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Australian-German Welfare Society Inc.



The end of the Australian-German Welfare Society (AGWS)

Quidquid agis, prudenter agas et respice finem

Whatever you do, do it wisely and consider the end

(Herodotus, 485-425, Greek Historian)

The AGWS now looks back over 66 years of existence. Much has happened over the past nearly seven decades and the Committee has now unanimously come to the conclusion that the time has come to wind up the AGWS.

Members of the AGWS will be asked to support a resolution put to a special meeting to be held in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, 18th November 2020.

Item 76 of the current Rules of the AGWS is reproduced below:

- (1) The Association may be wound up voluntarily by special resolution.*
- (2) In the event of winding up or the cancellation of the incorporation of the Association, the surplus assets must not be distributed to any members or former members of the Association.*
- (3) Subject to the Act and any court order made under section 1'33 of the Act, the surplus assets must be given to a body that has similar purposes to the Association and which is not carried on for the profit or gain of its individual members.*
- (4) The body to which the surplus assets are to be given must be decided by special resolution.*

There are many reasons that have led the Committee to conclude that the time has come to wind up the AGWS.

The 1980/81 Annual Report noted that, for the first time, more and more elderly people came to the AGWS seeking assistance. This is no longer so.

Ten years ago, the AGWS had funds in excess of \$ 1 million and today it is just around \$ 800,000 and reducing continually. We also said that the question had arisen whether the AGWS should continue on an "as is" basis, or whether we should consider expanding and/or changing our priorities, or even decrease them.

Over the past ten years, we have made many laudable efforts to re-invent the AGWS. Unfortunately, our efforts to increase our membership were in vain. At the end of 2015 we still had 760 members and, by the end of 2019, this has sunk to under 400. According to our Community Worker's latest report, only 58 of our members are under 60, which suggests that 85% of our members are over 60 and, again in her words: "On the whole I am very happy to find that the German community is well as a general rule" (Report to Committee on 26 May 2020).

We started to change the focus of our work and this resulted, inter alia, in the creation of the "Deutsche Woche", which turned out to be a one-time affair. We actively participated also in the initiative to create a "Deutsches Haus" under the patronage of the German Honorary Consul-General - after an initial indication of support, it turned out that a mere three representatives of the many German organisations attended the next meeting. It is fair to say that both the "Deutsches Haus" project and a possible cooperation with the German Club Tivoli are no longer a viable option.

In an effort to re-invent ourselves, we spent a substantial amount on getting advice from a consultant, namely the "AGWS Strategic Plan" by Ellis Jones.

On reflection, this advice confirmed essentially what we already knew:

The overall demographic profile of Germans in Australia has changed, the older generation is fading away and younger Germans are mostly young professionals who are unlikely to stay here indefinitely. In an effort to meet some of their requirements, we started the "Rappelkiste" but - on reflection - this could also operate as a private enterprise quite independently from the AGWS.

Governments (German, as well as Australian at Federal and State level) are no longer inclined to offer substantial support (apart from some very limited grants from the State Government).

German companies in Victoria, which used to be very strong supporters (CEOs were in fact members of our Board of Governors), no longer respond to requests for support (nothing like when VW-Australia donated a VW beetle as prize for a raffle at our Annual Ball in 1970!)

Other fund-raising efforts can no longer be relied on. In the past few years, our major fund raiser, the Annual Ball, attracted fewer patrons each year. The annual Christmas Market in the Melbourne Town Hall shows a result, which is in no relation to the efforts put in. Similarly, the book market may be a feel-good exercise but in terms of fund-raising makes little if any contribution. Outings and bus trips are financial border-line efforts and cannot be counted as fund-raisers.

Our recent efforts to phone just about all of our members showed an interesting result: Whilst the calls were generally appreciated, they did not result in any requests for assistance, financial or otherwise. It would appear that we play more of a social than a welfare role. It is noted that few, if any, members took the initiative to phone us!

Our Hon. Treasurer said in the last Annual Report: "The current financial situation of AGWS is not good. It is operating at a substantial loss and the outlook is fairly bleak. The society no longer enjoys the support of larger German corporations and bequests."

For many years now we have been unable to find members who were prepared to represent the AGWS on the board of the TTHA, the nursing home facility, which we founded in cooperation with the Temple Society way back in 1975.

Following the resignation of our last President, the Committee is now headed by its Vice-President and we have no indications of interest for the position of President for the next term.

Proposed special resolution

In view of the fact that the Committee has unanimously concluded that the services offered by the Australian-German Welfare Society (AGWS) are no longer needed, that in spite of all efforts to increase membership it has in fact continued to decrease from year to year, that the AGWS continues to lose each year, that in spite of many fund-raising efforts annual losses have continued to increase, it be as it hereby is resolved to wind up the AGWS at the earliest possible opportunity and that any funds left-over be distributed to beneficiaries with similar objectives to the AGWS and after careful consideration the Committee decided to distribute the funds between two organisations that meet the requirements of the Act, namely

Martin Luther Homes Boronia Inc.
67 Mount View Road
The Basin Vic 3154

Tabulam Templer Home for the Aged Inc.
31-41 Elizabeth Street
Bayswater Vic 3153

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Walter W.J. Uhlenbruch AO, KLJ
Honorary Life President
Australian German Welfare Society Inc.