

APLA Victoria report

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APLA Victoria is going through a period of intense activity and is involved in the fight of its life with ongoing rumours that the WorkCover and Transport Accident schemes are to be further tampered with and in particular rumours of the abolition of common law rights.

Unfortunately, the Victorian government is not one which is big on consultation. Trying to deal with the government on these issues is a bit like shadow boxing - you don't always know what you are fighting. Having said that, we do know that a committee of backbenchers has been set up by government and that it has been having regular meetings with a view to making recommendations for further changes (read restrictions) to the compensation schemes.

APLA has therefore launched a "protect victims' rights" campaign and we have employed a full time co-ordinator, Lee Carmody, who is operating from our new office.

We have already held a briefing session for the Victorian Bar with the dual purpose of promoting APLA amongst the Victorian Bar who have been much slower to become involved in APLA than members of the Bar in other states.

We are also planning a series of country and suburban briefing sessions for solicitors, again to advise them of the possible changes but also to encourage them to lobby their local politicians and to become involved in APLA as the best way of protecting their clients' rights.

Finally, no campaign can work without sufficient funding. The generous donations of a couple of member firms have made employing Lee possible but more funding is needed for the publicity campaign that is being prepared. All donations can be sent to APLA Victoria, 367 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000.

The seminar programme is also continuing. The next seminar is to be held on 29th July, 1997 at Le Meridian at Rialto. It will again be a breakfast seminar held on a topic which has been much requested by our membership.

Dr. John Arranga, who practices as a lawyer in personal injuries law, will take participants on a step-by-step introduction to the AMA Guides. The seminar will be a technician's approach to the Guides. In other words, by the end of the seminar we hope you will understand the Guides in a way which will enhance your ability to maximise your clients' rating under the Guides which these days is all important, not just for potential common law claims but also to ensure your clients' livelihoods.

Details will be forwarded in the near future. Please book early as the numbers are limited and if demand is strong enough a larger venue can be booked.

The seminar programme for the rest of the year will be as follows:

September: recent developments in social security, health insurance and tax law and the impact of these changes on settlements.

November: developments in slipping cases and occupier's liability.

We are also beginning to plan next year's seminar programme and would appreciate suggestions from members.

Finally, our membership drive is continuing. Our aim this year has been to double our membership and we are well on the way to meeting this target. This target will be more than met if each member joins up at least one other member.

As you should know the APLA conference will be held again this October in Coolom: this year the conference will be members only. This is a great incentive to become a member. If this doesn't work, we suggest you lean on a barrister whom you brief regularly or join up another member of your firm or local colleague.

See you at the seminar!

Angela Sdrinis is President of APLA Victoria.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the "protect victims' rights campaign", please contact Angela Sdrinis on (03) 9238 7815 or Co-ordinator, Lee Carmody on (03) 9221 6204.

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