

## Newcastle University Boat Club Annual Report:

It is my privilege to present our report for 2009:

### 1. Culture:

Picking up from my last report: "... in 2007-2008 [...] we have looked for sustainability in a time of uncertainty and growth built upon the work of the previous four years. We altered fee structures for sustainability and commitment, attempted to grow the social life of the club and came to the realisation that increasing membership brings cultural changes."

This year we have taken on more than we ever have by adding a trivia night and a corporate regatta (to be called the Vice-Chancellor's Regatta) to our calendar. We have built and maintained a website for the club, moved our land training sessions into The Forum and quadrupled our coach numbers.

Last year, beyond the students who train and coach, Hugh Dunstan was our only coach, often being heavily involved with the Merewether High School Program. This year three other coaches have become involved with the club, all on a voluntary basis; they are Sean Maloney, Margaret Mackenzie and Charles Bartlett. This has brought a greater depth to the club: in experience, technical knowledge and enthusiasm. We owe a great deal to these people.

In addition to the coaches, our membership has increase further, with an interesting element coming to the club from new members who have come from other clubs. The influence of prior experience in a rowing club, not just as a rower, but also with other club systems has had some effect on how the club runs this year. It will mostly likely have a larger effect next year when there is more chance of renewal with a different executive.

As noted in last year's report, the financial strain placed on students is affecting the willingness of members of participate in events which involve substantial cost. This issue is addressed further under the heading Finance, but we have been acting to minimise the impact of cost on developing and maintaining the culture of the club.

There have been three different changes and difficulties for the NUBC executive in the years since 2003.

First, in 2003 and 2004, we needed large physical changes. The boatshed at Raymond Terrace was becoming less suitable, and eventually unsafe. At the end of 2004, after considerable effort, a new shed was built at Berry Park.

Second, in 2005-2006, our club had grown into its new premises and our focus changed from the boats and shed to club members. This period saw a substantial increase in club membership and boat use. During this time that most of the current executive became members. This period ended with the effects of VSU inevitable.

We have found in this year more than ever that people are divided in their social, time and financial commitments. The increasing costs associated with university life have played a major role in the decision making of our members. A feedback loop has developed between the executive and the members. We are hoping that our plans for the forthcoming years may more fully and effectively address past concerns. This year has clearly showed both effective and ineffective approaches.

## **2. Finance:**

In 2006 we changed the membership fees structure for 2007 in preparation for the effect of VSU. Competitive membership increased three fold to \$150 and social membership increased by \$10 to \$30

Responding to New South Wales Rowing Association costs, the competitive fees increased another \$5 in 2008 and in 2009 will increase by a further \$5. In 2007, we allowed social members to pay in \$5 instalments, this year we asked for a full payment as a way to gain early commitment. This has generally worked as intended.

Once again, the entry fee at the Australian University Championships will be \$145 per competitor. Due to the financial pressures and a nervousness to commit early for this competition we have altered future plans for this event. Further details of these plans are set out under the heading 'Future'.

The club's financial records are moving to a digital record only.

There have been few purchases of note. Some work to the entrance of the shed, to make it safer when it is wet, and a refurbishment of the boat trailer. NU sport covered these costs. The club has also provided support for members to attend both a Level-1 Coaching course and a first aid course.

A deal came to light of buying cheap medals in bulk for our regattas. Top Nutrition continued their support of the club by sponsoring us for that cost, giving us a total saving of approximately \$3000. We also received a donation of \$1000 during the year.

During mid 2008, Hugh Dunstan was able to secure sponsorship for the purchase of three new rowing machines. They are a valuable resource to the club and are particularly useful during bad weather and for tryouts.

Under a government grant, the X grant we have applied for \$2600 to purchase a new set of quad scull oars. This purchase will only take place if our application is successful, but it is an exciting direction for the club to be involved in active pursuit of funding.

We had been preparing for some significant boat maintenance during the year and planned to prioritise and begin repairs ready for 2009. It had also been our intention that our next major expenditure would be the purchase of a double scull. These plans have been postponed after significant money was committed to the purchase of a rebuilt boat after a University Championships accident. The accident is included in the discussion under the heading The Australian University Championships. The accident caused two separate costs to the club, the first is the insurance excess of \$500 and the second is the cost of purchasing the rebuilt boat. The entire cost of the boat is \$8000. We have extended the loan from NU sport to an additional \$4000 and have been able to gain some sponsorship to cover the other \$4000. It is anticipated that the club will pay \$2000 to \$3000.

This has been an unexpected cost to the club and has changed our financial planning to make it a successful decision. It is seen as a very important purchase for the club, and interestingly will see all space in the shed occupied for the first time.

## **3. Membership:**

The altered fee structure was quickly accepted this year and early memberships were encouraging.

There is a trend of members wanting to train and compete locally rather than paying more

and travelling to race more experienced competitors. This has led to the development of a different approach for members in 2009. In general, the Friday and Saturday sessions are well attended, with MHS rowers out alongside University rowers.

Many of the new competitive members are reasonably committed and are expected to maintain involvement into 2009. This will be an important factor in the implementation of the succession plan for the executive and the competitive success of the club.

With further work, the continued commitment from members in subsequent years can be expected.

#### **4. Training/Competition:**

##### **Training**

As noted above, we have moved one of our regular land sessions from The Foreshore Park to a studio at The Forum. This move has resulted in a three-fold increase in attendance of these sessions

##### **Central Districts Rowing Association (CDRA) Regattas**

In March this year we attended the annual CDRA Championships held in Taree. This is the second year that we have trained and sent a team to this regatta and we were more successful than last year: winning a total of six races, including Anthony Mujic winning the Championship Men's Single Scull.

This year we will host two regattas.

The first is the Pre IV Regatta (12<sup>th</sup> September 2009), which serves both to prepare the University Championships competitors for racing and to run a CDRA regatta with sweep oar rowing as its focus. The Pre IV Regatta will be the first regatta in the CDRA season.

The second regatta was the normal club regatta (31<sup>st</sup> October 2009) and should generate a larger income than the Pre IV.

Newcastle Rowing Club will hold the Throsby Gift on December the 6<sup>th</sup> with the winner awarded \$500 prize money. We are preparing to enter a competitive team to try and win this money, having placed an extremely close second last year.

##### **Australian University Championships**

This year we will send a team of 16 to Canberra to compete at the AUCs.

#### **5. Merewether High School:**

It has been an exciting year for the MHS programme. Participation continues to impress the executive. The involvement of the MHS parents has also been pleasing.

Hugh Dunstan continues his efforts with this program. His involvement is critical to ensure the programme and provides fun for the rowers and highly effective coaching.

As noted in our Annual Report of 2007, the first generation of MHS rowers finished school last year. Four have joined our club in 2008 and have had an impressive first year. We look forward to their continued involvement and are pleased with what we see as a worthwhile investment.

The MHS programme provides ongoing and important funds, both directly through financial

arrangements with the students who attend and by the continued support through fundraising. This year we have received a financial contribution in excess of \$2000.

## **6. Future:**

The money saved through the sponsorship of Top Nutrition, the donation to the club and the MHS gain from the MHS program has allowed us to run without concern for our finances. Once the NUsport loan is repaid, our financial stability will be assured. We expect to finish repaying the loan by the end of 2010. It may be possible for a further loan to be taken out for other purchases after that time.

A prioritised purchasing and repairs program will allow us to make planned and informed decisions for the fleet throughout 2009. However, this will be significantly limited given the early expenditure for the purchase of the rebuilt boat.

Collaboration between NUBC, Newcastle Rowing and Endeavour saw the first of a planned six or so workshops on practical coaching views and techniques. One has been held, and was widely seen as a success. This has been the work of Hugh Dunstan, his involvement with the club and the workshops have the full support of the executive.

There are currently three future works in progress:

### **Changing Culture Response**

The most important future plans for the club involve a change in the expectations and treatment of members of the club. In previous years, the club was University Games/Championships focussed. It has become apparent that the commitment of first year members is highly reliant on how exposed they are to racing, both socially and competitively. This has prompted an intended change in our approach to first year rowers for 2009.

Rather than attempting to convince first year rowers to commit to racing at the end of the year at a highly competitive event, the approach will encompass a rower's first two years. The plan will complement all of the more experienced rowers in the club as well.

Every 4-6 weeks we will run a 5km time trial or similar event. This will be a social race for the more social rowers and first years, but also a serious timed race for more experienced rowers. It will also expose the younger rowers to experienced technical rowing.

In the middle of the year, near or during the mid-semester break, all rowers will race in either a half or full-length marathon event. This will be the main aim of the first half of the year's training and will act at the division in the year between the endurance and power phases of training.

The power phase will go back to about another two-5km time trial style racing, before speed phase training begins. In the speed phase, shorter and faster races will be practiced and these will lead into the Pre IV regatta for those members who are interested in competitive racing at the local and Inter-Varsity level.

After the University Games/Championships all rowers have the possibility of competing at the CDRA level. Ideally, first year rowers will have some race experience and for those who are interested in further levels of competition the CDRA Championships are held late in the summer break. The intention is that these rowers

will have found their racing spirit during their first year and may be keen and interested in racing at higher levels, such as University Games/Championships. The same plan would be used in subsequent years with some changes as required.

The intention of competition at the Inter-Varsity level will be that individuals and crews must pass minimum level requirements before they are able to represent the club at these higher levels of competition. These requirements should be achievable by all members.

The focus on local events will also encourage further relations within the club between University members, non-University members and the MHS rowers as well as relations between clubs.

### **Vice Chancellor's Regatta**

This regatta that was once held by the club involved competition between faculties of the University at student and staff level and competition with the colleges. Some work has been done already to re-introduce this event. The intention is for some local business involvement, along with the traditional participants and the Vice Chancellor. This will be part of the club's sharing its culture and experiencing part of its history as well as an opportunity for sponsorship.

### **Pre IV Regatta Money**

It is our intention that money raised from the hosting of the Pre IV Regatta in each year is used to subsidise the competitors in the following year. This will encourage University members to train and compete at higher levels. 2008 and 2009 will be a test for this system with an evaluation to be held after the University competition in 2009.

I am confident that with the purchasing planning, the success of the MHS program and the trial of a new system of races and coaching for new rowers, our club has a firm future in the local area and as a competitive and active University club.

**Stephen Pfennigwerth**

**President 2008**