



PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2018

This year, ALLA celebrated its 49th anniversary. This is a great milestone for our organisation and the Board is already planning events for next year to celebrate when we reach the half century mark. In my role as President this past year, I had the opportunity to learn about the rich history of ALLA. As an association, we have a lot to be proud of in terms of our achievements over the past 49 years. This year is no different, and I have highlighted some of the achievements from this past year below. As an organisation we are also facing some challenges, including our falling membership numbers, a lack of volunteers on local committees, and some organisational governing issues. These challenges and how the Board intends to address them are described in more detail below.

Highlights and Achievements

ALLA Conference in Darwin

One of highlights this past year was the ALLA Conference in Darwin. The conference was a tremendous success with 100 delegates (a quarter of our membership) who attended. Two of our members - Monika Zygmuntowicz and Philip Mullen – received ALLA fellowships to attend the conference.

We had a very engaging programme with wonderful presentations, including those from our three keynote speakers – Ruth Bird, Danial Kelly, and Sue Tongue. The conference concluded with memorable dinner at Crocosaurus Cove where attendees had the opportunity to pet and dine with crocodiles and various reptiles. At the conference dinner, the 2018 ALLA Awards were presented to the following members for their achievements and contributions to the profession:

- ALLA Law Librarian of the Year – Robin Gardner
- ALLA Legal Information Service of the Year – Law Institute of Victoria Library
- ALLA Gem of the Year – Amber Ho (LexisNexis WA)
- ALLA Life Membership Award – Ruth Bird

From a financial point of view, the conference was also a great success. The conference generated a healthy profit for our organisation thanks to the generous support from our sponsors. The profits from the conference will help fund the next ALLA conference and provide fellowships to our members to attend future ALLA and overseas conferences.

There was a tremendous amount of work that went into organising the conference. I want to thank all of those who served with me on the conference organising committee for their time and effort in putting together such a memorable event. They include Frieda Evans (co-convener), Barbara Keogh (co-convener), Kate Freedman, Karen Rowe-Nurse, Michael Gavan, and Alex Cato.

Future Conference Planning

Over this past year, the ALLA Board has worked to strengthen our organisation and to make it more sustainable going forward. One example is the Board entering a long-term relationship with Premier Events to organise future ALLA conferences. Shanna Sheldrick from Premier Events has organised the last few ALLA conferences with great success, and we are pleased to continue to work with her in planning the next ALLA conference in Canberra in 2020. In fact, a conference committee has already been formed for the Canberra conference and it has already held its first meeting. The members of the committee are: Fiona Gallagher (co-convenor), Margaret Hutchison (co-convenor), Karen Rowe-Nurse, Kirsty McPhee, Michael Gavan and myself.

Australian Law Librarian Journal

Another example of improved sustainability has been the work of the Board to transfer the ownership of the *Australian Law Librarian* journal to ALLA Ltd. The ownership of the journal has been a thorny issue for several years now, and we are at the final stages of completing this transfer. I would like to thank James Butler, Alex Cato, Kirsty McPhee and Michael Gavan for helping to work through all the legal and financial issues involved with this transfer. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the law firm of Arnold Block Leibler with the transfer. The completion of transfer will mean that ALLA will control the finances and future revenue generated from the journal. This will allow ALLA to be in control of the publication that was created by and for our members.

Challenges and Plans

Membership Numbers

ALLA currently has 475 members. This number may drop as we have 76 members who have not yet renewed for 2018-19. Our membership numbers have been decreasing slightly from year to year. The Board discussed the various reasons for this, including the changes in the marketplace. Surveys of our members also indicate that the main reason members do not renew their membership is due primarily to them leaving the profession.

The shrinking number of those employed as law librarians is something that is beyond our control. However, the Board is looking into ways to minimise these losses. One strategy is to explore the interest of other professionals in becoming ALLA members. These include business librarians, knowledge managers, and precedents managers who may not associate themselves as law librarians, but whose work encompasses that of law libraries. As a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of the association, the Board will pursue the interest of these other professionals in joining ALLA.

Lack of Volunteers to Serve on Local Committees

ALLA, for the most part, is a volunteer organisation. It can only exist when its members are willing to invest their time and effort into the organisation. Unfortunately, many of the ALLA divisions have had problems attracting members to serve on the local committees. As a result, a core group of members are continually running the activities for their divisions year after year without much support or relief. This has been the case in New South Wales.

This year at their AGM in September, the ALLA(NSW) division passed a special resolution to consolidate ALLA(NSW) into ALLA Ltd. This means that ALLA(NSW) will no longer be a separate legal entity as the special resolution authorises the new committee to cancel their registration as a not-for-profit organisation. Instead, ALLA(NSW) will seek to become a chapter of ALLA. They have opted to make this move because they do not have enough volunteers to continue with the administrative burden of being a not-for-profit entity. The new ALLA Board will be working with ALLA(NSW) to help them through this transition over the next year or so. There are still many details yet to be determine about how this process will work.

I do not believe that the changes to ALLA(NSW) represent an existential or even a major problem for our organisation. A few years ago, we opted for a national model – forming ALLA Ltd. We have continued to have divisions that are separate legal entities. However, if we ever want to become a true national association (like our sister associations in other countries), we do not need to have separate divisional and national bodies. I view the transition of ALLA(NSW) from being a separate legal entity to a chapter as a natural

evolution of ALLA becoming a national model. It may take several more years before other divisions to do the same.

My concern with the ALLA(NSW) resolution is not with the change to their structure, but with the lack of volunteers that prompted the need for change. Even if someday ALLA becomes a true national association without any local divisions, we will continue to need volunteers to serve on the national board, the local chapters and future conference planning committees. No matter how our structure evolves over time, we will continue to need volunteers to make ALLA function.

Organisational Governing Issues

ALLA has two organisational governing issues that the Board hopes to address with the special resolution at this year's AGM. First, is to change the length of time directors serve on the Board from one year to two years. Second, is to allow the number of directors on the Board to be greater than eight.

Currently, directors on the ALLA Board serve a one-year term. The exception is the role of Vice President, President and Past President, which is a three-year commitment where a person serves one year in each role. The problem with the one-year term is that for new Board members, there is a lot to learn in the first year. By the time they learn the role, their term is over. With only one year in office, directors are unable to complete many individual projects or goals of the Board.

The Board has discussed this problem at length and have recommended that directors should be elected to serve two-year terms. This will solve a couple of problems. First, it solves the problem of allowing directors more time to complete projects/goals. Second, with two-year terms the Board can stagger the elections, so that only half the Board changes each year. For example, one year half the Board is elected to serve for two years. The next year, the other half of the Board is elected to serve for two years. What this means going forward is that we never replace the entire Board in any given year. This will allow for more stability and continuity in the governing of our organisation.

The second change is to allow the number of directors on the Board to be greater than eight. Section 16.1(b) of the Constitution currently states that the Board shall comprise of a President, a Vice President, a Past President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and three General Board Members. This limitation of eight Board members has hindered ALLA's ability to complete many of its goals and to recruit more volunteers.

With more directors on the Board, hopefully the Board will have more support in completing many of its duties and goals. Each Board director is assigned certain duties. For example, some directors serve in the roles of CPD coordinator, Web coordinator, and

Vendor Relations coordinator. There are generally more duties and tasks on the Board than there are people to perform them. That is one of the reason why the Board has recommended that the number of directors be allowed to be greater than eight – to help share the workload.

By allowing the number of directors to be greater than eight will also help in recruiting new directors. In the past, when we have asked members to join the Board, one of the concerns was having to take on duties they know nothing about. Members stated that they were happy to join if there was an opportunity to observe the function of the Board before being assigned specific roles or duties. If we increased the number of directors, we can allow opportunities for people to serve as directors to understand how the Board functions before they take on more substantial duties.

To address these two organisational governing issues, the Board is asking members to approve a special resolution aimed at changing the ALLA Constitution as follows:

- 1) To allow the number of directors appointed to be greater than eight
- 2) To change the duration of appointment of Directors to two years with the maximum term of service being six years (except for the roles of vice-president, president and past president)

We hope that you agree that these changes will have help strengthen ALLA and its governance going forward. I, along with my fellow Board members, are happy to answer any questions about these proposed changes at the AGM.

Acknowledgments

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their contributions and time dedicated to help run our association this past year. They are:

- Michael Gavan – Vice President
- Alex Cato – Past President and Journal Editor
- Kirsty McPhee – Treasurer and Journal Manager
- Karen Rowe-Nurse – Secretary
- Caroline Knaggs – CPD Coordinator
- Petal Kinder – Vendor Relations Coordinator
- David Furler – Web Coordinator

I would also like to thank all the Divisional Committees and Conference Committee members for their work over the past year. And a special thank you to Richard Vankoningsveld who has continued to serve as ALLA Membership Coordinator and Bookkeeper.

I look forward to serving on the Board for another year in the role of Past President and to support Michael Gavan as he begins his term as ALLA President.