

Getting in on the act



By Eva Scheerlinck

I am in the fortunate position of having experienced this organisation from almost every conceivable angle.

In 1998 I was employed as the association's Media Officer in Melbourne, before the organisation moved its head office to Sydney. In 1999 I ventured into legal practice, accepting articles with a member firm, Ryan Carlisle Thomas. My involvement with APLA (as it was then) continued, however. I regularly contributed articles to the organisation's journal, and assisted in the planning and organising of CLE activities for the Victorian Branch. In 2000 I was nominated for the Victorian Branch Committee and was successfully elected.

As a first-year solicitor, I enjoyed my involvement on the committee enormously. My colleagues encouraged my involvement and valued my contribution. I was enthusiastic and wanted to participate. I got to meet senior people in the law and built great networks. I also learned valuable people skills, how to prioritise my different commitments and I also managed to have fun!

In 2001 I took up a position with APLA in Sydney, this time as Public Affairs Manager, before being appointed CEO in 2003.

I have been to this association's conferences as a delegate, a speaker and as an organiser. I have written for this journal as a volunteer and as a paid member of staff. I have contributed my ideas to the organisation's growth and considered the ideas of other members.

I am grateful for the opportunities this organisation has given me over the past seven years. I have met wonderful people, grown professionally and personally, and participated in an organisation that does important work. It has certainly stimulated my passion for justice, equal access to the courts, and the integral role and relevancy that the law can have in our society.

This opportunity is available to all of you. I encourage all members to engage with the work of the Australian Lawyers Alliance.

There are countless ways you can get involved: write for the journal, speak at a conference, join a committee, provide case studies or ideas. My experience has certainly been that being enthusiastic and wanting to contribute are warmly welcomed, and that any effort you're willing to make will be amply repaid in many different ways.

In April, members can engage in the organisation's future by nominating people for roles on branch committees

and the national board. Nominations for the position of director or office bearer are open to full members of the Australian Lawyers Alliance.

Nomination forms will be distributed to members soon, with nominations closing on 13 May 2005.

The organisation has gone through many changes in ten short years which, I believe, have made the organisation stronger, more resilient and more professional. These advances have largely come about from the ideas and hard work of elected office bearers.

Membership organisations such as the Lawyers Alliance are only as strong as the members who engage in it. As a not-for-profit organisation, we rely heavily on the good work and commitment of volunteers. In return, the organisation supports its members and recognises the contributions of volunteers and the value they add to its development and growth.

Get involved today – I guarantee you won't regret it! ■

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