



# SERRA COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND and the SOUTH PACIFIC

February 2016

## **THE SCANZSPAC BOARD MEETING:**

The first SCANZSPAC Board Meeting for 2016 was held at the Chapter House, Diocese of Sale, on Saturday 20th February 2016.

The day commenced with prayers, with President-Elect, Anne Larkins in the Chair, as President David Connell was unable to be present.

As the meeting was being held in Sale, members of the Serra Club of Sale were invited to attend as observers. Five members availed themselves of this opportunity, and Anne Larkins invited the President of Sale, Bill Henebery, to "say a few words." Bill welcomed the Board to Sale, saying that it was a fantastic idea for meetings to be held in areas where Serra Clubs exist, as it gave the local Serrans the opportunity to observe the Board in action.

Members of the Sale Club organised the catering for the meeting, and said that they would take care of any costs involved with the venue and the meals.

President Bill also said that they expected Father Peter Bickley to attend part of the meeting. He is the recently appointed Dean of the Cathedral, and a former Chaplain of the Serra Club of Sale, and has had a long association with Serra. Father Peter celebrated the evening Mass and joined the Serrans for Dinner.

### ***President's Report*** (forwarded by David Connell)

Appreciation expressed that Board Members had submitted reports prior to the last meeting, thus allowing time for consideration before the meeting.

David Connell hoped that Board Nominations would be forthcoming at the February meeting. He observed that, in these difficult times, it seemed as though sincere Catholics were reticent to act in carrying out their faith. This is at a time when many 'baby boomers' in Australia were retiring.

Many outstanding Catholic leaders are in these numbers, people who are desperately needed in Serra to provide strategies and leadership in Clubs to grow and to continue the Apostolate. However, these will not join Serra unless they perceive a challenge and

something constructive that they can do and that Serra does not represent, to them, just simply a prayer group or a dinner meeting.

The active support of the over 3,000 bishops and Parish Priests has been sought but recent experiences had not been encouraging. In each of August and September, Connell had sent out 3,000 emails and received just TWO responses ... simply wishing Serra well! One priest suggested that Serra was too 'Americanised' - something that Connell disagreed with very strongly. Serra is certainly an 'international' apostolate that, in his view, has the best resources available in the world for Vocational support!

It appears that Serra is unable to secure strong, if any, support from the Church hierarchy. This is at a time when Pope Francis has made frequent calls for stronger involvement of the laity. It seems that some Parish Priests do not want to have their few active parishioners who work hard for the Parish (for example, at Fetes, on School Boards, in parish programs and events etc.) encouraged away from the work that they already do.

Six Project Teams have been established to implement strategies in Serra.

David Connell was unaware of any progress being made by individual clubs in establishing databases or engaging new IT-skilled Catholics to assist. He emphasised the importance of building such databases. With its membership base, Serra has the ability to build a database across Australia but a start has to be made.

The Australian Catholic media is a resource and connections need to be built – every Club has to become involved.

Club 31 activity may have dropped off in some Clubs and requires rejuvenation.

It has been David Connell's experience that Bishops, Archbishops and parish priests, in the main, are very supportive of Serra but seem unable to assist to actually establish Parish Vocational Committees or to provide practical support because of their own very busy, demanding lives.

New Treasurer Max Spencer has commenced his duties and will report on this area of responsibility at this meeting. An auditor has been appointed

Max Spencer has also been very busy already with arrangements for the SCANZSPAC Convention 2016 and will provide an update on planning at the meeting. David Connell expressed his sincere thanks to Max Spencer, not just for his work here but for his tireless ongoing efforts always for Serra.

David Connell congratulated Melbourne Club for its outstanding work with its regular newsletter and for the various articles that are attached. He is not aware of any other Club newsletters but presumed that they are produced to keep all members fully informed.

The year ahead, 2016, is already highly-challenging. He prayed that the Holy Spirit will support Serra in its endeavours. As a Board, Serra will take all action practical, pray and

place its full trust in God that this will be a year of resurgence and growth.

Max Spencer commented on the lack of support. Canberra Club has some younger members and is trying to develop a 31 Club on the South Coast. Bill Henebery was firm in his conviction that, to form a Club, it was essential to have leaders.

## *Reports from Vice-Presidents*

### *Vice-President Membership* (Anne Larkins)

Contact made with each Club to confirm their memberships and to ascertain progress in obtaining new members. Larkins distributed an updated report to Board Members. Overall, membership has shown a slight improvement but there is a higher number of Serrans on the "sick list".

### *Vice-President Communications* (forwarded by Steven Vella)

The report covers the period between 25<sup>th</sup> October 2015 and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016. During this time, SCANZSPAC communications kept the status quo but Vella would prefer more change.

Emails have been sent from Clubs, Serra International and SCANZSPAC. Many of these are sent to contacts from databases held by each Club.

The 2015 Serra International Convention was held in Melbourne. The convention was held July-August 2015. Two requests were received since the last Board meeting:

Anne McCormack, Communications Coordinator for Serra's Council for the United States, requested photos of the convention for the Serran Magazine. David Connell replied with a link to photos from his camera.

A request made was to make and to distribute DVDs of the Convention to Serra Clubs. Members suggested they would use the DVD to show at meetings or at public events. Steven Vella has a copy of the videos taken on the day but he contended that they would benefit from editing before being transferred to a DVD.

### Using the Campayn.com email marketing:

The Campayn.com online marketing services are the preferred method for distributing public communication to members. As time permits, Steven Vella will create and send the emails.

### Terry Scanlan's strategy to set up an "Invisible Monastery":

Creating a membership site continues to be a challenge. Steven Vella has written to Daniel Jones (VP Communications Serra International) and to John Liston (Executive Director, Serra International) to seek access to the SCANZSPAC section of the Serra International website but has not had a reply.

There have been no further developments since the last Board meeting and a number of issues need to be discussed at the next Board meeting including:

Serra International Database/John Liston

Communications Planning

Use of existing technology

Making further use of the material/information for Serrans provided by Audrey Smith (Canberra Club)

Usage of the Invisible Monastery Site in USA dioceses and how it is promoted

#### SCANZSPAC online:

The following resources are available for SCANZSPAC.

scanzspac.org: SCANZSPAC domain name. Name registered till 04/09/2021

www.scanzspac.org/gateway.cfm: SCANZSPAC Website

si2015.melbourne: Melbourne IT Limited wrote asking SCANZSPAC to confirm ITS details. Frank's email address was updated to serrasecanz@gmail.com.

scanzspac.wordpress.com: SCANZSPAC blog site

Max Spencer will speak with Vella about publicity for the SCANZSPAC Convention. The big question is "How do we keep people in the loop?"

### ***Serra Australia Foundation*** (Neville Hackett)

02/02/16 Appeal letter sent to all Serrans

Income for the year to date was \$4,708.91 - interest \$3,683.91 and donations \$1,025.00. A donation of \$700 came from one Serran and from one ex-Serran and \$325 came from three other donors.

Grants totalled \$3,000: \$2,000 to the Melbourne Seminary Building Fund (construction of eight new rooms to house 2016 intake) and \$1,000 to assist a Priest with relocation and computer set-up expenses.

Current low interest rates on bank term deposits seem set to continue, restricting growth in funds.