OLD KNOX GRAMMARIANS’ ASSOCIATION

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

PRESENTED TO

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MONDAY 2 MARCH 2009
Patron of the OKGA and Knox Headmaster. Mr John Weeks, Members of the OKGA, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to present to you on behalf of your Committee the Annual Report covering the affairs and activities of the OKGA for 2008, at this our 77th Annual General Meeting.

In welcoming you to this meeting, I emphasize a particular welcome to our new members, the 2008 leavers.

Both the School and OKGA have had very full years, which have been greatly supported by members of the OKGA and the Knox community.

Our membership continues to grow with over 90% of our 2008 leavers joining our Association. Our membership at this time totals almost 10,000.

We continue to operate within our budget and have maintained the financial support to our Clubs and to the School. Our audited accounts show that for the three entities combined (ie. OKGA Inc, OKGA Sports Inc and OKGA Endowment Trust), our total net assets are $868,000. While the three entities have made a combined operating loss for the year, primarily due to the reduced market value of our invested funds, they show a strong underlying balance sheet, and we continue in a healthy financial position.
THE SCHOOL

The Old Knox Grammarians’ Association is an integral part of the School community and continues to have a close relationship with the School. We can maintain all of our objectives by assisting the School to achieve its long term goals. By supporting its philosophies and by being visible in our commitment, we are playing a significant part in developing the Knox boy into the Knox man.

The School continues to strive for academic excellence and our “newest Old Boys”, based on Band 6 results only, maintained their position in the top 10% of NSW schools. 38% of our students were placed in the 90+ UAI Band, while a number gained mention in the HSC honours list for particular subjects. Jack Day, Edward Gregory, Robert Edwards and Alexander Morris all gained the “Premiers Award for “top all-rounders” (90+ in their best 10 units).

As well, a significant number of our boys gained representative honours in CAS teams for their chosen sports – Mark Johnson and Luke Rissman were selected in the Australian School Boys Rugby team. In CAS competition we came second to Trinity in the swimming, first in the Athletics for the third consecutive year and were CAS champions in cricket, rugby and winter tennis.

Music and drama are now firmly established within the school and the stage productions of “Unman, Wittering & Zigo”, “Footloose” and the “Legend of King O’Malley”, which were excellent and of course the Knox Tattoo involving both the Prep and Senior School Pipe Bands, as well as the Old Boys, was outstanding.
A new addition in school activities is “Future Problem Solving” and our inaugural 2006 Year 7 team won the Australian Final and qualified for the International Future Problem Solving finals held in Colorado in 2007, where they gained a 4th place. During 2008, three of our teams from Years 8 and 9, qualified for the Nationals in Melbourne, with two placed Champion and runner up, thus qualifying for the International Title to be held at Michigan University in May 2009. Their tutor, Anne White, has been recognized with the E. Paul Torrance Award for her outstanding contribution to Future Problem Solving within Australian, and was also nominated to the Keith Frampton Roll of Honour.

The Founders Day Service this year was held in conjunction with the Induction of our Chaplains, Philip Newton and William Nicholas and I was honoured to represent the OKGA. Our Annual OKGA Service and Service of Confirmation is a well established and important event on our calendar and with a very interesting address from Will Nicholas and the usual superb contribution from the Gallery Choir, made for a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

The traditions of the School Cadet Unit are firmly embedded and it is without doubt one of the most important of all activities. The Anzac Service and Parade is considered by many to be the most significant event in the School and OKGA calendar, the Passing Out Service and Parade and the Honouring Service and Parade, where we honour our ex servicemen, were all carried out with the usual very high standard of discipline and precision. The performance of all cadets at each function was without fault.

Once again, a personal invitation was sent out to all our ex servicemen and to those Old Boys who we know are currently serving in the Defence Forces, for both the Anzac Service and the Honouring Service. This personal contact was very much appreciated by all concerned. This year we specially recognized the service
of Ted Carter (OKG ’38), Dr Marsden Hordern OAM (OKG ’39), Don Caldwell-Smith (OKG ’40), Arthur Pardey (OKG ’41) and Lysle Roberts (OKG ’42). At this Service of Remembrance, the Moderator of the Uniting Church, the Reverend Niall Reid, dedicated our now complete War Service Roll containing over 700 names. Additional names have also now been added to our War Memorial in the Quadrangle.

The Assemblies at which we present the “Most Improved Awards” are another opportunity to raise the profile of the OKGA but more importantly for us to recognize the “trier”. These awards are given in all sports and for all cultural activities, in both the Prep and Senior Schools and are highly valued by the boys.

The Gerry Alldis Scholarship continues to be keenly contested and is awarded annually to a boy with “All-Round Ability”. It provides 50% of tuition fees in Years 11 and 12. This scholarship for the years 2009 and 2010 has been awarded to Edward Turner.

The Norman Winter Scholarship providing 50% of fees for boarding and tuition to a son or grandson of an Old Boy entering Knox in Years 11 and 12 has been awarded to Richard Tulloch (the son Andrew (OKG ’78).

The OKGA also provides funding for a number of trophies and prizes on Speech Day in both the Prep and Senior Schools. Our most recently sponsored award, initiated in 2004 for the best UAI in 2007 was awarded to Dylan Campbell who achieved a UAI of 100 placing him in the first 22 students in the State.

We would like to significantly increase our pool of funds to sponsor more scholarships and bursaries, and also be in a position to provide further support and assistance to Old Boys and their families who are in particular need – in times
of tight budgets we must be always conscious of who we can help. The OKGA Committee is actively supporting the major capital appeal for the Great Hall.

Many of our younger members continue to provide support to the Prep and Senior Schools with coaching and refereeing in the various sports and also service in the Cadets. As well this year, following a request from the Headmaster, we introduced a mentoring programme for our Year 12 students. It involved introducing a number of our recent leavers to the students at a luncheon where they could give perhaps, more relevant and appropriate answers to the boys regarding those early years out of school. When required we also do our best to help with career guidance and opportunities in employment. Miles Karemacher in his time with the committee also pursued keenly an up-to-date database of all our Old Boys, to further provide assistance to our younger members.

The final day for Year 12, although varied slightly from previous years, generally followed a well formatted tradition. The day started with a very well attended Service in the Chapel and then followed their final assembly and prize giving. The OKGA is now an integral part of this ceremony, which in part symbolizes the transfer from school boy to Old Boy. Following on from the earlier luncheon our mentors participated in this assembly, presenting each boy with their OKGA tie. The following night I was honoured to represent the OKGA at their Valete Dinner.

THE OKGA

Generations of past students are proud to be known as Old Knox Grammarians and enjoy maintaining the connection between School and each other.

The OKGA provides an opportunity to meet generations on a common platform and it continues to encourage contact between Old Boys.
One of the objectives of the Association is to maintain contact between the parents of Old Boys and to keep them in touch with the School. In this case, unfortunately, we have been less than successful in recent years. However, we hope to revive the Past Parents Club by up-dating our database and in the future to include these members where possible in our online information network.

The Senior Knoxonians, many of whom laid the foundations of the OKGA are an enthusiastic and strong extension of our Association. I have been privileged to have been invited to each of their two luncheons in 2008. At the September luncheon we were entertained with a very thought provoking and at times humorous address by Mark Scott (OKG 80), the Managing Director of the ABC, on “The ABC and the Digital Future”. At their AGM, Alan Batley (OKG 49) passed over the reins of President to Brooks Wilson (OKG ’49). Brooks was the inaugural President of the Knox Foundation, and was the Chairman of the School Council from 1994-1998.

I would like to congratulate Alan for the leadership he has given to the Senior Knoxonians and to sincerely thank him for the valuable contribution he has given to our Committee meetings. In particular for the support he gave to me as our two groups continued to work together.

In 2008 it was Barker Over 70’s turn to host the Senior Knoxonians at the “Home Game” between the two schools and coincidently it was the final rugby game of the season. There are two trophies presented at these games – one, the Knox – Barker Challenge Cup for the winning First XV, on this occasion won by Knox, and two, the Headmasters Cup awarded to the school who wins the most games on the day, which was also won by Knox. We also brought home the “Plume Shield” for winning the CAS competition.
During the past 12 months we have said our final goodbye to a number of our Old Boys and our sincere sympathies are extended to their families. A complete list will be tabled in the next “Thistle”. In this time we also lost two of our long serving and well respected teachers – Jim (Jock) McConnell, an Honorary Member of the OKGA and John Hunt (OKG ‘60). Both men had a sincere love for the School and each in their own way had a big impact on many boys. Both fought with enormous courage over a long period to overcome their illnesses and the very large congregations attending their Memorial Services was a tribute to the enormous respect and friendship which both men had earned within the Knox Community.

Sir John Fuller, one of our original 1924 students, also passed away after a long illness on 31 January 2009.

Our year starts with the Annual Old Boy Parent function to mark the beginning of the new school year but more importantly those Old Boys who are now retuning to the School as parents or grandparents. The School now has almost 500 boys enrolled who are following in the footsteps of their father and/or grandfather. What a wonderful tribute for the School.

The OKGA Committee has again hosted an informal post match function in the Lawson Centre, after all “home games” during the Winter sports season – this provides a further opportunity to bring Old Boys together.

Prior to the Trinity game we unveiled the Captain William Robert Aspinall MC AMCC AIF Memorial Prize Honour Board. This prize is awarded to the “outstanding competitor in Open Rugby” and is one of the oldest “Special Prizes”, first given on Speech Day 1924. The Honour Board was funded and unveiled by
Gordon King who played in our 1st XV in 1936. All previous winners of this much valued prize were invited to witness the unveiling.

Our 5 year reunions continue to be well attended and give us direct contact to many Old Boys. In the past 12 months the OKGA office has assisted with organising 11 reunions. My sincere thanks to each of the Year co-ordinators for their efforts and in particular for tracking down many of those who have changed their address. Also to Pamela Hitchcock our Alumni Manager for her untiring efforts in assisting the Year co-ordinators with the organisation of the function.

Following the Queanbeyan Boarding Expo, we enjoyed a very pleasant evening catching up with Old Boys from the Canberra district.

The Tamworth Community Dinner is firmly established in the calendar and continues to go from strength to strength. John Boag and his wife Dianne organise the Tamworth end, while Julie Lines and Pamela Hitchcock look after the School end. The Year 9 Agricultural Students, while on excursion at the Gunnedah Agquip, join us for this very special evening.

I was honoured to be invited and to represent the OKGA at the Scots College Old Boys Centenary Dinner, this year held in the School Dining Room. Their Old Boys with the co-operation of the School have created an excellent photographic display of significant historical occasions and these are mounted around the walls of the Dining Room.

Our Annual Golf Day and Dinner was again held at Avondale Golf Club with 75 playing. The day began with a Golf clinic, which some need more than others and
as in previous years we invited representatives from the other CAS Old Boy organisations as well as the Scots College Old Boys. Our special thanks to all our sponsors and in particular to Phil Tuck (OKG ’77) for once again organising a very enjoyable and successful day.

We continued to be involved in the School Gala Day and Garden Day and maintained a stall at these major KPA events.

Po Mar (OKG ’65) is at present experiencing failing health and the Committee feels that this is an opportune time for us to recall his outstanding contribution to the OKGA over many years. He served as our Treasurer for 14 years retiring at the AGM in 2002. He was a very skillful and astute manager of our finances which improved markedly over his reign. As our finances improved, so did the contribution to the school and OKGA clubs. Po was responsible for many innovative changes during his time as Treasurer. In 1995, he orchestrated the incorporation of our two Associations, allowing us to change our operation procedure, thus almost totally eliminating our tax commitment. Further suggestions the OKGA committee put into practice were; sponsoring Matthew Burke, David Campese and Dennis Lillee to carry out coaching clinics at the Prep and Senior Schools; “The Most Improved Awards”, the Gerry Alldis Scholarship; and the Swords and Drums Parade and Service, to remember our Old Boys who served in the war.

Some outstanding achievement for our Old Boys during the past year:

- Matthew Cannon (OKG ’07) was the Ku-ring-gai Young Citizen of the Year.
- Ben Alexander (OKG ’02) was selected for his initial Australian Rugby Test.
- Lindsay Foster was appointed a Judge in the Federal Court.
- The Ian Ramage (OKG ’42) Memorial Plaque was unveiled in the Sir John Northcott Park, Wahroonga.
- Hugh Jackman (OKG ’86) was an outstanding host for the Oscars.
- Dr Marsden Hordern (OKG ’39) received an OAM in the Australia Day Honours for his contribution to Naval History.
- Matthew Dunn (OKG ‘91) received an OAM for his contribution to swimming and to the community through the Asthma Foundations of Australia.

I have no doubt there have been others and I apologise for their omission, but I hope they will be acknowledged in the next “Thistle”.

A continuing problem for the OKGA administration are members changing address but failing to notify the office. Approximately, 100 “Thistles” are returned following each dispatch.

We are continually striving to improve our communications to Old Boys and at present we have almost 2,000 registered online - “snail mail” is both inefficient and expensive. The number of Old Boys using our website is continuing to increase and hence they are able to keep contact with each other, can be kept up-to-date with major events happening within the School and the OKGA, as well as good opportunities for networking. Some of our sports clubs have their own websites which are linked to the OKGA site.

**OKGA SPORTS AND RECREATION CLUBS**

The Association sponsors six clubs which continue to provide a major link between our recent school leavers and the Old Boys. I strongly recommend to our new Old Boys the enjoyment available in an Old Boys team.
RUGBY – Our largest club in terms of numbers. Under the Presidency of Bryn Robertson (OKG ‘95) KNOBS Rugby continued its run of success in the Suburban Rugby Competition with our Club coming second again in the Club championship and the second grade winning their premiership (Burke Cup) for the third consecutive year. Our third grade was unfortunate to lose a closely contested grand final against Colleagues.

This year, the OKG Rugby played Mosman in their Annual fixture on Knox 1. An excellent day, in terms of seeing the return of many of our past players and coaches, but mixed results in terms of Rugby. The organisation of the day, the set up, clean up and ground behavior was a credit to all concerned. Again, this year the Club registered five grade teams, a colts and an under 85kg team.

The formal dinner, to celebrate 50 years of Knox Old Boys Rugby and presentation of awards, saw the return of a number of our earlier players.

No club can operate without a massive amount of work from the committee, coaches and managers. To the club captain Mark Cairns (OKG ‘99), President Bryn Robertson (OKG ‘95), Marilynn Buchanan, the devoted and extremely hard working secretary, we offer our congratulations for the season past and our very sincere appreciation for a job well done.

SOCCER – Knox United Soccer Club has strengthened its base and recruited well, ultimately fielding 5 teams – 2 teams in division 1, 2 teams in division 5 and a social team in division 7. This greater depth allowed the more senior players to drop down to a less competitive division as they moved slowly into retirement. It has also allowed for the further development of the younger players. On the field the club experienced mixed results and unfortunately was relegated to 2nd division for 2009. However the experience in the top division was valuable and it may not be long before they are back in the Premier League. An enthusiastic and dedicated committee led by Matt Feros have worked extremely hard to achieve good results on and off the field. Our sincere appreciation for a great effort.
CRICKET – Our oldest club, fielding a team continually for some 60 years. There are at present 20 enthusiastic players who can be called upon to play. Under the capable leadership of Nick Bangs (OKG’98), they have continued to attract younger members. (The Bangs family form the core of the team now that Charlie and Tom are back from their GAP year—there is even some talk that Ian might come out of retirement). They play a very good standard of Cricket and once again made the semi finals of the Jack Pace Shield, only to be beaten by ZINGARI. Three of our teams were chosen to represent the Sydney Suburban CAS against GPS – Nick Bangs (OKG’98), Ed Bangs (OKG’05) and Michael Kelynack (OKG’85).

BASKETBALL – This is a popular club playing both in the winter and summer competitions. They cater for all grades and play in the Hornsby – Ku-ring-gai and Manly – Warringah competitions. The team playing in our local competition are primarily our recent leavers. The OKG Colonels, our more senior team in terms of age, are playing in Division 2 of the Manly – Warringah competition and have a solid base of Mark Welch (OKG ‘90), Matt Paterson (OKG ‘91) and Matt Ashwin (OKG ‘91). They have recently recruited Carson Maddocks (OKG ’03) and Phil Webster, an ex Knox Teacher and first grade coach. Unfortunately, in the Winter season competition they could not block the opposition 3 pointer specialist and lost the Grand Final 59-50. However, they have an impressive record since making Manly Warringah Association their home in 2005 – being placed 3rd on 2 occasions, 1st on 2 occasions and runners up twice.

This is our only sports Club still allowed to compete against the School side.

The benefits to the School team, to play against some of these boys, who were in our Firsts when at school, and who have now developed their experience and talents, cannot be measured. Our sincere thanks to both Matt Paterson and Mark Welch for their dedicated commitment.
**Volleyball** – John Nguyen is still looking after our Volleyball Club but many of our Old Boys are playing with their University team. However, John is still looking after the Sydney North Volleyball Club representative programme and is taking some of our School players to train with their senior team.

**OKG Pipes and Drums** – The Old Boys Pipe Band, under the steady leadership of Allan Watts, continues to provide a place for Old Boys to keep up their piping once they have left school.

The Old Boys Pipe Band are always more than happy to play at OKGA functions and over the past 12 months performed at a Wahroonga Rotary Fund Raising Dinner; a fund raising Dinner at St Edmunds School; Wahroonga Fair (when they combine with the School Band); Bundanoon Highland Gathering; Redfern RSL Anzac Service and March; the Gulgong Anzac Day Dawn Service and March and we can’t forget the outstanding performance of our Pipe Bands at the Tattoo. Individual members of the band have also been available to play at weddings, funerals, and other functions.

The Old Boys Pipe Band is primarily funded by donations. However, in 2006 the OKGA assisted them financially with the purchase of drums and this year we gave $2,000 to help with the purchase of two sets of pipes which will enable student members to keep up their skills until they can afford to buy their own.

We very much appreciate the work of Allan and his committee.

We have much to be proud in what our clubs have achieved. For a more in-depth report of our sporting clubs, Old Boys in the News and the recording of so many of our Old Boys who have passed away in the past 12 months (some well before their time), I particularly direct you towards the next publication of the Thistle.
In conclusion I would like to particularly thank the following people:

- Jo Tait, our archivist, who painstakingly collects and preserves our School records and who has a greater knowledge of the School and Old Boys’ history than most of us. Jo is ever willing to prepare archival displays for various OKGA functions and Year reunions.
- Edric Chaffer (OKG ’50) who is often found working with Jo Tait in the archives and who has spent many hours compiling records as well as researching the involvement and war records of our Old Boys.
- Leigh Stevenson and Nathan Edwards for their helpful assistance and cooperation in catering for many OKGA functions.
- Julie Lines for her enthusiastic support and involvement in many OKGA activities. Her friendly cooperation is much appreciated.
- Pamela Hitchcock, our enthusiastic, committed and friendly Alumni Manager. Her friendship and cheerful personality affects all those who come in contact with her. Her patience with my requests and the constant support she has given me over my term as President has been very much appreciated.
- Our auditors, Gerry Cowling and David Seaman of RSM Bird Cameron, our sincere thanks for your sound advice and willingness to assist our Association and for the time diligently spent poring over our books.
- Andrew Martin (OKG ’75) who continues to look after our investments. Initially with Private Portfolio Managers, he is now with Peak Investment Partners.

I would specially like to record my thanks for the commitment and support given to me by each and every member of the committee. Their dedication and willingness to get involved is a major reason for the success of this Association and is very much appreciated. The OKGA cannot function without an enormous commitment by all on the committee to accept their responsibilities.

Tonight sees the retirement of Miles Karemacher (OKG ’02) now overseas for 12 months – his friendship and significant contribution has been much appreciated.
I would also like to thank Alec Cameron, our liaison with the School Council.

I would further like to record my appreciation to Bob Thomas (Head of the Preparatory School) and to our Chaplains Phil Newton and Will Nicholas for their friendship, keen interest in the OKGA and their constant support to me during the year.

Finally, on behalf of the OKGA, I would like to formally record our thanks to Mr Rob Wannan, Chairman of the School Council, for his friendship, continued support and his interest in the OKGA. As well, despite the constant demand on his time from many sources, our Headmaster and Patron Mr John Weeks has given willingly of his time to the OKGA. He has been of immense support to me personally throughout the year and his friendship and helpful advice has been very much appreciated.

I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous support my wife, Margaret, gave to me during the greater part of my Presidency. Her patience, encouragement and understanding had no limit. When talking to our Knox friends she would often say that “I had one black eye and one blue eye”, but this could equally be said of her.

Our School, during the last few weeks, has been severely shaken; however, Knox has been, is, and will continue to be a great School with firm foundations and we will face the challenges ahead with great optimism.

As this will be my last AGM as President, may I say that it has been a great honour to have held this very important role for the past three years. I am personally most grateful to all those people who have supported me and who have responded so generously to my requests.

Ladies and gentlemen, I look forward with confidence to the years ahead and commend the Old Knox Grammarians’ Association for your active interest and support.