



Dragons Abreast Geelong Newsletter/Website Update April 2005



Dragons Abreast Geelong has had a most exciting inaugural year!! In March 2004 we had 5 Geelong paddlers travel to the Yarra to train and compete with the Melbourne team in the International Dragon Boat Festival. Our dream was to establish a team in Geelong and twelve months later we competed in the event, in our own pink dragon boat and won the Dragons Abreast Cup to boot!

We have had a lot of support to achieve so much, so quickly and the Zonta Club of Geelong Central have been the powerhouse behind the team getting our own dragon boat. Zonta is an international professional women's organisation which operates within local communities for their benefit. We applied for a Working in Partnership Grant with Zonta over a twelve month period with a guarantee of \$10,000 funding. We successfully applied for funding for a dragon boat. The funds were raised with a corporate event that utilised Zonta's connections and expertise.

The boat was built by Brian Adams at The Wooden Boat Centre, and it looks stunning painted in the Breast Cancer Network Australia's signature hot pink colour. Our 'Ocky Oar' paddles were kindly donated by the Australian Dragon Boat Federation. The Victorian Dragon Boat Association with Neil Crosthwaite has been very helpful and obliging, allowing us to use our beautiful boat at the International Dragon Boat Festival in Melbourne.

The boat has been named 'Spirit of Zonta.' The origin of the Zonta symbol is from the Sioux Indian language and means 'inspiration', 'loyalty' and 'trust' – surely these are fitting virtues for our vessel. Our pink boat makes a bold statement and we received a 'Best Presented Team' trophy at the International Dragon Boat Festival. The Zonta women were a great bunch and we really enjoyed it, but most importantly it was so overwhelming to receive such a show of faith and a huge financial commitment, to a fledgling team. We will always be indebted to Zonta and their legacy is a well-loved boat by a team of grateful paddlers.

Our team formed an early alliance with the Geelong Canoe Club and their President, Paul Carnegie. He is our coach and provides us with unswerving support and encouragement. We enjoy their clubrooms and facilities, including boat storage, at an associate membership rate and have been welcomed warmly to their club. The Barwon River at Balyang Sanctuary is a wonderful backdrop for a paddling experience.

We have also received significant financial assistance from a private benefactor who shuns public acknowledgement. David, a kind elderly gentleman, has no family connections within the team yet he has given generously to see us grow. He has given money to purchase a set of life jackets, boat towing accessories and general funds. It is heart warming to see such generosity within a community.

We have also had support from DA up through the ranks; including the girls from Bendigo, Pru Menzies, the Victorian State Co-ordinator and Michelle Hanton at the National level. The Executive Committee of the Geelong team, Linda Cooke, Kathleen Ure, Lauren Vallance, Helen Wood and Tracie King have been a solid guiding force.

They have provided strong leadership and a firm direction for the team. Our President, Tracie King, has worked tirelessly for this team and her talents with a camera and design have gone a long way in promoting and publicising our cause. She is a well-loved driving force for the team with a multitude of wonderful ideas. The team is a tight unit.

The success of our team, as it is with all teams, is a coming together of wonderful women and their supporters. Each paddler brings a depth and strength to the team which we value, and we are all richer for the experience.