

## Chairman's AGM Report 2017

Bruce Jack

It gives me great pleasure to present the Chairman's AGM Report at this, the 121<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Old Diocesan Union.

Point 10.4.1 of our Constitution spells out exactly what the AGM must discuss: "The approval of the Financial Statements and Annual Report as at the end of December each year."

In recent years, under the Chairmanship of Brian Robertson, the first stipulation, the Annual Report, encompassed, in engaging detail, what had transpired the previous year and was known as "The Annual Chairman's Report".

I have decided to split the "Annual Report" requirement into two reports – one from the Chairman, called: "The Chairman's AGM Report", and one from our Executive Manager, called "The Secretary's Annual Report".

The latter will focus on what has happened since our last AGM. I will use the Chairman's AGM Report to look forward.

But to do so, let's first take a step back. Last year my predecessor, Brian Robertson, highlighted the March 2015 Strategic Planning Session conducted by Nicky Bicket. That session highlighted four strategic objectives:

- To build and promote a mentoring and support framework of ODs worldwide
- To segment and broaden functions and events to appeal to the widest possible OD audience
- To communicate with ODs worldwide in a way that is meaningful
- To uphold and strengthen the Bishops reputation worldwide

I believe we have excelled at the first two objectives (our mentoring programme and functions). We will continue to work hard at these. We are improving our communication all the time, but this really requires focus and action this year. And it is an obvious given that we will continually strive to uphold and strengthen the Bishops reputation worldwide.

Last year in May 2016 we held what I called a “top-up” Strategic Session. The purpose of these annual sessions is to look at immediate challenges and opportunities in an holistic way.

The main learning from last year’s session was that without a very hands-on Chairman such as Brian, we needed to employ an executive manager to drive our Mission and Objectives as outlined in our Constitution.

As a direct result of this session and after a thorough, transparent process, we appointed Dr WP van Zyl (K,1997) to the position of Executive Manager of the ODU. He took office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2016.

I would like to thank Simon Peile, John Macey and Adam Pike for joining me on the Appointment sub-committee for this job.

The forward-looking focus of my Chairman’s ODU AGM Report this evening reflects one of the significant shifts in our committee structure and philosophy, which will see the Chairman’s role become increasingly strategic and hands-off.

As you will know the OD committee serves on a voluntary, non-paid basis. For interest, I asked your committee to put an annual figure, based on their current remuneration, to the time they spend on OD matters. Excluding any value of lost opportunities, your committee commits somewhere in the region of R2.4 million per year towards the ODU.

As this rather astonishing figure will reflect we are fortunate to have committee members of high calibre and deep institutional knowledge serve you.

This is just as well because the ODU has ambitious plans. To utilise properly this pool of talent and experience we must become more efficient and effective as a committee. This requires a re-organisation of more structured and responsive sub-committees to help The Mitre Administrative team carry out our ambitious plans. Where appropriate we will invite non-committee members of the Union and members of the school staff to join these sub-committees.

We have invested in our physical infrastructure (The Mitre), we have invested in the human resources required to run our Union and now we must commit to further investment in the systems and communication

infrastructure needed to leverage our initial investments and update the operational structure of the ODU. This will ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness in carrying out our Mission and Objectives.

To this end we have earmarked a further R1million of our funds under management to be spent over the next two years in this regard, and have planned to run at a small operational loss for at least the next two years, probably three.

This will allow us to support our Mentoring Programme and other targeted initiatives of our branch secretaries. It will allow us to build a vastly improved, more engaging and useful website for effective communication. It will mean we will be able to activate a database management system and launch an interactive, on-line global OD entrepreneurs' platform, among other projects.

Long-term sustainability and success, however, will rely primarily on operational efficiency. We must increase revenue and cut unnecessary expenditure.

As a small example, our OD events are currently run to breakeven (with some running at a small loss). With targeted, ad-hoc sponsorship we will make them fund-generating without any impact on the wallets of our members.

Cost-cutting measures, as any of you who run businesses will know, are like endless trench warfare. With Mukesh Govan and Sean King supporting us from the school we have already rationalised our banking activity, cutting out costs.

A priority for The Mitre administrative team is to streamline all our financial processes like petty cash control and the management and sale of memorabilia.

Most significantly, we will be running your Union to a planned, inclusive annual budget, which for the first time, will be informed by an agreed 5 year business plan with the school executive and the Chairman of Council. This will be periodically monitored by both the committee and the school's business unit.

We are investigating ways to make our magazine financially sustainable. Currently this critical component of our stated Mission costs us in the

region of R120 000 per year. The likelihood is that it will cost more than double this going forward.

Specific strategies to address this include targeted advertising and charging for postage. To ensure we handle this sensitive matter correctly, we have gathered a sub-committee of print and internet media professionals from our OD family to guide us. I would like to thank committee member Anton Taylor (B, 2005) for leading this very important sub-committee.

The timing is good for a rejuvenation as there will be a change in our ODU magazine anyway. The school has chosen to produce an annual magazine which will stand separately and be distributed separately from the ODU magazine.

I believe this is a wonderful opportunity to improve on our current printed magazine offering, while retaining all the elements of tradition and content that are important to us.

In line with our Constitution your ODU committee is committed to help bring ODs together and closer to Bishops. I believe we need to do more than this - the rapidly changing world around us demands it and our Constitution makes provision for it.

As a result we have set ourselves the task to investigate and establish what is being called 'The Bishops Benevolent Society'. This needs form and substance by the end of 2018.

Point 2.2.3 of our Constitution states that one of our objectives is "To apply its funds and services to other South African charitable and welfare initiatives where deemed appropriate and which may render an ancillary benefit to Bishops or its students;"

Our vision is to establish a Bishops Benevolent Society to support ODs in many different ways. Of particular concern are young black ODs who leave Bishops and have almost no support structure in place to help them through those crucial first five years after school.

Whether through The Benevolent Society's structures or not, it is clear the ODU must make much more effort to be an immediate support for young black ODs when they leave these school gates for the last time. The ODU must be a friendly, accessible ladder leg to grasp onto. We are indebted to the work of the BODs on the ODU Committee for guiding us in this process.

Another issue for the Bishops Benevolent Society to address are those in the Bishops family who have fallen on hard times. We have an alarming number of ODs living rough on our city streets for example.

Fortunately, within the OD family we have all the professional experience and expertise to support each other; from doctors and psychologists to those running night shelters and places of safety.

With the launch of The Bishops Benevolent Society we will be able to organise pro-bono support from many quarters. The Society may, in time, also be able to financially support indigent ODs and retired teachers or their spouses.

In 2017 we will launch The Sophie Gray ODU Art prize for Bishops students. Working closely with the Head of the Art Department, Peter Hyslop, we will establish a prize for the best Grade 12 artwork exhibited at their final matric examination assessment.

We intend for this assessment and award ceremony to take place in The Mitre and for the winning work to become the property of the ODU and part of a long-term curated ODU collection.

The obvious, positive spin-off of the prize and the artwork will be a proudly visual representation for young ODs leaving school and a powerful reminder that they are very welcome in the ODU.

Still focused on the younger members of our Union, we will hold more regular and varied Young OD Club gatherings.

Linked to our Young OD members, but with ambitions to tie into the Mentoring Programme, it is our wish to establish The OD Entrepreneurial Society by the end of 2018.

We all know the major issue facing South Africa is joblessness. The significant future contributor to job creation lies not in big business or government, but in small to medium-sized entrepreneurial businesses.

It is absolutely vital that we help to create an entrepreneurially-friendly environment for ODs. Both your President and I are passionate about this. The platform and structure we want to roll out over the next two years will include the aforementioned interactive on-line platform (the new ODU website) that will allow OD entrepreneurs to communicate, share experiences and learnings, raise funds, and do business. There will also be networking opportunity talks and events to which Bishops students will be invited.

A personal goal for WP and myself over the next year is to establish a formal affiliation between the Old Boy and Old Girl organisations of our neighbouring Cape schools.

However, without a doubt, our main focus for the next twelve months is to support The Bishops Trust. Our school is in dire need of funds. Not only do facilities need upgrading, but we must establish a useful endowment fund and expand our scholarship and bursary reach. Above and beyond all the general support we will commit to, we will facilitate effective communication between ODs and The Trust.

As part of this general support, we will rejuvenate and relaunch the Hamilton Mvelase Bursary Fund for gifted students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds.

There is concern expressed by many ODs about the colour make-up of the Bishops student body – it still appears far too white to many, myself included. However, there are complicated reasons why this is and it is not an easy fix. Importantly, our role is not to interfere with how the school is run at this level, but we can and should create structures to help facilitate this change.

The Hamilton Mvelase Bursary Fund will allow us to provide the school with the financial support to achieve sustainable transformation with the right candidates who in turn will become proactive and proud ODs.

Besides the relaunch of this Bursary Fund we intend making a difference to the black pupils already at the school by encouraging ODs, especially black ODs, to mentor black kids at Bishops and help them navigate the often culturally alienating, sometimes racist, school environment.

In conclusion, I want to thank all of you for attending this evening and for Delre and WP for organising all the things that need to happen in the background of events such as this.

We have placed a massive burden WP's shoulders. I believe he has risen to the task. We are asking him to help lead us in a fast-paced, dynamic, uncertain environment.

WP, much is expected of you by both your committee and the wider OD family. I'd like to personally thank you for taking on this responsibility and for doing so well.

My predecessor was passionate about strengthening our branch offices around the world. I am determined to carry this baton for us and we

thank all our branch secretaries in advance for all their effort and support we will require to achieve our goals this coming year.

Once again special thanks and mention must go to Nicky Bicket in the UK whose tireless, innovative and engaging work is a model of what a branch should be.

Your committee, we have already learnt, is much poorer as a result of the time and effort that goes into serving you. As a new Chairman I am grateful for the patience and loyalty shown towards me and my new way of doing things. Thank you for your hard work, persistence and commitment to the Bishops cause.

To our Patron, thank you for your support and calming presence.

It is one thing inheriting a committee of this stature, but quite another, far more daunting matter, to inherit a President such as Raymond Ackerman.

Thank you, Raymond, for your passion, insight, carefully phrased challenges, wisdom, kindness, generous counsel and most importantly your unwavering, inspiring commitment to Bishops. It has been a true privilege spending time in your presence.

A big thank you must also go to Guy Pearson and Mike Bosman, not just for your support and commitment to a close, collaborative relationship between the school and the OD Union, but especially for allowing us to make use of the school's business unit. Both Sean King and Mukesh Govan have been instrumental in establishing the parameters of good financial governance and simplifying our financial day-to-day dealings.

Finally, and importantly a huge thank you to all the staff that help out at The Mitre on a daily basis. Donovan Murray and Rashied Golliath deserve mention and thanks in this regard.

Thank you once again for attending this evening's AGM.

