

# President's Report by Martyn Taylor

It goes without saying that the last 12 months have been somewhat insane.

- In my previous President's Report, we were just entering the bush fire season. The scale of the subsequent Black Summer fires was horrifying. I visited the small town of Mogo, south of Batemans Bay, in 2019 to take my girls to Mogo Zoo. A delightful little town filled with amazing craft shops. But fire swept through Mogo on New Years' Eve causing utter devastation. It was deeply emotionally distressing to see this. My heart went out to all those affected throughout Australia.
- Then we had the severe floods in February 2020 caused by Tropical Cyclone Damien. We wondering what else 2020 would throw at us. The answer was the first global pandemic in a hundred years, COVID-19.
- In January, we watched on Twitter as all China went into a severe lockdown. I watched the images coming out of Wuhan in China with horror, including a run on supermarkets and hospitals totally overrun. People literally dying in the corridors. Military in the streets. By April, the whole world was in lockdown.
- As a result, we have had the first Australian recession in some 30 years. Many around Australia in 2020 have been suffering, including a surge in unemployment and many businesses going under. We also faced the emergence of social distancing – and zoom video calls.

But through that hurricane of 2020 events, CAMLA has emerged relatively financially secure. We have continued to deliver high quality content to our members. We have kept operating and kept smiling.

So my objective as President for the last 12 months has been to ensure that CAMLA remains a vibrant, interesting and successful association for the benefit of media and communications lawyers.

Notwithstanding all the insanity that 2020 has thrown at us, we have again met this objective.

However, as I said last year, CAMLA is a voluntary organisation. CAMLA succeeds because we collectively make the effort to translate ideas into reality. We arrange high quality, relevant and interesting events. We produce a topical publication with outstanding content. We provide a forum for networking and sharing news. The more we each contribute, the more valuable CAMLA becomes as an association for us all.

So I can't say that CAMLA has fulfilled its objectives without mentioning the support of the great many people that have been heavily involved in CAMLA over the last 12 months. Those of you who have contributed your valuable time to make CAMLA the success that it is.

I thank you all from the heart.

However, in my role as President, it is also my prerogative to again bore you in one of the few speeches that you permit me to make over the year. However, I will try to keep this very succinct. So here goes...

I'll start with the most important people in CAMLA, namely all of the members of CAMLA.

We now have around 400 people who are current members. Our membership increased by around 15% over the year. This means CAMLA remains a relatively large association.

Around 20% of our membership are students and new lawyers, around 25% are standard individual memberships, and the remaining 55% are individual members through corporate memberships.

We now have some 30 firms and organisations who have corporate memberships, again a further increase on last year. This now includes a wide range of media companies, government agencies, law firms, industry associations, and content companies.

It is a credit to CAMLA that we have increased our memberships in a very difficult year. So many thanks to all of you for renewing your memberships and welcome to our new members.

However, in order to make a CAMLA membership worthwhile, it is absolutely imperative that we provide real value for money to our members.

In my view, we have done so over the last 12 months, assisted by many of our events being held for free to CAMLA members. I'll quickly take you through some of the highlights.

I'll next mention the CAMLA Board. We have had 17 members of the Board over the 2020 year. I could shower praise on each of you and you each certainly deserve that, but I would like to make special mention of those in the executive positions:

- First **Katherine Giles**, who has really had the hot seat as Treasurer and Public Officer. Over the last 12 months, she has successfully navigated our finances through the COVID economic crisis. This included initiatives to reduce cost to offset the reduced revenue. Special thanks Katherine for all your hard work.
- Next, the two CLB Editors, **Eli Fisher** and **Ashleigh Fehrenbach**. The content produced for the Communications Law Bulletin over the last 12 months has been truly outstanding. I will come to that in due course.
- Next, **Rebecca Dunn** who has performed an amazing role as Secretary in keeping the CAMLA tradition of well-organised meetings with high quality minutes and records. She has also assisted me in managing the many twists and turns of 2020. Many thanks Bec.
- Finally **Debra Richards** and **Ryan Grant**, who been the two vice Presidents of CAMLA for the last 12 months. Both of them have been instrumental in organising events. Many thanks both.

The executive roles on the Board are unchanged for 2021 although this will probably be my final term as President. To all 18 board members, including myself, welcome to the new Board. I also welcome Marina Olsen to the Board as a new Board member.

Next, I'd like to mention the CAMLA Young Lawyers Committee.

As you will know, CAMLA Young Lawyers is an official sub-committee of CAMLA. In 2020, that sub-committee comprised 17 young lawyers who represented the interests of young lawyers working in, or who have an interest in, communications and media law in Australia.

The contribution of the Young Lawyers Committee over the last 12 months has been outstanding. Myself and the Board have been impressed and very grateful for the time and effort of each of the members of the CAMLA Young Lawyers Committee and the very high quality of the contributions made.

Many of the events held over the last 12 months have been organised by the CAMLA Young Lawyers Committee. They are also responsible for several innovations, including the CAMLA podcast.

We very much welcome the continued participation of the CAMLA Young Lawyers Committee in board meetings and we again extend an invitation to the chair of the Young Lawyers Committee and two committee members to attend each CAMLA board meeting during 2021. Applications for membership of the new Committee for 2021 are due shortly. Please also encourage the Young Lawyers in your respective organisations to get involved.

I would like to give particular thanks to Calli Tshipidis for chairing the Young Lawyers Committee over the 2020 year and to Belyndy Rowe for acting as secretary. Calli has provided a copy of her report as Chair – and I'll hand to Calli next to give her overview as to what the Young Lawyer's Committee has been doing over the last year.

That brings me to the CAMLA Events.

We have held a record 10 events in the following year and I think almost all of these have been online:

- In February, the CAMLA Young Lawyers Networking Event
- In April, two seminars relating to the impact of COVID-19
- In June, a young lawyers event on prepublication

- In July, a webinar on the future of Australian content
- In August, a webinar on the future of defamation law and the Young Lawyers speed mentoring event
- In September, Minister Paul Fletcher gave an interesting address and he is giving a further address to CAMLA tomorrow
- Also in September, a further CAMLA Young Lawyers event on non-publication and suppression orders
- Earlier this month, a CAMLA Young Lawyers event on streaming services

We have received highly positive feedback in relation to each of these events. Many thanks to all of you who were involved. We had record attendances for many of these.

Our use of webinars has meant we have been able to serve our interstate membership base. I'm very keen going forward that we offer dual events that are both in person and online so we can continue to serve a wider community.

We have some opportunities in 2021 to hold some really great event, many of which are already being organised. The media and communications landscape in Australia continues to change rapidly. It is a very interesting time to be a media and communications lawyer.

That brings me to the Communications Law Bulletin. In my view the CLB Editors have again topped in 2020 the impressive record that they had set in 2019.

Many thanks to Eli and Ash for their incredible effort in very difficult circumstances. Many thanks particularly to Ash for continuing as CLB Editor from Oxford at a social distance of some 17,000 km.

In June 2020, we had a bonus edition of CLB in recognition of the fantastic content we have been receiving. In October 2020, we had a special edition focussed on the fashion industry.

For those of you that have not read the CLB over this year, you really should take the time to do so. The

content is interesting, relevant and insightful – and it is well worth the time to read.

Again, my hat off to our two editors, Eli Fisher and Ashleigh Fehrenbach. They have a difficult task in co-ordinating the CLB. They have both driven the CLB with huge energy and enthusiasm. The high quality of the CLB over the last 12 months is testimony to this. Many thanks to you both.

Of course, our huge thanks to Cath Hill for her incredible effort over the course of the last 12 months in keeping us all organised as the administrative secretary.

CAMLA would not function without the efforts of Cath and it makes it a lot easier for those of us on the Board to ensure CAMLA and the events that we hold work smoothly.

It has been such a difficult year on so many fronts and all of us are grateful to Cath for always being there to provide support. So my personal thanks Cath, as always – and I'm sure I have the full support of the CAMLA Board in conveying our deep thanks from the heart for all your work over the last 12 months in very difficult circumstances.

I'm not intending to spoil the excitement by giving too much away about our plans for the next 12 months - you will all just have to wait and see. We have plenty of great ideas.

The changes in the telecoms and media sector continue to provide many opportunities for interesting seminars and content.

For those of you involved in CAMLA - many thanks indeed from all of us and I look forward to working with you all over the next 12 months!



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