

A MESSAGE FROM NATIONAL PRESIDENT, DAVID DOYLE

Dear fellow members.

It is a genuine privilege to have been elected to serve as President of Pipe Bands Australia and I do so with a great respect for the people who have built, sustained, and contributed to our association over a great many years.

I give my thanks to the outgoing members of the association's leadership and Australian Pipe Band College Principals;

- National Presdeint, Ainsley Hart
- National Secretary, Phil Weber
- National Treasurer, Michelle Haysom
- Principal of Drumming, Dean Hall
- Principal of Ensemble, Rob Bennett
- Principal of Rules & Administration, Peter Felton

for their stewardship and unwavering work over the past few years.

I extend my congratulations to the newly elected members and returning faces

- National Secretary, Joel Solak
- National Treasurer, Tim Bodey
- Principal of Drumming, Andrew Womersley
- Principal of Piping, Scott Nicolson
- Principal of Ensemble, Harold Gillespie
- Principal of Rules & Administration, Jamie Robinson
- Principal of Drill & Dress, Tony Coen OAM

For raising their hands and showing commitment to improving piping and drumming across Australia. I look forward to working alongside each of them.

Pipe Bands Australia is so much more than an organisational chart. It is more than a National Management Committee, a National Council, a College, or the contests, championships and rules that bring structure to our activities.

The true heart of our Association beats far beyond the meeting rooms and committee tables. It is kept alive in band halls, community centres, schoolrooms and practice rooms across this country.

It lives in the dedication of those who turn up, week after week, often without recognition or reward. In the experienced player who patiently teaches a beginner their first notes or beats. In the Pipe Major who gives another evening to rehearsal. In the volunteers who organise uniforms, maintain instruments, raise funds and keep their bands moving forward. In the families who make sacrifices and must endure many pipe band related conversations, the committees who work quietly behind the scenes, and the generations of musicians who have passed their knowledge, their passion and their traditions from one to another.

These are the people who form the very foundations of Pipe Bands Australia.

Our committees may provide leadership, our rules may provide direction, and our championships may provide a stage upon which we celebrate excellence. But it is our people, in bands large and small, in cities and regional communities, who give our Association its purpose.

They are not simply members of Pipe Bands Australia. They are Pipe Bands Australia. And that is who we are here to serve.

Our association and its many elected officers must always remember that we work first and foremost on behalf of our members. Every decision, every policy, every meeting and every initiative should be measured against a straightforward question:

Does this help our members, our branches, our bands and the future of piping and drumming in Australia?

If the answer is no or if we cannot explain clearly how it does, then we need to listen more carefully and reconsider our approach.

My overarching commitment is simple. ***Our Members come first.***

A Fresh, Collaborative Approach

The leadership team entrusted with guiding Pipe Bands Australia into its next chapter brings together individuals with experience across our National Management Committee, National Council, College and branches. Each brings their own knowledge, perspective and a willingness to contribute to the future of our Association.

Collectively, we recognise and value the work of those who have served before us. Their contributions and countless hours have helped shape the Association we inherit today. But with new leadership comes an opportunity to reflect, to challenge established ways of thinking, and to consider how we might better serve the members who place their trust in us.

Leadership is not about the position we hold. It is about the difference we make.

It isn't about titles, seniority, or whose voice carries the greatest weight. Our Association should not be about national versus local, competing interests or even one branch against another.

For me, it's about recognising that despite our different responsibilities, experiences and perspectives, we share a common purpose: to strengthen, support and advance pipe bands throughout Australia.

Our branches serve as the connection between Pipe Bands Australia and the communities we represent. They understand their members, their challenges and their opportunities in ways that no national committee ever fully can or will.

Our role nationally is not to stand above the branches, but alongside them to provide leadership where it is needed whilst offering support where it can make a difference. Connecting people, sharing knowledge, encouraging innovation and creating opportunities that might otherwise remain beyond reach.

We should be removing barriers and building relationships, not maintaining divisions. Ensuring that every branch, regardless of size, location or resourcing, has a meaningful voice in the future of our Association.

For me, this begins with how we communicate.

Consultation should not be an afterthought, undertaken only when a decision has effectively been made. But rather, a genuine opportunity for those most affected by our decisions to contribute to them.

Communication should not depend on who happens to know whom. Information should be accessible, decisions explained, and members should understand not only what we are doing, but why we are doing it.

Alongside this, transparency should not be something we offer only when it is convenient.

These are not extraordinary expectations of an Association. They are the foundations of good governance, and they are standards we should expect of ourselves at every level.

We must also recognise that meaningful collaboration will not always produce agreement.

There will be difficult conversations, competing priorities, differing opinions and occasions when we must make decisions knowing that it cannot satisfy everyone.

This is not weakness, rather the reality of an Association made up of passionate people who care deeply about its future.

What matters is how we approach those differences.

We should be willing to listen before we respond, to understand before we judge, and to consider that another perspective may reveal something we have overlooked.

We should be prepared to challenge ideas respectfully, but equally prepared to have our own ideas challenged.

Disagreement should never be mistaken for disloyalty, and constructive criticism should never be treated as an obstacle to progress.

As National President my expectation is that we speak with one another, rather than about one another. That we raise concerns constructively, approach difficult conversations in good faith, and treat one another with the dignity and respect that every volunteer and member of this Association deserves.

And when decisions are made, those decisions should emerge from processes that are fair, informed and transparent. Every member should have confidence that their contribution was considered and that the reasons for the outcome can and will withstand scrutiny.

Accountability & Respect

Respect for the members who place their trust in us. For the volunteers who give countless hours of their lives. For the bands who contribute their resources, energy and passion. And for the generations before us, whose dedication has left us with both a proud tradition and a responsibility to preserve and advance it.

Above all, we must be prepared to hold ourselves accountable.

Accountability is not something to be feared, neither should it be regarded as a criticism of those who give their time in service of our Association.

When we accept a leadership role, we accept a responsibility to those people. We commit to following through, communicating openly, explaining our decisions, and being accountable for the work we have agreed to undertake.

We will not always get everything right. No committee, no leader and no organisation ever does. But when we fall short, we must have the humility to acknowledge it, the courage to put it right, and the willingness to learn and improve.

Accountability is not about blame. It is about taking responsibility, supporting one another to meet our commitments, and respecting our members enough to be honest about both our progress and our challenges.

Trust does not come with a title, and neither is it secured by promises or speeches. It is earned through consistent action: by doing what we say we will do, treating people fairly, and demonstrating the values we ask others to uphold.

That is the standard I intend to set for myself as President during my term, and the standard I will ask every member of our leadership team at national and branch level to embrace.

My Areas of Focus

Development and Youth

The development of our members will be among the central priorities of focus set out for the direction of the incoming team.

When we speak about development, we must think beyond the pursuit of musical excellence alone.

Of course, we want to nurture outstanding pipers, drummers, drum majors and contest supervisors. We want to see our bands improve, our adjudicators develop, and our standards continue to rise.

But development is also about building confidence, encouraging leadership, sharing knowledge, strengthening governance and creating opportunities for people to discover what they are capable of achieving.

It is about supporting the tutor who gives their time to teach, the volunteer who steps forward to help run a band, and the emerging leader who may one day guide the next generation.

Because the strength of our Association should never be measured solely by the standard of our performances, but also by the opportunities we create for people to participate, contribute and belong.

We must recognise that not everyone comes to piping and drumming with the same ambitions.

For some, the goal will be to compete at the highest level. For others, it will be the enjoyment of playing alongside friends, performing in their community, learning a new skill or simply being part of something meaningful.

Every one of those aspirations deserves our respect and encouragement.

Our responsibility is to help create an environment in which people of all ages, abilities and ambitions can find their place, develop at their own pace and enjoy a lifelong connection with our traditions.

And nowhere is that responsibility more important than in the development of our younger members.

Across Australia, dedicated tutors, schools, bands and families invest extraordinary time and effort in introducing young people to our music.

We should celebrate that work. But we must also ask ourselves an important question:

What happens when those young people leave school?

Too often, the transition from a school program into the wider pipe band community is left to chance.

A young person may spend years learning, performing, competing and building friendships through a school program, only to find that, when their schooling ends, their connection with piping and drumming ends with it.

That represents more than the loss of a potential player. It represents the loss of years of investment, developing talent, friendships and a connection to our musical heritage and community.

We must do better at building bridges between school programs, community bands and the wider Association.

That means working with our branches, educators, tutors and bands to strengthen opportunities for young people to continue learning, performing, competing and connecting beyond their school years.

It means encouraging mentoring between experienced musicians and emerging players, supporting workshops and development camps, sharing successful initiatives between branches, and creating opportunities for young people to contribute to the leadership and future direction of our Association.

To help advance this work, we intend to establish a dedicated group focused on youth development and retention, drawing upon the knowledge and experience of those already doing remarkable work in this space.

We do not need to reinvent every solution. There are schools, bands and branches across Australia already achieving wonderful things. Our opportunity nationally is to connect those efforts, learn from what works, and help make successful ideas accessible to others.

But above all, we must remember that retention is not simply about keeping names on a membership list or ensuring that a young person pays fees to a community band.

It is about creating a community that they want to remain part of for many years to come.

A community in which they feel welcomed, supported and valued. Where friendships extend beyond individual bands, where opportunities are not limited by geography or circumstance, and where young people can see a future for themselves, whether as performers, teachers, leaders or lifelong participants.

Because if we want the next generation to carry our traditions forward, we must give them more than the skills to play our music.

We must give them a reason to love it, a community in which to belong, and the opportunity to make it their own.

Competition and Community

We must also be prepared to ask ourselves a difficult question. Have we become an Association that bands feel they only belong in order to compete, rather than one they genuinely want to belong to because of the value we provide?

For too long, there has been a perception that Pipe Bands Australia exists primarily for competing bands. Meanwhile, we risk losing our connection with the community bands that form the very foundations of our movement.

Competition will always be an important part of who we are, but it cannot be the only reason to belong.

If a band has no intention of entering a competition, what compelling reason have we given them to be part of Pipe Bands Australia? And if we cannot answer that question confidently, then we have work to do at a national and branch level.

Our ambition must be to build an Association that every pipe band sees value in belonging to, regardless of its size, location or competitive aspirations.

We must become an Association that bands choose to belong to, not simply one they are required to join in order to compete. We will deliver opportunities for development to our members on performance and standards whether this is for competitive reasons or not. Building personal confidence in playing may one day lead to entering a competition circle but until then, Pipe Bands Australia is focused on representing all aspects of piping and drumming across Australia.

Building The Culture We Want

Our shared commitment

I do not intend to lead this association alone, and neither should any official, Branch Chair, or volunteer attempt to do so.

I invite each of you to be part of this next chapter for Pipe Bands Australia. Bring your ideas. Raise your concerns. Offer your skills and join the conversation.

I acknowledge that not every issue will be simple.
There will be challenges.
There will be differences.
There will be times when the right path is not immediately clear.

However, I believe strongly that we can rise to those moments well if we approach them with openness, respect and shared commitment to our members.

My commitment to you is that I will listen, communicate honestly, treat people respectfully and work collaboratively. I will continuously encourage the National Council, the College, branch executives and association members to do the same.

When you put your hand up to serve in a position elected by the members of our Association, you are not putting your hand up for a title.

Pipe Bands Australia

From the National President

You are not putting your hand up to advance a personal agenda, to build influence, to protect particular interests, or to place yourself above the very people you have been elected to represent.

You are putting your hand up to serve.

To listen, to contribute, to make difficult decisions when necessary, and to act in the best interests of the members of our Association, even when doing so may challenge your own views or personal preferences.

Election to a position of leadership is not an entitlement to authority. It is an expression of trust placed in you by your fellow members.

And with that trust comes a responsibility to lead with integrity, humility and accountability.

Together, we can work towards creating an Association that is more connected, more responsive and more confident in its future.

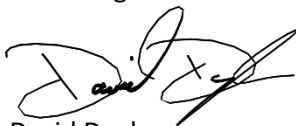
That is the standard I will set for myself. It is the standard I ask of our officials. And it is the standard our members deserve.

My hope is that, at the end of this term, members can reflect on a PBA that became more connected; prioritised improved communication; and that branches and the national body worked in collaboration; that decisions were clearer; that people feel heard; and that we created a stronger, healthier culture for everyone involved.

Thank you for your effort, your time, passion and all that you bring individually to our community.

I look forward to working with you all.

Warm regards and best wishes,



David Doyle
National President
Pipe Bands Australia