

Opening up the Future

by Howard Melder

The Subud Australia National Committee as currently structured consists of:

- Chairman
- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Bookkeeper
- Committee Councillor (Zone Representative)
- Kejiwaan Councillor (National Helper)
- National Office Manager

In these positions each volunteer serves a 2 year term.

8 National Helper volunteers each serve a term of 4 years.

Wings

- SICA
- SIHA
- Susila Dharma
- SES
- Youth

In these positions too, each volunteer serves a 2 year term.

Local Groups

In addition to the national structure we also have Chairs of local groups and they too need to have (ideally) a Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer as well as SICA, SIHA, SD, SES and Youth representatives. Volunteers serve in these positions for 2 years.

This equates to an ideal scenario of 9 members each in the committees of Cairns, Brisbane, Wollumbin, Sydney, Wollongong, Melbourne, North-East Melbourne, Adelaide, Adelaide South, Perth, Darwin, Central Australia and Tasmania. (There are also the sub-groups of North Melbourne and North Sydney.)

9 volunteers x 13 groups = 117 members on local committees (in the ideal world).

Add to that figure, 13 members on the National Committee plus 8 National Helpers.

So if we all had our full contingent or a complete committee, there would be in total 138 members serving on committees.

Our membership base conservatively has 400 active members, with an average age of 55 years (the majority range from 40 – 70+). Membership is on the decline.

400 members minus 138 committee = potentially 262 members not on a committee. Then there are at least 60 local helpers! If you subtract them, you are down to 202.

This means that to fully staff our organisation, half the membership needs to be involved in administration one way or another.

Our funds come from donations and are currently not enough to support Subud Australia and the commitments we have made internationally and locally. Our finances are really propped up by local members including current/past Chairmen, committee members, and helpers.

So these volunteers are not just doing the work, they are also financing it from their own resources.

This type of operation above is not sustainable, especially if we need to ask for donations from the same sources. These sources may dry up at some time and then where would we be?

We need to re-think the way we move forward in this organisation. I do not have the answers, but I do think I need to highlight that Subud Australia is not running effectively and neither are the local groups. We are too top heavy. We have built our organisational structure as if we had 5,000 members rather than our current membership base of 400.

We have had many workshops looking at ways to grow Subud or make more money. We make resolutions and then do not fund those that we ask to carry out these decisions. I have been to many a congress and heard of resolutions to build halls or organise ways to grow Subud, but we are too small on the ground and perhaps people are getting too busy in their everyday lives to be able to give something back to Subud.

The end result is that the people who put in the effort end up accomplishing little and feeling frustrated.

If we assess our situation from an asset perspective Subud Australia is very

wealthy, but that is on paper. We have a number of properties worth an estimated 10-12 million dollars in total. However we are not willing to sell them – even in areas where the membership is shrinking.

What do we need to do to make our organisation more effective?

- Charge Membership Fees?
- Reduce the responsibility of the National Committee?
- Give the groups more autonomy?
- Increase the funding and business responsibilities of the National, leaving the local to focus on the needs of the members?
- Start to create properly remunerated, long-term administrative positions?
- Make local chairs/groups responsible for some of the national duties and get rid of the national committee, as we currently know it?
- Sell our properties?
- Do something to grow our membership?

As our ex Prime Minister John Howard pointed out, Australia has an ageing population. So does Subud Australia. If we do not do something constructive to address this issue, Subud Australia as we know it will cease to exist.

I think we need to engage with our local helpers and national helpers to feel our way through to an agreement on a way forward that is based on concrete and *realistic* objectives.

Let's set out a possible future vision: what Subud would look like with far less administration, far more energy being put into value, and 2400 new members.