

The COVID-Cohort: Reflections from Readers

Interviewed by Naomi Wootton



The course was a lot more intense than I had imagined, so the fact that it was partly remote worked well because the reduced commuting time left more time for preparation and review. The only downside was the missed opportunity to meet all of the other readers in person.

In terms of receiving content and learning through the online platform, I think the Zoom format worked really well. Some speakers permitted those listening from home to treat the sessions like a 'podcast' and to walk around while listening to the lecture. I found that I retained much more content this way.

The final mock trial was definitely a highlight – it was the culmination of four weeks of hard work and putting all that I had learnt into practice. Working together on the mock-brief with a co-counsel was also a great opportunity. Building camaraderie, sharing ideas and learning from your colleagues is something that I find particularly rewarding. The best moment of the course was when I had the opportunity to appear before the Chief Judge in Equity and receive feedback from Her Honour on my advocacy — definitely something I never thought I would have the opportunity to do.

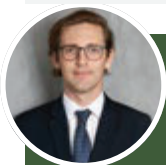
Tereza Seric, Culwulla Chambers



I had planned to start at the Bar in May, but decided to wait until September once the course was cancelled. State Chambers were flexible and accommodating in allowing me to start later, so I just continued in my previous employment in the interim period.

I really enjoyed undertaking the course. There was a great emphasis on substantive skill development in areas like drafting pleadings and advocacy, and comprehensive feedback on performance. The highlight was the advocacy exercises in the third week, which focussed on a singular case broken down into each of the component elements of the opening address, examination in chief, cross-examination and closing address. We did very focussed exercises on each of these component elements which really helped with skill development. I also found the remote advocacy sessions very helpful, which gave us the opportunity to get accustomed to the online environment which might become the 'new normal'.

**Haren Pararajasingham,
State Chambers**



I was supposed to start at the Bar in May. When the course was cancelled due to COVID-19, I decided to wait for the September course. I was lucky as although I had already resigned from my position at the Crown Solicitors Office, they allowed me to return to work there, which offered more certainty at the time than starting on a restricted certificate. It ended up being a great experience, as I worked in a different team for the interim period and was able to experience a different role.

I think the remote aspect of the BPC was really successful. It was easy to participate even while you were remote, because the readers on Zoom could be heard in the common room by both the speaker and the readers appearing in-person. There was a particularly good use of the 'breakout room' function on Zoom, which was a great way to properly meet other readers and engage more fully in the remote setting. I found it was better than participating in person, where engaging and participating was complicated by social distancing and mask-wearing. However, there was still the opportunity to meet other readers through the advocacy groups, which were mixed up from week to week. The highlight of the course for me was the advocacy sessions, and I felt there was a big difference in my confidence at the bar table from the start of the course to the end.

Myles Pulsford, Banco Chambers



I started at the Bar in May under the restricted reader conditions. When the May 2020 Bar Practice Course was cancelled, I had already resigned from my job as a solicitor with the intention of having some time off before starting at the Bar. I started at chambers on 11 May, in the middle of the NSW lockdown. It was certainly a strange time to start, with people working from a variety of different locations and the CBD being virtually empty. However, I was lucky enough to be offered a brief acting for a client in the Special Commission of Inquiry into the *Ruby Princess*, as well as work from members of the floor and my tutors. I am very grateful for the support and advice I received from the members of New Chambers, my clerk and barristers from other floors during that time. In my view, the collegiate nature of the Bar was on full display, even during a time where there was obviously a lot of uncertainty and stress for everyone.

It was great to then be able to do the course and meet all the other readers. A highlight of the course was the advocacy sessions, especially the mock applications in week two. The advocacy coaches gave us really practical tips and also demonstrated techniques for dealing with issues that arise while you are on your feet — like getting an unexpected answer from a witness! The remote advocacy sessions were also incredibly useful, as those sessions gave us the opportunity to practice the art of 'online advocacy' while simultaneously dealing with the practical issues that come up in an online format, including the stability of internet connections, microphones, lighting and camera angles. It is great to now have a set-up that I know will work and that I can take into online hearings going forward.

Amy Reid, New Chambers