

Note of Oxfam Australia Board Meeting

May 2019

The Oxfam Australia (OAU) Board met in Melbourne on Friday 24 May 2019. At the commencement, the Board met in camera to discuss the short-listed candidates for the position of Chief Executive (CE) towards the end of a thorough process to appoint a new CE, following on from Helen Szoke's announcement that she will retire in August 2019. Hearing the perspectives of the full board at this particular point in the selection process was extremely valuable for the CE Selection Committee.

Before commencing its formal proceedings, the Board received a presentation and update from Lillian (Lan) Mercado, Regional Director, Asia. Hearing Lan's briefing underscored for the board the significance of Asian country programs in which OAU is deeply invested and of the value of the increasing emphasis on regional coordination that Oxfam has been applying globally.

After acknowledgement of country and opening formalities, the Board received the CE's report. Helen Szoke's report covered the agency's performance and operating environment; financial, budgetary and risk matters; discussion of issues around the impending closure of Trading operations; a program update; a progress report on current IT projects; and an Oxfam International briefing. There was discussion of the many pressures on OAU and the INGO sector at this time and major change both in the external environment and within the agency itself. It is a time when boards need, more than ever, to be vigilant, informed and supportive while holding management accountable. The Board is grateful to Helen and the Executive team for their candour and willingness to brief the board comprehensively and deal with issues, and it recognised the workload and stresses that the team are bearing and expressed its appreciation for their diligence.

The Chair of the Finance Risk and Audit Committee and the CFO briefed the board on all finance and risk matters including the interim EOFY result at March 2019 and there the Budget for FY 19/20 was approved after a thorough discussion.

An update was provided on the Operational Plan, then a paper on OAU's Deductible Gift Recipient Status in the light of advocacy forming a key element to Oxfam's change programs and objectives, followed by the quarterly Risk, Compliance and Legal Report.

Board matters were next on the agenda. Following the recent meeting and recommendations of the Board Nominations Committee (BNC), the Board approved the extension of Dennis Goldner and Alan Wu for further one year terms, the reappointment of Melissa Houghton and Fiona Kotvojs for three year terms, and the appointment of a new board member, Peter Bars. Peter is currently Deputy Chair of Deloitte Australia and a senior management consultant specialising in technology.

The BNC recognised the need for experience and continuity in times of change but has recommended that, from 2020, the Board seek new board members in an open process to provide 'new blood'.

The Board also approved the reappointment of Judy Mitchell and Glenyys Romanes as Community Advisers for further two year terms.

Reports were received from the Public Engagement and Governance Committees. In the latter, a recent Board Performance Assessment done by QUT and the follow up requirements emerging from the report were discussed.

At the end there was a meeting evaluation and other feedback provided in camera.

Dennis Goldner,
Board Chair
6/19