

**BENEVOLENT ORGANISATION FOR DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH AND INSIGHT (BODHI)**



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
SUNDAY 30 MAY 2021  
12.00 NOON – 13.30PM AEST  
MEETING CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA ZOOM**

**1. Present**

- Dr Devin Bowles, BODHI President and AGM Chairperson.
- Ms Lucia Arman, BODHI Vice President and AGM Minute Taker.
- Professor Colin Butler, BODHI Treasurer and BODHI Co-founder Founding Member.
- Ms Maxine Ross, BODHI Secretary.
- Dr Gilles Rohan, BODHI Committee Member (joined the meeting at Agenda Item 4.1).
- Dr Ajay Niranjane, BODHI Committee Member (joined the meeting at Agenda Item 2.2.5).
- Professor Elise DeVido, BODHI Australia member and President, BODHI America.
- Kulottam Chakma, BODHI Australia community advisor.

**Apologies:**

- Ms Emilia della Torre, 2020 BODHI Committee Member.
- Michelle Engelsman, BODHI member
- Mr Jan Spanka, BODHI member.

**2. Ordinary business:**

***2.1 to confirm the minutes of the last preceding annual general meeting and of any general meeting held since that meeting;***

- Ms Ross moved that the Minutes to the BODHI Annual General Meeting dated 31 May 2020 be accepted as a true and accurate record.
- Ms Arman seconded.
- None opposed.
- Carried.

***2.2 to receive from the committee, auditor and servants of the Organisation reports on the operations and transactions of the Organisation during the last preceding financial year of the Organisation; (i.e. reports from the President, Treasurer, Gender and Communications for calendar year 2020)***

***2.2.1 President's Report***

- In the absence of a written report Dr Devin Bowles provided meeting attendees with a verbal President's Report, thus:
- BODHI's work was significantly disrupted in 2020 due to COVID19 and especially BODHI business in South East Asia.
- As a consequence of COVID 19 lockdowns in India, funds were not provided to Aryaloka for adult computer education as students were not able to attend classes due to quarantine and other public health measures aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19.
- BODHI however funded Aryaloka for the provision of emergency food relief in the way of food parcels for Indian families unable to work due to COVID-19 lockdown in India. Funds for food relief were drawn from non-tax deductible donations provided to BODHI.
- In 2020 BODHI approved funds for the Bahujan Hitay Pune Women and Children's Project as coordinated by Karunadeepa.

- Dr Bowles indicated that the majority of BODHI business in the last year fell largely to Professor Butler. In recognition of Professor Butler's pivotal role in the daily and ongoing management of BODHI business Dr Bowles stated he would like to propose a way that would better support Professor Butler in the execution of those duties. Dr Bowles explained that whilst the BODHI Committee has legally defined responsibilities and oversight over BODHI business and its governance, the reality is that BODHI's day to day management and operations are largely undertaken by Professor Butler. Dr Bowles stated he will speak further about this matter in Agenda item 4.1 and where he will outline a proposal aimed at streamlining the interface between BODHI governance and the operational management of BODHI business.

### *2.2.2 Treasurer's Report*

- Professor Butler provided a verbal overview of the BODHI Treasurer's Report as submitted to all BODHI Committee Members (and available online at the BODHI website) prior to the BODHI AGM.
- Professor Butler reiterated that BODHI was on solid ground with respect to its financial status and therefore continues to be viable.
- Professor Butler indicated that should BODHI be required to wind up in the future due to unforeseen circumstances that there are currently two options:
  1. gradually spend available funds in the BODHI account until all donated funds have been expended
  2. transfer BODHI funds to another charitable organisation whose aims and values are similar to those of BODHI
- Professor Butler indicated that at this stage his strong preference was a third option; to keep BODHI going. In the interim Professor Butler indicated that BODHI Committee Members should consider a contingency plan should there ever come a time where due to unforeseen circumstances it may no longer be viable for BODHI to continue.
- Dr Bowles proposed that the three options as proposed by Professor Butler be discussed at a follow up meeting of BODHI Committee Members. All agreed.
- Professor Butler advised BODHI Committee Members that he would like to reduce one of BODHI's term deposits by 20K and to transfer this money into another account, where the money can be immediately accessed should it be required. Dr Bowles moved that Professor Butler be given permission to do so. None opposed. Carried.
- Professor Butler explained that BODHI's non-taxable donations in calendar year 2020, excluding advertising revenues, were in the order of A\$5K of which 3K were received from the Ambedkar International Mission. Professor Butler clarified that it was this pool of money that was used to fund emergency COVID-19 food relief for Aryoloka in 2020. Professor Butler explained it was possible to use non-tax deductible funds for projects that were clearly "welfare" not development should the need arise. Professor Butler indicated that all tax-deductible donations cannot be spent on "welfare" and must be spent on development.

### *2.2.3 Gender Report*

- Nothing to report.
- Ms Ross explained that much of the work on the Gender Sub-Committee was unable to be progressed due to the emergence of COVID-19.

### *2.2.4 Communication Report*

- Professor Butler reported he had produced and disseminated two BODHI newsletters; and continues to maintain and keep up to date BODHI presence on Facebook and website.
- Professor Butler explained that BODHI's website receives a number of visitors to the site; BODHI also receives donations from people who visit the site.

- Professor Butler reported that he was approached by a Canadian company representing Reuters and AAP who claimed that the use of 3 images on the BODHI US web site (although available on the internet) was a breach of copyright and that BODHI was required to not only remove the images from its web pages but to also pay a fee for the use of each image to date (\$800 US per image). Professor Butler subsequently removed the images from the website. As BODHI is a not for profit organisation the Canadian company re-negotiated the fee payable requesting that BODHI pay \$100 US per image, a total of \$300. Professor Butler reported that he paid the fee using his own resources and did not use BODHI US (of BODHI Australia) funds to pay the Canadian company.

#### *2.2.5 Auditor's Report*

- Professor Butler explained that the BODHI auditor's report, completed by Camerons Accounting, Launceston was circulated to all BODHI Committee Members prior to the AGM for approval. It was subsequently approved by all BODHI Committee Members and formally co-signed by Dr Bowles, as BODHI President, and Prof Butler. The auditor's report will be placed on the ACNC website but is yet to be uploaded as Professor Butler has requested Camerons, for privacy reasons, to remove all BODHI Committee Members' home addresses from the report. Once completed Professor Butler will upload the PDF document to the ACNC website prior to 30 June 2021.

#### *2.26 Acceptance of BODHI Reports*

- Dr Bowles moved a motion that all BODHI reports be accepted.
- Ms Arman seconded the motion.
- None opposed.
- Carried.

### **2.3 to elect the officers of the Organisation and the ordinary committee member**

- Dr Devin Bowles advised that the purpose of an AGM is to elect its Office Bearers and Committee Members.
- Single nominations were received via the BODHI Secretary for the following positions; and were therefore accepted:
  1. Ms Lucia Arman, BODHI President
  2. Dr Devin Bowles, BODHI Vice President
  3. Professor Colin Butler, BODHI Secretary and Treasurer (both roles by the one person permissible under the BODHI Constitution)
  4. Ms Maxine Ross, BODHI Committee Member
  5. Dr Gilles Rohan, BODHI Committee Member
  6. Dr Ajay Niranjane, BODHI Committee Member
  7. Professor Elise DeVido, BODHI Committee Member

### **2.4 to appoint the auditor and determine his or her remuneration**

- Cameron's Accountants and Advisors, Launceston, Tasmania audited BODHI in the previous calendar year (2020).
- Professor Butler indicated that there are risks in selecting another auditor as they would not be as familiar with the workings of BODHI. Camerons are not overly expensive and therefore affordable.
- Dr Bowles moved a motion to continue with Cameron's Accountants and Advisors, Launceston, Tasmania as the BODHI auditor for the next financial year and to allow for an up to \$1,000 spend on the execution of the auditor's report. Ms Ross seconded the motion. None opposed. Carried.

### **2.5 to appoint a Public Officer;**

- Ms Jane Hudspeth, who resides in Tasmania, is happy to be re-appointed as BODHI Public Officer.
- All those present agreed to re-appoint Jane Hudspeth as the Public Officer.

## **2.6 to determine the remuneration of servants of the Organisation.**

- Currently 5% of all BODHI annual income (minus donations made by BODHI Committee Members in recognition of the contribution already made to BODHI by Committee Members) are provided to Professor Butler in recognition of the role he undertakes in the day to day and operational management of BODHI business.
- Dr Bowles stated he is not opposed to increasing that percentage amount paid to Professor Butler but would like to put this discussion on hold until after Agenda Item 4.1 is discussed.

## **3. Business Arising (if any)**

- Dr Bowles is not aware of Business Arising. Professor Butler affirmed this was the case.
- Nothing to report.

## **4. Special Business**

- Ms Emilia della Torre has submitted her formal resignation from BODHI as a BODHI Committee Member.
- Ms Arman formally thanked Emilia della Torre for her outstanding contribution as a BODHI Committee Member over the years and especially with respect to her unique contribution to the issues of gender and the empowerment of women and girls in BODHI funded projects.

## **4.1 Consideration of the president's proposal to simplify the running of BODHI**

- Dr Bowles made reference to a preliminary paper he distributed prior to the AGM to all BODHI Committee Members in relation to his proposal to simplify the operational management of BODHI business.
- Dr Bowles indicated that the role Professor Butler undertakes as part of BODHI is the equivalent of a Chief Executive Officer or General Manager of a non-government organisation. Dr Bowles proposed that rather than, as is often the case, for Professor Butler to go backward and forward seeking BODHI Committee approval for all, and any, operational matters, that Professor Butler be authorised to expend funds on matters that have been given prior approval by the BODHI Committee or for expenditure connected to already pre-approved and known BODHI project partners eg Bahujan Hitay Project in Pune, and the Aryaloka Education Society. All new project proposals however, with new project partners will continue to be discussed and to require the endorsement of the BODHI Committee.
- Dr Bowles' clarified that the proposal will have safeguards in place, and where any BODHI Committee Member will be able to raise any issue at any time for reconsideration by BODHI Committee members.
- Dr Bowles reminded meeting attendees that BODHI is still required to act in accordance with the BODHI Constitution.
- Dr Bowles asked whether the proposal he outlined had in principle approval of BODHI Committee members. None opposed. Carried.
- Dr Bowles put to meeting attendees that Professor Butler be given approval to spend up to \$40,000 of BODHI's funds per year on either current projects or additional projects with current project partners without seeking BODHI Committee Members' input. None attending the BODHI AGM were opposed. Carried.
- Dr Bowles indicated that given Professor Butler's increased responsibilities with respect to BODHI's operational matters and in recognition of the work that Professor Butler undertakes to continue BODHI's work that his remuneration be increased to 7.5% of annual donations. All attending the AGM approved the increased remuneration. None opposed. Carried.

## **5. Date and place of 2022 A.G.M.**

- BODHI Committee Members to determine date, time and place of next BODHI AGM as the time draws closer.
- Ms Arman formally thanked Dr Bowles for his contribution as BODHI President over the last 7 years and looked forward to working with Dr Bowles in his new role as BODHI Vice President.
- Ms Arman indicated that following the AGM she will schedule another zoom meeting in about one month's time and where BODHI Committee Members will be able to discuss other BODHI business matters.

**6. Meeting closed**