

Increasing APLA's membership

John Peacock, APLA Executive Director



John Peacock

APLA has had outstanding growth in membership levels since its official inception in 1994. APLA now has well over one thousand members, and the resources provided by subscriptions enables APLA to perform its vital work. Yet, APLA needs to continue to grow to be able to tackle the increasingly complex legal and social challenges with which plaintiffs and their lawyers are presented.

A general comparison between the membership of APLA and the number of solicitors and barristers in Australia's jurisdictions shows that we still have considerable scope for membership growth.

With a large marketing and promotion budget we could no doubt accelerate membership growth even further, but we do not enjoy the luxury of such funding. Therefore, we have to 'think smart' to utilise low-cost and highly effective strategies.

Recommendations for increasing membership of APLA follow:

Recommendation 1: Run seminars and conferences

Without doubt, APLA's National Conferences were great boosts to membership. The National Conference is now a members-only event and some branches are restricting their local events to the membership.

If branch events are open to non-members, the pricing should select prices that make registering as a non-member poor value for money, hence encouraging them to join.

Don't overlook the value of introductory type seminars which can be given by less senior level practitioners. If it is possible to combine these activities with some social occasion, they will be appreciated even more.

Recommendation 2: Lobby for people's rights

A core activity of APLA is to change Australia's laws to benefit personal injury

plaintiffs. Effective lobbying campaigns can be done without also carrying out a membership campaign, but a good campaign will certainly attract members.

The reason that membership grows with lobbying efforts is that non-members lawyers or other professionals eligible to join are tremendously impressed that APLA is making its voice heard. As a very pro-active association with clear belief in civil justice and common law rights, APLA pushes its beliefs with Australia's legislators and this courage always impresses aware and concerned individuals who then consider applying for membership.

Recommendation 3: Appoint branch committee member responsible for membership

It is very important to have a member of each branch committee responsible for increasing membership. Sharing the workload of the voluntary state committees is best done by clear responsibilities for committee members.

Local knowledge of firms and chambers needs to be utilised in deciding targets. APLA branches need to examine the most up-to-date membership listing and identify the targets for membership, such as:

- plaintiff firms not represented
- plaintiff firms that should have more members
- barristers

The most effective promotion is via personal recommendations and personalised letters. Once potential members are identified, they need to receive a personal letter from an APLA member along with a membership brochure and perhaps a copy of Plaintiff. This letter needs to be followed up with a phone call. Assistance in letter production from the APLA secretariat can make this promotion an easy task for members.

Looking at the Yellow Pages is an easy way of locating persons who do APLA work, but who are not yet mem-

bers. Once a firm is identified, approaches to partners and managing partners are recommended as they can decide most easily whether to join.

The branch committee should include membership growth as a standard item on the agenda for branch committee meetings. This will ensure that the issue is not overlooked and that credit is given to the work of the committee member responsible for membership.

Recommendation 4: Promote through Law Societies & Bar Associations

As all lawyers must be members of their solicitors or barristers body, branch committees should aim for:

- free editorial in publications of the main law bodies
- regular communication with relevant Specialist Accreditation lawyers

A cost/benefit analysis of inserting the brochure or an advertisement in publications should be undertaken. Paid advertisements will usually not result in new membership to justify the investment. As journals for lawyers should be writing about matters of interest to lawyers, they should be including stories about APLA. Utilise this free editorial content!

Recommendation 5: Launch APLA

Launches of APLA have been held to the legal community in the ACT and to barristers in Victoria. A launch to the legal and legislative community in the NT will be held in April 1998. These events are hard sell activities, directly asking people to join APLA. Launches are particularly suitable for specific promotions, such as the Victorian Protect Victims Rights Campaign.

Recommendation 6: Promote to law undergraduates

APLA is a very new organisation and is as yet little known on campuses. Law students undertaking a course of study relevant to the aims and objectives of the

Association are entitled to join at a special discounted rate of membership and to take advantage of most benefits of membership.

A campaign to undergraduates is currently being developed, however APLA members with contacts to law schools, perhaps through lecturing or children as students, can play a role. The APLA secretariat would appreciate hearing of any contacts members have at universities in any state or territory.

Recommendation 7: Target non-lawyer member categories

Lawyers are APLA's first priority as targets but not our sole target. The potential to grow our other membership categories is large. APLA will be able to raise our membership if we examine the patterns of current associate membership and target the sources of this membership eg certain professions.

If you have access to mailing lists which might contain potential members, contact the Member Services Manager to discuss the possibilities of using them. The

APLA Secretariat can provide administrative support or advice on large initiatives such as bulk mail-outs.

Recommendation 8: Innovate and be creative

Creative, innovative marketing campaigns yield exciting results. Members are asked to think laterally with ideas for increasing membership. If a new idea seems useful be it untested, APLA's branch structure means that an idea can be trialled in a branch and, if successful, used across the nation.

Recommendation 9: Ensure Retention

Without maintaining our current membership, the advantage of new members will be lost. To date, APLA has an excellent retention rate of members. Whilst members see that they receive a good service, they will be inclined to continue their membership. Therefore, we must maintain a high level of membership service so that we maintain our current base from which to grow. Comments from the membership about the services of

APLA will be most welcome.

I wish to thank my secretariat colleagues, Simon McGregor and Tanya Simpson, for their input to this article. Remember that growth in membership is crucial for APLA's continued success. All members can play a part in this. ■

APLA Membership at 31 March 1998

NSW	439
Queensland	267
Victoria	196
South Australia	58
Western Australia	28
ACT	17
Northern Territory	15
Tasmania	12
International	41
TOTAL	1,073

PERSONAL INJURY LAWYERS

- ECONOMIC LOSS REPORTS?
- WORKERS COMPENSATION VALUATIONS?
- COMMUTATION PROBLEMS?
- LITIGATION SUPPORT?
- DISPUTATION RESOLUTION?

We are a company with highly experienced and qualified accounting personnel specialising in the above

We work on a speculative basis in respect to personal injury, MVA & WC work (Subject to accepting the brief)

No Win/No Fee

Call now!

PERSONAL INJURY SUPPORT PTY LTD
Po W Mar B.Com, FCA, ASIA & John C Malouf BA, CPA
Sydney City: Parramatta:
 (02) 9221 2577 tel (02) 9630 1155 tel
 (02) 9223 1243 fax (02) 9630 4135 fax

CITY AND PARRAMATTA