

Changes in the APLA Secretariat

John Peacock, APLA Executive Director



John Peacock

In February 1999, I shall be concluding my time as Executive Director of the Australian Plaintiff Lawyers Association. When I commenced in this role in September 1996, APLA had 505 members and I had one part-time assistant. Much has changed in that time - most significantly the membership, which is now around 1,350.

The achievements of the members of APLA in member services and lobbying are well recorded in the pages of *Plaintiff* and its predecessor, *APLA Update*. The many active members of APLA have much to be proud of in their accomplishments. This article looks at APLA from a different angle - how APLA's structure gives it an advantage compared with other professional associations.

Having worked with or been a volunteer committee member on a number of professional bodies, I consider APLA very fortunate in many aspects of its structure, such as having the same name across all of Australia and select membership criteria which binds the membership together closely.

The proposed new constitution of APLA, to go to a Special General Meeting in February 1999, will further improve APLA's governance and unity. At present, all states and territories have equal representation on the National Council of APLA. Under the new constitution, some

branches may gain an extra National Councillor depending on their membership numbers but the agreed formula means biggest branches will not dominate the Board. It should be an excellent balance between democratic and jurisdictional representation.

APLA also has a practical mix between decentralised activities in states and territories and a national administration. It is economical and efficient to have one membership department, one set of accounts and one auditor across the country. Other projects are truly national, such as *Plaintiff*, the National Conference and the Special Interest Groups, with representatives from each state pooling their ideas for the benefit of all. Branch committees benefit from this infrastructure and also have independence to tackle restrictive legislation in their jurisdiction and to run targeted local seminars and conferences.

Thanks are due to the APLA staff members who worked with me in this time: Tanya Simpson, Simon McGregor, Jane Staley, Rebekah Kay, Eva Scheerlinck, Lee Carmody, Hannah Middleton, Tamara Dickson and Michael Trinidad.

I wish to pay special tribute to the hard work of the voluntary National Officer Bearers of APLA in this time: in particular Peter Semmler, Peter Carter,

Roland Everingham, Ron Pearce and Bill Madden. APLA's development has been wisely guided by these dedicated members. My personal thanks go to Catherine Henry for introducing me to APLA in early 1996.

It has been an honour to be Executive Director of APLA for half of the age of the Association. ■

APLA Membership at 31 January 1999	
NSW	561
Queensland	354
Victoria	240
South Australia	81
Western Australia	37
ACT	22
Northern Territory	17
Tasmania	15
International	55
TOTAL	1,382

CALL FOR PAPERS

**1999 APLA National Conference
October 21 - 24, Sydney**

The National Conference Technical Committee invites submissions of papers or proposals for topics for the National Conference to be held in Sydney in October, 1999.

The Committee welcomes papers from suitably qualified speakers on topics of interest to plaintiff lawyers in Australia.

APLA members are also encouraged to contact the Committee if there is a particular topic or area of practice which would be of interest to them.

All correspondence should be sent to Jane Staley, GPO Box 2658, Sydney, 2001.

Phone 02 9415 4233, **fax** 02 9415 4210, **email** jstaley@apla.com

Proposals due by March 31, 1999