

Information Technology Committee

PART A: REPORT

Achievements/Activities

Since the last Yearly Meeting, the theme of the IT Committee's activities has been "learning new things". Technology itself feels like it is in a constant flux, especially where it involves the internet. But, too, the Committee itself has had changes in membership, and we are embarking on new projects requiring us to learn new skills.

Changes to Committee membership

In November 2022, Daniel Buckmaster took on the role of Convenor from Roger Sawkins. The Committee thanks Roger for his dedicated work over many years, helping see us through much change and growth. Roger remains a member of the Committee.

Garry Duncan was co-opted onto the Committee in November 2022, with a special interest in helping work on the new membership database (more below). The Committee welcomes his experience and attention to detail.

We note that Julie Walpole, while not a member of the Committee, has now taken on the role of managing our set of official email addresses. Her work is adjacent to ours and she has attended meetings where it is appropriate. The Committee thanks her for taking on this important responsibility.

During 2023, we expect to welcome the new Communications & Publicity Manager person employed by AYM, and as part of that transition, farewell Jacqueline Schultze.

The website

Our main concern remains the two primary websites, one for enquirers and the other for members. Around the time of AYM 2022, we transitioned the members' website to a new hosting provider with the assistance of CMTech, our web development contractor. That transition was happily without incident, and we have since migrated the enquirers' site as well.

We selected VentraIP as a new hosting provider due to it being based in Australia, and having had very positive recommendations. This has allowed us to consolidate our digital assets (domain registration and web hosting) into a single account, close several other accounts (Digital Ocean, TPP Wholesale, and soon Web Central). This has reduced our expenses, and should simplify our work.

Now that we have "lifted and shifted" our hosting service, we are beginning the task of upgrading the version of our CMS (Drupal) that the websites run on. This is a maintenance task that improves our security posture and reduces some risks, but should also give us access to new features and abilities to work with the websites.

New membership database

The Committee's work in replacing Salesforce as our membership database is ongoing.

At the start of October 2022, the Committee met with regional Membership Secretaries to discuss the ways they currently manage records and produce reports for the AGM. The Committee learned that all regions have a slightly different process, and these often involve using a completely local database of memberships, only using Salesforce to check against, and to update when necessary.

The Committee commissioned a report from an Australia and New Zealand based agency, Optimi, on the feasibility of building a system of our own using a low-code platform called Knack. Based on feedback from that report and our experience with the current systems and alternatives, we judged that it would be the best way to proceed with the new database.

We judge that it will prove less complex than either our Drupal CMS or Salesforce. It will be accessible by more than just the small number of Salesforce accounts we are allowed. Michael, Daniel and Garry are undertaking mentoring with Optimi to ensure we use Knack correctly and securely as we undertake this work.

Until now, the AYM Secretary has been an automatic member of the Committee. Once a Communications and Publicity Manager has been hired by AYM, they are planned to become an automatic member of the Committee as well.

This has led to discussion within the Committee, and with TIWG as they manage this transition, about the precise nature of the Committee's responsibilities. While we have had the Secretary as a member, we have been casually involved in helping advise on changes to the content of the websites, but many other communications like social media posts have been managed without our involvement.

These internal discussions have focused on the distinction between content and capabilities. We look forward to working with the new C&PM to support their needs.

PART B: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

Committee members: Convener: Daniel Buckmaster (NSWRM); Garry Duncan (NSWRM), Roger Sawkins (QRM), Jacque Schultze (NSWRM), Michael Searle (CRQ), Julie Walpole (TRM).

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