AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC ACCESS NETWORK ASSOCIATION INC

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2011 ANNUAL REPORT

September 2011

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:
Marc Walters

Another 12 months have passed, a lifetime in the fast-paced world of computers, and APANA reaches its twentieth year of existence. I wonder if the originators of APANA had ever imagined how ubiquitous computer networks would eventually become, entwining themselves around and through the lives of billions of people, changing forever the way we interact with others as it removed the "tyranny of distance" from so many aspects of life and computing.

Try to imagine a world without the convenience of email, a world in which online forums do not exist and where computing devices cannot easily connect and communicate with each other. It's not easy is it, but for most people this was the reality just two decades ago.

Although APANA has seen many its original functions relegated or evolved in response to changing technical and membership considerations, the original enthusiasm and experimentation with computer networking in its many guises remains a core feature of the organisation.

APANA continues onward, relatively strong despite the many challenges, and for this I extend my thanks and regards to the general membership and the regional and management committees for their support, activities and efforts.

Marc Walters
President, APANA Inc.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Jeffrey Toll

Region	Members September 2011	Members September 2010	Change
SA	27	28	Down 1
Hunter	16	19	Down 3
Brisbane	7	7	-
Perth	7	11	Down 4
Melbourne	6	7	Down 1
Sydney	6	7	Down 1
ACT	6	6	-
ICR	4	5	Down 1
TOTAL	**79**	**90**	**Down 11**

This has been a relatively quiet year for APANA, with most regions suffering only minor member losses (compared to previous years). Whilst APANA still suffers from the issue of a clear direction, we can pride ourselves of

With APANA's 20th anniversary being celebrated this year we can pride ourselves on being one of the very first organizations to provide ordinary Australian citizens with access to the then very new medium of the Internet. Whilst previously Internet access was only available to government department, universities and large corporations.

There was a time in the mid 1990's where dialup access was competitive business and APANA was in the thick of it. I recall several top Australia computer magazines listed and reviewed APANA amongst the many companies providing dialup access at the time.

TREASURER'S REPORT:
Carolyn Baird

The surplus recorded during the 2010/2011 Financial Year while less than that of previous years was still significant. SA region was the largest contributor to this surplus. It had both the largest income source and largest expenditure but it was responsible for 53% of the combined surplus. National's surplus was ample to cover the deficits of Brisbane, Hunter and Perth and still contribute 13% to the combined surplus. Sydney contributed around 31% and Melbourne 3%.

Brisbane's deficit was entirely due to overdue fees that were received late - after the end of the financial year.

Since the end of the financial year Hunter has further reduced its expenditure by cancelling the last of its original 33.6K dialups and migrating its last ECN dialup member to an ADSL connection.
Although finances will still remain tight as the result of the need to replace obsolete hub hardware it is envisaged that Hunter will be able to achieve a small surplus in the 11/12 financial year.

No information is yet available as to how Perth intends to reverse its financial decline that grows worse with each passing month.

ACT's funds remain static (no income; no expenditure) while ICR's income from membership only fees feeds directly into the National account.

From September 2010 onwards sorting out ECN billing discrepancies became a monthly chore. At the moment these have all been resolved.

Otherwise it has been a quiet year for all regions.

Looking forward, this year appears to be 'business as usual' with the exception of the cancellation of the ECN dialup service no later than December 31, 2011 and the need to make certain that no member is left disconnected or out-of-pocket by that event. So far, two members will be receiving refunds of fees paid in advance as soon as the cancellation date is confirmed.

REGION REPORTS:

ACT:
Edwin Gibbons

No report received

Brisbane:
Pauline Sheppard

No report received

Hunter Region:
Carolyn Baird

As predicted last year, the region remained relatively quiet throughout the year.

Although membership numbers dropped by only 3 (4 lost; 1 gained), the financial impact of those losses was significant and required certain adjustments to be made to ensure that the region remains financially viable in the longer term. The region currently has 16 members made up of 1 dialin, 2 uucp, 1 domain, 5 mail-news, 1 ethernet, 2 organisations & 4 APANA members only.

In December last year, our System Administrator moved to Sydney but still maintains the network remotely and makes regular visits for the purpose of performing backups and/or attending to any problems that arise. The reduction in the fees he pays was the main contributing factor to the loss Hunter experienced in the last financial year.

Problems with connection drop-outs grew even more frequent. Replacing the Ethernet card in Niggle reduced the frequency of those occurrences but didn't eliminate them. It was only after our connection and modem were upgraded to ADSL2+ that this problem was resolved and no further problems have been encountered to date.

  The upgrade to ADSL2+ was actioned primarily as a cost-cutting measure, so this was an added bonus. The benefit of replacing old hardware for more cost-effective/energy efficient newer versions was extended and the old 240V 24 port hub was also replaced with a new 12V DC 8 port hub.

Earlier in the year, one of the Ciscos that handles the dialup connections died and was replaced by an identical unit obtained as part of the old equipment sent from the Wollongong region years ago. Unfortunately this failure wasn't detected early enough to prevent the loss of all but one of our remaining dialup members. This has led to the cancellation of the last of the original dialup lines (4954 8168) and led to the conversion of the previous fax line (4954 7879) to a dialup line.

This year also saw the migration of the last of our ECN dialups to an ADSL connection.

Again this year I've been involved in helping with computer-related problems for members, although not as many as in previous years.

Hunter's budget at the moment shows a deficit for the coming financial year of around $110, but the region will benefit from the credits from Internode (as will both SA and WA) and should be able to record a small surplus by the end of this financial year. In any event our current balance of $1,644.97 will keep us solvent for a number of years yet to come.

Carolyn Baird
Deputy Regional Co-ordinator
Hunter APANA
7/9/11

Perth Region:

Jeffrey Toll

Perth region continues to struggle on despite several significant hardware failures, loss of members and mounting financial pressure. With only 7 members left in the region, the cost of running Odyssey as a physical machine to supply member services of mostly email and shell access is no longer viable in its current configuration. Whilst the offer from South Australia to host Odyssey as a virtual machine is still open, we still have not come to any decision as what to do yet.

Unfortunately, our slow decision making process (or no decision making process) worsens the financial situation day by day, month by month putting a drain on APANA's financial resources. This has been pointed out many times by the very patient APANA Treasurer.

Therefore, the goal this coming year for Perth is very simple: Make Perth region financially sound.

ICR:

No report.

Melbourne:

No report.

South Australia Region:

Tony Bazeley

This year SA was successful in attracting three new members, Adelaide Touring Cyclists, Beyond Oil South Australia and the North East Radio Club, maintaining membership numbers. Monthly meetings were transferred from the Brecknok Hotel to the near city Southwark in the seemingly never ending quest for a quiet public environment permitting group discussions.

On the technical front, following the successful server upgrade and the use of virtual machines in 2010, a more capable firewall machine was commissioned, with the capacity to handle VPN activities. A revised ADSL agreement providing 150GB capacity per month was agreed and operating system upgrades to virtual machines completed with all now running the latest Ubuntu LTS systems.

IPV6 configuration was explored during the year allowing SA to successfully participate in World IPv6 day on 8 June. The allocation of final IPV4 addresses in the Asia Pacific region was monitored with great interest by SA members.

May brought a system failure which highlighted the need for remote access to the hub machines in such emergencies. This resulted in the construction of a remote access channel utilising the mobile network in such circumstances.

Changeover from the use of FTP to the more secure SSH was completed in March, and a number of security vulnerabilities in the Joomla CMS used to maintain the SA web interface were resolved.

VPN links to APANA WA were established and APANA SA now provides email services to a number of interstate APANA members.

Sydney Region:

No report.