

President's Report 2015

Greetings to all members as the 2015 business year starts to wind down.

The Committee of Management is pleased to report a number of positive developments this year. Firstly, the amalgamation of VADR and AFMA was finalised with a corresponding increase in our numbers. It was a natural amalgamation, as our interests were so similar, and it seemed a waste of resources not to combine forces. It has been most enjoyable getting to know the family practitioners who have joined subsequently and who have attended in large numbers the recent family specific events as well as the more general events offered. The Committee members from AFMA have also served on VADR's Committee for two years now, and we have always worked harmoniously together, indicative of common interests and outlook.

The second development of interest is the formation of the Workplace Grievance Special Interest Group. It was founded after a very well attended and stimulating panel presentation on workplace grievance, run jointly with the Victorian Association for Restorative Justice (VARJ) in April and now has 54 members. The group is also run jointly with VARJ, loosely facilitated by Drs David Moore and Alikki Vernon, although Helen Collins organised the speaker for December 3 meeting. The group meets every two months; four meetings will have been held this year. Almost all members practise mainly or exclusively in this workplace arena, so the level of expertise is high, reflected in the outstanding presentations and discussions.

Finally, we are about to form a new Special Interest Group for Private Practitioners. While the independence and work in private practice are very rewarding, it can be difficult and exhausting sometimes for members operating on their own, without the support services of an organisation behind them. Committee member Ian Smith, and Rebecca McKelvie, who has nominated for the Committee, have set up the group, whose first meeting will take place on 3 February next year and it is hoped the group will meet at least two-monthly. A flyer with further details will be sent to all members shortly.

There have been seven events this year, details of which appear on the website so that, among other things, you can get details of the events you have attended. As usual, a wide variety of topics were covered, reflecting the wide range of expertise and interests of VADR members. Apart from the workplace and panel and family dispute resolution presentations of Jennifer McIntosh and Jill Raby mentioned above, these included government (Geoff Browne, the Small Business Commissioner), ADR in Courts and Tribunals (Peter Lauritsen, Chief Magistrate; Catherine Aird, VCAT), and specific (disputes in non-for-profit associations (Robert Wright). Summaries of this year's presentations, if available, will be placed on the website in December. Can I take this opportunity to remind you that we will host events on any DR topic you suggest and will also contact specific speakers, including interstate speakers, whom you would like to hear. The contact address is admin@vadr.asn.au.

Our membership numbers have risen sharply this year. This is partly due to the amalgamation with AFMA, but new members are being drawn from all areas of ADR, which is very pleasing. The number of members accredited through VADR has also risen and the work of the Accreditation Sub-Committee has been onerous from time to time. Most of the work carried out through VADR is done by volunteers, which is not always easy when people are working. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to extend grateful thanks to the members of the Accreditation Sub-Committee, and note in particular, the sterling work of Richard Godfrey, who is leaving the Committee this year after serving for seven years.

FDRPs Carol Makhoul and Anthony Moore, who were on the AFMA Committee are also leaving after serving for two years. They moved to Warrnambool about the time they came onto the Committee, but continued to attend meetings during that time, and their input was particularly valuable with regard to the current Constitution and work associated with amalgamation and the broader interests of FDRPs. In addition, Committee member Jan Wilson is leaving after four years; her wealth of experience and integrity were also very valuable to the Committee.

The Committee would also like to thank Alison White, our admin assistant who does a great deal of work for us, and without whose help it would be difficult to coordinate the events, and meetings of the special interest groups, as well as complete all the administrative tasks essential to the running of an organisation such as VADR.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their hard work this year and in most cases, in previous years as well. We meet monthly, but there is also a lot of other work behind the scenes, necessitating constant emails and phone calls. I know, for example, that Ian Smith, working with FDRP Rebecca McKelvie, who hopefully will join the Committee tonight, has put a great deal of thought and effort into the establishment of the Private Practitioners Special Interest Group. And a particularly heavy workload falls on our Secretary, Anthony Grimes, who also serves on the accreditation sub-committee.

Our business finished, we would like to thank you, the members for coming to events this year, for your helpful suggestions and comments, and in some cases, for sharing interesting problems you have had to face as mediators. We wish you all a pleasant and relaxed holiday season, and a Happy New Year. We look forward to seeing most of you, hopefully, in 2016.