

President's Report 28 November 2016

Welcome to everyone here tonight.

This is our second year after the amalgamation with AFMA and I am pleased to report that our numbers have continued to rise, not just in the family area, but in all areas of mediation. This is reflected in the number and variety of events offered and in the increase in numbers of the two special interest groups, participation in all of which has remained free to members. With accreditation numbers also on the rise, the Committee of Management has been very busy this year.

There have been ten events this year, averaging one a month. The year began with Treasure Jennings, the Public Transport Ombudsman speaking about best practice in her office, and ended with management consultant Rob Jagger talking about how to build a successful private practice. In between, topics included collaborative practice, changes to the treatment of sexual harassment disputes, how to craft specific solutions to workplace disputes, cognitive biases in decision making, the effect of the mediator on mediation models and how to increase the efficacy of mediation through training, working with adolescents in mediation, the ADR work of the street pastors in Melbourne, and the use of Restorative Justice in sexual assault and family violence. I think you will agree these topics provide a wide sample of ADR practice. A reminder that a summary of all topics and speakers appears on the website, partly for your information,

and partly as a PD record for nationally accredited mediators and those family practitioners accredited with the Attorney-General's Department.

Two Special Interest Groups have also operated through VADR this year. The first is the Workplace Special Interest Group, which VADR runs jointly with the Victorian Association for Restorative Justice and which is chaired by Drs. David Moore and Alikki Vernon. The second is the Private Practitioners group set up by Rebecca McKelvie and Ian Smith which has met two-monthly. When topics raised by the Special Interest Groups may be of more general interest to members, we invite the speakers to Cooper's Inn, which explains tonight's presentation and the April presentation on Crafting Bespoke Solutions to Workplace Grievance Disputes. The work required in running these groups is considerable and I would very much like to thank the organisers for providing these valuable services.

Our member numbers have continued to rise following the amalgamation and are now approaching three hundred, almost a hundred more than two years ago. It is very exciting to welcome to VADR such a lot of new mediators. However, paradoxically this has occurred at the same time as more than the usual number of 2016 members have not renewed in 2017 because they have left the profession. Some have retired, but many have not been able to obtain work, and have moved to other areas. This may reflect a declining government interest in mediation but may also reflect initial involvement in the profession by recently trained mediators

who subsequently find it difficult to break into their chosen area of work. While a certain level of attrition is inevitable, I do find it concerning that the pathway into mediation, and the maintenance of that pathway is becoming more difficult, and hope that members who are able will assist new mediators and promote ADR as far as practicable.

The number of accredited members has continued to rise, increasing the already high workload of the Accreditation Sub-Committee. Maintaining accreditation is an essential requirement of the work of many of VADR's members, so the time-consuming work of the Accreditation Sub-Committee is vital. I would like to thank the Committee chair, Anthony Grimes, and the other members of the Committee for the valuable work they perform in this regard.

The Committee of Management is exceedingly grateful for the work carried out by our admin assistant, Alison. For the first couple of years I served as president, I did the admin work, and therefore know just how much work is needed to ensure that presentations, special interest groups, the production of the Events Bulletin, the welcome of new members, answering queries from existing members, the maintenance of financial records and all the other multifarious administrative tasks of a mediation organisation run smoothly. Alison does the work intelligently and promptly, and with so many new members now, we would not be able to operate without her.

Like most mediation organisations in Australia, VADR was a sponsor for the National Mediation Conference at the Gold

Coast this year. As for Melbourne National Mediation Conference, we sponsored Indigenous mediators to attend. The reason for this is twofold: firstly, these mediators find it very difficult to attend National Mediation Conferences because of the remoteness of the communities they serve, and secondly, the work they do is of great importance to their communities and is very interesting for mediators operating in the mainstream to learn about. This year we were proud to sponsor two Indigenous mediators from Mornington Island to present on the wonderful work they have been doing on the Island, resulting in a sharp decline in suicide, murder, violent crime, incarceration and arrests. Their plenary presentation was very well received and attended. As it was videoed, we hope shortly to be able to put a video of the presentation on our website.

Only one Committee member, Robert Turner, is leaving the Committee this year because he intends to spend quite a bit of next year travelling, having recently retired from full-time work. Robert has been a member for a number of years, and performed particularly valuable work at the time of our amalgamation. Thanks so much, Robert for everything you've done for VADR. Otherwise all the current Committee members are standing again, together with two new members, Marg Leser, and Vincent Thorne. The workload of a Committee member is completely voluntary and not insignificant and most of our Committee members are still working full-time. Committee work therefore requires a high level of commitment both to VADR and the mediation profession generally. I would especially like to thank very

much the office-bearers, Anthony Grimes, our Secretary, Ian Smith our Vice-President and Stephen Graham our Treasurer, as well as all other Committee members for the hard work they have ungrudgingly put into VADR this year.

Finally, the Committee of Management 2016 would like to wish you a very joyful festive season and a Happy New Year for 2017. We look forward, as always, to seeing as many of you as possible in 2018.