

## **President's Report 27 November 2017**

Welcome to everyone here tonight for our Annual General Meeting.

This is our third year after the amalgamation with AFMA and although we obviously have many members who are family dispute resolution practitioners, we also have in our membership a wide variety of mediators in other areas. This is reflected in the diversity of events offered throughout the year. Most of these took place at Cooper's Inn, but we also conducted an all-day Saturday workshop at Geelong run by Ian Smith and Vince Thorne to cater for country members who often find it difficult to attend Melbourne events. We anticipate another event for rural mediators next year. In addition, the Private Practitioners' Special Interest Group ably conducted by Rebecca McKelvie and Ian Smith met bimonthly throughout the year at the Multicultural Hub. We are currently planning for the Workplace Special Interest group to start up again next year.

Last year, as you know, we sponsored two indigenous mediators from Mornington Island to attend the National Mediation Conference. Although we probably will not be in a position to sponsor Indigenous mediators directly for the Canberra conference in 2019, we are hoping to obtain funding by other means. We feel that it is important that Indigenous mediators should have the opportunity to present on their important work in remote communities, hear about the work of others and establish networks at the National Mediation Conference.

Member numbers have continued to rise as have the number of people nationally accredited through VADR, now around 45. We are mindful that with the retirement of a number of our older members and the influx of new and often younger mediators and conciliators, the needs of our members may have changed. Our primary focus has been to date on events and supporting mediators administratively, providing insurance, accreditation, and information about other ADR organisations, job details etc. However, members may now have other needs and to this end we are shortly going to send out a questionnaire to ask you why you joined VADR, what you have appreciated and not appreciated, and what you would like us to offer in the future. I hope most of you will be able

to answer the questionnaire as otherwise it is difficult to get a clear picture of members' total needs.

Several Committee members are leaving this year. The longest serving is Maartje Van-der-Vlies who has been on VADR committees since around 2005, and we thank her most sincerely for her hard work. Lucy Hase has been with us throughout the negotiations involved in the amalgamation with AFMA and now feels it is time to make way for others; similarly, Rowyn Dickins, who has been on the Committee for six years, notably on the Accreditation Sub-Committee would like a rest although she has said she is happy to continue on that Sub-Committee. Our Vice-President, Ian Smith resigned in September, but has continued to run the Private Practitioners Group with Rebecca McKelvie which has been fantastic. Together with Marg Leser, who is also leaving, Ian conducted a review of the Constitution which we hope to implement next year. On behalf of the Committee of Management, and VADR members, I would like to thank all these members, and the Committee members who are standing again, for the long hours of voluntary work they have put into VADR. As I said last year, most of our Committee members are working full-time, and committee work requires a high level of commitment both to VADR and the mediation profession generally. I would particularly like to thank Anthony Grimes for the constant work he performs as Secretary and head of the Accreditation Sub-Committee, and Stephen Graham, our Treasurer, who performs that thankless task so well. Final thanks must go to our Admin Assistant, Alison White, who is the backbone of our organisation, and puts out the ADR Bulletins which have been so appreciated by many members.

Now I would like to thank you, the members, for coming to the events and being appreciative of them, and for your suggestions and help in all areas of concern to mediators. It is not always easy to find the time to come to events, and yet so many of you manage to do this on a regular basis. The Committee of Management wishes you all a very happy holiday season, and hopes to see you flourishing in the New Year.

