



Presidents Report 2018

The 2017/18 year is one that has marked a significant escalation in the operations of BAG as it continues to strive towards its objective of community rejuvenation. Certainly, it has been a year of challenges and quite a few difficulties but overall, one in which I can say with some confidence, that significant progress has been made.

Great Artesian Spa

Building on the initiative of the previous year when the initial decision was made to create a full time position, 2017/18 saw BAG successfully tender for the operating rights to the Great Artesian Spa. Although this was a protracted and sometimes trying process, we did successfully commence operations on October 3, 2017 and have made steady progress with the operation since. Financially, it has been a difficult first year of operation with the Spa recording a direct operating loss of almost \$37000.00. Of this however, about 30% (or \$11000.00) was directly attributable to “start up” costs including training, uniforms, equipment and plants and will have limited impact in subsequent years. The operating loss does however reflect a number of other issues including the two month shutdown for reconstruction, overcoming lingering negativity from past years, finding the right staff structure and mix and simply having to re-sell the re-vamped product.

On the positive side however, just in excess of 20,000 visitors enjoyed the services of the Spa Complex for the first full year of operation and the facility has been continuously been rated as “**Excellent**” by **Trip Advisor** since re-opening after reconstruction. The culmination of these positives, the continual search for efficiency in operations and the constant search for additional activities augers well for year 2 of operations. It should not be forgotten that, from a community viewpoint, the Spa provides employment for 10 people.

Overall Financial Performance

Needless to say, given the direct operating loss at the Spa, BAG’s overall financial performance for the year was disappointing recording a total organisational loss of almost \$68000.00 for 2017/18. However, now that the start-up year is behind us, (and most of the “one off” costs out of the way) we should be able to look forward to a much better outcome in the 2018/19 year.

Other Highlights

- **Bottle Tree Bulletin** – Despite having to survive an arduous Tender Process, BAG has retained the publication of the BTB. Although now reduced in size it continues to be the regular earner for the organization and well read by the community.
- **Digital Media** – During 2017/18, BAG was able to complete its portfolio of digital media and now has an active presence on Facebook (BAG & Spa), Instagram and actively maintained web sites for both Mitchell and The Great Artesian Spa. These tools will certainly increase our marketing and information reach in the coming years.

- **Partnerships** – Good business is built on good relationships and BAG has paid particular attention to forming good working relationships with other community groups and organisations. These relationships (like those with RESQ+ and more latterly, Nalingu and the Gunggari Native Title Aboriginal Corporation) are now giving our community a significant united voice which is being heard by all levels of Government.
- **Tourism Promotion** – The continued pursuit of the tourist dollar for the community has been a constant activity for BAG and 2017/18 saw Mitchell accredited as an *RV Friendly Town*, something which, according to our digital media, has already been noticed by touring and travelling organizations. Our application for accreditation as an *Information Centre* is also ready to be lodged. Darryl's *Community Bus* continues to be well patronized and has become a point of praise from a great many visitors.
- **Community Assistance & Functions** – BAG continues to provide support to other groups and community members. In 2017/18 these included the Mitchell RSL & Combined Sports Club and the Major Mitchell Caravan Park. BAG is also currently providing some administrative assistance for Rotary's drought relief operations.

In closing, I would like to thank

- the Management Committee and BAG members for their support, insights and enthusiasm,
- Jeff, Bree and the staff at the Spa for their dedication and commitment and
- All of those groups, individuals and Councillors who work with us and share our vision and commitment to build a better future for our community.

Rob Cornish