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# AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF LIVE STEAMERS

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AALS Web Site  
[www.aals.asn.au](http://www.aals.asn.au)

Limited  
ACN 107 882 404 - ABN 81 107 882 404

**President:**

**David Proctor** 262 Southern Cross Drive, LATHAM ACT 2615

**Tel:** 02 6254 1641

**E-mail:** [ame@grapevine.com.au](mailto:ame@grapevine.com.au)

**Secretary:**

**Linda Hall** 18 Kelso Road, YALLOURN NORTH VIC 3825

**Tel:** 03 51671780

**E-mail:** [lmh-080808@bigpond.com](mailto:lmh-080808@bigpond.com)

**Treasurer:**

**Ben De Gabriel** 33 Cherry Lane, ROBIN HILL NSW 2795

**Tel:** 02 6331 5738

**E-mail:** [ben.degabriel@iinet.net.au](mailto:ben.degabriel@iinet.net.au)

**Insurance Officer:**

**Dennis Hamilton** 63 Pioneer Rd, BELLAMBI NSW 2518

**Tel:** 02 4284 1942, **Fax:** 02 4284 0337

**E-mail:** [steamer38@bigpond.com](mailto:steamer38@bigpond.com)

## PRESIDENTS REPORT To the 2015 Annual General Meeting of the AALS

The last year kicked off for me with trying to find some practical solution to **the char problem**. For several weeks after the 2014 Convention I researched all the known possibilities and held discussions with the dwindling number of potential suppliers. The outcome from this exercise was distributed to all clubs in August and the feedback I have received since can best be summarized by saying none of the products are as good as what we once had but everyone is working and experimenting and finding something which works for them. It is a case of 'try and see' because one thing is for sure, the good old days of Aussie Char are not coming back. Perhaps we were spoiled for too long.

One issue that made 2014 memorable from an administrative viewpoint was the large number of clubs who were very late paying their annual **Affiliation fees**. In fact nine of them had reached the point where technically their affiliation with the AALS had lapsed and they were no longer eligible to use the facilities which affiliation bestows, such as boiler inspectors and boiler tickets, and in fact really should not have been running their passenger carrying railways. I think this is the largest number we have had who have left it so late, and in most cases it was simple oversight or someone had misplaced the correspondence. In a couple of cases there were very good reasons. Because of the generally relaxed nature of our hobby and our tendency to help others out, no club was suspended and time was given for them all to pay, the last payment being received at the time of writing this report in mid January. Remember, the affiliation fees are due by June 30 and if payment is not received within 90 days, i.e. by October 1<sup>st</sup>, legally your affiliation lapses. The added strain put on the Association's limited finances when we have to carry late paying clubs means that we cannot afford to be so generous in future, unless of course clubs are happy to accept a **substantial** increase in the affiliation fee to provide a buffer for such contingencies.

Some clubs seem not to appreciate why we have affiliation fees. Well, the short answer is that they are the Association's main source of funds and without them, there would be no AALS, no AMBSC, no boiler codes, nothing. Every time the boiler codes are revised it costs money, the printing of boiler record books and boiler tickets, every time mail is sent to clubs, stationary, postage and so on, it all comes from one source ... your affiliation fees. Have a good read of the Financial Statements and you will see what your affiliation fees are used for.

Speaking of Affiliation fees, you will see a motion on the Agenda to increase the Affiliation fee by a small amount to \$4.00. This is because the current \$3.00 is no longer sufficient to cover our costs. Rather than increase it by say 65 or 70 cents we have opted for a round figure, which will enable you to receive additional benefits. A \$4.00 fee will enable us to provide boiler tickets and boiler record books to clubs free of charge as well as providing one copy of each boiler code free of charge to new boiler inspectors and on revision, free of charge to existing boiler inspectors. In short, the affiliation fee will cover all the bits and pieces you require, provided of course the small increase is approved.

We had **two changes to the AALS Board** of Directors during 2014. Long serving National Secretary Hugh Elsol retired during the year after a decade in this role where he did an outstanding job. If you look through this year's Agenda you might find his name somewhere – he does not plan to totally go away! Later in the year Barry Potter retired as Chairman of the AMBSC after successfully leading it through a sometimes difficult six year period of change. I have said it before but once again I place my sincere thanks to both these gentlemen on the record. Linda Hall of the Gippsland MES, was appointed to the role of National Secretary by the Board until the 2015 AGM. John Auty of SLSV and Bluescope clubs, was likewise appointed by the Board to the role of AMBSC Chairman until the 2015 AGM. I thank them both for accepting these roles.

From where I sit, the saddest time of the year for the AALS was the passing of our highly respected NSW State Representative, **Jeff Wakeham** in August. As well as holding the state rep. position, Jeff was also President of the Lake Macquarie club at Edgeworth for 16 years until his death. Jeff was one of the stalwarts of our hobby, took a common sense approach to everything, gave wise counsel and was an all round decent bloke.

When you read through the material which accompanies this report you will probably see a couple of interesting topics down for discussion at the **AMBSC** meeting. Apparently a small number of boiler inspectors feel that there is a need to change the relationship between the AALS and the AMBSC, or at least to have a look at this relationship. What they can achieve is limited to making suggestions or recommendations to the AALS, because the only forum where changes can be addressed is the AALS. I will be interested to see what comes out of this discussion because legally any options are very limited. The AMBSC is a Committee of the AALS which in turn is a registered Company under the Corporations Act. We are governed by the AALS Constitution, which comes under the Act and is subject to the Act. We are not able to make changes to our Constitution which would put it at variance with the Act. My own opinion is that we don't need change. The current relationship between the AALS and the AMBSC has served us well for a very long time, and it has been accepted by the various state authorities, also for a very long time.

No doubt by now those of you in the AALS insurance scheme are all aware that we were subjected to an increase in our premium for this coming year. This occurred as the result of a payout by the insurers on a claim lodged some 6 years ago. Under the terms of settlement the details are confidential but I take this opportunity to remind you all to be vigilant, adhere to the safety measures in the Codes of Practice and operate safely. When a mishap occurs we all pay for it eventually. While on the topic of insurance, late payment of **insurance premiums** does cause the AALS serious problems. You see, the insurance underwriters insist on being paid by a certain date, and if some clubs have not paid, it is then up to the AALS to somehow find that money, not an easy task. If you ever have a problem with paying your premium, please contact Dennis immediately so he can look at some contingency plan, don't just say nothing and let it drag on.

I believe our hobby is currently in a very healthy shape. I know of at least one application for Affiliation from a new club, which was going to be on this year's Agenda but changing circumstances meant they have had to delay it for a few months. We have five clubs putting their hands up to host the four Conventions from 2016 to 2019, so the medium term future of our conventions seems assured.

My sincere thank you to all the folk on the Board and to the State Representatives for a job well done and for making my job easier. I also say a big thank you to all the clubs and to the great people who make up your clubs as they are the ones who make this wonderful hobby the fun that it is.

On that note I will stop before anyone complains that this report should have been broken up into chapters.

Cheers



David Proctor  
National President