



## President's Report – 2014

### Continuing to Grow, Sustaining a Legacy

At the last Council meeting in November, I was appointed to the position of President of Fencing Victoria under circumstances of profound sadness. I take on this role with the aim of continuing the mission and goals of Simon Auty to promote and develop Fencing within Victoria and beyond. It is with pride that I report some of the major activities of the year just gone.

### Simon Auty Tribute

While not a strictly a Fencing activity to report, 2014 will be memorable for the untimely and unexpected departure of the previous President, Simon Auty. Many words have been spoken and tears shed in remembering Simon and his contribution to Fencing. His love of the sport and the communities' respect for him were on display in full measure at the Tribute service held in the Fencing Centre he did so much to bring into being. In this my first report to follow his legacy, I would like to remember that. A video of the proceedings may be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/1adpfbf>

### Membership

Fencing Victoria closed 2014 with 747 affiliated members across all categories. This is up from 629 in 2013, and largely reflects the growth in the Club/School membership base reflected in the increased Schools League participation. This has been extremely encouraging and will be further enhanced with the expansion of the trophies recognising championship status in all school categories in 2015. A breakdown confirms the conversion of previous school level fencers to Full Junior affiliations, with growth in 2014 to 104 Juniors from 81 in 2013. Senior Fencers dropped slightly from 125 to 120 while Coach affiliations reduced by 4 from 35 to 31 in 2014. Club/School level affiliations showed a major uplift in registration from 388 to 468, confirming the impact the Schools League is having.

### Coaching and Club Development

The reduction in Coach affiliations is excluding the growth in trainee coaches, with 24 members currently in a training program to establish professional hours. Reflective of the increased number of participants each year in the Level 1 coaches' course, it is encouraging to see fencers making the conscious decision to develop in the Coaching arena. This is mostly practiced in the Schools environment, however early indications in 2015 show that 2 (possibly 3) new fencing clubs are preparing to affiliate with Fencing Victoria which will increase the opportunities for new coaches.

## Club Affiliations and ASC Online Health Check

It is pleasing to see the completion rates for the ASC online Club Health Checks have continued to grow. Currently 7 clubs have completed this. A reminder that this is a requirement to achieve star club recognition for 2015, based on activities conducted in 2014. As a final incentive, I will be reviewing the Star Club affiliations for 2015 over the coming weekend. Any Club who completes this before Friday will be captured in the dataset for analysis. Those that have not done so will not be eligible for Star Club status. Without naming and shaming, you know who you are.

Currently 16 clubs are affiliated with Fencing Victoria. This does not include the many school-run group that participate in Schools league events only. The number of affiliated clubs is expected to grow in 2015 as at least 2 groups have made approaches to clarify the establishment process. These are based in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, which does not address the ongoing shortfall of training opportunities on the other side of the Westgate Bridge. It remains a key challenge for our sport to be more geographically diverse.

## Competitions

Victorian fencers have continued to perform extremely well on a National and International stage.

I will not attempt to list all the achievements or name individual fencers as I am certain to leave someone out. However, the countries and regions which have not hosted Victorians in a competitive or training environment are few. A great development on the AFF website is the "Australians Fencing Overseas" page, which takes feeds directly from the FIE and EFC entry portals to identify which Australians are where in the world, flying the flag and hopefully the blue oval with "V'd" weapons of Fencing Victoria. I encourage you to visit the site at <http://bit.ly/1zFHCMc> to keep up to date.

## Fencing Victoria Hosts...

Related to the point above, this year Fencing Victoria will be hosts to 3 major events. More will be discussed on these later in tonight's meetings, however, none of these can run without the help and assistance of more than just a few people. The Arnold Classic, AFF#3 including U23-Sabre and AFF Junior National Championships will all be showcased in Melbourne and as an organisation, we have a great reputation for delivery to live up to. I encourage the clubs to get behind these events. Publicity, Development, Growth are all intricately linked and in particular with something like the Arnold Classic, we have just one opportunity to make a first impression. Let's work together to make it a good one. Volunteers – be one!

## Governance

2014 was challenging in terms of the capacity of Fencing Victoria to deal with disruptions. Part of my role as President will be to ensure we can withstand these types of events and continue to deliver administrative and strategic support to the sport of fencing.

We have some way to go, but have also made significant progress in better documenting our internal procedures and processes and moving critical pieces of supporting systems away from single points of failure. Fencing Victoria has embraced "the Cloud" with the introduction of a Xero platform for accounting. Centre Management has been simplified and a reduction in the need of physical presence made possible by the installation of 2 IP cameras to view centre usage from a mobile device. Email management is being examined (once the vendor responds....) to prevent information droughts when an Executive member's personal email is not available. These are relatively simple and inexpensive improvements that will make a big difference to the operations of the FV Executive and in our ability to serve the members better. Please bear with us while we undertake this journey.

The governing document of any association is its constitution. On Sunday 22 February, following up on a commitment to Council at the last session, a workshop was convened to discuss options that the membership and executive of FV could pursue to improve our current Constitution. It was a very valuable session, and will be discussed in more depth later in this meeting, but one point I would like to raise is in the level of engagement displayed on Sunday. The participation of those present was excellent. Sadly however, only 4 clubs (apart from those represented by the Executive) contributed with their presence. Even more sadly, some of the most vocal members to this and other areas of apparent concern did not appear. This is disappointing. To improve the organisation, there needs to be engagement. To have engagement, there needs to be a sense of ownership and united purpose. Time-consuming dialogue from the sidelines and then not contributing in a forum specifically designed to address member concerns and issues is not helpful.

#### Usage of the State Fencing Centre

Mentioned briefly above is the Centre Management role that covers the booking of pistes and usage of the fabulous asset we have in a permanent fencing venue. We are becoming victims to our own success in that there are times when it is not possible to reserve pistes as they are fully utilised. This is a good position to be in, when considering the alternative but does create some extra challenges, especially on Monday and Tuesday nights. FV has a commitment to provide access to pistes according to the priority established some time ago, which can be found here: [http://www.foxsportspulse.com/assoc\\_page.cgi?c=1-3825-0-0-0&SID=162712](http://www.foxsportspulse.com/assoc_page.cgi?c=1-3825-0-0-0&SID=162712)

Prioritisation over usage is as follows:

- Fencing Victoria run or supported competitions
- State or National squads
- School groups co-ordinated as part of State development initiatives
- Coaches who hire strip times in blocks
- Ad hoc fencer or coach hire

Please review the page listed and the requirements for fencers and coaches wishing to book time.

#### Best Wishes

In conclusion, I and the Executive team wish all clubs and fencers success in the coming season. Asian Cadet and Junior Championships commence on 28 February, closely followed by World Championships from 1 April. Victoria will be well represented across all age categories and weapons and we look forward to their results.

Domestically, AFC#1 DH McKenzie begins in April. The local FV calendar has commenced, please see the year-on-a-page view available for printing here: [http://www.sportingpulse.com/get\\_file.cgi?id=3467881](http://www.sportingpulse.com/get_file.cgi?id=3467881)

For everyone in FV, be they Olympians, Club fencers, School fencers, U9 or Veteran, the Executive welcomes your feedback and encourages your engagement with the organisation. If it wasn't copyrighted I'd say "Just Do It" and together we will grow our sport.

I submit this report to the Council for consideration

Geoff Webber

25 February 2015