**Balint Society of Australia and New Zealand**

**Annual General Meeting**

**28 November 2020**

**President’s Report**

This year has been a very unusual year for BSANZ and indeed the country. The loss of lives, the loss of land and the loss of livelihoods has been tragic and felt by all of us in some way. However, these awful situations have offered us a great opportunity to respond in an innovative fashion for change and growth. The BSANZ was challenged to adapt and respond to how Balint work could be most helpful to the community in this COVID-19 year. The Board took up this challenge with the help of the Accredited Leaders, those on the Leadership pathway and the membership.

The first minor challenge was to decide how to proceed with the annual Face to Face meeting of the Board scheduled in Melbourne in March. This is the one opportunity of the year for the Board to meet and have the necessary discussions to develop the Society. To proceed online was the only answer. Through careful planning of the time and a great deal of tolerance, persistence and patience the Board addressed the agenda and held useful discussions over a weekend. I think we were all amazed at the fruitful work that was achieved online.

The major event that was planned for the year was the Congress that was to be held in October in Brisbane this year. It was clear by March this was not going to be possible. This was to be the opportunity for Balint work to be presented to the community with papers, workshops, Balint groups and getting to know each other and introduce new people to Balint work. Neither would there would be any Face to Face group meetings in New Zealand or Australia. The Society responses and actions are summarised below.

Australia suffered horrendous bush fires and the devastation to the southern communities of Australia was apparent. Mike Fitzgerald, as a frontline GP, could see the toll this was taking on his fellow practitioners. It was Mike who suggested that we develop online Balint groups for these frontline workers. In the process of developing a response, COVID-19 hit our countries. The Immediate Response Initiative was developed.

The Immediate Response was several initiatives:

* Shifting Ground discussion groups.

These groups were developed to provide an avenue for medical practitioners to discuss the unique situation in which they found themselves practising.

* Leading Online Balint Groups.

Saturday morning meetings were held to build capacity to offer online groups to all health practitioners. New co-leader pairs were formed and many new groups across New Zealand and Australia were established. New groups continue to be established.

* Online Seminars.

Five seminars were held from July to November. For those of you who have attended these seminars I am sure you appreciated the quality of the presentations. These sessions have been invaluable in enriching our Balint work. I appreciate the time and thought that has gone into each of these presentations by the presenters. The topics have been diverse and yet each very applicable to Balint work.

The Accreditation Committee is the backbone of the society and operates in the training and the development of our Leaders. With this intensive training, our Society is assured that our leaders deliver effective Balint groups to the community.

Ruth Dunn is chair of the Accreditation Committee and along with Frank Meumann developed the training from its inception into the comprehensive training programme that it is today.

Currently there are 33 Accredited Balint Leaders which includes 19 Accredited Leader Trainers and there are 12 people on the Leadership Pathway.

Balint Groups in Medical Schools is an International group, chaired by Alexa Gilbert-Obrart, has not been able to meet this year however they are hoping to reconvene in 2021 and remain an important connection to the International community for BSANZ.

An unexpected benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic has been that the IBF events and meetings have been held online allowing local participation. Many of our members attended the Leaders Workshop weekend and new International relationships have developed thereby broadening our experience of Balint work.

I would like to acknowledge Anne Malecki our Administrative Assistant who, quietly in the background, very efficiently takes care of administrative matters and accounts. Anne is always willing to help. Thank you, Anne.

Prue Bonifant will leave the Board this year. The contribution Prue has made not just as our treasurer but as a thoughtful insightful Board member is very much appreciated. Your presence will be missed Prue.

Ruth Dunn will also leave the Board this year. I would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution Ruth has made to the Board and the Society over many years including 8 years as Treasurer. Those of you who have been members for some time will know her capacity as a leader of the Balint Society and her contribute to the Balint community.

I would like to acknowledge the contrition that Mike Fitzgerald made to the Board in the first half of the year.

I would also like to thank each of my Board members, Ruth Dunn, my vice president for 4 years, Kerrie Colling-Silvey, Prue Bonifant, Di Nash, Judy Griffiths and Hilary Ash. As you can imagine it is only due to the commitment, hard work and thoughtfulness of these people that the work has been achieved. I also want to acknowledge the work, that often we are not aware of, that many of our members do out in their communities in the name of Balint. Thank you.

What a different year it has been for BSANZ from what was planned. The willingness to accommodate change, proceed with new initiatives augers well for the future. I hope the membership has benefited from the changes and, in some way, the BSANZ Board has been able to support the membership in this challenging year.

Chel Quinn

28 November 2020