

Interview with Susan Helson

17th November, 2020

Suzie lives an alternative dream with husband Mark who is also a DTE member. Together they tour Australia in an off-road camper trailer. It is interesting that in modern times it doesn't matter if you are traveling, the internet allows work to be done where ever located. Suzie volunteers for FinCom.

CL

Why do you want to become a director?

SH

Initially I was shocked when I was asked would I be interested in standing for the Board. I thought I'm retired and I don't want to work all the time, then the more I thought about it I acknowledged that a good board doesn't have to do a lot of work because the committees are there to do most of it. DTE should not have certain individuals with so much control over the organisation because there has been many associations and cooperatives which have been taken down by one individual having too much authority and without others having it. I volunteered a number of years for ConFest and at working bees but had never been on the meeting side of DTE. After being isolated on site when Covid restrictions came into place I was introduced to the meetings through Tania and I didn't like what I was hearing. When you volunteer doing set up, pack down or during the festivals you don't hear the nastiness. It seems that through the meetings or when minutes are being read that, that comes up. I think their needs to be a healthier outlook, not only to the members but also in relation to all others on the board, which often is disrespectful. So I am hoping if elected I can bring change. My aim is to bring respect for all of us.

Being involved in FinCom helped me to understand the workings of DTE, financial compliance and so forth. I have been involved in meetings this year and so I think yes this is the time to have a go.

I want to encourage our dedicated volunteers. We have such enormous talent with our volunteers who are mostly overridden. I think there is too much control by singular people. I am standing up to bring change to that.

CL

Have you worked on a Board before?

SH

No but I have worked on many committees. In particular a not for profit 63 year old club called Tindo. It doesn't have a Board but has a president, vice president, a treasurer and secretary, two member secretaries and a committee. Over the years I have been the fire warden maintaining 11 acres by doing regular burn offs and making sure all the safety equipment and fire alarms were in working order. We have a gated community with plenty of fallen trees that we have to burn off from May to November. At a different time I had the portfolio of managing inventory.

CL

What is your work outside of volunteering?

SH

For 42 years finance, reports, accounts and bookkeeping. This is why I took an interest in FinCom. I am hoping to be given access to zero, to me, seeing what we give to the bookkeeper compared to what zero reports is an important part of being on the finance team. The team of volunteers in this group are extremely supportive of one another and are a great group who all show respect for each other.

CL

What is your main focus and what would you like to achieve on behalf of DTE and ConFest?

SH

I really want to create change. I participated in the NRAR clean-up. I want us to leave the forest in the way we found the forest. Not with all the trash that people leave there. It is heart breaking. I would like to instil that we only leave our footprints. I was told that when DTE rented land that all rubbish was taken away but now because it is our land people think it is OK to dump crap everywhere. I would like to encourage a different attitude towards our land and river.

The board should not be passing motions that were already passed by the OC and CC, to me that is a waste of time and energy. I don't like how the Board passes motions by circular and that four people can override up to 30 members who had made a decision at an OC, to me that is not respectful of the members or the OC.

Too much time is spent in meetings on passing minutes. The minutes need to be read before the meeting, directors need to know if they have an objection and if there is a matter arising. It takes up too much valuable time, they wouldn't end up having a three hour meeting if this was better managed.

CL

Is impartiality important to you?

SH

Yes of course.

CL

How will you safeguard your impartiality and independence on the Board?

SH

I think because I don't live in Melbourne socialising won't be available. My personality is quite strong. I am very thick skinned. I believe every director should be voting on the issue and not for who raised the issue, not for what side you are on or who is your best mate. I can honestly say that DTE is more important to me than individual directors. This is not a popularity contest, running for a Board is about wanting to see the organisation thrive.

Susan Helson thank you for your time.

