

President's report 2021

This year's President's report has many things to note. The 2020 year was certainly one with many challenges, both internal and external, and I will attempt to be systematic both chronologically and thematically.

Club Membership

At the end of the 2020 membership year, we have 59 people listed who are active participants across the Club's disciplines. Many members continue to participate across multiple disciplines, and we currently have 6 USQ Student members.

This represents a significant turn-around from our position this time last year, where we had declining numbers across all disciplines and ran the risk that we could slip under the minimum quota for the number of USQ students to continue as an affiliated Student Life Club.

Since restarting classes after our COVID-induced shut down, member numbers increased as did regular numbers of participants at regular training. We start the 2021 year in a strong position to continue to grow numbers.

COVID impacts

The outbreak of COVID-19 has been a significant disruptor to many Clubs and businesses, and our Club was no different. The complete lock down that we experienced from March to July prompted us to develop on-line classes via Zoom. These, while generally attended by a small, consistent, cohort from week to week, it provided a vital point of connection with our practice and with each other.

We have continued to run a virtual dojo presence, connecting Toowoomba with our sister dojo in Gin Gin, and the Sunday evening FlexiFit classes have continued to prove popular, having reconnected with our broader Club diaspora in Brisbane, Townsville, Tamworth and Sydney.

The COVID shut down also opened up the opportunity for the Club to shift back to USQ Toowoomba campus. Having been located at the Holy Name Catholic Primary School since the end of 2011, the availability of the GX room in the Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre (CBRC) has been a big step for the Club and has allowed us to make the best from our virtual class presence, made it easier for the University community to interact with us, and has been directly responsible for our growth in numbers.

Success with Active Restart Infrastructure Fund grant application

One very positive consequence of the Government attempts to support community infrastructure post-COVID shutdowns was the expansion of more pools of grant funding to assist with minor and major equipment and infrastructure upgrades. The Club was successful in securing \$5000 through this fund, which has contributed to the purchase of mats increasing our training surface from 66 m² to 144 m². We are still waiting delivery of the order, which ought to arrive in Toowoomba between the last week of April and first week of May. When they arrive, it will be exciting to have access to a full-sized Judo

competition court's worth of training surface, especially as it can make for much larger numbers of participants to be catered for.

Disciplines

There have been a few changes to the active disciplines that the Club supports. With the departure of SMR Jodo in April 2020, we have since commenced a Seitei Jodo study group with input from Tom Johnson *sensei*.

It was wonderful to have Taiko resume post lockdown at the Hear and Say Centre, Ruthven Street, though we do miss the sense of all of us being under the one roof for a time at the CBRC. Systema has also been strong with its numbers, having made active use of virtual classes during the lockdown and maintaining a solid core of active participant in the months since.

We continue to actively support Kyudo, Arnis and Go through the Club, though regular sessions have been disrupted due to my personal commitments with study. With only one more 5-week block to go, I am hoping that we will be able to build some momentum over the coming months.

It has been satisfying to welcome commencement of a second Japanese Jujutsu discipline training at the Club, with Daen Fryar teaching the Kokusai Jujutsu Ryu (KJR) syllabus under the umbrella of John Bear *shihan*. Currently, there is a very large overlap between the people training across both styles. However, as we continue to promote their separate identities, I am sure that we will grow unique numbers in both.

Fencing and Judo has been on hiatus, though we are continuing to actively look for someone suitably qualified to run classes for them in Toowoomba. We are still providing support to Judo athletes wishing to participate at Uni Sports Div 1, though mostly through Strength and Conditioning support and ancillary training opportunities in other disciplines.

Move to the CBRC and new relationship with the Student Guild

As noted above, we restarted face-to-face classes after the COVID lockdown at the invitation of Jennifer Rix, CEO of the Student Guild. I would like to offer my thanks to Jennifer for the warm and constructive welcome that we have had by her and her staff at the Guild. It has been marvellous to be able to provide some presence in the space we use, to have a space that is more suitable for our activities, particularly Kendo, and a genuine pleasure to have an improved facility to train in. The new facilities have also made it far easier to keep up with our COVID-related obligations and maintain our equipment.

Social Media and BBRD's virtual presence

Aside from the Club's foray into Zoom, we have also developed a proper Google presence as a "business", including being literally on the map with respect to Google Maps, starting up a Twitter account as an alternative channel for communication, maintaining our Facebook chat groups and specialist group pages, and of course the weekly Budo Bulletin that mails out to over 200 subscribers.