**Members’ Council (Directors) Report 2020 AGM**

2020 has been a turbulent year, starting with the summer bushfires, then floods, and since March, the global COVID pandemic, which continues to impact Alfalfa House, all of us individually, and as a community.

Notwithstanding, the Members’ Council and staff team have continued to build on last year’s efforts to turn around Alfalfa House, from the loss-making concern it was in 2018-19, to the beginnings of a sustainable business now.

Heartfelt thanks must go to Allie Cooke, Ran de Silva, all shop staff, and our dedicated volunteer team for their commitment and hard work over the last 12 months. Without your support and heavy lifting, we would not have recovered to the extent we have. Thank you!

As stated at the Extraordinary General Meeting in March 2019, and subsequently, it was never going to be easy, but now positive signs are evident. Having said that, there are also on-going headwinds which we will need to recognise, and act to combat.

Not least of these is that, despite having a relatively strong trading performance through the COVID lockdown period, since the removal of restrictions and withdrawal of subsidies, we have seen a consistent year-on-year reduction in revenue of between 7-10% per month.

This reinforces the need for us to revitalise our plan, put on hold during COVID, to develop a consistent, integrated and imaginative sales and marketing agenda, including (but by no means limited to) the following key activities:

* A seasonal, monthly and weekly calendar of focus categories, products and activities;
* Disciplined, fact-based category reviews on a rotating basis, to test the range of products we are selling, making changes where necessary, together with appropriate pricing and promotion;
* Marketing activities integrated to the calendar, to both drive and support in-store implementation (events, social media and promotional activities).

Given the decline we are currently seeing is primarily in Groceries (rather than Produce) we will focus our efforts here first.

Cognisant of several voices asking whether we should consider moving our shop premises, and taking into account refurbishment options open to us, we recently completed (in a fairly subdued retail real estate market) a study of the costs and benefits involved, and concluded that until we have cash reserves of around $120k, we cannot afford to. Given that we may just break even this year (after exceptional costs), we cannot contemplate such a move for some time to come.

Finally, a big thanks must go to the MC team, who also faced a very different year, getting used to the joys of virtual meetings and social distancing! Although we all have busy lives outside Alfalfa House, we were still able to effectively contribute our time, energies and range of skills to the very worthwhile enterprise that is Alfalfa House.

Tom Bartels, our wonderful Treasurer for the last two years, must be especially thanked for his stoic and unstinting efforts at our financial helm – without him where would we have been? We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

For members who may be considering the possibility of contributing to MC life for the first time, into next year and beyond, please don’t be shy in coming forward. Following our Rule changes at our last AGM, up to nine (9) vacant director positions are up for nomination at this AGM.

Contributions of energy and vision to our combined Alfalfa team effort are always welcome. If you’re not sure what to expect, or want to stick your toes in the water first, please contact us, attend our monthly MC meetings to find out more, or enquire about the many other ways to get involved. A rewarding time can be guaranteed!

Ashton Roskill & Bruce Diekman

Members’ Council Co-Chairs