



Message from President PUAAViC

- **Bernard Silva**

Dear Members and Alumni,



I am very happy to pen this message on the eve of our AGM. We have all experienced the Covid related isolation and restrictions during this year too. Therefore, I invite you to look back at our Association's functionality with that in mind. Our annual Australia day was successfully celebrated with the membership drive and a friendly cricket match with Kelaniya Alumni which was graced by a very good crowd. A striking feature this year was the participation of increased numbers of women and children.

We managed to stage "Me'pura Wala" a sold-out cultural show mainly performed by our own alumni and their families at the Chandler Theatre. Our chief guest was Shyamon Jayasinghe and as a recognition for his services we felicitated him by presenting an appreciation plaque during the function.

We tirelessly tried to have an outing targeting the Sri Lankan New Year in April, but health restrictions prevented us from proceeding with the planned outing. However, we directed our energies to streamline and update procedural matters such as Face Book, Webpage, membership lists, Westpac accounts, Code of conduct for exco, membership survey etc. A zoom seminar was organised on "Mindfulness and Kindness".

During the lockdown, as an association we have improved our participation and visibility by taking appropriate and timely

actions. We joined hands with sister Alumni associations in launching and raising funds through an appeal named "Husmata Hiyyak" for Mother Lanka's hour of need. We also joined in the appeal to the Australian Federal Government to Donate Vaccines to Sri Lanka. We took a further step in enhancing our involvement and rapport with our parent body in Peradeniya and sister associations in Australia.

I am sure you would love to hear the good news on scholarships. Most of the Banking document requirements were completed and we are now in the process of finalising the opening of a Fixed Deposit Account in Sri Lanka to award scholarships to undergraduates of Peradeniya.

All these were made possible mainly because of the support and encouragement we received from our alumni for which we are ever so grateful. I thank our Executive committee and all subcommittees for their dedication, commitment and the Peradeniya spirit extended towards each other during these testing and trying times. Hopefully any unfulfilled obligations could be met and events could be staged once the new normalcy returns in the near future.

I wish you all the best.

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EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN 2020-21

1. PUAAViC membership drive/Australia day event 2021 – S Godellewatte

Subcommittee: Somaratene Godellewatte (coordinator), Kanchana Senaratne, Amarasiri Herath, Bernard Silva, Upali Ileperuma, Kavinga Prasad, Nalinda Rathnayaka.

It is a great pleasure to announce that the eleventh annual PUAAViC membership drive/Australia day event was held on 26th January 2021 at the Knox Gardens Reserve, Wantirna South with great success. PUAAViC received a record number of membership applications during the event. While the ongoing pandemic was a challenge, we were lucky to find a window of opportunity to hold the event before movements became restrictive.

Many of the hugely enthusiastic members, their families, friends, and all well-wishers came along under their Peradeniya and Kelaniya banners respectively to take part in the event. It was a great opportunity to get-to-gether. We had the event conducted under the ever-changing Melbourne weather conditions which didn't matter to a record number of participants.

On arrival in the morning, everyone was greeted and enrolled to the event. A joint team of PUAA and KUAA members ensured the health protocols for participant's safety. Morning snacks together with hot tea was served. Then, both the Sri Lankan and Australian national anthems were sung by the crowd to celebrate our motherland and our second home, which also marked the start of the events. One minute silence was observed in memory of Covid victims.

The first event of the day was the most anticipated Kelaniya and Peradeniya under forty men's cricket match. Both teams fiercely fought and eventually the Kelaniya team grabbed the title after a long time. While grownups were battling for pride, kids were having fun with events dedicated for them. Lot of young families with young kids graced the occasion and we had organized archery, baton relay and painting to entertain them. Kids missed the traditional jumping castle, face painting and balloon popping due to health restrictions.

Next was the over forty men's cricket match which also saw the title going to the Kelaniya team.



Supplying food was also restrictive and we missed the joint preparation of traditional BBQ. We had delicious fresh food supplied from a local caterer, which everyone enjoyed. Food serving was a challenge as we got a record number of participants, but all went well without a major issue.

Unfortunately, the PUAAViC team couldn't participate in netball this year. However, Kelaniya ladies were well prepared and had a friendly match and it was a home vs home? game. The trophy went to Kelaniya without a contest.

Day's proceedings came to an end with the handing over of prizes and trophies. We are thankful to the two able compères making the event cheerful. The refreshments and the music kept the winners and losers warm, and we are sure the day ended with many families getting together and enjoying the day.

My thanks, as the coordinator, go to all those who helped make the event so successful. This includes all the university members, their families, the venue management and all others who helped in various ways towards the success of this annual event and of course, the competitors who were the stars. We hope all those who participated enjoyed the day and we look forward to seeing all of you in the next Australia day event.

Australia day 2021 in Pictures





(Items 2 to 7 have been extracted from the Secretary’s report for 2020/21)

2. Team Building Event for Executive Committee

On 13 March 2021 after relaxation of restrictions, Exco members met for the first time in person at the Scout Hall Mt Waverley, of course with their lovely families. We were so happy to meet and greet each other after a long time. New Exco members were formally inducted to the committee. After the formal meeting, tickets for “Me’Pura Wala” were distributed among our members followed by family introductions, dinner, light entertainment, and bit of a sing song.

3. “Me’Pura Wala” Cultural Extravaganza

Subcommittee: Bernard Silva, Chamila Fernando, Chaminda Hewajith, Nalinda Ratnayaka, Rukman Wimalasuriya, Somaratne Godellewatte, Sunil Arachi, Sunil Ratnayake and Sunil Wickramasinghe

An Event Subcommittee with a few non exco members was formed and was able to put our ideas into action. The Fairfield Amphitheatre overlooking Yarra River was booked for a cultural extravaganza on 10 April 2021 named "Mepura Wala" being the popular choice and of course the term 'Wala' is so close to our hearts. We thank the Yarra City

 **Peradeniya University**
Alumni Australia - Victoria Chapter 





Council for accepting our appeal and providing the facility free of charge. Rehearsals were held including on site. However, by 7 April, it was obvious the weather gods were not on our side as a rare severe cold spell with rain was forecast. Lighting and music providers advised us of their inability to perform in open air and would have inconvenienced our spectators to enjoy an event in the rain. Few members of the team had the foresight and acumen to book an indoor theatre as an alternative. Within two days we decided to shift the venue from Fairfield Amphitheatre to Chandler Community Centre displaying the amazing organisation skills and teamwork. We invited our most senior alumnus Shyamon Jayasinghe as the chief guest and as a mark of appreciation we also awarded a Plaque in front of a full house of art loving alumni and spectators. We thank all performers, most of them from our own and other contributors for the wonderful fun filled night.

4. Alumni Annual Trip

Due to uncertainty though a subcommittee was not formed, Upali Illeperuma was entrusted with the task of finding a suitable venue. Few committee members and non-committee members were assisting him. Accordingly, holiday resorts like Big4, Christian Youth Council, Cammeray Waters and few private venues were looked at and tentatively booked. Unfortunately, these plans had to be put on hold due to the continuously changing health regulations.

5. Covid Appeal for Sri Lanka "Husmata Hiyakk" – Bernard Silva

During the height of the Covid crisis one of our doctors contacted PUAAViC President to discuss the idea of helping Sri Lankan Hospitals as a joint Alumni Associations effort (in Australia) for which we gave our blessing and later actively participated and contributed. As a core group of Presidents of Alumni Associations Victoria, we regularly met on Zoom and chatted on WhatsApp group called Alumni Presidents. This group agreed to the name the fund-raising effort as "Husmata Hiyakk" and later many volunteer groups also joined in for this worthy cause. On the invitation of PUAAViC president, our sister Associations' Presidents of Perth, Sydney and Canberra also joined hands and the joint effort was a huge success. We thank everyone that contributed for your generous support. A total of \$406,755 was raised and spent on providing medical equipment to hospitals in Sri Lanka. Final report is available on Covid Appeal website <http://www.australianappealforsrilanka.com/>

6. PUAAViC Scholarships programme – Bernard Silva

The University of Peradeniya was closed for students in the past months as they functioned under limited capacity. Therefore, the question of awarding scholarships did not arise. However, we worked on related outstanding issues slowly but steadily. Firstly, Regulations governing scholarships were approved by the University Senate in February.



Secondly, our proposal for the University of Peradeniya to open an account on behalf of PUAAViC had gone to University Grants Commission (UGC) for approval. We like to thank the UGC for giving it a fair hearing, but they could not take a final decision by themselves due to the nature of the account and foreign remittances. They forwarded our request to the Ministry Finance and External Resources Department for the final decision in late September. They agreed in principle to our proposal but did not agree to the University opening accounts on our behalf. The whole purpose of the exercise was to make sure our funds are safe with the Senate operating it and being accountable to us. Now we must open accounts by ourselves. We are hopeful but struggling to open an account in absentia. If we succeed, we become the sole customer with the mandate to operate so that intermediaries will not be required. We like to thank the previous subcommittee for their valuable input and support (*Update: The money has since been transferred to Sri Lanka and an AUD fixed deposit has been made in the name of PUAAViC, the interest of which will be used to pay for scholarships via a rupee account*).

7. Mindfulness webinar on 28th October 2021

Based on a proposal made to the Exco a webinar was held on the subject of "Mindfulness and Kindness by Dr Lydia Brown, a Clinical Psychologist, and a Research Fellow with the University of Melbourne. This was considered a very timely initiative by the PUAAViC exco, given the ongoing Covid lockdowns and the impact it was having on many peoples mental and physical health. The content was well received and appreciated by the participants. We thank Dr Kithsiri Dassanayake for liaising with the speaker.

8. Membership survey

We decided to gauge the post Covid expectations of our members as most of our concepts on social interactions had dramatically changed. Accordingly, a number of pertinent questions were formulated, and a survey was conducted in late October 2021. We are in the process of evaluating these responses. We thank our secretary Rukman for taking the leadership in this.



Treasurer's Summary – by Somaratne Godellewatte

I hereby submit the financial report and the Financial Statement of the PUAAViC for the year ending

30 June 2021 (subject to pending auditors' approval). The report comprises of:

- Income & Expenditure Statement
- the Balance Sheet.

As per the FY20/21 Balance Sheet, the PUAAViC has assets valued at \$53,458.71. This includes \$39,395.03 in the Scholarships fund, \$8,931.74 ERF account.

The PUAAViC is in a stable financial position and is well placed to remain so into the future. The PUAAViC's main sources of revenue are from membership fees, Hantane Nite event, and Father's Day Fundraiser for scholarships and Educational Resources Funds. In the last two years, unfortunately, we had to cancel most of our regular events due to coronavirus pandemic and resulting covid restrictions.

Despite the challenging environment, the committee managed to hold two successful events, Australia Day Membership drive and MePura Wala cultural event.

With the help of PUAAViC members, alumni and friends, our executive committee continued to improve on reserves with a surplus.

Membership FY20/21: Membership fees collected was **\$905**.

Fees collected up to Oct 2021 was \$1,530 with 20 new members joining.

MePura Wala cultural event: Surplus of **\$2,005.46** (\$1005.46 income plus \$1000 scholarship donation)

Funds available as at 09/10/2021 is **\$53,790.88** comprising of:

Total in General PUAAViC A/C **\$5,457.04**

- Daily Transaction A/C \$4,270.64
- High Interest A/C \$1,186.40

Total in Scholarships Fund **\$39,401.89**

- Scholarships A/C \$20,326.18
- Term Deposit \$19,075.71

Total in ERF A/C **\$8,931.95**

I wish the new executive committee and its treasurer the very best in the 2021-2022 Financial Year.

Somaratne Godellewatte
Treasurer 2020-21

Peradeniya University Alumni Australia - Victoria Chapter (PUAAViC)
<http://www.peradeniya.com.au/>



Editor's Note:

Due to untold disruptions resulting from the global pandemic, activities of PUAAViC have been severely curtailed in the past two years. Under the circumstances many activities including the publication of this newsletter have been delayed and I am pleased that we were finally able to publish this limited edition. We are hopeful that Issue 10 of the newsletter due in November 2022 will cover a much wider range of activities that PUAAViC is currently engaging in. My thanks and appreciation to all those who contributed to this newsletter.

For new membership applications please visit our website:

<http://www.peradeniya.com.au>

send completed forms to:

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