

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Welcome everyone. It is great to see members here congregating at the union offices for our AGM. It has been an honour to be the Secretary of the Health Services Union in Western Australia during this extraordinary year. The value of our members' work and their immense dedication to the health system and the community has been in sharp focus during the health crisis. It has certainly deepened my resolve to strengthen our union and expand our influence.

A consistent theme this year has been the difficulties faced by members dealing with unwieldy Health Service Provider employers and a system-manager who deflects responsibility. There are many examples that could speak to this. The one I wish to relate is about some members who have invented something truly unique, something that will transform the lives of certain patients. Even though this is all well accepted and applauded, and their efforts supported by their employer, progress of the innovation has been affected for over a year because of a lack of clarity when it comes to the rights of employees. The stifling of health innovation is at odds with the State Government policy and the priorities of the Health Minister. So why has this happened?

It seems to be the confusing tangle of WA Health governance structures and interests – designed to be opaque, where the ultimate decision maker is obscured. Our members deserve better and challenging these structures is a big part of our work ahead.

Looking back on the year, the pandemic looms large. The union's activities were dominated by supporting and advocating for members for all things COVID—19 related, for example:

- Accessing PPE
- Working from Home
- Fighting for Paid Pandemic Leave
- Lobbying for change to workers' compensation laws to ensure health workers who became infected were presumed to have been infected at work
- Stopping employers who made unlawful directions
- Navigating Job Keeper

And there was a lot of other work accomplished too, for example:

- A new Union Agreement 2020 for our public sector members
- Pay increases negotiated across private sector employers who sought to delay enterprise bargaining
- Working with members through significant restructuring and new roster agreements
- Overturning a member's termination through an appeal to the Public Sector Appeal Board
- Members achieving permanency, reclassifications and underpayments
- Securing redundancy pay and financial settlements for members
- The formation with WA Health of the Health Union Consultative Group

- Private sector bargaining campaigns such as at Activ Aged Care and Western Diagnostics Pathology
- Working with our National HSU office to start the Change Aged Care Campaign
- Commencing the Public Good Campaign with our affiliate public sector unions at Unions WA.

We have also finished the year with more members and in a better financial position. It has been a very big year for our union.

I would like to express my thanks to you the union staff. You have done a terrific job, stepping up to the challenges of the year and fearlessly forging ahead. Building trust, supporting each other, being positive and enthusiastic, staying power - this year's experiences hold us in good stead. It really is an achievement to have met the challenges we faced this year and come out stronger as a team. Congratulations and awesome job HSUWA staff. Can we please give our team a round of applause!

We have lost some long-time staff to retirement this year, with both Gilbert Reid and Chris Panizza retiring and we held a fabulous party to celebrate their achievements. We have also had new staff join us this year, as Cheryl has mentioned. You are most warmly welcomed! I would like to ask Adrian Barrett our new Assistant Secretary forward to introduce himself to you all.

[break]

Thank you, Adrian. Early in the new year we will also commence a new Communications Officer position, which is also exciting and was one of the initiatives to come from our union's strategic planning process.

The union's strategic framework has been developed to clarify our direction and our focus. Our next steps are to plan how we can most effectively operate and meet the goals and objectives of our union set out under our framework.

This work has begun, we are working towards the implementation of a new database next year and we have a staff planning day next week. We look forward to working with the Committee of Management and Union Representatives in the new year to further this work. This is really the exciting internal work we take into 2021.

Looking outwards, if we put COVID-19 and vaccination rollouts to the side, there are big opportunities ahead where we can work to advance our members interests. We have:

- A state election in March and possibly a federal election at the end of the year
- The findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care
- The implementation of the Sustainable Health Review
- The commencement our new state WHS laws

We are facing serious headwinds at a federal level as the Morrison Government's anti-worker agenda takes form – all in the guise of supporting jobs and economic recovery of

course. It's going to be a busy year! We are up to the challenge. The fortitude and courage our members have shown this year has made our union stronger.

My final thanks are to our members who take on those extra and much needed roles, so our union is effective, supportive and well governed. They are our Union Representatives and our Committee of Management members. I would like to thank you all for your volunteered dedication and support to your union, that often is behind the scenes and takes up your precious time and energy.

I would particularly like to thank our Finance and Executive Committee members who oversee our union's finances, President Cheryl Hamill, Vice President Brendan McKernan and Treasurer Suvi Bird. Also, a big thank you to our outgoing Committee of Management members this year: Dave Shaw, Chris Goodsell, John Shehade and Cassie Reading.

I warmly welcome our new Committee members, Craig Russell, Ric Skipworth and Michael Berry and the energy and ideas you will bring to our team. Last, but not definitely least, the inspiring Cheryl Hamill. Our newly re-elected President is a leader of grace, intellect, humour, common sense and warmth. I cannot thank you enough for your support, thank you Cheryl.

It's almost time to have drink and enjoy the new courtyard garden! It would be remiss of me not to specifically thank the ring leaders of the improvements to our spaces here at the union – Cheryl Potkura, Katie D'Souza, Katrina Robertson and Naomi Kefford. Thank you also to Dan Hill and Chris Panizza for the sorting of many union records. It has been a great team effort overall and we are really excited about how we can use these spaces next year.

I hope you all have a safe and enjoyable Christmas and summer break. I look forward to working with you all next year.

Naomi McCrae

