



28th Annual General Meeting

Thursday 8th September 2022 3.00pm AEST
Via Zoom Teleconference:

Minutes

Meeting opened at 3.00pm

PRESENT:

Annelise Alexander
Mary Brown
Greg Daniels
Julia Feiss
Kate Green

Amanda Lambros
Jennifer Mason
Ria Subrahmanyam
Mandi Smith
Shane Smith

APOLOGIES:

Robyn Donnelly

Minute taker: Shane Smith

1. Welcome and Apologies

Amanda Lambros, MAREAA President and Shane Smith MAREAA Secretary, welcomed everyone to the MAREAA 28th AGM.

2. Opening Address and Presidents' Report

Amanda Lambros, MAREAA President, welcomed everyone and thanked all for their continued support.

Refer to appendix A.

3. Minutes of 27th AGM 2021

Accepted by Ria Subrahmanyam and seconded by Annelise Alexander.

4. Financial Reports

Presented by Shane Smith. Refer P&L and Balance Sheet presented.

P&L: In the 2022 Financial year the association made a loss of \$3,338.16:

Income was \$184.46 (Membership fees)

Expenses were \$3,459.68 (Website \$624.00; Conference Charges \$2,835.68(FRSA))

Balanced Sheet:

Net Assets \$11,198.36, current year earning \$184.46

Savings \$11,198.36 less GST Payable of \$1,390.37

Finances accepted by Mary Brown and seconded by Ria Subrahmanyam.

5. State Branch Reports

NSW – Shane Smith (Appendix B)

WA – Ria Subrahmanyam (Verbal)

QLD – Jennifer Mason (Appendix C)

VIC – N/A.

SA – N/A.

NT – N/A.

6. MAREAA Award for Excellence in Marriage and Relationship Education

Action: No nominations... discuss at the next committee meeting **Amanda/Shane**

7. National Committee 2022/2023

All positions declared vacant:

- Acknowledgement of State Branch Representative appointments
- Election of Management Committee office bearers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary)
- Election of ordinary members (committee members other than State Branch Representatives and office bearers)

State branches:

- Robyn Donnelly NSW
Resigned
- Mandi Smith – NSW Representative
Accepted by Annelise Alexander and seconded by Ria Subrahmanyam
- Ria Subrahmanyam – WA Representative
Accepted by Amanda Lambros and seconded by Jennifer Mason
- Jennifer Mason QLD
Resigned. No Nominations
- Vacant – SA
No Nominations
- Vacant – VIC
No Nominations. (Julia Feiss put forward as a potential)

Action: Julia Feiss. Discuss at next committee meeting. **Amanda/Shane**

- Vacant – NT
No Nominations
- Vacant – TAS
No Nominations

National Committee:

- **President** - Amanda Lambros (Re-elected)
- **Vice president** - Ria Subrahmanyam (Re-elected)
- **Secretary** - Shane Smith (Re-elected)
- **Treasurer** - Mandi Smith

Accepted by Ria Subrahmanyam and seconded by Shane Smith

Election of ordinary members

An ordinary member is far from ordinary. An ordinary member can sit on the committee and hold an important role in supporting the objectives of the association.

- **Catherine Christie** was mentioned as a potential candidate for committee membership. Unfortunately, Catherine did not attend the AGM.

Action: Follow-up with Catherine **Shane/Amanda**

8. Any Other Business.

- (i) Mandi Smith offered services to conduct regular webinars.

Amanda Lambros closed AGM at 3.55pm

Appendix A:

MAREAA Presidents Report AGM – 8th September 2022

Just when we thought we were in the clear, we've experienced yet another year of disruptions to individuals, couples and organizations globally. We had the delight of borders opening, National and International travel recommencing, families and loved ones reuniting and having the opportunity to bring closure to experiences that didn't have closure for far too long.

When it comes to relationships - more people than ever before are being married by civil celebrants, the number of registered marriages is still at an all time low, the median age for first marriages is increasing and more couples than ever before are living together prior to getting married.

As Marriage and Relationship Educators - we thrive on doing exactly that - teaching people the skills to create strong relationship foundations and to build on that foundation through learning how to engage with outstanding communication all whilst learning to support each other in the relationship.

When Covid-19 first took effect here in 2019, for the educators that worked in face-to-face delivery, the ability to provide relationship education came to a grinding halt. Most of you had to transition to an unfamiliar online environment and the learning curve was steep. Three years on, the majority of Marriage and Relationship educators are now familiar (and somewhat comfortable) with online delivery. Some have returned back to face-to-face delivery and finally...some have even been able to reintroduce National and International Relationship Retreats into their offerings.

Things are going to continue to be in flux for the remainder of 2022 and more than likely 2023. As a committee, we are still meeting over zoom and have not had the opportunity to meet in person as of yet. I would like to wholeheartedly thank Shane Smith, Robyn Donnelly (ret.), Ella Li (ret.), Jennifer Mason, Ria Subrahmanyam for your time and enthusiasm and most of all your optimism in the mission that was and will continue to be.

I had the privilege of attending the FRSA Conference in May 2022. The direction and focus of FRSA seemed to be divorce and abuse. As the MAREAA President, these themes were devastating and gut-wrenching as research suggests that through early intervention and education, these are two areas that show marked and significant decreases. Another great reason to lobby the government and key stakeholders to invest and market the importance of early intervention and seeking the expertise of relationship educators.

MAREAA has had to realign its core objectives and has also seen a shift with the website and now we are working towards a more streamlined membership process.

Recently, we decided that the key focus areas for 2022-23 would be:

- To lobby the professional interests of members of the Association at both the Federal and State levels.
- To promote MAREAA at the State and National level.

- To elevate the publishing and distribution of a National journal, newsletter, and other periodicals to advance the professional understanding and practice of marriage and relationship education.

Again, with the absence of face-to-face meetings, achieving these goals has been challenging. We are continuing to hold successful MAREAA webinars and have a list of dates for meetings and webinars to take place throughout 2023 - provided well in advance so that you can pencil us in throughout 2023. The webinars will take place over zoom so that they are accessible to all who would like to attend.

Our membership has remained stable but we would love to see growth and any and all help from current members in this area would be greatly received.

During the year we lost the service of an amazing and long-standing committee member. Robyn Donnelly from CatholicCare Hunter-Manning resigned: 27th of August 2022. A veteran of the marriage and relationship space, Robyn has always brought deep conversation and industry insight to the committee and has always been open to a laugh. While sad news for us, we wish her and her family good health and good times. Thank you Robyn.

Jennifer Mason Coordinator Pre-Marriage Education Services at Centacare Family and Relationship Services Brisbane resigned: 7th of September 2022. Jen has also been involved with MAREAA for many years supporting the various events we have held but more recently as a committee member supporting members in Queensland. Always insightful and calm, she was able to present new ideas and brought new capabilities to the team. I'd like to thank Jen.... Thank you, Jen.

Looking back on 2022, it seems much of it has simply slipped by but we all know that there is much to be done in this current climate and we are working hard on ideas around lobbying the professional interests of our members, and promoting and elevating MRE to couples, families and individuals across Australia.

Amanda Lambros

info@amandalambros.com

National President

Marriage and Relationship Educators Association of Australia (MAREAA)

Appendix B:

MAREAA NSW State Report AGM – 8th September 2022

NSW MAREAA has been impacted by COVID and struggles to come back into full stride. That said, MAREAA has supported a number of initiatives across the state as outlined:

Better Marriages Conference, 3 September 2022. Held in Kiama this one-day couples events included Robyn Donnelly as the keynote speaker. Titled 'Sticking together when the world is pulling us apart', Robyn brought in research that helped couples and families stay connected, (focussing particularly on John Gottman's work), Robyn introduced research to assist couples to strengthen their relationship and for them to share it with others.

<https://youtu.be/S8n8EI5epGk>.

Shane and Mandi Smith presented two workshops, titled '**Exploring positive and negative cycles in relationships**'. Similar to that presented at the MAREAA AGM, the workshop focused on improve assertiveness and active listening skills, reflecting on the level of self-confidence of each partner, revealing each partners tendency to minimise and deal with issues directly (level of avoidance) and focusing on how each partner feels their partner tries to control and/or dominate their life (partner dominance).

Mandi and Shane have led a **Marriage Mentor, Family Life Skills Relationship Education Program pilot program through the Sydney Anglican Diocese** since early 2021. Designed to reinvigorate an Anglicare Led training and mentoring approach with Churches to increase Anglicare's connection with Church and Community Partners, the program set out to develop marriage mentors, who would then work in their churches to provide relationship strengthening courses and activities. Using the PREPARE-ENRICH program, Shane and Mandi trained 7 couples and are continuing to provide mentoring support.

Mandi Smith has been working with Victoria University and the Sir Zelman Cowen Centre in partnership with Benevolence Australia, to support the '**Good Beginnings**' program, using prepare-enrich, a collaboratively developed pre-marriage mentoring resource for Muslim couples. The program works to create opportunities for conversations with Muslim pre-marriage couples about how to build respectful relationships and strong marriages when they are at the beginning of their journeys together. It is a world first primary prevention program funded by the Department of Social Services (Community-led Projects to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children – 4-DPV4EVR) to address the gendered drivers of violence against women using OurWatch's primary prevention framework 'Change the Story'.

Shane Smith

Secretary

Marriage and Relationship Educators Association of Australia (MAREAA)

Appendix C:

MAREAA Queensland State Report AGM – 8th September 2022

Queensland MAREAA has continued to decline in membership numbers from previous years. Despite this Marriage and Relationship Education has continued across the state, and I commend my colleagues in Marriage Education for their commitment to best practice and innovation in providing services to clients across our vast state.

Promotion of MAREAA has occurred with distribution of MAREAA newsletters and promotional materials across Qld to agencies such as Relationships Australia, Centacare, CatholicCare and civil celebrant organisations. During the year I have met (virtually) with the MAREAA executive and participated in discussions regarding the industry and engaged in professional development opportunities provided.

Unfortunately, due to my own personal and work commitments, I need to withdraw from the committee at this time and so will not be standing for re-election as Qld Branch Representative.

I value and appreciate the leadership provided to MAREAA by Amanda Lambros (President) and the collegial support provided by the MAREAA executive Shane Smith, Robyn Donnelly, Ria Subrahmanyam, previous and current State Representatives, and members of the organisation whom

I have had the pleasure of working with over the years of my involvement as Queensland Rep. I wish them and the organisation all the very best for the future.

Jennifer Mason
Coordinator - Pre-Marriage Education Services
Centacare Family and Relationship Services Brisbane Metropolitan Branch
September 2022