



## **2017 Annual Reunion - President Peter Farr's speech notes 10 Sept 2017**

### **Greetings & Acknowledgments**

Warm greetings to local, interstate and overseas Members and your guests. Principal Lois Joll, parents and siblings of the musicians.

I wish everyone present a very enjoyable Reunion today

I am most pleased to welcome Centenarians Rafe Snader and Gordon Ewers who started at Mod in 1928 and 1929 respectively. Rafe is 104 years old and is Gordon 101.

Especially I also welcome the graduating class of 1957 with some 26 Modernians present today celebrating 60 years - including Tony Wegener who has come the furthest distance - from Utah, USA, along with Prof. Shirley Randell and Brian Savvas from the eastern states.

We have received apologies from many people - the list is on a display stand at the Refectory where we will have lunch. In addition the School Patron Malcolm McCusker and Tonya McCusker who are in Melbourne today have asked that I pass on their best wishes to the Mod attendees at this Reunion event.

Also there is a list of some 30 members who have passed away in the past 12 months including Dr Phillip Playford AM and I ask you all to think of these Modernians for a few moments please.

### **Relationship with the School**

The spirit of willing cooperation of the Society and The Sphinx Foundation with the School - the Executive, Admin and teachers - what Don Tyler refers to endearingly as the **'whole crew'** - is at a high level.

The Principal attends ex-officio meetings of the Council and the Associate Principal attends ex-officio meetings of the Sphinx Foundation. Councillors and volunteers attended many School events this past year. the Council is represented on the School Board.

### **Amended Constitutions**

In order to comply with the new Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA), the Society has been forced to revise its Constitution so that it complies with what are called the Model Rules set out by the Commissioner for Consumer Protection.

The opportunity has been taken to make many refinements to the Constitution, and the extensive legal work was done on a *pro bono* basis by Nigel Hunt, a partner in King & Wood Mallets, and who happens to be a Director of the Sphinx Foundation Inc. and member of the PMS Board. Nigel was assisted by Brendon Dawson, Solicitor.

Similarly, a completely revised Constitution has been produced for the Sphinx Foundation Inc. and a completely new Constitution has been produced for the proposed Perth Modernian Society Museum Association Incorporated.

The Society records its gratitude to Nigel Hunt and Brendon Dawson. Not only has the work been done with great diligence but the legal costs that would otherwise have been incurred would run into several thousands of dollars.<sup>1</sup>

### **Membership**

We are a member-based organisation, and for financial survival we need many more 4-Year Contributing members - esp from the eras when Mod was a comprehensive 5-year high school (1960 - 67) and then a specialist Music School (1968 - 2006)

For any who haven't converted to the 4-Year Contributing membership, the forms are here today, and it also can be done on line via our website.

### **Annual Oration**

Each year since 2011, the PMSoc organises an **Oration** to upper school students by a prominent citizen. In August 2017 it was given by our fellow ex-student Dr Judyth Watson.

### **Memorabilia**

The Society and the School have a jointly sponsored a set of memorabilia - which is on display at the lunch venue and may be purchased or ordered there or via our website.

### **Sphinx Scholarship Fund**

A record number of 86 people have responded so far to the 2017 Annual Giving appeal, contributing the magnificent sum of \$110,000 for which the Sphinx Foundation Inc Board is very grateful. As a result two new scholarships will definitely be able to be created - one at the Year 7 entry level and one for a needy upper school student. In 2017, the Fund is financially supporting a record number of 55 PMS students.

I take this opportunity of sincerely thanking all the donors who made these remarkable achievements possible.

### **Perth Modernian Society Awards**

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<sup>1</sup> At the Special General Meeting held on 10 Sept. 2017, each of the three constitutions was adopted by unanimous votes in favour.

The Perth Modernian Society Awards are intended to recognise the actions and achievements of people who have gone above and beyond what could be reasonably expected, to advance education through the Perth Modernian Society (Inc.).

At the AGM in April 2017, Honours awards were conferred on Eve Broadley and myself.

On Friday evening during the Senior School Concert, I had the honour of recognising Mrs Tonya McCusker's great contributions to Perth Mod by conferring on her the title of Honorary Member of the Perth Modernian Society.

Please note that nominations can be made at any time. Any member of the Society can nominate an individual for an award, and the nominees can be Perth Modernians, persons eligible to be Modernians, or members of the wider community. All the information needed is on our website or can be made available in printed copy of course.

### **The Save Perth Modern School Campaign**

In late January 2017 the then State Labor Opposition announced completely unexpectedly a policy to repurpose PMS as a local intake secondary school and to relocate the Gifted and Talented program to a new CBD high rise school to be called 'Education Central'. The entire PMS community was appalled at this proposed sacrilege. Janet Holmes a Court called it a 'thought bubble' and I labelled it a 'hare brained idea'. After all, it was only in 2007 that Perth Mod was converted back to being the State's only exclusively academic selective high school by the then Gallop Labor Govt. A tirade of opposition spontaneously arose which was continually countered by a refusal for proper consultation and the repeated quoting of the M word - Mandate by the new McGowan Govt. when it came to power in mid March.

The Society was only one player amongst many which included individual Modernians far and wide, the P&C, Save PMS Action Group, the parents Public Campaign Group, individual parents, students, past teachers, non-executive members of the School Board, Opposition members from various parties in both houses of the WA Parliament, some Federal politicians, the Subiaco City Council, and the media.

When one bears in mind the many public schools that have either disappeared or been repurposed in WA since the 1990's, it obviously took something very special for success to come our way.

I have no doubt that it was the totality of all the actions and public sentiment that finally convinced the Government to change course, which of course seemed nigh impossible for four months.

When one looks at the roles played by Modernians, parents and students, things that immediately come to my mind include the thousands of signatures gathered from the general public across the State on the two petitions to Parliament, the Peaceful March/Rally, letters to the Editor, letters to and meetings with Ministers and other politicians, lobbying the Subiaco City Council, media interviews - these all played a big part. Through its 'Save PMS Fighting Fund' the Society worked side by side with parents to make the Peaceful March/Rally a public relations triumph - a game

changer in fact.

The primary objective of all participants in the campaign was for the Government to leave Perth Mod just as it is – in the same buildings and grounds, and as an academically selective school – and for the Government to seek another location, among the many alternatives open, to deal with the overcrowding problem for some secondary schools in the north- western/north-eastern suburbs.

That was the bottom line of the Perth Modernian Society and we, along with other stakeholders were very gratified that was the outcome. As you probably know, the Society and the Sphinx Foundation Inc. twice placed a large Public Thankyou notice in *The Weekend West* to acknowledge the McGowan Government as well as all those people who worked so hard and tirelessly.

We should not rest on our laurels since as long as there is only one fully academic selective high school in WA, Perth Mod will always be at political risk.

One serendipitous benefit of the Save MS campaign is that there is much greater awareness and respect now for the role that the Society plays within the overall Perth Mod community. The School Principal Lois Joll stressed to students and guests on Friday evening during the Senior School Concert how lucky this School is to have a long-standing and effective alumni body. Also the President of the P&C Association recently sent a gracious letter thanking the Society for its part in the campaign and offering to endeavour to encourage leaving students to join the Society - which we would certainly appreciate.

### **Thankyou**

I would like to thank the PMSocy Councillors, the Board of the Sphinx Foundation Inc and the H&M committee, Magazine Editor Graeme Hunt, as well as many volunteers for their sterling work. If I can single out one person it is **Ian Jarvis** who has singlehanded done an awful lot for the Society on the IT front for many years now.

On your behalf I would like to convey a big thankyou to the Music Department - staff and students for the performances that we heard today. I know for many guests, this is the highlight of any Annual Reunion.

### **Conclusion**

The Society is not only doing lots of worthwhile things for the here and now, but also creating a really worthwhile legacy.

Examples include the successful Save PMS campaign, the Sphinx Scholarships and Bursaries, the Annual Oration, the History Centre, Heritage Trail, and the ever expanding database catalogue of our historical artefacts, photos, records and equipment.

The biggest challenge by far is to get more volunteer assistance from younger Modernians.

I wish everyone present an enjoyable reunion today and good health for the year ahead.