



Chair report APOMA 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen, residents of Andamooka, it is my privilege to once again, present you with the annual report of the Andamooka Progress and Opal Miners Association.

The 2024 – 2025 financial year has been one of renewal and reorganisation, successes, challenges and disappointments.

It is very apt that I first acknowledge the committee of APOMA; Vice Chair Donna Waters, Secretary, Jim Middap (new to APOMA and to the position this year), Treasurer Katalin Wilby (also new to the position of treasurer this year, and who continued as Public Officer due to ongoing statutory demands from early 2024), and committee members Alison Smoker, Gill Rowley, Peter Sach, and also a new member Paul Williams. I would also like to acknowledge to ongoing support of the Independent Chair, Cecilia Woolford, who has been instrumental in providing ongoing advice over the years especially in areas involving interactions with outside organisations and authorities,

Each member has been very proactive this year, often in their own way in addition to being members of the committee, enhancing not only the organisation of APOMA, but also the community of Andamooka external to APOMA. The organisation by Paul and his group of friends of the fundraising BBQ's as a cultural event independently organised and held regularly at The Cottages is one such example. Another is Donna and Bec, who independently organised the Annual Colour Run again this year, the third of these events, which are becoming more popular each year.

Volunteers:

As with previous years, the voluntary organisations and their members have been busy enhancing and advancing their areas of interest for the benefit of the community. The Lapidary Club continues to be a highlight of 'Mookian' experience, attracting and engaging with many tourists who visit the area, who are impressed with the friendliness of the members and the help they receive.

The CDP crew have again this year, despite ongoing insecurity around continuation of the programme, been instrumental in assisting the community both in preparing for social events, and with maintenance tasks. The committee extend their thanks to all of them.

ACHWAG (Andamooka Community Health and Wellbeing Advocacy Group), is continuing to develop, with the process of acquiring the old Mines Dept building as a centre of operations continuing, hopefully to be concluded early in 2026.

Opportunities this year have been a very mixed bag. Last year's opportunities as provided through the generosity of the ADF Woomera were well underway, as components and items were collected through volunteer assistance. Regretfully, the

jewel of the opportunity did not come to fruition, as last years 'super storm' damaged the hangar earmarked for Andamooka beyond repair and recovery.

On the other hand, BHP have very generously donated two pieces of equipment, a Forklift and Grader to APOMA, as a part of their asset disposal and upgrade routines, a gift for which we are very grateful. Being machinery which are both expensive and high risk, protocols for maintenance, hire and usage are being developed, and should be complete in the new year. I would like to extend my thanks to those who volunteered to facilitate the collection of these resources, from the wider community and to the members of the committee.

The Town Office.

One significant event of the past year is the retirement of Gill Rowley, the Town Administration Manager. As many of you know, Gill tendered her retirement resignation early in the year, with a three-month hand over period to conclude on the 30th of June. At the time, the committee agreed to have an interim Town Administrator to consolidate the role that Gill had filled, and to gain an understanding of what it took to run the Office of APOMA and the town, and the myriad of roles that needed to be filled.

At this time, began a series of serious accusations made against some of the employees in the office, which initiated unnecessary bureaucratic impositions placed upon the office which have led to the situation where Gill has been instrumental in addressing each of these issues. Consequently, the interim position was extended, and in early October the tasks were completed, and Gill can now step away from the office, knowing that it is in sound, well-advised hands.

At this point I would like to acknowledge the enormous amount of work that Gill has done, far exceeding the pay and hours allocated, often at significant cost physically and emotionally to herself. I would ask that we take this moment to acknowledge how much the Town of Andamooka and its inhabitants have benefitted through Gills commitment to the roll, especially during the covid years where her strength of character and independent confidence kept the wheels of town function operational.

Interesting Times.

This year, the opportunity for APOMA and the Town Office to contribute to enhancing opportunities for Andamooka and the residents have been significantly restricted due to unnecessary needs to address unfounded accusations of criminal activity against employees of the Town Office, where we had to self-report to the Ombudsman and in doing so initiate an investigation – which has found no evidence of criminal activity nor mal-administration at all.

Furthermore, recently we've had a complaint / accusation made to the office of corporate affairs that we are not operating within the right association and Tax office framework because the plaintiff claimed we had an income above \$500 000. This matter was promptly addressed by the APOMA Treasurer in consultation with our independent accountant. We can confirm that APOMA's income remains well below that threshold and that we are fully compliant with all relevant Association and Tax Office requirements.

Responding to these has taken a significant amount of time by both part time employees of the office, and volunteers. Time which could have been spent on far more productive and beneficial activities for the town.

Lastly, the OCA indicated that (in their opinion), the organisation of APOMA had not been compliant in reporting its finances to them and indicated that a significant financial penalty against the township would be applied. Through the work of both the Town Administrators, (past and present), members of the committee, and the independent chair, it was demonstrated to the OCA that we were compliant, and that there had been no indication that they thought otherwise leading up to the pronouncement of the penalty, and the penalty was as a result, revoked.

I would like to thank and compliment Lara Lukich (Interim Town Administrator), Gill Rowley (Former Town Administrator and Former APOMA Treasurer), Katlyn Wilby (APOMA Treasurer) and Jim Middap (APOMA Secretary), under the very experienced guidance of Cecilia Woolford (Independent APOMA Chair) in handling the complexities of bureaucratic impositions, it seems possibly they have been 'beset on all sides by the inequities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men', and prevailed.

Moving Forward

As a result of the adventures and misadventures of the past 12 months, there seems to be a disconnect between expectations of the relationship between APOMA and the OCA, and amongst other things, the role of the CCS levy and it's administration between its collection, and distribution to the town. Many are questioning the process, and its efficacy.

At the October Public general meeting, the community voted to ratify an effort to gain a precise, thorough and transparent understanding of what are the obligations between the OCA and APOMA, so that informed information and options can be presented to the members of APOMA so that considered decisions may be voted upon in the future.

It is also worth considering our constitution, last revised in 2018, our town, and its population have altered somewhat, placing new demands and needs upon the members of APOMA, and the town itself.

It is vital that a controlling document such as a constitution be revised regularly, to meet the needs of a changing community, and I look forward to seeing both the Office of APOMA, and the frameworks which direct us, and those we interact with such as statutory authorities, reviewed, refreshed, and revitalised.