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The General Secretary / Management Committee BSNSW.

Many of the recent comments about vision statements and business plans have prompted me to think constructively about the future of the BSNSW. I am the chairperson of the New England Branch of the BSNSW and wish that branch to survive and prosper. Thus I have a vested interest in having the BSNSW do likewise. Please do not take any of these thoughts or comments as a challenge to the running of the society or any individual. I have obviously given much time to think about and then commit to writing the following comments.

To survive and prosper in the coming years I believe the BSNSW needs to address many issues. In general the present management committee is doing an excellent job and has identified many of the problems we face. That is; declining membership, lack of newcomers to the fancy, high cost of producing the 'Budgerigar' magazine, ring issuing and a major lack of funds.

We can take for granted that our community is continuing to change at a rapid pace. People today are better-educated have more experience and indeed have many more choices of leisure activities than was the case in the past. Additionally people today are very discerning when spending their limited resources. So each year a percentage of members will move on regardless of what the fancy does. However I believe there needs to be a radical change of focus, back to the membership of the BSNSW. The membership or people in any organization are its most important asset.

I did an investigation on behalf of our New England branch into changing from a branch to an associated society. Interestingly I found a number of advantages of being an associated society. Firstly it was much cheaper for all members not having to pay BSNSW fees per member. Secondly autonomy, one can arrange which ever Judges they feel appropriate and generally run there club as they see fit. Another important aspect was that basically members of associated societies receive all the benefits that a full paying branch member receives at a fraction of the cost. The only difference being that members of associated societies do not receive a magazine every two months.

I unfortunately have to say that the Membership cost, which includes the magazine, does not represent value for money. I have spoken to Mrs. B Wallis and other editors of fancy press on a number of occasions and all have a problem getting original and suitable material to publish. Some of the New England Branch members and others have said that the magazine is a disappointment because it has nothing in it. By this I'm sure they mean, not a lot that helps them progress or enjoy their involvement within the hobby more fully. At the end of the day I see the Magazine as a major asset for the BSNSW however it needs to focus more on helping members with their birds. I have a couple of ideas for content additions if anybody is interested.

The cost of producing the magazine is another problem, which needs to be addressed. The magazine fundamentally is to disseminate information within the society. Obviously the more members we have the more magazines are printed and each copy then costs less because of economy of scale. The magazine is a very professionally produced product, although I think considerable costs could be saved if the colour cover of the magazine was dropped. The printing quality of the internal pages is first class, that continued as a single colour cover makes a colour cover really pointless. Changing the cover will not effect the content of the magazine and I believe it is the content that the members are more concerned with. Changing from the bi-monthly publishing regime is courting disaster; information taking longer to reach the members and the perception that membership of the society is even worse value for money than it already is will not help the cause.

The single biggest hurdle for the BSNSW is to make membership of the BSNSW desirable and of value. By achieving these two objectives the decline in membership will be slowed if not arrested. Increasing membership is possible however it would be a very slow process and against all predicted and current worldwide trends in many forms of leisure activity. As I stated earlier the only advantage a person gets from being a fully paid up member of the BSNSW is the Magazine. So something needs to be done to give full members of the society some additional benefits which non-BSNSW members do not get.

The other two major assets the BSNSW has are the annual and the state challenge shows/National. I find it strange that for the state challenge show, associated societies are invited to compete, however they do not contribute in any form for the costs of sending delegates and birds etc to the National over and above the entry fee (we all pay a team entry fee). In reality the fully paid up members of the BSNSW are funding NSW competition at the National.

Following are some thoughts for raising additional capital and giving additional benefits to full members of the BSNSW.

- All persons competing at both the annual and the state challenge must be full members of the BSNSW. Or have non-members pay a higher entry fee per bird at the annual.
- Have the associated societies pay a more equitable share of the cost for competing at the National; perhaps a \$100 entry fee for associated societies and branches cheaper or no charge at all.
- At both shows a nominal door entry fee should be charged to non-members of the BSNSW. Where else can you expect to go for entertainment today for nothing? People expect to pay entry fees. The members of the BSNSW are subsidizing other people's entertainment.
- A large sales section should be encouraged at both shows. Only full members of the society can participate in selling. Any member who is selling their birds at \$25 (or what ever) or under should not be charged a commission by the BSNSW. This is doing both the majority of members of the BSNSW a service by helping them sell excess stock and giving people the opportunity to participate or start in the hobby and acquire stock at reasonable prices. This could be an excellent draw card and who knows we may even get some additional people interested in the hobby. Auctions can continue as at present.
- An approach could be made to suppliers of bird products/seed etc. to give Full BSNSW members only, discounts on their products. The inducements for these companies to participate, could be free or reduced prices on advertising in the magazine.
- All advertising rates in the magazine for full BSNSW members should be reduced and for others normal rates apply.
- Only branches of the BSNSW should receive free advertisements for their shows or up coming events, all others must pay full price.
- The joining fee and late payment fees for membership should be eliminated. We should make it easy for people to join or rejoin and not make it restrictive, which both of these fees are.
- Associated societies, which compete at the interstate challenge, should be required to buy a number (three or whatever) of subscriptions for 'Budgerigar' per year. Give them one copy only of the magazine and no more.
- Give new members of the BSNSW two years membership for the price of one, or three for the price of two. BSNSW records should show when newcomers become frustrated and bail out. That way at least we will have newcomers long enough to have some influence and get them through the highs and lows of starting in Budgerigars.
- Give full members of the BSNSW discounted prices from the services section.
- Breeders directory adds should be discounted for full members of the BSNSW
- A free classified advertising section for birds and equipment etc. could be included in the magazine for full members. Other classifieds at a cost to the advertiser

Some of the above thoughts may seem a little harsh and even outrageous. Some could be implemented in isolation while others could be utilized in a more holistic approach to the future of the BSNSW.

I know many discussions have taken place and committees have spent considerable time looking at ways to increase revenue. The problem will always be membership focused, as you charge more for the BSNSW membership/services there will be a number who will drop out who can not afford or will not pay the increased prices. Thus alleviating any advantageous gains that were hoped for. All organizations are restructuring to ensure they have a viable future. Likewise the BSNSW needs to have a serious look at past practices and adjust them where necessary. The BSNSW must develop a business plan that incorporates long term survival and growth objectives. Increasing costs to the members without giving commensurate benefits will achieve nothing in the long term. Unfortunately that appears to be the road that has been traveled many times before.

Probably these ideas and concepts will be seen as too hard or ridiculous, notwithstanding this a major effort must be put into maintaining the membership. It is so much easier to look after and encourage the members we already have than it is to find new members. Our members of the society are in fact customers of the BSNSW and they must be valued. Any business/organisation that wishes to grow and prosper must give value for money and perceived customer benefits.

My comments above are about giving benefits to those who are full members of the BSNSW and not to those who are freeloading on our society. If the benefits are real and are perceived to be large enough then it may encourage

others to become members and maybe some associated societies to become full branches. This would be the ultimate aim and should be a focus of the BSNSW. All other issues are secondary and are reliant on a productive healthy BSNSW. Which is not possible without a content existing membership.

Another area of concern is the ring issuing procedures. Firstly, I know of one fancier who received his rings this year on Boxing Day; if he had have called to see the ring secretary before that day he could have perhaps had them earlier. The same associated society is selling rings endorsed by the BSNSW to people who are not members of any society. Is this OK? I aware of another associated society that has continued to release rings early to members. Whilst the BSNSW has gained control over a section of the budgerigar breeders ie. BSNSW Branch Members, it has absolutely no control over the associated societies and the issuing of rings.

Further to the ring issue problem, my rings arrived on the 5th of January 1999 from the ring registrar. It takes at least three working days for mail to reach me from Sydney, therefore I am at a disadvantage to those who live in the Sydney metro area. I believe rings for those members of the BSNSW living outside the Sydney area should be posted before those in the Sydney area by the number of extra post days, this would make it fair to all concerned. I believe these two important points need to be addressed and a workable and enforceable ring policy should be formulated.

It is obvious to me the BSNSW can not be all things to all people and it will not satisfy everybody. There needs to be some consultation with the associated societies so that the BSNSW has the control it should have over the Budgerigar hobby in New South Wales. If some of the autonomy issues could be addressed and perhaps some ground given then the associated societies could become part of the branch system that is presently in place. What benefit to the BSNSW are associate societies? The recent granting of an associate to the Tamworth Caged bird Society has cost our branch at least ten-percent of our membership. A decision that has stifled the progress of the New England Branch and hence the BSNSW. It is interesting to note the New England Branch was not consulted or informed of the management decision to grant the association to another club, which is based in the same city.

The BSNSW has all the trump cards, we have the largest show in Australia, ie. the Annual show, we have the state challenge show and the national exhibition, plus we have the best and most professional budgie magazine produced in Australia. These are all bargaining tools that can be used to the BSNSW's advantage. It would appear that the BSNSW is some how reluctant to take on the associated societies. The BSNSW needs to develop some long-term policies to have all those that compete at the national under complete control of the BSNSW. Furthermore requiring all that benefit from the BSNSW contribute in an equitable manner to the running of the BSNSW. If this was the case many of the problem issues like lack of funds will evaporate.

I would be more than happy to discuss any of the issues I have raised in greater depth with any interested parties within the BSNSW.

Yours sincerely
Robert Manvell