

A winning combination – collaboration not self-interest

By Eva Scheerlinck



What makes the Australian Lawyers Alliance such a unique professional association is the willingness of the members to put aside competitive differences in the pursuit of justice for their collective clients.

The readiness to share valuable intelligence was the foundation on which the organisation was first established, and it continues to be a strong and undeniable thread running through its activities today.

The special interest group email lists are used by members for feedback on new legislative provisions, the use of experts, and to alert members to recently decided cases which could benefit colleagues in representing clients.

The special interest group meetings at Alliance conferences allow for a frank exchange of ideas and knowledge that in another setting could be viewed as the sharing of commercially sensitive information with competitors.

Each week's edition of *Australian*

Lawyers Alliance News (ALAN), our weekly email newsletter, is packed with information submitted by members. Again, the contributions of members to the content of ALAN each week are a testament to your unique enthusiasm to share information with colleagues that might lead to the loss of competitive advantage in the market but provides a worthwhile contribution to a larger aim.

Our members also refer experts used in litigation to the Alliance expert database. Entry onto our expert database is only possible via referral by a member, to ensure the integrity of the experts listed. Again, members are willing to share advice on experts used to support clients' claims with colleagues so that they too can benefit from these contacts.

The Alliance's policy and lobbying program also involves members intimately. Using your knowledge and experience, you collaborate to develop policy that strives for equitable outcomes for wronged individuals. Through cooperation members achieve expert positions on areas of the law where, as representatives of your clients, you are best placed to provide opinions and guidance to policy makers. Striving for better outcomes for your collective clients, you often put self-interest aside.

So what makes Australian Lawyers Alliance members so willing to put aside competitive differences? Perhaps you are motivated by the greater good; perhaps you can see the bigger picture. Perhaps you believe that what goes around comes around. Or maybe you see the scales of justice weighed in favour of those with the resources to finance litigation and draw it out until

the other side must withdraw for financial reasons; and that the only way to balance the scales is to share knowledge with likeminded practitioners aiming to protect the rights of individuals.

Whatever the motivation for Lawyers Alliance members' readiness to share with their colleagues, it highlights the heart that lies at the centre of the organisation and the spirit with which members represent their clients' interests.

I commend the membership for your ongoing commitment to collaborative endeavours that seek to create better outcomes for wronged individuals and encourage new members of the association to similarly engage in this worthwhile exercise.

The Australian Lawyers Alliance would like to thank Kassie James for her hard work and dedication in her role as Managing Editor of *Precedent*, and before that, *Plaintiff*, since July 2003. Kassie's two terms as Managing Editor have seen the journal transform into a truly professional 'must-read'. We wish Kassie well in her new endeavours. Meanwhile, we would like to thank Andrew Freer who was guest Managing Editor for this edition. Thank you, Andrew, for jumping in at the last minute. Ben Cochrane takes over as Managing Editor from the next issue which will focus on corporate responsibility and tort.

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