

President's Report to General Meeting 29 September 2011

Committee

I welcome Alan and Linda Caldwell to our Committee. George O'Kane has had an accident and a stroke and hasn't been able to participate on the Committee. I have taken on the role of Federal Councillor and Ken Harrison is the Bulletin Editor.

Your Branch Committee has worked hard with limited resources with five positions currently vacant. Unless we get more members to serve on the Committee, the Branch will have difficulty in maintaining the services and advocacy performed for our members.

The Secretary's duties are to be split into two positions. One will handle the membership database; the other will look after all the other Secretarial duties. Committee member Tim Smith has kindly agreed to administer the membership database. Our current Secretary Joan O'Connor wants to step down as Secretary at the AGM in March 2012.

It is essential to find a replacement for Joan as this position is the Public Officer for SCOA and legally must be occupied for our branch to continue operating.

I will talk more on this under General Business.

Much of our work over the past few months has been devoted to the national issues of Fair Comsuper pensions and SCOA's future. I will discuss these matters under the Federal Council report.

Communications

Bulletin/Supertime

The primary role of the Bulletin and Supertime is to inform members on issues that SCOA is pursuing. If you have any suggestions on how the content or format could be improved, please tell a Committee member. Both the Bulletin and Supertime will continue to be published quarterly.

Emails

With our new internet provider, we are able to send bulk emails to members quickly and efficiently. We have recently used this facility twice to quickly communicate with members. Unfortunately, we only have email addresses for about one third of our members and some 20 per cent of those are out of date.

If you have an email address, please advise it to the Secretary so that our records are kept current.

Membership

Our membership continues to decline through memberships terminated for those who had not paid their fees for 2010 in addition to resignations and losses through death.

Our current membership is 1645 compared to 1811 at December 2010 a loss of 9%. The concerning statistic is that 43% of those members for whom we have dates of birth are over 80 and 73% are over 70. If SCOA is to survive, we need to retain existing numbers and improve our recruitment to compensate for the inevitable losses through death.

Your Committee continues to pursue ways of reaching the many thousands of Comsuper recipients who are not SCOA members. I will outline under the Federal Council Report measures that SCOA is taking to increase membership.

While we can achieve some success, we need your help. I ask you to find out from fellow members of clubs or associations you belong to if they are Comsuper recipients. Get them interested in SCOA and give them a brochure or your Bulletin.

SCOA needs to grow its membership if it is to have the financial resources and strength of numbers to pursue the many issues where it is seeking more just benefits for you.

Membership Database

Our Branch is in the process of changing to a new membership database adopting the Member Ties program. This is inexpensive and is maintained externally which means that any technical issues can be quickly resolved by a phone. The system has been trialled for a couple of months and has performed well and meets our needs. Over the next month we will be copying all the membership records onto the new program. These details will then be checked against the current records to ensure that the information on the new program is correct.

It is intended that Federal Office will have direct access to our membership records by way of a password. They will not be able to alter any information but read it only. This is being checked to ensure that Queensland's Privacy laws are not being breached by releasing member's information out of the State. Our Secretary and Assistant Secretary (membership data) will be the only persons who can alter membership records.

Members will not need to take any action.

I particularly want to thank our Secretary Joan for the extraordinary time and effort she has put into trialling and setting up the new database and keeping the current unreliable database operating. I thank Tim Smith for his work in assisting Joan with the transition arrangements to the new database.

Finances

As you saw from the financial report presented by Peter, our Branch is in a strong financial position with \$42,000 in fixed investments. I particularly want to acknowledge the \$1,750 we have received in donations this year and thank the members who contributed those funds.

Kindred Organisations

We continue to have an excellent relationship with the DFWA with their representative Ken Railton regularly attending our Branch Committee meetings.

We are also pursuing a similar relationship with the Association of Independent Retirees who primarily provides services to people on allocated pensions. I have met with their Queensland President a few times this year to discuss items of common interest.

I met with the CEO of National Seniors this year to discuss indexation and taxation matters. It is intended to have a further meeting this year. They are a strong organisation and one which can provide support to SCOA particularly in lobbying Government

With SCOA's membership declining, it is important that we work with these kindred organisations on issues of mutual interest and thus present a stronger case.

Fair Comsuper Pensions

The Fair Comsuper pension title covers all issues relating to our pensions e.g. indexation, taxation, reversionary benefits, income test for CSHC etc.

On the recommendation of this Branch, Federal Council agreed to set up a Working Group to pursue the Fair Comsuper pension campaign. I was appointed to the Group in May. The other members are John Coleman, Indexation Manager and Graeme Evans from the ACT Branch.

In May, our Branch sent a comprehensive plan to Federal Office outlining actions to be taken to progress Fair Comsuper pensions. The plan was intended to be the basis for the Working Group to develop strategies for SCOA's campaign with the Government, Opposition, individual MP's and the media. I wish to thank our Vice President John Hill for his work in compiling the plan.

I submitted a paper to the August Federal Council meeting and will discuss the outcomes under the Federal Council Report.

We will continue this topic under the Federal Council Report.

Superannuation Pensions

Two of our members have made representations to our Committee regarding the unfair treatment they received from ARIA, Superannuation Complaints Tribunal and Comsuper when claiming their just superannuation pension entitlements.

We are preparing a submission highlighting their issues and will send it to Federal Office to pursue with the relevant organisations.

Closing

In closing, I wish to thank the Committee for their efforts and support where there is much to be done but with limited resources.

I also thank you, the members, for your ongoing support of SCOA and look forward to your continued involvement as we continue the fight for fairer indexation and taxation.