

## **Presidents Report – AGM 2021**

It's hard to look back and reflect on the enormous disruption and challenges that we all had to face in 2020. After one of Australia's worst bushfire seasons ever, a global pandemic stopped us all in our tracks.

The COVID-19 health crisis dominated 2020 and the rapid changes and barriers to providing necessary allied health services during the pandemic were on everyone's minds. However, I believe the APodA shone during this time providing consistent leadership, service and communication to keep podiatry at the forefront of policy considerations and supporting the membership through difficult and uncertain times.

Working with our allied health partners and the relevant authorities saw allied health recognised as an essential service during much of the pandemic. This is something that many may not have appreciated, but it was very important.

Shortly following the closure of our borders and the unprecedented restrictions imposed on non-essential services, saw the APodA Board move into action and conduct special Board meetings to address the obvious impending disruption. Whilst the Association's annual result appeared potentially devastating, the work of the Board and the State Associations to merge into a single entity was truly coming to the fore. Had the circumstances been different and the Association not taken the steps of making itself a larger single national entity, I believe we would have seen a very different and less co-ordinated result. The easy option for the Board would have been to bunker down and take a conservative 'save and cut costs' approach. But we took a far more member-focused approach and did everything to ensure that the profession we serve with great pride, was supported and nourished at a time of greatest need. This, despite the likelihood of a significant change in the environmental circumstances which would see the Association shift from a balanced budget proposal to a very uncomfortable deficit forecast and the likely result of a loss of hundred thousand dollars.

I said earlier that the Association shone in 2020. This was evident in our approach to membership fees, the inclusion of hardship clauses, the increase in online CPD options, the exceptional communication to

members and the profession, and our very caring approach to ensure everyone was able to get through to the other side with minimal negative impact.

I'm very proud to say that we did what we said we would do. Yes, despite the delay in a number of progressive programs such as Podiatry 2030, we managed to assist members to get through the worst of what was really a forgettable year.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the APodA team for their dedicated work and efforts to ensure that podiatry continues to be well-recognised and represented across a wide range of our programs. I would like to thank each of the board directors for their support and assistance, in particular. We had two new directors join us in 2020, Maria Latemore and Jason Dunne who found their feet in exceptional circumstances. I'd particularly like to thank Ainslie Davies as chair of our audit and risk committee and Joe Brooks as chair of the advocacy and nominations committees.

I'd also like to pay homage to Ian Wilson who after 6 years on the APodA Board as one of our two independent appointed directors, is retiring from the role. Thank you for an enormous job Ian. You've been an absolute delight to work with and you've made an enormous contribution to the APodA over your 6 years and will be very sadly missed.

And lastly, I convey my thanks to you the members for your strength, collaboration and collegiality in what was truly an exceptional year.