

Note of the Oxfam Australia Board Meeting – 9 October 2020

I had the honour of Chairing my first Oxfam Australia Board meeting in October and am delighted to be working with such a skilled and passionate Board. The staff and Board have welcomed me warmly into this role and I want to particularly thank my predecessor Dennis Goldner who has provided great support as I learn more about Oxfam and its important work.

The Oxfam Australia (OAU) Board met on 9 October with apologies received from Mel Houghton. The Board continues to meet via zoom due to COVID19 restrictions.

After opening the meeting and acknowledging country, the Board was delighted to have an international guest, Raj Kumar Founder of Devex and global thought leader in aid and development, join the group from his home in Washington DC, for a strategic discussion. Raj talked about how non-traditional models of philanthropy and aid are changing the face of development around the world with billionaire philanthropists and social entrepreneurs acting as a disrupting force on global aid.

Following a thought provoking discussion the Board reviewed the financial report. The Finance Risk and Audit Committee, under the guidance of Chair Sally McCutchan, underwent an intensive tender process for selection of auditors and as a result the Board endorsed the appointment of BDO as Oxfam Australia's external auditors for the next three years. The Board also endorsed the appointment of Grant Thornton as internal auditors with the aim of providing increased assurance and risk management for OAU as it operates in a particularly volatile and constrained environment.

Lyn Morgain gave her CE Report highlighting progress on operations in Australia and overseas and updated the Board on key projects. COVID has had a significant impact across the world and global response continues to be implemented with countries experiencing different stages of the pandemic. The impact of COVID on program delivery is being closely monitored and we are working closely with donors who have been very flexible in supporting reprogramming to meet the changed environments. OAU has been adapting to working remotely, including program monitoring remotely and whilst not replacing face to face contact entirely these new ways of working will serve Oxfam well into the future.

The Board was pleased to receive a comprehensive overview of initiatives to support staff wellbeing throughout a very challenging year. The health and wellbeing of our staff is paramount and despite significant changes within OAU and the challenges COVID has placed on everyone, our staff have continued to deliver the important work we do. Lyn provided an overview of Oxfam International activities and the Board received an update on the status of OI's Governance reforms from General Counsel-Company Secretary Sari Baird. The Board empowered the Chair to vote for the new OI Constitution which has taken three years of extensive consultation and development. OI is undergoing a transformation and the changed global operating model and governance arrangements will allow it to provide increased support to affiliates in the south and make it more resilient and adaptable in a changing world.

After reviewing the regular Legal Risk and Compliance report the Board was pleased to welcome OAU's Safeguarding Manager Jody Kelly to the meeting. Jody presented on progress at OAU, in the Confederation and in the Sector on safeguarding and highlighted the extensive work being done in this space and how OAU is embedding safeguarding practices in all aspects of the organisation.

The Board then discussed organisational performance reporting and how insights from Raj's presentation might be incorporated into the framework going forward. The Board also set its calendar for 2021.

OAU has been undergoing major transformation and as I commence my role as Chair of the Board I want to thank the management and staff for all the hard work and passion that has gone into creating these changes. The Board is also undergoing an extensive governance review to ensure it has the ideal composition and skills to provide the best guidance and support to OAU as it is poised for an exciting future working to create a just and sustainable world without the inequalities that keep people in poverty.