

# APLA's future *has* begun

**A**PLA's national conference in Coolumb in October was again a great success. The conference was well attended and the standard of speakers was high. From the report on the conference and photos in this issue of *Plaintiff*, I'm sure you will agree that everyone had a great time.

One of the events at this year's conference was APLA's annual general meeting. Usually a brief affair, this year's AGM was well attended and provided the forum for some passionate discussion.

Special resolutions to change APLA's constitution were circulated to members prior to the meeting. The National Council sought changes to APLA's constitution to enlarge the membership beyond the occupational limitation of plaintiff lawyers and to refocus the objects of the association on the rights of citizens and the protection of those rights.

Consistent with the proposed changes to the membership structure, the National Council determined that the name of the association should also change. After considerable debate the council agreed to put the name 'APLA Limited' and the trading name 'APLA – Lawyers for the People' to the members for a vote.

A further proposed change was the requirement that a director of the company be a member of APLA for no less than three years.



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The AGM was chaired by John Gordon, APLA's National President. All company directors were present at the meeting sitting on the platform alongside the chair. The chair provided some background to the proposed changes and gave all present the opportunity to speak in favour or against each of the special resolutions.

All who spoke from the floor did so from the heart. It was obvious from the meeting that members felt very strongly about the association and its roots, as well as its future direction.

Ultimately all three resolutions were carried.

The objective APLA now serves is to protect and enhance justice, equality, freedom, and the rights of the individual. Membership is open to those who subscribe to and advocate the objectives of the association. Applications for full membership are vetted by both the Branch Presidents and the National Council to confirm that applicants are acknowledged as subscribing to the association's objectives.

APLA will continue to focus on the rights of injured people and to promote safe workplaces, public places and products, but will gradually widen its interests and campaigning to take on our broader aims and objectives.

The changes will be gradual and considered. National Council and staff are dedicated to preserving the current standards of member services with a view to improving the benefits of membership of the association. No new services will detract from the existing standard of the journal, the excellence of APLA's conferences and other educational events.

The quality of APLA's services will not suffer. We will remain the premier provider of personal injury legal education. We will continue to run exciting and affordable conferences with relevant content and a sensational social program. We will continue to provide forums for our members to share information with like-minded colleagues and we will continue to lobby for a fairer justice system. *Plaintiff* will continue to provide pertinent information to its readers, though it will be reborn in full colour in 2004.

This is a very exciting time for the association and all those associated with it. We continue to grow and improve our service to members. We continue to be relevant as a lobby group, protecting the rights of those wronged at the hands of others. We look forward to growing in influence and collaborating with other organisations with similar goals.

APLA is standing strong in the face of the gradual collapse of our democratic system of government, where respect for the separation of powers seems a mere shadow of its true purpose. APLA still remains the only association of lawyers that is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the rights of the wronged individual and the only lawyers' association that will attack the government and corporate Australia for misusing its power and harming the ordinary Australian in its selfish pursuits.

In 2004 APLA turns 10. We hope you remain loyal to an association which exists to support the altruistic work you do. We hope you will all join us in Melbourne for next year's National Conference to celebrate APLA's tenth birthday. 