "courage", as sole and company-based service providers. The OMAA will be adding a freelance service provider section to its website… watch this space!

Please contact Kim Pilic (O&M) via email [kimpilic@gmail.com](mailto:kimpilic@gmail.com), or mobile 0490 044 344, if you are interested in connecting to this group as a freelancer.

Please circulate *Footwork* to anyone who might be interested. If you have queries about the work of the OMAA, or would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to *Footwork*, please contact [info@omaaustralasia.com](mailto:info@omaaustralasia.com)