

Chairman's Report to 2025 Annual General Meeting Sunday 28th September 2025

Previous AGM – for financial year ending 30th June 2024

The last Annual General Meeting of the Estonian House Co-Operative Society Limited was held at Sydney Eesti Maja on the 24th of November 2024.

The 2025 Board

After elections on that day, Board members going forward remained as before – Valdur Liira, Aino Matwisyk, Taimi Nurm, Giles Parker, Arne Rahnel, Hillary Ranniko and Grahame Reinthal. At a subsequent Board meeting, the following Board positions were confirmed:

- Chairman – Grahame Reinthal
- Secretary and also Co-Op representative with Sydney Eesti Selts – Giles Parker
- Treasurer – Aino Matwisyk
- Director – Valdur Liira
- Director, Share Registrar – Taimi Nurm
- Director – Arne Rahnel
- Director and also Director of Estonian Cultural Foundation in Australia – Hillary Ranniko.

Master Plan progress

Stage 2 of the Master Plan progressed through the 2025 fiscal year, resulting in more toilets, the new kitchen and bar with cool rooms, customized storage, wider real lane access and so on. Physically, this work was largely down to Hillar Ranniko and Giles Parker working side by side on the tools at Eesti Maja – a huge effort with great commitment. Financially, we were able to accelerate this process thanks to the significant and generous cash bequest from Maud Kalio, received early September 2024 and announced at last year's AGM.

Thus, the Board was proud to be able to reveal the Stage 2 renovations and building works to all Co-Op shareholders and other members of the Sydney Estonian community at our "Grande Reveal" event in April. This was a marvellous event, attended by more than 100 guests, christening the new kitchen and bar facilities with delicious food, refreshments and great camaraderie.

The plans for the next year are to complete the shelving in the bar, convert the old kitchen to a meeting room and storage area, and renovate the entry garden.

The Strathfield Church

Those who attended last year's AGM were also the first to hear of the transfer of the ownership of the property at 11 Waratah Street, North Strathfield from the Sydney Estonian Evangelical Lutheran St John's

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Congregation to Estonian House Co-operative Society Limited. Importantly, this transfer was entirely initiated by the SEEL St John's Congregation Elders, who are facing diminishing numbers of mostly elderly people attending services and no younger Estonians participating. A letter dated 23rd October 2024 to Co-op from Maret Noble (Chair) and Leena Treffner (Secretary) of the SEEL St John's Congregation was read out to the last AGM, explaining the Church's history and rationalisation for the transfer of the property to Co-op.

This transfer was finalised on 19th November 2024. Apart from legal fees and NSW Government Stamp Duty, there was effectively no cash involved in this transfer. Agreement was reached between the Church Elders and the Co-op Board on the details, and then solicitors were engaged by both organisations to implement the transfer. However, to complete the transfer of the Church property into Co-op ownership, we had to pay NSW Stamp Duty of \$147,429.00 based on the valuation of the property.

Once again, without Maud's bequest, we would not have been easily able to pay this Stamp Duty without delaying progress on Stage 2 of the Master Plan.

For the time being, nothing really changes. The Church property remains available to the SEEL St John's Congregation for its use for as long as it remains active, although in time that venue could also be suitable for smaller functions, especially as it is close to North Strathfield railway station.

Maintenance of Eesti Maja

It seems like a perpetual problem, but water ingress during inclement weather remains a problem. Water ingress is one of the hardest problems to solve, because it occurs infrequently and then where it appears inside the building is not necessarily where the primary problem is! Our experience with leaks now is that there have been several different issues at play, confounding diagnosis. For example, new gutters were installed in the 1990s but the old gutters were not removed, resulting in the leak location and the origin not being the same.

Nevertheless, over the last few years, we have re-engineered and stabilised the main hall roof, addressed various gutter issues including at the front of the building, and gradually, partly by a process of elimination, the water problems are being minimised and resolved, one by one. There are still one or two issues being looked at, involving larger, re-engineered guttering systems, but we are getting close to solving these.

Other maintenance and repair items that have been addressed in the last year or so include...

- Repairing collapsed and broken sewer and stormwater pipes
- Upgrading stage electrical circuits
- Painting
- Air-conditioning and fire safety inspections and maintenance
- Pipe clearing of rusted junctions in upstairs tenants' toilets.

And so it goes – there is always something to address but the issues are gradually being addressed and/ or eliminated!

Future maintenance works planned are the remaining sections of broken clay pipe, repair and replacement of blinds in the hall and meeting rooms, and LED tube upgrades to remaining light fittings.

Maintenance of Waratah St, Strathfield

Since acquiring ownership of the property, there have been several deferred maintenance issues that have had to be addressed, including, once again, roof and water ingress issues. However, these have been largely addressed.

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Maintenance and repair items that have been addressed include...

- Removal of tree matter from roof and gutters
- Replacement of 12 broken roof tiles
- Repair of kitchen ceiling, damaged by water ingress

Accounting for all the money in and out

With the mix of income from grants, donations, bequests and rental income, along with the acquisition of the Strathfield property, and the outgoings due to repairs and maintenance, Stage 2 works or whatever, our accounts have become a little more complex. However, as always, Aino manages all this with aplomb and has everything neatly accounted for in our Xero accounting system.

Shareholdings

There were 201 shareholders as at 30th June 2025. Given our current healthy financial position, as per Rule 2(b), we reduced our annual fee from \$40 to \$20 for this year (FY26) and going forward.

Thank you to all Board members & for the opportunity to serve our Estonian community

So, it has been another eventful year, and once again, I thank you all for the opportunity to serve our Estonian community and again thank every Board member for their hard work over the year and for their commitment to the ongoing viability of Eesti Maja as the home for all things Estonian in Sydney.

There is a strong, positive momentum for Eesti Maja and our Estonian community it serves, and I look forward to seeing the progress of Stage 3 of the Master Plan and the community enjoyment of the revamped Eesti Maja in this coming year.

As always, please feel free to call or email me if you have any suggestions or ideas in relation to the ongoing maintenance and development of our venerable Eesti Maja.

Yours Faithfully,



Grahame Reinthal

Chairman

Estonian House Co-Operative Society Limited

E: grahame@reinthal.com.au

M: +61 418 979 880