

## **Australian Law Librarians' Association Inc.**

### **Presidents Report 2014-2015**

The past twelve months have been spent consolidating the transition of the Australian Law Librarians' Association Ltd from a loose collection of state associations to a national body combining more than forty years of history and over 550 legal information professionals. This report gives a brief overview of the achievements and events of the last year, finishing with a look at the possibilities and future plans for ALLA in the coming months.

#### **ALLA Ltd – A Structural Overview**

ALLA Ltd. is a company formed from six divisional groups: New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. While Queensland and Tasmania have opted not to have a local division sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ALLA Ltd, we have nearly 100 members in these states giving ALLA a truly national presence.

Members who reside in a state without a local division have become members of one of the six divisional groups. For each renewing and new membership, a local division receives a per member disbursement amount – for a full year, ordinary member the amount is \$45 (see s 5.2 of the MOU for full membership fees and disbursement information). Each of the divisions has the means for recording local CPD sessions, and many sessions are shared via the ALLA website. Each month, the divisional presidents and national president meet by teleconference to share local news, collaborate on projects, provide ideas and feedback to the Board and find solutions to local and national issues.

Each of the six divisions is chaired by a committee, and these committees are supported at a national level by the ALLA Board of Directors. The Board is made up of eight directors, including a President, Vice President, Past President, Treasurer, Secretary and three general directors, each of whom chair one of the national sub-committees. Each of these sub-committees include members who have volunteered and who work with the directors to facilitate national programs and collaboration with the states.

## **A Look at the Last Year**

### **Corporate governance and sub-committees**

During the past twelve months the Board has met monthly via teleconference, with two face to face meetings, November 2014 (Melbourne) and March (Sydney).

In April 2015, a casual vacancy was filled by Michael Gavan taking on the role of treasurer.

2015 has been a settling in period for the Board's the sub-committees – Vendor Relations, CPD, Scholarships and Web Communications. My thanks go to the 2014/2015 sub-committees chairs: CPD – Phil Mullen, Vendor Relations – Lianne Forster Knight and Web Communications Committee – Kirsty Wilson and the wonderful members of the divisions who have ably assisted them over the past year.

### **Divisional Presidents' Meetings**

On the last Wednesday of each month, the ALLA Divisional Presidents' meeting is held by teleconference. This facilitates communications between the Board and the divisions as well as between the divisions. It is also a useful opportunity for the Board to update the divisions on its activities and initiatives, as improving communications is a key Board objective.

### **Membership Renewals**

The membership renewal form and process was redesigned this year in an attempt to streamline the renewal process this year. Further refinement will need to occur to reduce costs to the association. Feedback is always welcome and can be emailed to [president@alla.asn.au](mailto:president@alla.asn.au) . Each month we see new members from a variety of fields of legal information join the ALLA members' network. ALLA membership is now over 500, including several international members. A gentle reminder that the grace period for renewing memberships expires at the end of September – if you have not renewed your membership, doing so now will retain your membership privileges. Final membership numbers will be provided in October.

### **Communication**

In 2015 ALLA began a program of national webinars for the membership's continuing professional education. Uptake has been good and I thank Phil Mullen for his work in delivering these webinars to our membership. One of

the aims of the Board for 2015 was to ensure that members from all states got access to good cpd. Many of the divisional talks and activities have been made available as podcasts on the website for members.

Our quarterly newsletter has been successfully established and the Board hopes that it allows members to become more engaged with the activities of the Board. Other communications initiatives for ALLA include the special interest groups on LinkedIn, a twitter feed, blog and updates of the activities of the divisions via the website. The alla-anz list continues to be well used, as does our duplicates list. The Board is working on establishing a photo sharing site linked to our website. Other working groups and committees will be established in consultation with the members over time as a need or project is identified.

### **ALLA Website**

The ALLA website continues to be developed under the stewardship of the talented Kirsty Wilson and her team of web admins. If there are changes or improvements that would be of benefit to the membership, please send them through to your divisional president or [admin@alla.asn.au](mailto:admin@alla.asn.au). If you want to re-write or create content, or if you have the proof-reading, technical or marketing skills, the web team would like to hear from you at the same email address.

### **ALLA Conference**

In 2016, the ALLA Conference will be held in Melbourne at the State Library of Victoria on the 23- 25 August 2016. This is a slightly earlier date than in previous years, changed to accommodate the numerous sporting events that take place in Melbourne in the period from September onwards. It is a delightful coincidence that our conference will take place in the most important library in Victoria. Planning is well underway and our first five sponsors have signed up to the join ALLA. This means that over 20 per cent of our sponsorship budget has already been achieved and this will assist us in not only having an informative conference but a profitable one. The conference committee is dedicated and the Board is looking forward to a well-attended, engaging and informative conference.

Recommendations from the review of the conference and the member surveys were taken into account and it is our hope that this conference will deliver the sessions and activities that members need as well as providing opportunities to network, develop relationships and reconnect friendships. Members are

encouraged to contact the committee via their divisional president or [president@alla.asn.au](mailto:president@alla.asn.au) and let them know who and what we need.

### **QUT Law Librarianship Course**

QUT will run its law librarianship course again in 2015, beginning at the end of September. It is provided online, allowing it to be offered in Australian and internationally. This post-graduate unit is available for course credit (with assignments) or as a professional development opportunity (without assignments). ALLA members will operate as mentors for the course again this year.

### **2015 ALLA Fellowship**

Eleni Christos of Arnold Bloch Liebler in Melbourne was the recipient of the 2015 ALLA Fellowship. The fellowship awards \$3000 towards the costs of attending an international conference. Eleni has chosen to attend the 2015 International Association of Law Libraries 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Course which will be held in Berlin, Germany, September 20-24<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The conference “Within and between: German legal tradition in times of internationalization and beyond” offers an exciting and challenging program and Eleni will write up her experience for the Australian Law Librarian.

### **Awards and Scholarships**

In 2014, the board has introduced a number of new awards that recognise the achievements of our members. These are:

- Life Membership of ALLA Ltd;
- Gem of the Year – an award recognising a commercial representative that has gone above and beyond for ALLA members;
- Legal Information Centre of the Year;
- Law Librarian of the Year – recognising an outstanding librarian or library technician nominated by peers.

The awards will again be open for nomination later this year with presentations occurring at the appropriate divisional end of year festivities.

### **International Networking Opportunities**

In May, Alice Hewitt represented ALLA at the 2015 Canadian Association of Law Libraries at their annual conference in Moncton, New Brunswick from May 3-6, 2015. I represented ALLA at the American Association of Law Libraries conference in Philadelphia. This was an important opportunity to learn from our colleagues and some ideas have already been shared with the conference

committee. I will share lessons learnt with members via the journal and email communications.

### **Future Possibilities**

ALLA has signed a Morandum of Understanding (MOUs) with the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), and the Special Libraries Association with the aim of working together on projects that are beneficial to our organisations. Input from these associations can only assist us in facing the unique challenges to legal information professional. Our members are our greatest strength and the Board realizes that more must be done to expand our capacity as legal information professionals. However to offer more, ALLA needs the assistance of the membership. Every contribution to ALLA, make a difference, no matter how small and I urge the members to attend the activities, out your hand up for committees and to join in. ALLA is only as strong as we make it.

Discussions are underway with the New Zealand Law Librarians' Association to hold a combined conference with an Asia-Pacific focus. One possibility is to be involved in the proposed 2018 Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and the Library and Information Association of New Zealand (LIANZA) joint conference. A similar geographic focus is planned. Further details will be released as they come to hand.

### **Future issues for the Board:**

#### **The Directors' Roles**

One issue the Board will be exploring in the next few months is to establish how the Board could be restructured to ensure the journal editor is a director.

#### **Partnerships and Funding**

The Board is exploring new ways to raise funds and partner with industry to bring more benefits for ALLA's members. Wolters Kluwer and LexisNexis have sponsored webinars for members this year on topics suggested by the membership. This has been very successful.

This year will be holding the Annual General Meeting (AGM) via webinar with the technology being supplied by Wolters Kluwer. Our thanks go to them for their assistance.

In 2016 we will be holding our (now bi-annual) conference and with the assistance of a committed committee and our professional conference organizer, Premier Event Concepts, we hope to make a profit in order to fund further activities.

Other funding streams will be sought to establish tax deductible scholarships and awards.

### **Finances**

The Board has developed an annual budget and financial plan for ALLA Ltd. The Treasurer, Michael Gavan, has identified that annual funds are extremely limited and the Board is looking at ways to cut expenditure on administration and governance. Several options have been mooted including the need to bring back in-house activities that are currently outsourced to our association management organisation, NFPAS. The Board feels that it is important to free up as many funds as possible for member services and benefits.

### **The Legal Structure**

In 2015, ALLA Ltd and the state divisions were all accorded charity status under the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission. This was a substantial amount of work and our thanks go to the divisional presidents and committees who worked on the process as well as our pro bono lawyers, Arnold Bloch Liebler, who developed the strategy. ALLA Ltd is still a company limited by guarantee but the reporting and administrative requirements are significantly less complicated and onerous than under the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).

### **Communication**

The Board is currently exploring avenues for photo sharing of events and activities of the divisions and the membership. Any suggestions can be sent to [admin@alla.asn.au](mailto:admin@alla.asn.au)

### **MOUS between ALLA Ltd and the Divisions**

The Board will be renewing the MOUs with the divisions in the coming months. Although the MOUs are designed to roll over after the initial three year period, increases in membership fees and changes to terms require a new MOU to be signed between both parties. Initial discussion will take place between the presidents before being ratified by the divisional committees and the Board. It is hoped to establish a common rollover date for all the divisional MOUs for ease of administration.

**Thank you**

On a personal note I would like to say thank you to all our outgoing directors, divisional presidents, committee members who are taking a well-earned rest after holding their ALLA positions. Your contributions have been incredibly important and have helped make this Association and its members flourish.

I will continue with the Board for the next twelve months in the role as Past President and look forward to working with our incoming president, Elizabeth Langeveldt.