



**Mairéad Browne**

ALIA president

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## A Clayton's yearly round-up

It seems it is traditional for the president of a professional association to do an annual round-up of events highlighting the achievements of the past year and heralding the new president. But for me, this is not really possible. Certainly, I can talk about last year but as piggy-in-the-middle I have to hold-off the hand-over to the new president. This is because this presidential term straddles the old ALIA under Royal Charter and the new incorporated ALIA. So, I started my term as president under the Royal Charter on 1 January 2000 but will end as a president under Corporations Law on the date of the next AGM, which is in May 2001. So this Frontline is a bit inconclusive in terms of being retrospective on my term! Nonetheless, I shall share some perspectives on the year 2000 and save the rest for later.

So, what were the highlights in an action-packed ALIA year? Firstly there was the satisfaction of a very smooth change to incorporated status which was steered through magnificently by ALIA National Office. We had to go up-hill and down-dale a bit on the way there but in the end we moved into the new mode of operation very quickly and effectively.

Then there was the exhilaration of the National Policy Congress. The Board of Directors was a little apprehensive before the event given that we were in uncharted territory, but we were simply delighted by the outcomes which were far-reaching. Some were even what Sir Humphrey might have called 'courageous'. The enthusiasm of Congress delegates for change, their commitment to revitalising the Association as well as their confidence in the new Association was infectious. This provided the Directors with the optimism and energy that is needed to steer us through. Some of the recommendations of the NPC have been hard to translate into operational terms but with your help we are well on our way to a more flexible and member-friendly way of structuring and funding local-level activities. And there is a lot more of your ideas to implement — we are working on these.

As president I got to travel to branches and divisions all over the country. I was told

I would have a 'good time' and I certainly did. The meetings where I met members were, without exception, friendly and open and provided me with a really good feel for local issues. These meetings also showed how tuned-in our members are to the need for change and to creative ways we can achieve this. Thanks to all of you for the spirit you bring to these discussions.

The biennial conference in Canberra in October was, of course, a highlight. I felt a bit of a fraud from time-to-time as people passed on their congratulations on the quality of the program and the organisation of the event. After all, I did nothing directly on the organising side — I just wafted in at the last minute. But in thinking about it, I realise that the complements were not for me, or even the Board of Directors, but for the Association as a whole. We can be proud that as an Association we have the capacity to mount such a stimulating and well-organised conference. The Sydney 2002 Committee has a hard act to follow.

As for the Board, let me say how pleased I am with strategic directions adopted by the Board of Directors. We are working well as a Board, looking ahead and setting the broad parameters for our future. Implementing some of the priorities we have established will take a while, but I believe members will be very pleased with the new benefits and services which we will be 'rolling-out' over the next year. It means, of course, that we have to stop doing some things we currently do to release resources for new initiatives but the impacts will set the Association on a new footing with major improvements in what we do for our varied membership.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for the confidence you have placed in our capacity to steer the Association through the Renewal process. We are working very hard to demonstrate that your initial support was justified and to deliver a re-vitalised ALIA which is in tune with hugely changed times.

With best wishes for a good break over Christmas and New Year. And I hope to see many of you at the Online conference in January. ■