

## **The Next Era for Harvard Club of Australia**

The HCA Strategic Review has been running since early 2018. At this year's AGM we will be looking to ratify changes to the Club's Constitution to enable the next strategic era for HCA including expanded membership criteria and a new operating model.

But changes to the Constitution are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the intended new look and feel for the Club's Next Era. In this article we summarise the context for the Review, our bold mission to make a difference, key strategies for members, for Australia and for Harvard, a new 'distributed leadership' operating model and ways to get more involved.

### **'Good to great' Review**

The Review has been undertaken from a position of strength. In fact, last year HCA was honoured as Harvard International Club of the Year for our strong membership base, varied calendar of intellectual-cultural-social events, new mentoring program, world-leading philanthropic scholarships/fellowships and innovative fundraising through the 20-year running Program for Leaders. So, the Next Era is a good-to-great story!

The motivation for the Review stemmed from a general view that, notwithstanding our acknowledged success, the Club was not reaching its full potential for impact. Membership and participation levels can be greater, our offering can target more unmet needs of inactive-lapsed-non-members, our philanthropy can achieve higher payback and visibility, Harvard's reputation in Australia can be enhanced, our connections back to Harvard can be more structured, our finances can be more robust. What's more, the Harvard ethos is to strive for excellence and continuous improvement.

The Review was an engaging process built around a series of seven evening workshops, each attended by about 20 Councillors and key leaders. At one such workshop we were honoured to have Harvard's Vice Provost for International Affairs, Mark Elliott, participate for the entire five hours.

To feed into the workshops, we conducted 50+ interviews with a cross-section of members and stakeholders and fielded an on-line survey of lapsed/inactive members. We studied best practices at 12 peer Clubs. We analysed the membership base, patterns of participation, unmet needs of member segments, event impact, scholarship/fellowship impact and modus operandi, Council governance effectiveness, contributor time commitment, funding sources and uses, Club economics and more.

So, what has emerged from the Review? Read on!



### **Bold ambitions for making a difference**

A 3-part mission for the Club has been developed – “To make a difference as a Harvard community in Australia... for Members, for Harvard and for Australia.” For Members, it’s about extending the unique Harvard experience through life’s journey. For Harvard, it’s about enhancing Harvard’s reputation in Australia and vice versa. And for Australia, it’s about making a worthwhile contribution to Australian society. Our soundings with members indicated that this 3-part re-articulation of our mission was catchy and inspiring. And as you will read, it flows through our value proposition, strategy and operating model.

In keeping with the mission, we distilled our value proposition to members as follows: “HCA will be a Club that makes a difference, offers ‘something for everyone’ and fosters camaraderie” ... and does so consistently day by day, event by event, program by program, course by course. The strategy aims to deliver on that promise for all members regardless of school, location, gender, age or background.

Lastly, we also created a set of five HCA shared values, which will guide our collective behaviours in pursuit of our mission. These values – inclusiveness, empowerment, excellence, integrity, generosity – are described on the below chart. You can expect to hear more about these values at Club gatherings and more importantly see them in action!

## NEW HCA CORE VALUES

### New set of HCA core values



**Inclusiveness.** *Harvard family DownUnder*

Camaraderie as the 'heart of the Club'; warm and welcoming, caring, friendly and fun; diverse (gender, age, school, geography); opportunities for all to contribute, SIGs; supportive of each other & others, collaborative



**Empowerment.** *Club full of leaders*

Initiative encouraged, innovation backed, accountability expected, governance supportive not controlling, contributions recognised



**Excellence.** *High quality in everything*

High quality people, scholars, events, speakers, programs, reputation, communications; intellectually and socially stimulating; personal development; focus on impact, learning, improving; good value for efforts



**Integrity.** *'How' not just 'what'*

Honest in all dealings; transparent to all; independent and non-political; humble in our accomplishments

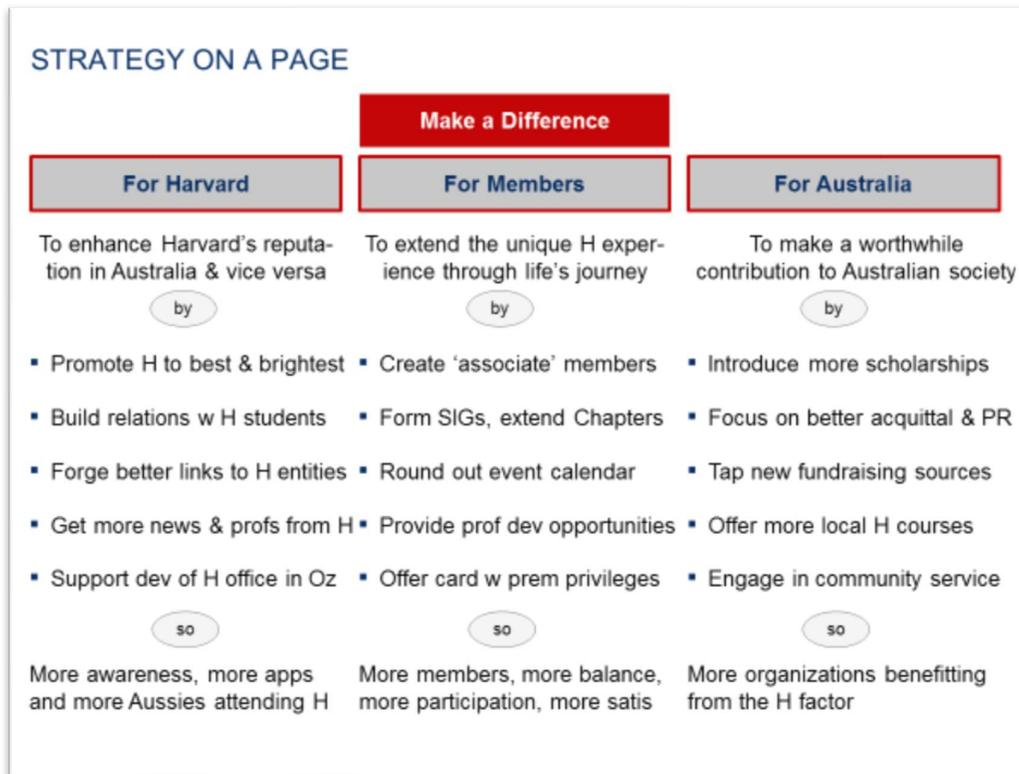


**Generosity.** *Giving beats receiving*

Philanthropy as the 'soul of the Club'; real volunteer spirit; giving back to Harvard, Australia and the Club; finding your own way to give back

### New ideas for Members, for Harvard, for Australia

The Review process generated 172 ideas to turn the bold mission into reality, and we are getting more and more good ideas every time we talk with members about the strategy. The chart below portrays HCA's 'strategy on a page'. It shows the desired outcomes and key strategic themes for each of the three sub-missions.



## For Members

The aim 'For Members' is to extend the unique Harvard experience through life's journey. When successful it means more members, more balance, more participation and more satisfaction.

Members currently enjoy a range of events and early adopters rave about the new mentoring program. Recent membership campaigns have also lifted the membership base to around 500.

The Club membership is representative of the different schools (i.e. similar membership rates) although it's unbalanced due to significant (40%) HBS Exec Ed in the alumni base. Gender is also representative but unbalanced with 27% women, although encouragingly 50-50 for the younger cohort.

Analysis revealed that only 25% of identifiable alumni are members, with 62% of alumni enrolling in the Club but only 41% of those being retained. We also found that only half of the current 500 members are active, which helps explain the lapsing phenomenon.

The importance of warmly welcoming and integrating new members into the Club was evident from the fact that new members who don't attend an event in the first year are twice as susceptible to lapse, and 40% of all lapsing happens within three years of joining. These stats are more pronounced and worrisome for Young Harvard College grads. At the other end of the spectrum, long-standing

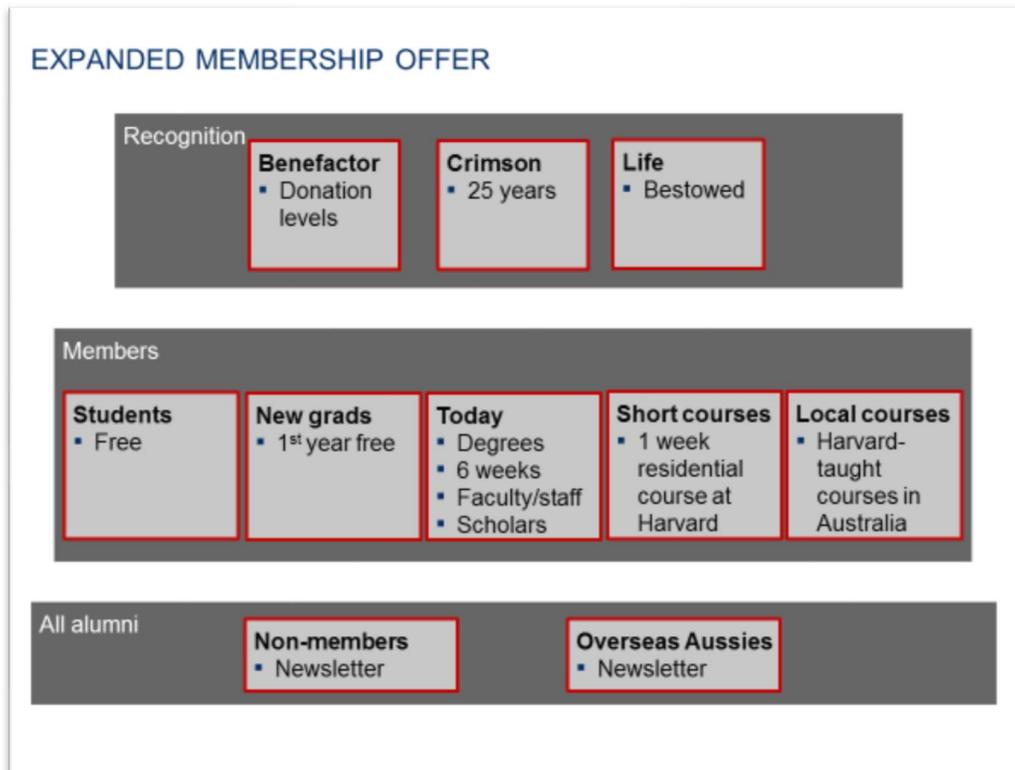
Senior members tend to lapse due to perceived loss of relevance.

So, when we looked at the Club's event calendar and attendance patterns, we found a loyal core (18%) plus many sporadic joiners (30%). But through focus groups and the on-line survey we learned that the large inactive (52%) and lapsed groups are searching for a wider variety of events, different formats, more professional development, more Harvard speakers and more 'people like me' in attendance.

In short, alumni want a Club that extends a warm welcome, offers something for everyone, creates meaningful connections and fosters camaraderie. If, as it's often said, philanthropy is the 'soul of the Club' then camaraderie is the 'heart of the Club'.

Therefore, the 'For Members' strategy will span five action themes over time.

***M1. Create an 'associate' membership.*** We will embark on a membership drive to attract back lapsed members and enrol new members. But importantly, if adopted at the AGM, we intend to broaden the criteria for membership to include those who have attended a 1-week course at Harvard or have attended a 1-week local HCA-sponsored Harvard-taught course like Program for Leaders. The current cut-off point (set by Harvard Alumni Association) is a 6-week course but we felt that was excluding people who attended short courses at the non-HBS schools. So, in the spirit of inclusiveness and better balancing the Club, we'd like to warmly welcome these others by establishing an 'associate' membership, which is allowed in HAA guidelines. For example, there is a large group of Australian women who have attended a 1-week course at Harvard and in search of camaraderie have formed their own club. Changing our criteria would enable them to join HCA.



**M2. Form SIGs and extend Chapters.** Forming special interest groups (SIGs), like young grads or women or those interested in international affairs or education or health, will help to create a Club with ‘something for everyone’. There is huge interest in the SIG idea, so any group/topic where there is critical mass and a passionate leader will be supported. We will also seek to establish Chapters in new locations, and encourage Chapters to embrace the full mission of the Club not just hold events in their geography. We will also look to strengthen bridges to near-by clubs like the HBS Club of NZ and to deepen our relationship with the Harvard Club of Victoria.

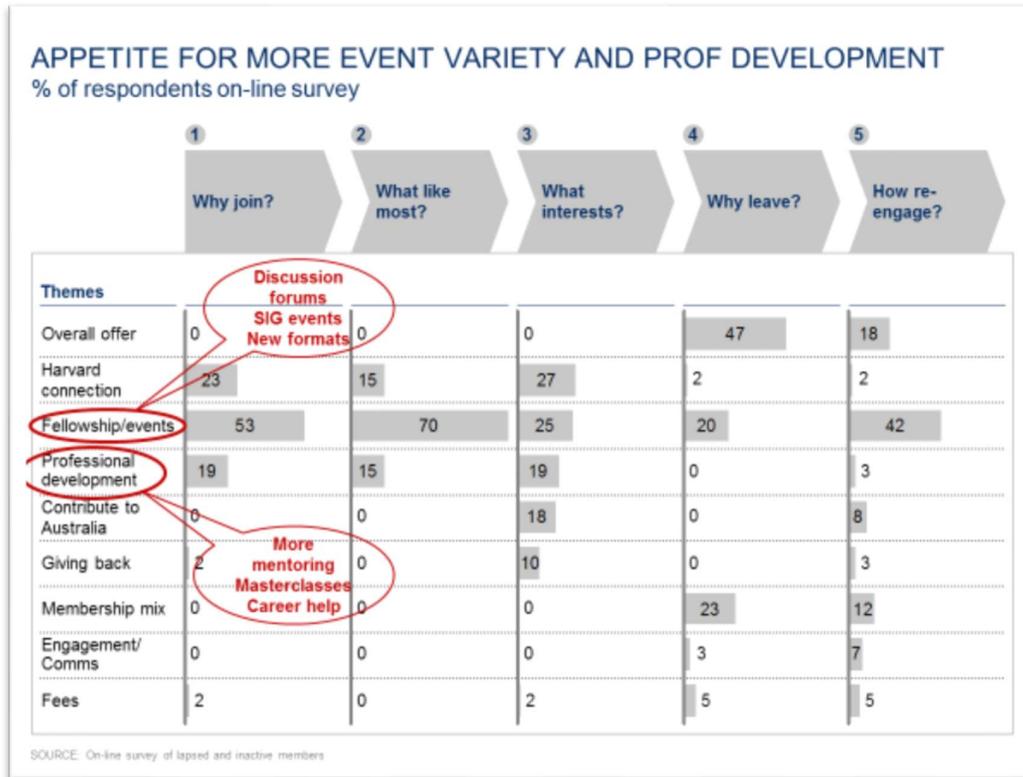
**M3. Round out the event calendar.** People are clearly energised by high quality events spanning intellectual, cultural, celebratory, social purposes. According to the on-line survey results, camaraderie through events is the #1 reason why alumni join and enjoy the Club. We intend to diversify the event calendar in terms of type, target audience, format, time of day and price point. For example, Young members are keen for more casual inexpensive after-work drinks events. Mid-career members are interested in ‘war story-telling’ events. Chapters are interested in multi-University events. Many members are interested in informal discussion groups or cross-sectional small dinners. Everyone is keen to continue multi-location video-conferenced events.

**M4. Provide professional development opportunities.** The current mentoring program is a big hit, but members would like to see the Club offer more professional development opportunities for all ages. It’s about ‘life-long learning’, and doing so is what should set HCA apart from other purely social or

networking clubs. New initiatives will include expanded mentoring for different life transition points, career assistance, masterclasses taught by members who are leaders in their field, curated Harvard on-line courses and more.

**M5. Offer a membership card with premium privileges.** Interviews and the on-line survey identified an interest in creating a membership card with special access privileges such as reciprocal clubs, cultural organisations, overseas travel tours, airline lounges, premium hotels, fitness facilities, group insurance, etc. A card would also make it easier when visiting Harvard Clubs overseas. Such a card would make the annual dues even more reasonable. On that note, the on-line survey revealed that people think the annual subscription is over \$100, whereas it is \$75 and hasn't changed for many years. Consensus from the survey respondents was that a \$100 annual charge would be quite reasonable.

The chart below summarises the results of the on-line survey feedback from lapsed and inactive members



### For Harvard

The aim 'For Harvard' is to enhance Harvard's reputation in Australia and vice versa. When successful it means increased 2-way awareness and greater 2-way flow of human and intellectual capital.

There are various current activities relating back to Harvard. There has always been an HAA rep from Australia (either from HCA or HCV) who connects HCA

with the Harvard Alumni Association. Local alumni from Harvard College invest time in interviewing short-listed Aussie applicants and representing Harvard at high school student fairs. The Coordinator of the Chair for Australian Studies, David Haig, hosts Australian students at periodic on-campus events, and there's a student-run ANZ Club on campus. HBS supports sending faculty to teach the Program for Leaders, and HCA members billet touring student groups and host visiting researchers.

The opportunity for greater impact lies in adopting a more structured approach to connecting with Harvard. Harvard College and the 12 graduate schools operate in silos, so HCA needs to be more proactive and tactical to increase the flow of news/information/research and to gain greater access to visiting professors. On-line survey respondents strongly reinforced this point.

As for HCA's focus on prospective and current students, it relies on the efforts of a few alumni so could benefit from becoming a greater focus for the Club. Analysis of overseas scholarship statistics shows that Harvard's attraction to Australian students lags Oxford and Cambridge and is roughly on par with Stanford in terms of winning the war for talent. It would be great to see Harvard more preferred, especially since it is one of the few global universities that offers guaranteed financial assistance to international undergraduates. It would also be great to forge more systematic ties with students to help them find employment and to pave the way for later HCA membership.

Therefore, the 'For Harvard' strategy will encompass five action themes over time.

**H1. Promote Harvard to the best and brightest.** HCA can do a lot more to promote the interests of Harvard in Australia, such as holding applications seminars or sponsoring a high school Book Prize or offering an award to attend Harvard College Summer School. The Club can also rally support for those few alumni who shoulder the load cultivating future students for Harvard College. The graduate schools could benefit from similar efforts. The Menzies Scholarship is fabulous but there is more we can do.

**H2. Build relations with Harvard students.** There are various ways HCA can forge closer ties with students such as sponsoring an Australia Day campus BBQ event, hosting an event during Reunion Weekend when HCA leaders are on campus, offering Summer Internships back in Australia, coordinating with the ANZ Student Club. A simple but powerful gesture will be to offer all students a free HCA membership while they are at school, thus giving them access, for example, to the searchable member database which would be useful for job search purposes. Upon returning to Australia, we also propose to waive first year dues and establish a buddy system to commence the 'warm welcome'.

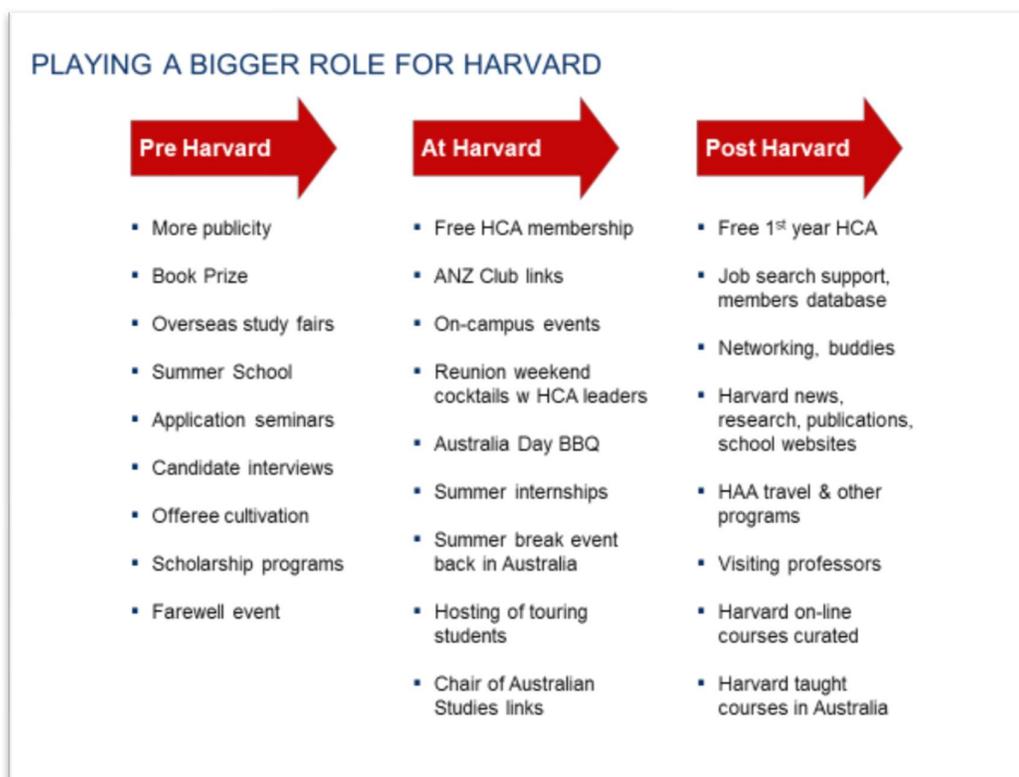
**H3. Forge better links with Harvard entities.** Considering the silo issue, we will take steps to establish more formal channels of communication with each Harvard entity. This means Harvard College, the 12 graduate schools, the alumni associations, other Harvard Clubs, etc. For example, there may be an opportunity

to input more proactively to the activities surrounding the Chair of Australian Studies at Harvard.

**H4. Get more news and professors from Harvard.** As noted earlier, there is a huge appetite for more news/research from Harvard and meeting visiting professors. Leveraging the above-mentioned channels, we will put in place more systematic mechanisms to collect, curate and disseminate news and research. We will also aim to identify more often when professors are travelling to Australia and try to organise for them to address members whenever possible.

**H5. Support possible development of a Harvard office in Australia.** There is a remote possibility that someday Harvard could open a small office in Australia. Harvard has such offices in other countries to assist with research activities, relationships with other universities, student cultivation and so on. There is lots to do before the concept could become reality, and it would need be a joint undertaking with HCV, but the Vice Provost for International Affairs was warm to the idea.

The chart below recaps the key ideas arranged as pre-Harvard, during Harvard and post-Harvard



### For Australia

The aim 'For Australia' is to make a worthwhile contribution to Australian society. When successful it means more organisations benefitting visibly from

the 'H factor'.

Philanthropy is already a distinctive aspect of the Club. It was a key factor in being recognised as the International Club of the Year. Even more telling, philanthropy was repeatedly referred to in interviews as the 'soul of the Club'.

There are seven high-impact programs which have awarded \$4.4m to 228 worthy recipients over the years. They include the Menzies Scholarship (50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year!), Australian-Harvard Fellowship for medical researchers, Wolfensohn Scholarship for public servants, Non-Profit Fellowship founded by patrons Bill & Lea Ferris, Education Scholarship for high school principals, Roberta Sykes Scholarship for indigenous students, and Clive Gard Scholarship for HCA members.

These programs provide a broad cross-section of impressive Australians with the privilege of attaining Harvard education and bring leading Harvard faculty/researchers to Australia. If you have attended a past AGM or Non-Profit Awards Lunch then you will have heard first-hand the inspiring stories of recipients. Interestingly, analysis showed that over 50 years the Menzies scholars have been distributed across the 12 graduate schools in remarkably close proportion to the student base, and the gender mix has been 58-42 men-women in total and 50-50 over the last 20 years.

The scholarship/fellowship programs are made possible through a combination of generous benefactors, major donors, member contributions, partner organisations, earnings on a nearly \$4m endowment and annual surplus from the ground-breaking Program for Leaders.

Given the amazing philanthropic success, there are opportunities to form new worthy scholarship programs, to pursue innovative non-scholarship ways of contributing to Australian society, and to tap new diversified sources of funding. More specifically, given the existence of generous benefactors/ donors, partner organisations and the Program for Leaders, our analysis found that funding has been taken for granted by the wider Club.

The broader challenge is ensuring that Australia receives societal impact and the Club receives reputational impact that are commensurate with the educational impact for the individual recipients. The seven programs are well regarded in tight circles but represent the 'invisible hand of Harvard' to the general population. Closer to home, not all HCA members are fully aware of every program.

There is also a mixed track record of 'acquittal' by recipients giving back. For example, of the past Menzies scholars known to live in Australia, only half are members and only 25% of those members are active in the Club. This fact frames the 'acquittal' opportunity.

Therefore, the 'For Australia' strategy will cover five action themes over time.

**A1. Introduce more scholarships.** Building on our proven success in running scholarship programs, HCA can consider doing more, subject to volunteers stepping forward and securing sustainable funding. Suggestions include creating a returned military soldier scholarship, funding Summer job internships or a spot at Harvard College's Summer School. There are also programs at Harvard which we can help to promote and financially assist worthy participants. Two such programs are the HBS New Venture Competition for budding entrepreneurs and the Advanced Leadership Initiative for post-career leaders keen to make a difference on a social cause.

**A2. Focus on better publicity and acquittal.** The case for more publicity and better acquittal has been made above. The key is how we do it. We will seek more publicity and recognition but without a boastful tone. In our interviews and on-line survey, it was clear that members like being associated with an institution that is widely known for making a real difference, so communicating our contributions through multiple appropriate channels is important. On acquittal, it will be a matter of setting the expectation that if/when a recipient is able to 'give back' then that would be highly valued. Giving back can take many forms, such as applying new-found knowledge for a better Australia, sharing insights with peers, acknowledging Harvard in public settings, mentoring future scholarship recipients, getting involved with the Club or donating back.

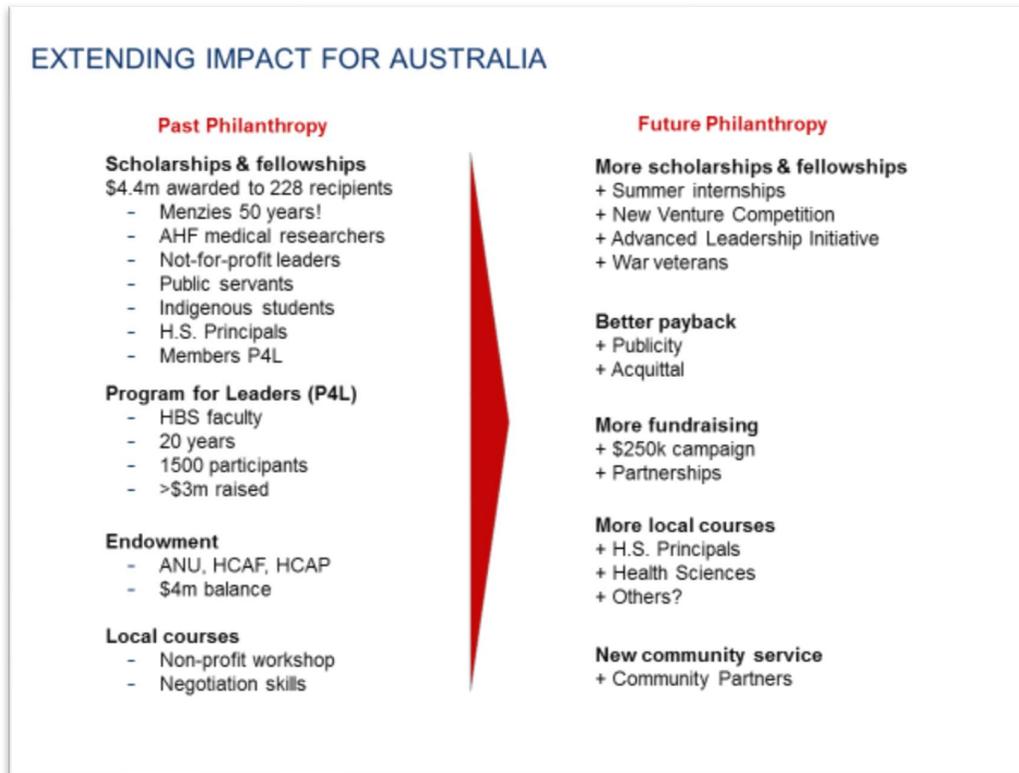
**A3. Tap new fundraising sources.** The longevity of the Club and its ongoing contributions to society obviously depend on a strong financial foundation. We desire to strengthen that foundation by raising more funds and diversifying funding sources. As announced at the Prime Minister event in 2017, we have launched a \$250k capital campaign. We also wish to engage Corporate Australia and our members who can make special gifts. We will explore more partnerships for our various programs. As part of this focus, we also intend to put more attention into donor relations via more regular communications about how their money has been put to good use, by publicly acknowledging them in the Annual Report and at the AGM, and by holding an annual Donor Appreciation Lunch.

**A4. Offer more local Harvard-taught courses.** Harvard is supportive of HCA organising other local Harvard-taught courses, akin to the Program for Leaders and the Non-Profit Workshop. This will be an exciting way to bring Harvard to more of Australia. For example, building on the huge success of sending high school principals to Harvard, there is interest in potentially running an annual Education course in Australia to reach even more principals. Another example with growing interest is in the Health field.

**A5. Engage in community service.** There is energy amongst the membership to contribute to Australia in new and different ways. Lapsed Senior members highlighted this as a means of regaining relevance for them. We debated if the Club should conduct special local research efforts on topics of National significance but determined that it would be better to increase local pick-up of the vast amount of research already coming out of Harvard. Alternatively, we discovered an interesting initiative at a few peer clubs called Harvard

Community Partners. HCP is about members providing pro bono assistance to Non-Profits. It is very early days, but the concept at HCA could entail hosting evening brainstorming sessions for Non-Profits who bring a 'problem to solve' and a few pizzas to a conference room full of 6-10 astute socially-minded HCA members. Initial target Non-Profits could be past winners of the Club's Non-Profit Fellowship. The idea could also apply to For-Profit start-ups. Full pro bono projects could follow but that would be up to the participants.

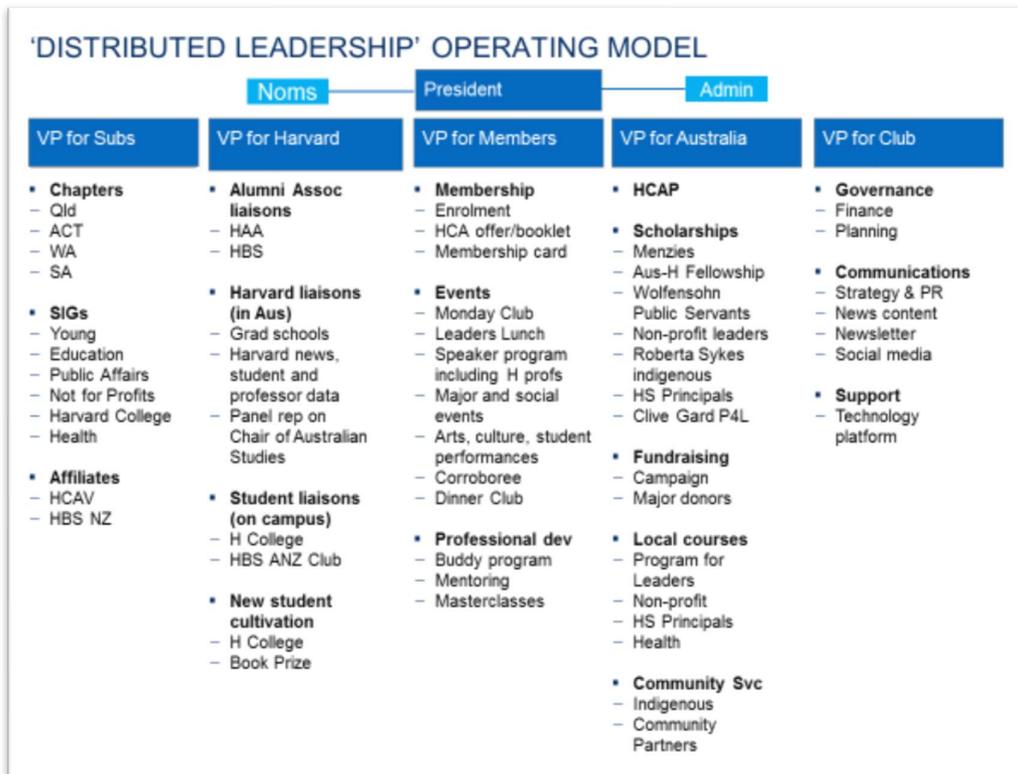
The chart below recaps the past and future intended impact of Philanthropy



### 'Distributed leadership' operating model

The strategy is exciting but also daunting. So, a new 'distributed leadership' operating model for the Club was developed based on an assessment of what it will take to execute the strategy and address current pain points. The new operating model will need to cope with an increasing scale and variety of activities, simplify accountability, coordination and oversight, foster camaraderie, motivate young and new members to take roles and provide for smooth succession planning. The current model was deemed not fit-for-purpose for the Next Era.

The new operating model will have various structural features – Board, VP-led Mission teams, Council of Program Leaders, Nominations Committee, HCAP/HCAF, and an Administrator. It is portrayed on the following chart.



**Program Leaders.** The fundamental building block of the ‘distributed leadership’ model will be Program Leaders (PLs), each of whom will hold single-point accountability for a distinct program/activity of the Club and will be empowered and supported to ‘make a difference’. HCA is a ‘club full of leaders’ and we envision opportunities for about 50 such PL roles as members step forward to fill them. PLs will be appointed not elected.

**Board.** Oversight will be provided by an elected Board, comprised of a President (still 2-yr term) and five VPs (3-yr staggered terms). Flowing from the strategy, there will be a VP for Members, VP for Harvard and VP for Australia. There will also be a VP for Subs (Chapters, SIGs and affiliates) and a VP for Club (finance, governance, planning, communications, admin). This group will provide overall governance for the Club by setting direction, approving programs and budgets, ensuring compliance and financial viability and promulgating values.

**Mission Teams.** Each VP will lead a Mission Team comprised of the Program Leaders (PLs) related to their mission. The Mission Team will provide operational coordination across programs and a practical way for smaller groups of PLs to collaborate around similar objectives. Many PLs will seek ways to involve members who wish to contribute time and energy to their program. For example, as happens today, the PL of a scholarship program will form a selection panel. In another future example, the PL of masterclasses may form a core faculty of interested members.

**Council.** There will still be a Council but it will be much larger than today and

serve a different purpose. Council will be comprised of the Board plus all Program Leaders (PLs). So, Council will be the assembly of the Club's distributed leadership. It will meet several times per year for debate, innovation, alignment, camaraderie and celebration. Council will be extremely important as glue that binds the Club together, but will no longer be the day-to-day decision-making body of the Club.

***Noms Coms, HCAP/HCAF, Admin.*** In addition to the core structural elements of the Board, VP-led Mission Teams and Council of PLs, there will be a few other support structures. We will be forming a Nominations Committee (Noms Com) who will help ensure inclusive leadership and smooth succession and will also identify members worthy of special awards or recognition. Two existing legal entities (HCA Philanthropy and HCA Foundation) will continue for liability protection and fiduciary purposes. Lastly, the Club will continue to employ an Administrator to help keep the wheels of progress turning.

***Management practices.*** Beyond structure, the Club will actually 'operate' through a set of key management practices. We will be putting in place simple pragmatic mechanisms to help with planning, oversight, collaboration, stewardship, communications, succession, organisation and values. A few worth noting will be the PL POP or Plan-on-a-Page, an integrated Club Calendar, a new technology platform to enable an agile way of working in a distributed model such as ours, new Spirit of HCA Awards to celebrate our values, and an Observers Program where a few young PLs are chosen to sit in on a year's worth of Board meetings as a way of learning about non-Profit governance.

There will be change ahead as we adopt the new operating model. But it will be exciting change that will give more opportunity for members to contribute toward making an even bigger difference for Members, for Harvard and for Australia.

### **Now is an ideal time to get involved**

Implementation will be staged. There are many new ideas, which obviously can't all happen at once, especially by a volunteer organisation.

Over the last six months, the focus has been on packaging up the Review outputs, communicating through various in-person and on-line methods, re-drafting the Constitution, forming the Noms Com and preparing to go live with the new structure. An implementation task force has helped to bring urgency and discipline to these activities.

After the AGM, we will be bedding down the new ways of working and unleashing the 'club full of leaders' to follow their passions to pursue the 172 ideas and whatever else excites them. It will be a passion-led not centrally dictated implementation approach. Watch out!

That said, we are keen as soon as possible to promote the Club to new groups of potential members, get some SIGs up and running, pilot the first masterclass, and

forge closer ties with students on campus.

There are various ways to get involved. Give us feedback. Spread the word to other alums. Attend an event and bring a friend. Get involved or even start a SIG. Volunteer to play a PL role or contribute to a program. Make a donation. This is a great time to act on those impulses!

For more information, you can go to the HCA website for a copy of the final strategy document and an accompanying 11-minute video of President Justin Greiner talking about the Next Era.

By Tom Saar & Christopher Smith