**Growing our Society - Spread the Word……..**

By Fran Maitland Chairman ADFAS Brisbane 2018, 19.

This is something I regularly say at our Lectures. And it seems to work

I learned a lot from coming to Council and talking to experienced chairmen in particular and learning from their experiences. There is so much you can learn from others.

When I started we had 274 members. We now have about 345. They are still trying to join – this late in the year. We have to explain that the year is almost over. But they want in and they want it now. So HOW. And WHY has it changed………

I took this question of how we increased to my Committee and I’ll talk about some of the things we came up with:

**First is a positive attitude: This is crucial**

When I took over I didn’t for a moment think. We can’t increase….it’s too hard to attract new people….

I immediately set a target (it was 300) and worked towards it.

At the same time, I set about increasing our bank balance. We were barely breaking even, we had an evening lecture meeting that was struggling with low numbers and we had been talking about dropping it! A previous treasurer told me we had to cut costs. That we couldn’t afford big morning teas, brochures etc. I thought. But we need these things to attract new people. If we the Committee can’t be positive, we can’t expect the members and guests to be enthusiastic.

It reminded me of when I was a teacher librarian. When I started, Parents and even teachers thought the Library a bit boring, old hat. It was dull, nothing seemed to happen. The children weren’t even allowed to borrow books in the holidays! but I set about revamping it. I held special events, introduced new ways of doing things and the children came and brought their mum, dads and siblings to the events. – and became enthusiastic. It’s the same here.

SO, with a **positive attitude** we arranged a really good brochure. I called on a friend – a graphic designer and she helped put together a reasonably priced, very attractive brochure. I ordered 500. Then I launched them…….at our AGM and the first lecture. I talked it up. And We gave each member one and then a spare to hand to a friend – to Spread the Word. I had to order more.

**Spreading the Word**

**SPREADING THE word** became what I did. And this is what I asked my Committee and members to do. I talked to everyone I could about our wonderful lecture program. I handed out brochures, I spoke about ADFAS – the history of ADFAS, the lectures, the program at about 8 Probus & Rotary Meetings and took the brochure along. We got a few new members.

And here I must thank our **wonderful Lecturers Committee.** You have been giving us really wonderful Lecturers. We can confidently say – You will love our lectures.

3. We became **enthusiastic** about what we were offering

We offered a **free guest pass** if people joined before Christmas – ***Conditions of use***: it was given to someone who hadn’t ever experienced ADFAS before (we didn’t police this!) and that their guest must supply an email.

4. We Communicate: Our efficient email Secretary followed up every guest. They became a separate email list and they got an invitation to each lecture and received our newsletter inviting them to our events. I’m happy to say as people started to join, they were often already in our email data base as they had already attended as a guest. So free guest passes DO work – if you follow up. And guests became our way of increasing our bank balance.

Newsletters: We have redesigned our newsletter. We use Mailchimp with click button to go straight to Try Booking to book guests or events or Interest Days. We make it easy.

We have a little quiz in it to try and encourage members to read right to the end.

The guests get a newsletter. We communicate……

5. **Follow UP** Those who don’t re-join or miss lectures. I send a quick friendly email asking if everything is ok? It often works. Sometimes people just forget to re-join – then think it’s too late. Or they are so surprised to get an email they start to come along again.

We offer a sliding membership rate\. If they come as a guest - we offer a discount on the membership if they sign up, then and there. We deduct the guest fee.

6. We warmly **welcome members and guests**. We hold a new members lunch after the first lecture. It is always well attended. People like to get to know each other. We still have sign in sheets to slow everyone down and give us a chance to learn names.

7. We hold **Extra Events** Yes; they take a little extra time. But that is how we make some money. We have Gallery tours – often with Sue Drummond and her friends guiding us around. We follow up with a lunch at the Gallery. They are well attended, and donations are made to our YA fund.

We’ve just had another wonderful visit to Ipswich Art Gallery to tie in with our Chris Bradley lecture on Art Deco. We have built up a relationship with Michael Beckmann, Gallery Director, and he guided us around the National Gallery touring exhibition on Art Deco. It was sold out. We had 46 come for the tour, including some guests from ADFAS Brisbane River, we had a lunch and a then visit to an historic house. A great day of including great PR and we made some money.

We toured Old Government House and had a lunch.

They don’t take too much effort to organise – especially now we have introduced Try Booking.

I believe that any society can grow but you have to believe it.

We have a great product so let’s get it out there.

There is a lot of talk about building a younger membership. This too can be done but I think you can build a bigger audience from the 50’s up - the newly retired - then go for the younger demographic. I think to do this we could focus maybe one or two lectures on a younger audience, and I would start with Australian lecturers. Then approach the audience which aligns with the lecture chosen.