



## Dragons Abreast Sydney

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Hi all,

Well, I've been on the committee since we started but I'm new at this co-ordinator thing, so please bear with me while I learn the ropes. They're big shoes I'm expected to fill! One thing I can tell you for sure is that your committee works very hard and what I would like to see this coming year is much more involvement by the rest of you.

You know, you get out of life what you put into it and that goes for Dragons Abreast Sydney too. If you don't involve yourself, you're only having a fraction of the fun! We want ideas, suggestions and people to drive them, so don't be backward in coming forward – you can ring or email me or any of the committee any time with comments or suggestions or offers of help (that's if we don't ring you first!!) The committee can't and shouldn't do everything. So *don't be a passenger* – find a way to contribute!

### Our Paddle Wetting Day

What a dismal, cold, wet day it started out on our Paddle-Wetting for Newbies day on July 11<sup>th</sup> But we DAS gals are not so easily put off – and I'm pleased to say that we had a tremendous showing. Not only did most of you turn up to welcome and help the newcomers, bringing a wonderful assortment of afternoon tea goodies – but even more amazingly, seven newcomers and a handful of nearly-newcomers braved the weather as well. How good is that!! Thank you to all those who helped, especially Sally Lynch who started up the buddy system for the first time. And welcome to the new paddlers – we hope you'll decide to join up and make a habit of this crazy fun. Gals who can brave lousy weather like that obviously have the sort of steely determination that will undoubtedly make fantastic dragonboaters!

It was the first time we've given newcomers a proper introduction, with information, instruction and a buddy to give them an experienced partner in the boat. We tried it this way in response to

feedback that having new people arrive any old paddling day was a bit of a haphazard way of inducting people. Also because there are more of us now, it's easier for newcomers to feel a little lost on day one. Judging from the gals who've got back to me about the day, this new arrangement went down well and they seem to have enjoyed themselves. That's great and hopefully they will be now encouraged to join the ranks. Thank you all for helping out on the day and making it a success.

From now on we are agreed that new paddlers will only be able to start on designated days. Next Paddle-Wetting for Newbies will be **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September** – so pls all put that in your diaries.

### **Mel's Surprise Birthday Party on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July**

And we fooled her completely!! Mel, our wonderful pocket rocket coach and club mentor, thought the party at Franks Pizza Bar was to thank Margot Case for the splendid job she did starting up DAS and being mother hen to all of us for our first 18 months and to thank Fairlie Stanish for her hard work too before they both retired from the committee. We did indeed make a fuss of them and give them little gifts to show our thanks. However later in the evening the huge, beautiful, dragon-shaped birthday cake (made by Jenny and Jo Petterson) left Mel in no doubt as to why we were really there. We also had spectacular cards (again made by Jenny and Jo – they're so talented!!!) for both Mel and Chris with thanks for their nurturing of DAS. Thanks to all of you who showed up to help celebrate and who contributed to the "mobile office" we gave to Mel (a huge handbag she needed to cart around all her DB stuff). It was a fun evening.

This was also the first day we've *ever* had to cancel paddling due to the weather – my phone rang hot all morning with everyone wanting to know if the paddle was to be cancelled, because of the gale force wind gusts – even the ferries were cancelled! However, after hearing that there were waves on Rozelle Bay Mel and I decided perhaps the time had come to call it off. Normally the only thing that keeps us off the water aside from gale force winds is lightning. So, even if it is raining where you live on a paddling day, it may not be doing so at Glebe – we'll paddle anyhow unless the radio says to stay home.

### **DAS 2004/5 Calendar**

It's going to be a really busy year coming up – as I discovered when I tried to map out all the things we are already committed to organise. As soon as this is vetted by the Committee we'll publish the calendar so you can mark out your diaries well in advance – there's heaps of things you won't want to miss. The first of these will be the Bankstown Masters Regatta on 1<sup>st</sup> August. Our hugely patient and efficient race co-ordinator, Anne Gates, is organising our participation in this event, despite being temporarily laid up following knee surgery. Naturally we wish Anne a speedy recovery so she join back in the fun ASAP.

### **Membership Renewals**

Our indefatigable treasurer, Janet Green, has yet again done an amazing job in preparing all the membership renewals. This another of the utterly thankless tasks that fall to the Treasurer and I can only reassure Janet that we all really appreciate your efforts on our behalf.

Most of you will have already received your renewal by hand, by email or as a last resort, by snailmail. You may not realise it, but DAS membership at a mere \$120 per year is the most amazing bargain – if you paddled every weekend in the year it would only cost you around \$2.30 per paddle. If we manage paddles twice a week in the summer (we'd like to arrange that this year), the value will be even more amazing. What other sport gives you that sort of value – fun, exercise, friendship and social activity. Your \$120 covers individual insurances, boat hire and training, memberships of Dragons Abreast Australia and Dragonboating NSW as well as our administrative costs all rolled into the one payment.

Please renew your membership NOW if you haven't done so already – you only have until July 31<sup>st</sup>. You can pay Janet with cash or give her a cheque made payable to “Dragons Abreast Australia” – Just DO it!

### **Where have all the old paddlers gone?**

Just in case you are wondering where some of our “old” paddlers have gone, and why they show up smiling but not paddling – it's because they are temporarily paddling in another team - the Australian Masters Women's team, which is going to the World Championships in Shanghai in October. You see, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak – the coaches for the Australian team drive us mercilessly. One of our compulsory tough paddle practices comes immediately after the DAS paddle on Sundays and if we did both sessions on the same day we'd need ambulances to get us home. We can hardly stand up after this cruel and unusual punishment for which we inexplicably but cheerfully volunteered (so it's all our own fault).

You have to admit that the opportunity to have a crack at the Worlds was just too good and freakish an opportunity to miss. But, never fear! We'll all be back paddling our hearts out regularly with DAS again as soon as we get back from China in November. Special thanks to those who've wished us well. It's a huge feather in DAA's cap that not only can we demonstrate by paddling with DAS that there's life after BC, but now we also show that we can mix it with the best of them.

### **The Membership Survey Results**

Thanks to all those who took the trouble to respond to our little survey. The results were really interesting and very important in helping us to help DAS. First up it made clear that we needed to revamp the way we bring new members into the club – and we've already acted on that and tried out our new system (see above *Our latest batch of New Paddlers*) seemingly successfully

It also highlighted something we'd begun to suspect – that it is hard to get to know each other when everyone jumps in the boat, paddles and then races off home – we need more time and opportunity to get to know one another, especially in winter when there are fewer regattas. So Margo-Lynne Lee is charged with making that happen – she has heaps of good ideas already and would welcome suggestions and hands-on help. Get thinking and stay tuned.

The other major revelation was that by far the greatest majority of paddlers find out about us from one of our existing paddlers. So GO FORTH AND HELP US MULTIPLY!! Tell everyone you meet about DAS, tell them what fun it is and tell them to tell their friends. For starters they have probably never heard of dragonboating. Most of my friends think I'm absolutely crazy and after some 30 yrs as a couch potato I assure you that dragonboating was about the last thing they thought I'd do after breast cancer! It's not even ladylike!

Lastly it seems everyone is keen to have their own copy of the membership list with contact details. Now we have your permission to do so, we'll publish that (after a little updating). It will help when you want to contact anyone re carpooling or anything else to do with paddling.

### **DAS Partnering with Zonta**

Many of you will be familiar with Zonta already, but for those who are not, Zonta International is a global service organization of executives in business and the professions working to advance the status of women worldwide. Many of you will have been the grateful recipients in hospital of one of those lovely Zonta Breast Care Cushions that provide post-operative physical comfort to women who have had breast surgery.

The good news is that the Macquarie Zonta club has started distributing our DAS and DAA brochures together with their Breast Care Cushions. We've drawn up a special leaflet explaining about Dragons Abreast so patients can read all about us in hospital and look forward to some fun when all the treatment is over. How good a partnership is that! It's a fantastic way

for us to get information about DAS to the very people we want to reach. We are hopeful that more Zonta Clubs can be persuaded to do the same.

If you would like to know more about Zonta, then you can track down our own Wendy Mann at paddle practice – she's a member of the Macquarie Zonta Club as well as of DAS and we are hugely grateful to her for helping us to put this partnership together.

### **Planning Meeting August 8<sup>th</sup>**

Don't forget our planning meeting on Sunday Aug 8<sup>th</sup> – this was decided upon at the AGM and is your opportunity to contribute your ideas to the planning process. As our team continues to grow, both in numbers and diversity, we face many of the problems that plague all growing organisations. The issues aired at the DAS extraordinary general meeting are listed below, and at this planning meeting we need to look at:

- Communication strategy
- Goals and strategies
- Team response when we lose someone
- Disparate paddling skills

We need input from the whole membership on August 8th so the meeting can develop a set of recommendations to the committee. It starts at 9.30am at the Kauri Hotel, Glebe (on Pyrmont Bridge Road, right opposite where we paddle).

As there is still no operative café on the site, bring a thermos of coffee or a drink and a nibble or two to keep you going through the morning. And don't forget to bring some lunch for after the meeting because we'll be paddling at the usual 1.45pm.

### **Hands up?**

With such a wide variety of talented women in this club I'm sure that there will be some of you with skills in desktop publishing and also someone who's great at graphic design. If so, pls let me know – for starters I need someone who can make this bulletin look a whole lot better (I'm happy to write the copy – but it sure would be nice if someone could lay it out a bit better for me). Secondly, we need a club logo – something really simple that looks good in colour or b&w, large or small. If anyone would like to have a crack at either of those things, please give me a ring on 9449 6855.

### **Bankstown Masters Regatta on 1<sup>st</sup> August**

For some of you this will be your first regatta – and, believe me, you'll love it. Remember to bring food and drink to sustain you (although the usual sausages etc will be on sale) and the exact money (\$11) for race entry. You may even need some rain protection and a spare set of dry clothes in case it drizzles.

Anne Gates, our very capable race co-ordinator (who's just had knee surgery, but who's recovering very well, I'm pleased to say) has sent you all the details by email. Canberra Dragons Abreast are sending up a crew and we'll have girls from Central Coast and Newcastle there too, I'm told. We'll have to show them how – won't we?

### **Starting Times**

One final thing – pls remember to arrive for normal weekend practices no later than 1.45 – last weekend someone turned up at 2.30 and of course the boat was long gone and so they missed out on a paddle.

I'm impressed if you are still reading after all this waffle – so thanks.

Paddles up!  
Cynth...