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## 1. Executive Summary

The Australian Photographic Society (APS) has a long history of providing services to amateur photographers throughout Australia. For many talented photographers, it has helped improve their knowledge and skills, forged friendships and enhanced a rewarding pastime.

Like many not-for-profit societies, it is facing a range of challenges, borne out of rapid social and technological change. The society has done its best to weather these changes, but in recent years there has been a decline in membership and an inability to attract young members, the fuel of organisational renewal.

As revealed through consultations for this paper, members are concerned for the future for the APS but don't know how to improve the society's lot. But despite high levels of concern about the society's direction and a lack of confidence in the value provided by membership, there is a growing market for the services of photographic clubs and societies. If the APS can address this market and offer a service which provides value, membership could very well increase.

The key question for the APS is whether it can galvanise the resources to consistently deliver that value for members. With an ageing membership base and a reliance on volunteers, it may well be that the society cannot adequately deliver a service which members see as value for members and cannot compete in an increasingly crowded market.

Even if that's the case, there are still options open to the APS. Through a reexamination of the organisation's purpose, it may be able to re-invent itself in a way which doesn't require a membership base. This would be a big change for the organisation, but could be a real alternative to slowly fading way.

This paper presents an analysis of the situation facing the APS and presents four options for the Management Committee to consider as future paths for the organisation. It is presented in four sections:

- Situational analysis - the external environment: a consideration of the external factors impacting on the APS, informed by data on photography as a pastime in Australia and the market for photographic societies,
- Situational analysis - the internal environment: a consideration of the internal pressures within the APS, informed by view of members and non-members collected via two online surveys,
- Options – options for the future both as a membership based organisation or under different structures and
- Next steps – a suggested way forward to enact further change.

## 2. Situational Analysis - The External Environment

### 2.1 The market for APS's services

Despite a declining APS membership, there is a market for the services provided by photographic clubs and societies.

The market can be described as people with an interest in producing high quality photography.

These people may:

- consider photography to be a hobby, a profession or both,
- be of any age,
- be resident in any location and
- access services in person or via the internet.

Information is available to estimate the size of the market. Research from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that over one million people practise photography as a cultural pastime.

*Table 1: Cultural participation in photography, filmmaking or editing (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015b)*

Photography, film-making or editing, apart from recording personal events	15–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	55–64 years	65 years and over	Total persons
<b>ESTIMATES ('000)</b>							
Males	118.7	108.1	95.1	81.3	55.8	50.6	510.7
Females	173.4	100.5	86.5	75.7	53.2	18.4	506.4
Males & Females	292.0	209.2	179.2	157.7	105.4	68.7	1,015.7
<b>PARTICIPATION RATE (%)</b>							
Males	7.7	6.5	6.1	5.4	4.3	3.3	5.6
Females	11.6	5.9	5.4	4.9	4.0	1.1	5.4
Males & Females	9.6	6.2	5.6	5.2	4.0	2.1	5.5

Participation drops as age increases, particularly for women. In the age bracket 15-24 years females practising photography, filmmaking or editing outnumber men, but this is reversed by the time they reach 25. The gap between men and women grows as age increases.

According to the Australia Council for the Arts 12% of Australians undertake 'photography as an artistic endeavour', up from 9% in 2009. This percentage rises to 16% for people aged 15-24. (Australia Council for the Arts 2014)

A significant proportion of these photographers do so as part of an organised club or group.

"When they do photography as an artistic endeavour, 61 percent of people do it alone, though 45 percent also do it with friends and family. Around a quarter create photographic art with an organised club or a group." (Australia Council for the Arts 2014, p47)

The precise figure quoted by the Australia Council is 23%. Given a population figure of 23,714,300 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015), this equates to 654,515 people pursuing photography part of an organised club.

In summary, there is no shortage of potential customers for the APS.

## 2.2 What customers in this market seek.

The key interests of photographers seeking to join a society of likeminded people may be summarised as:

- producing outstanding images,
- improving their photographic skills and
- interacting with other photographers socially.

To a lesser extent they are also interested in:

- gaining personal recognition for their photography,
- being well informed about equipment and software available and
- competitions and exhibitions.

Data collected for this paper shows what aspects of a photographic club photographers are interested in.

The table below shows responses collected from two groups via online surveys:

- APS members and lapsed members and
- non APS members (i.e. those who have never been an APS member) who are followers of the APS Facebook page.

*Table 2. Aspects of a photographic club of interest to photographers (Australian Photographic Society 2015a and b).*

<b>What aspects of a photographic club are of interest to you? Choose as many as applicable.</b>		
	<b>APS members and lapsed members</b>	<b>Non APS members</b>
<b>Learning more about photography</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>91%</b>
<b>Socialising with like minded people</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>78%</b>
Sharing technical information	56%	61%
Accessing competitions	56%	48%
Being able to exhibit my work	53%	54%
Attending events	43%	63%
Ability to submit for honours/accreditation	37%	22%
Access to an online folio	30%	14%
Discounted services	26%	29%
Other - please list	9%	9%
No interest at all	2%	0%
(answered question)	500	92

The top two responses in each category are highlighted in bold in the table above, indicating that learning more about photography and socialising are both key aspects of what members and potential members want out of a photographic society. After that, interests diverge, particularly around attending events, submitting for honours/accreditation and access to an online folio.

## 2.3 Competition in this market is high.

People in the market for a photographic society have a range of options open to them in pursuing their interests. They can:

- access free online services,
- form informal social groups of their own,
- join a photography club run on a not-for-profit basis,
- join a photography club run on a for profit basis or
- undertake tuition in photography.

Most likely, they undertake some combination of the above. The table below shows survey responses to the types of clubs and societies respondents engaged with.

*Table 3. Types of societies engaged with by photographers (Australian Photographic Society 2015a and b).*

<b>Are you a member of any of the following? Choose as many as applicable.</b>		
	<b>APS members and lapsed members</b>	<b>Non APS members</b>
<b>A local camera club</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>An online photographic community</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>53%</b>
A state-based camera club body	30%	12%
Other	14%	7%
An international camera club	12%	0%
The AIPP	8%	4%
A club run by a for profit company	1%	1%
(answered question)	415	90

Interestingly, respondents across all categories (members, lapsed members and non members) are more likely to be involved in their local camera clubs than to be part of an online community.

This could indicate that photographers still value face-to-face contact highly, even though they also engage online. This not only means that there is much competition for APS's services, but also duplication of APS's services by other institutions.

## **2.4 Not-for-profit associations in general**

Not-for-profit associations in general are struggling to retain and grow membership. As Belinda Moore of SMS puts it:

“Are younger members joining your association and then leaving after a year or two? Or not joining at all? Are you struggling to get people to your events? Are you battling to recruit quality volunteers? Is your board full of men aged over 50? Are competitive organisations forming around you? These are the stirrings of the "perfect storm" of generational, cultural and economic forces that are combining to challenge the way associations operate. Association leaders need to effectively position themselves to deal with these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities they bring.” (Moore 2015)

Moore singles out the following elements of her 'perfect storm', many of which are relevant to the APS:

- Baby Boomers, traditionally the most likely to join associations, renew membership and volunteer labour, are retiring. Moore believes their departure from the workforce means associations “can no longer rely on these active, engaged and supportive Baby Boomer members to support the growth of their associations.” (Moore 2015)
- As Baby Boomers retire, opportunities for Generation Xers will be high, as many senior management positions become vacant without the population base to fill them. As such it will be harder to recruit Generation X members, board members and volunteers.
- Associations’ services are generally aimed at Baby Boomers and not Generations X and Y.
- Generation X and Y members are much more focused on value for money from their membership. They are also harder to entice to board positions and to volunteer.
- Generations X and Y are generally suspicious of organised structures.
- Baby Boomers are resistant to the changes needed to attract younger members.

With the majority of APS members being aged 65-70, it is not difficult to see the problems Moore outlines applying to APS. (Australian Photographic Society 2014)

## **2.5 Summary**

- APS operates in a competitive market but one in which there is scope for growth.
- The operating environment for not-for-profit organisations like APS is challenged by social and technological change.
- In such an environment, APS must concentrate on two areas if it is to grow membership:
  - it must ensure its membership offer delivers value for money and
  - it must actively pursue membership growth across three categories: retention of current members, reactivation of lapsed members and acquisition of new members.

### 3. Situational Analysis - The Internal Environment

#### 3.1 Decline in membership

The APS is a society with a long history, but it has recently suffered a decline in both membership numbers and revenue from membership.

Detailed statistics on membership are not available, but the consultant brief for this report put the number of members in 2010 as 'just on 2000'. Figures for 2014 and 2015 indicate the biggest challenge to membership is retaining existing members. New members actually increased in 2015.

Table 4: APS Membership by category 2014 and 2015 (Data provided by APS office staff).

APS Members	2014	2015	difference
New	102	151	49
Renewing	1960	1629	-331
Lapsed (reactivated)	544	488	-56
Total	1518	1292	-226

Data from the survey of lapsed members indicates a regular decline in members each year since 2012. This could indicate that long term members are resigning their membership or that new members are not renewing after a short period of membership, or both. More research would be required to confirm.

Table 5: Years when membership ceased (Australian Photographic Society 2015a).

What was the last year you were a member?	
2014	26%
2013	27%
2012	18%
More than 3 years ago	29%
(answered question)	202

Based on the data above, APS's immediate challenge is to retain its existing members and reactivate its lapsed members.

#### 3.2 The reasons for the membership decline

More research is required on why people are giving up their membership of APS, but it is clear that the reasons are various and diverse.

The survey of lapsed members showed that 41% of members weren't accessing APS's services and thus gave up their membership. However, the most popular answer option was 'other' (42%).

Table 6: Reasons for giving up membership (Australian Photographic Society 2015a).

What was the main reason for giving up your membership?	
I wasn't accessing the services	41%
Price was too high	14%

I lost interest in photography	2%
I could access the services cheaper elsewhere	1%
Other (please list)	42%
(answered question)	199

84 respondents gave further information when choosing 'other'. The reasons given were diverse; no single reason emerged as a dominant one for people relinquishing their membership. Among the reasons offered were:

- discouraged by the lack of a joint membership option,
- felt the membership did not offer value for money,
- grew too old/infirm to practise photography,
- put off by internal politics and
- did not realise membership was due.

Some reasons given were in opposition to each other. For instance, some respondents objected to the dropping of hard copy versions of Image, others felt the APS was not embracing electronic communications enough. Some felt the APS was too focused on digital photography, others felt there was not enough emphasis on this.

More research is required to gain a fuller picture. However, these responses, and those collected through interviews, indicate the challenge facing APS when trying to address the membership decline: there is no one single factor at play. Although the question must be asked why such a high percentage of lapsed members were not accessing the society's services.

Another factor in the membership decline is a lack of activity within the society around the three triggers for membership growth: retaining existing members, reactivating lapsed members and attracting new members. This is discussed throughout the remainder of this report.

### 3.3 Value for money

Opinion is divided on whether APS membership offers value for money.

*Table 7: Members and lapsed members opinions on APS membership's value for money (Australian Photographic Society 2015a and b).*

<b>To what extent do you agree with the following statement: APS membership represents good value for money</b>		
	Current Members	Lapsed Members
Strongly Agree	8%	2%
Agree	51%	27%
Disagree	26%	36%
Strongly Disagree	7%	14%
Don't know	7%	21%
Total Agree and Strongly Agree	60%	29%
Total Disagree and Strongly Disagree	33%	51%
(answered question)	307	184

Although 60% of current members think the society offers value for money, 40% either think it doesn't or don't know whether it does. Although it's pleasing to see that the majority think they are getting value for money, a higher proportion would offer greater reassurance. A third of members think they are not getting value for money from APS membership and this is a key risk for the society to address.

Unsurprisingly, lapsed members have a much harsher opinion on whether the society offers value for money. This indicates that any strategy for reactivating these members needs to include an improved member service offering.

### **3.4 Resources available to address the decline**

APS needs to ensure it delivers value to members, but it lacks the resources to do so.

APS has only two part-time staff, both of whom are responsible for administrative functions. As such, it is the voluntary efforts of members themselves which deliver the value in the membership.

Specifically, it is the efforts of the special interest groups (known as 'divisions') which undertake the most activities for members and as such are crucial to providing value for membership. As is often the case when dependent on volunteer labour, some divisions provide better levels of service than others. Conversations with members indicate it is increasingly difficult to get members to volunteer to help run activities.

The lack of members volunteering combined with the increasing average age of those who do means that the ability of APS to provide value for its services is declining.

This provides a clear challenge to the APS's status as a membership based organisation.

There is little point seeking to increase membership of the association if it is unable to provide those new members with a compelling membership offer with services that provide value for money. This raises the question of what the organisation's purpose is and whether it requires membership to fulfil its aims.

### **3.5 APS's purpose**

The society's constitution describes the aims as follows:

"The objects of the Society are:

- a) To contribute to education in and through photography by holding lectures, courses, demonstrations, discussions, conventions, conferences, and by all other means possible, and to do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the advancement of photography as a science and an art.
- b) To provide the medium for the co-operative action of the photographic organisations of Australia in the promotion of photography in all its aspects.
- c) To arrange for the holding of an annual exhibition of photography under the auspices of the Society.
- d) To encourage national and international exhibitions and competitions, to rationalise dates where possible to facilitate the distribution of entries from one to the other and to lay down rules for the conduct of such exhibitions.
- e) To issue approval of exhibitions which are conducted according to the rules of the Society.
- f) To encourage Australian entries in Australian and overseas exhibitions. To arrange, circulate and exchange folios of photographic work within Australia and overseas.
- g) To arrange and thereby ensure the collection and preservation of outstanding and representative photographic work and material.

- h) To arrange the distribution to, or between, members and member bodies of literature, lectures and any other information of photographic interest.
- i) To foster and promote interest in Photography amongst young people” (Australian Photographic Society 2010)

This is a formidable list and likely beyond the resources of the society to truly fulfil. It is indicative not only of a need to revise the organisation’s purpose, but also to update its constitution to be a more flexible and readable document.

A clearer and more concise organisational purpose should lead logically to a discussion about the best way to achieve this purpose. It is not essential for not-for-profit organisations to maintain a membership structure in pursuit of their purpose. There are alternative structures which may result in less revenue for the society, and changes to operation, but which may relieve the society of the burden of supplying services to members.

### **3.6 How big should the membership be?**

If the society does choose a membership-based structure, a further question is what level of membership should the society aim for? Although there may be good reasons to do so, it is not automatically true that an organisation needs to continually increase its membership. It depends on what the organisation's purpose is.

It is not necessary, and potentially unhelpful to choose an arbitrary number of members to aim for, based on past performance. A better approach would be to seek a correlation between the organisation's purpose, its activities, its available resources, its membership target and membership revenue. Put another way, there should be a strategically chosen membership target as part of a wider organisational strategy.

### **3.7 The diversity of views among members**

In addition to the surveying of members, lapsed members and Facebook followers, 20 telephone conversations were held with Management Committee members and other members of the society. The interviews conducted resulted in a wide range of views being presented.

The interviews were not exhaustive, and although they were helpful in ascertaining the views of members past and present, this should not be the end of a consultation process with members. Consultation should be an ongoing activity which the Management Committee pursues.

Often the views collected during the interviews were in opposition to each other.

This again reflects the array of opinions held about the society. Some recurring topics provoked polarised and often strongly held opinions. For example, some members regret the move of Image to an electronic format, others embraced it. Another example was the honours system; some saw this of great value to the society, others of very little value. Often, reflections on past events and internal politics within the society coloured the comments being made.

Very few voices expressed opinions in the centre. However, this tendency to express strong opinions needs to be contrasted with the more moderate results found in the survey data.

It may be that the strong opinions of those interviewed represent the most extreme views of membership. This chimes with the free text responses gathered in the online survey, where a minority of passionate and strident comments sat side by side with more measured responses.

The diversity and strength of opinions indicates that it will be impossible to please all members, whichever path the APS takes.

Given this, it is likely that membership numbers will fall further before they recover – regardless of the path the Management Committee takes. This is because some changes will inevitably disappoint a section of the membership who will find they can no longer support the society.

Very few common themes emerged from the interviews. Among them were:

- dissatisfaction with the level of services provided by APS (generally greater than was expressed in the online survey results),
- an awareness of the need for the society to change but no firm ideas as to how, and
- a need for improved communication between the Management Committee and members.

The last point is worth further elaboration.

### **3.8 APS's management structure and internal communication**

The management structure of the APS is overly complex, and should be reviewed. Despite having a Management Committee, committees for each division and a range of subcommittees, it still proves difficult for the society to deliver services which members respond to positively.

The Management Committee should also review its procedures around communications to members and transparency of decision making. It may also be helpful to schedule more regular teleconferences between Management Committee members. Although the online forum is an innovative way for a not-for-profit organisation to undertake decision making, more structured, minuted discussion could prove easier for members to follow.

### **3.9 APS's divisional structure**

The divisional structure has both pros and cons. The existence of special interest groups (aka divisions) which deliver services to members has merit, as does the option for members to buy into the groups which appeal to them.

Unfortunately and perhaps inevitably, some special interest groups are more active than others, and thus there is an inconsistency in the level of service provided to members. Also, having separate management structures for divisions, and having them generate their 'own' funds, contributes to a silo mentality which is an impediment to overall governance.

The number of divisions should be reduced to only those which provide sufficient levels of service to members.

A revised management structure could consist of one committee made up of either state or divisional representatives who organise services for members at a grass roots level; effectively making a governing body out of the heads of the organisation's other structures. This would cut down on the number of APS committees and give increased emphasis on service delivery at a management level. However it would also increase the workload on those people serving in those positions.

### **3.10 Membership fees**

The membership fee structure should also be reviewed. The removal of a joint membership option for spouses has been widely unpopular and does not seem to serve any purpose; it should be reinstated.

In general however, the opt-in system, where members pay for the services they want, is appropriate, as long as:

- the base level of membership offers sufficient detail in and of itself and

- the opt-in services such as divisions are genuinely of value.

The system could also be used to offer those who want a hard copy of Image to pay extra for its printing and mailout. It is difficult to predict how many members would take such an option; a recent online survey indicated that it would not be many, but perhaps advocates of a hard copy Image would not access an online survey in large numbers. A six month trial of such a system would give an indication of the costs incurred and benefits gained.

### **3.11 Summary**

- The internal environment provides greater challenges to growing the APS's membership than the external environment.
- There is an immediate need for the society to redesign its membership services to ensure it is providing value for money.
- However, limited resources may mean that the society is not able to effectively service members.
- As such, the society should reexamine its purpose and structure and be prepared to change into something different which better suits its circumstances.

## 4. Options

### 4.1 Introduction

After considering the internal and external factors facing the APS, the options available to the society fall into two categories:

- continuation as a membership based organisation (and seeking to increase membership and improve services to members) or
- adopting a non-membership based structure.

Options under each category are explored below. A third category would be to wind up the society but not replace it with another entity. This option is not explored in this paper.

The options presented under each category are as follows:

Category	Option
Membership Based	1: Revise the membership offer so it provides real value, and devote resources to increasing membership.
Membership Based	2: Partner or merge with an organisation better resourced to provide membership services.
Non-Membership Based	3: Adopt a fee for service model which concentrates on selected activities.
Non-Membership Based	4: Wind up the society and replace it with a trust which distributes funds to approved photographic activities.

### 4.2 The choice between membership and non-membership

A key conclusion of this paper is that in order to compete within a crowded market, the APS needs to offer its members services which represent better value for money than it is currently providing.

However, with its limited staff and volunteer resources, it may not be possible for the APS to deliver such member services.

A choice will need to be made about whether the organisation can or cannot service membership. If it can, then options 1 and 2 set out ways in which the membership experience may be improved.

However many organisations (both for-profit and not-for-profit) have in the past changed their purpose and structure to adapt to changed circumstances. In management jargon, such a change is known as 'pivoting'. It's possible that the APS could pivot, and take on a new form without the burden of servicing membership.

If so, the APS's purpose needs to be rethought and its activities redesigned accordingly. Options 3 and 4 outline possible ways this could be achieved.

### 4.3 Steps to common to each option

Regardless of which option is chosen, the following steps are recommended:

- a review of the APS's purpose, to ensure relevance and practicality,
- a revision of the APS's constitution, to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, to streamline the document and make it more readable,

- a simplification of the APS's management structure (consider a Management Committee made up of people responsible for delivering service to members, such as division heads and/or state representatives),
- an evaluation and redesign of the APS's website and
- the results of the online surveys conducted for this paper should be collated and shared with members.

#### **4.4 Option 1: Revise the membership offer so it provides real value, and devote resources to increasing membership.**

##### *4.4.1 Summary*

This is the option which is closest to APS's current mode of operations. But in many ways, it means the most work.

To reverse the decline in membership, the APS needs to:

- Devise a set of services which provide value to members,
- Set up systems that deliver those services effectively and
- Actively promote membership to its target market.

##### *4.4.2 Elements of Membership*

A first step should be to establish what benefits should be included in membership. Core elements of a membership offer might include:

- Access to online resources such as forums and galleries
- Access to exhibitions and competitions
- The ability to acquire APS and international honours
- The provision of an annual conference
- A regular newsletter
- Access to discounted goods (inc. publications) and services
- Access to special interest groups
- Organisation of events such as tours and walks

An important point is that these services must be able to be delivered with little effort. For example, including a subscription to *Australian Photography + Digital* may be expensive, but it would be a tangible benefit to members without any ongoing effort from management. The annual conference is another example of a service which could be outsourced.

In this way, a membership offer should be crafted as a mix of in-house and outsourced elements. Elements should be produced in-house, only where it provides a valuable service to members to do so.

##### *4.4.3 Levels of membership and divisional structure*

Levels of membership need to be considered afresh. The opt-in system where members can pay for the services they want to access should be retained. It could be extended to include fees for a printed edition of *Image*, retention of post-nominals for honours and other add-ons which some members want and others don't.

The divisional, or special interest group structure, should be retained as long as:

- a) The baseline level of membership - without division membership - provides a level of value and
- b) Each division provides a genuine and consistent level of service.

Divisions should be kept to the minimum amount and should consist only of those delivering valued services to members.

#### *4.4.4 Delivery and resources*

The society has two main resources which it can devote to the delivery of membership services: staff and volunteers. In considering which elements of membership the organisation should supply, consideration needs to be given to which tasks should be undertaken by staff and which by volunteers.

- a) Staff: currently at 1.2 FTE. Staff responsibilities should be reviewed. Staff time should be devoted not only to serving members, but also to increasing membership numbers and revenue. In this way staff positions should be used to generate funds, rather than being seen as a sunk cost. Ensure staff have the latitude they need to pursue these activities, without over regulation by the Management Committee.

NB. One option raised throughout consultation was a reduction of staff numbers. This is not seen as feasible if option 1 is to be pursued. A reduction in staff numbers only reduces the capacity to earn revenue, and should be avoided as long as staff hours are dedicated to raising revenue. In fact it may be necessary to increase staff resources (perhaps temporarily) to increase membership.

- b) Volunteer efforts from members: these efforts are concentrated in the divisions, or special interest groups. When working well, this structure can deliver effective benefits to members and can raise their own revenue through the opt-in fee. However, as noted above, for this approach to work optimally, all divisions must perform to a similar level.

Consideration should be given to how volunteering can be encouraged, perhaps through the offering of incentives. One suggestion provided through the consultation process was the payment of honoraria. Other non-cash incentives, for instance the waiving or discounting of membership fees, or the discounting of entry to events, should be considered.

#### *4.4.5 Pricing*

Pricing of the offer also needs to be carefully considered. The demographic of members is a price sensitive one. The basis of the pricing system is a baseline membership price, with additional costs for add-on services. This system should be retained, as it allows members to opt-in to the services they want.

It is recommended that joint membership should be reinstated.

#### *4.4.6 Marketing*

Once there is confidence that the membership offer provides value for money, the APS can then develop specific strategies for:

- Retaining existing members
- Reactivating lapsed members and
- Attracting new members

Ideas to consider include:

- Existing: consider offering a discounted rate for renewing members, or deals for signing up for 2 or 3 year terms.
- Lapsed: recontact with a special offer, promote APS-only competitions/events and build a membership offer into the price of entry, or promote the activities of the special interest groups.
- New: canvas the local camera clubs and other groups for membership, offer a free trial, have a presence at other photography events, increase editorial in *AP+D*.

Focus on retention first and collect increased data about membership. Clearly identify who is coming to and leaving the membership on a yearly basis.

#### 4.4.7 Targeting

Like many organisations, APS is attempting to appeal to people in all age groups. This is hard to do and produces limited results. The organisation should target a specific demographic and tailor its services and marketing approach accordingly.

The reality of the current membership is that they are mostly retirees, aged 60+. Given this, it will be very difficult to target people under 40 and probably under 50. These demographics are unlikely to join structured groups like APS. It is suggested that the age group targeted should be 50-60, and members of their local camera club.

This would not prevent members outside this age bracket joining, but it would play to the APS's strengths, by marketing to people who are like the existing membership, but younger than the current median age.

#### 4.4.8 Ongoing communication with members

One of the few consistent themes to emerge from the consultation process is a dissatisfaction with the level of communication between the Management Committee and members. It's important that this is improved and continually maintained. Most not-for-profit organisations would hold meetings and publish minutes for members to read, but the APS handles most of its business through an online forum. It is suggested that:

- monthly summaries of decisions made via the online forum are collated and published online for members and,
- a thorough review of Management Committee communications processes is conducted and recommended changes implemented.

### **4.5 Option 2: Partner or merge with an organisation better resourced to provide membership services.**

The APS is not well set up to provide value to members, and with limited resources, it may never be. However, it does have a membership of 1,300 which may be of interest to other photographic organisations.

When looking for partners to merge with, the following criteria would be important:

- organisations which provide membership services well,
- organisations with similar values to the APS and
- organisations in which a subgroup of APS members could continue to communicate and socialise

Two organisations to consider are:

- the Royal Photographic Society, which already has an Australian chapter into which the APS could be integrated, and
- the AIPP which although targeted at professional photographers, has a membership option for amateurs.

There may well be others. A combining of forces with APS could provide a welcome boost to these organisations' membership ranks, and could take the burden of servicing members off APS volunteers.

#### **4.6 Option 3: Adopt a fee for service model which concentrates on selected activities.**

Under this option, the APS would relinquish a membership structure and would concentrate on activities which are not duplicated in the market at large.

These could include honours, an annual convention, a major national competition and/or others. These would generate revenue on a fee for service basis, but would not require a membership system to be maintained.

This option would result in a much smaller organisation, but one which would be easier to manage. If this option was pursued, the constitutional changes required might mean it is expedient to wind up the society and form a new not-for-profit organisation with new aims and regulations.

#### **4.7 Option 4: Wind up the society and replace it with a trust which distributes funds to approved photographic activities.**

The net assets of the society as per the audited financial statements were \$437,115 at 30 June 2015. This combined with the funds in the A R Andrews Trust Fund, could provide a corpus of funds which could be managed in order to:

- make selective grants to other photographic societies to pursue APS-like activities and
- reinvested each year to help grow the corpus of funds.

Again, this is a non-membership option which ensures the aims of the society continue to be pursued. It's also possible that the trust could continue to administer the APS honours system, or distribute funds to an organisation to do so.

## 5. Next Steps

### 5.1 The challenge of change

Structural change is difficult for even the best resourced and managed organisations. For APS, with its long history and highly vocal membership, it will be especially challenging.

The following step-by-step process is offered as a potential way to pursue this change.

#### 5.1.1 *Establish a task force*

The APS should establish a task force of 3-4 people and charge that group with pursuing organisational change within APS.

The careful selection of members of that task force is of critical importance. They should be members who are widely respected within the membership. They should not be seen to hold any particular agenda; they should be, to use a political phrase, moderates. The consultations for this process have shown that emotions about the APS run high, and the task force should be made of people who can calmly and methodically work to bring about change.

The terms of reference of the task force will need to be carefully drafted, but in summary they should be charged with:

- considering the options presented in this paper,
- considering variations to these options or new options that arise,
- consulting widely with membership and
- presenting a final preferred future option to the Management Committee.

#### 5.1.2 *Consult with members*

A wide-ranging consultation with members is considered essential to this process. It will be up to the task force to design the process but it is suggested that:

- it seeks information from all members,
- it does so via electronic and hard copy means and
- it considers the consultation already undertaken for this paper and from other activities.

#### 5.1.3 *Enacting change*

Once a preferred option is finalised, the Management Committee should review its constitutional responsibilities for enacting such change. Once those have been fulfilled, a plan should be devised for enacting the necessary changes. The plan should include timelines and nominate specific staff/members responsible for each step.

## Methodology

- Desktop research on the market for photographic societies and services available was conducted.
- Telephone conversations were held with 18 Management Committee members and other members of the society.

Interviews were conducted between 9 September and 28 October 2015. Interviewees were:

Paul Bennie  
Robert Bettman  
Graham Burstow  
Neville Foster  
John Hodgson  
Peter Kewley  
Roy Killen  
Pele Leung  
Peter Manchester  
Tim Newbery  
David Oldfield  
Brian Rope  
Ron Speed  
Felix Staub  
Tom Tame  
Ian Turnbull  
Graeme Watson  
Alfred Zommers

- Face to face interviews were held with office staff Stella Fava and Rene Lolesio and with Treasurer Andy Yeoh.
- An online survey, with the purpose of ascertaining members' views about the value gained through membership of APS, was conducted via Survey Monkey and received 505 responses.
- An online survey, with the purpose of gaining information on the activities of the APS Facebook community in relation to APS's membership services, was conducted via Survey Monkey) and received 188 responses. Please note, that for the purposes of this paper, analysis was restricted to 97 respondents who had never been APS members.
- Data was collated and included in this report.

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## About Generate

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### **David Sharpe, Senior Business Adviser**

David has over 10 years' experience in advising creative industry companies on an extensive range of business related issues. He has been engaged by the Australia Council and the Federal Government's Creative Industries Innovation Centre to provide business advice to their clients and is an expert in best practice for creative businesses and arts organisations. He holds a Masters in Arts Management with a Graduate Certificate in Finance & Accounting.

### **Generate**

Generate (formerly Money Penny Business & Taxation Services) is a financial services business based at Fox Studios Australia and provides a variety of services to creative industries worldwide. Generate is dedicated to servicing the accounting, taxation and advice needs of the entertainment industry and creative industries generally. Our clients include film & television production companies, arts organisations, record labels, touring companies, graphic designers, advertising & marketing agencies, fashion designers, and many more creative individuals and businesses.

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