

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Annual General Meeting of Members Friday, 14 October 2016

This year has been most noteworthy in several significant respects.

It has been a year of intensive enterprise bargaining on a number of concurrent fronts in a different industrial environment to that of previous bargaining rounds and also one which witnessed the historic introduction of state legislation enacting nurse patient ratios.

This effectively removed ratios as a matter for future industrial negotiations via the enterprise bargaining system and which undoubtedly set VHIA on a new path.

The culmination of a Membership Engagement project leading to a plan for improved connectivity between VHIA and its members also evolved.

The modest industrial resources of VHIA were heavily stretched in the enterprise bargaining cycle that dominated the year. The political/industrial environment, though different from previous bargaining rounds, required an adjustment to bargaining methodologies, membership consultation, engagement and a differently nuanced management of relationships with the government and DHHS. This has resulted in several major agreements being settled without the trauma of industrial action and outcomes falling broadly within the wages policy parameters of the government.

Agreements reached, all having a Service Delivery Partnership Plan component are real potential for sustained focus on workplace improvements of a less controversial kind. VHIA will play a pivotal role in consolidating these arrangements which will require membership engagement in an unprecedented manner over the coming years. The current Reference Group consultative mechanisms will be essentially retained and enhanced to ensure the interests of VHIA members are maximised.

The legislation relating to nurse patient ratios came to pass in December 2015 after intensive collaborative work by VHIA, ANMF and DHHS. The legislation, among other things, requires health services to be fully compliant with the *Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Act 2015* by December 2016.

VHIA is working with DHHS and ANMF to ensure compliance challenges are resolved in a coherent, coordinated and collaborative manner. This is particularly necessary as the Government moves into the next phase of ratio improvement and extension by means other than industrial negotiation!

VHIA will make appropriate representations and submissions as part of that process in the coming year or so.

The governance arrangements of VHIA, its Charter and service commitments have been subjected to close scrutiny and discussion by the Board over many months which has, since the Membership Engagement Project, distilled a clear set of service principles and commitments which will be articulated to the membership and acted upon by the management and staff of VHIA.

The financial health of our organisation remains strong, indeed it has enabled the Board to determine that the current membership fee structure be frozen for this coming year.

The Members and all associated with VHIA wish President Dr Brendan Murphy every success in his new national role as the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer. Brendan's pivotal contribution to reshaping and refocusing VHIA is greatly appreciated and recognised. The Board commends and thanks him for his valuable contribution as President of VHIA over the past 3 years.

The Board also thanks Ms Kathy Huett for her six years, Mr Alan Lilly for his 3 years and Mr Nigel Fidgeon for his 4 years service to the Board and wish them every success in the future.

On behalf of the Board I also extend thanks to Mr. Simon Chant for his contribution to VHIA, his wise counsel and guidance is gratefully acknowledged. I thank Simon and wish him every success in his future career.

It is well known that the first and current CEO of VHIA, Alec Djoneff, a legend in the Industrial relations profession, has resigned after 22 years of service. Fittingly the Board and Alec came to a mutual agreement for him to be retained in a part time consultancy/advisory position which was deemed to be a win win outcome for all concerned.

As a result, the Board proceeded with a recruitment process to engage a replacement for Alec. Happily the process was successful and Mr. Stuart McCullough, the Advocacy Services Manager of VHIA, was appointed. His appointment has been met with enthusiasm and widespread approval from members and other stakeholders.

Welcome and congratulations Stuart.

I now conclude, in addressing what I can only describe as the water shed event of the year - the resignation of Mr Alec Djoneff as Chief Executive Officer of VHIA and which will witness his transition to retirement in a consultative/advisory role to extend over the next 2 years to which I have previously alluded.

Therefore, in closing it is my privilege to personally extol the virtues of Alec and the incredible contribution he has made to the Industrial Relations Governance of the Health Industry now values.

While from time to time we consider that our lot may have not always been the most desirable, one can only say thank you to Alec for ensuring that the employer in this industry has had a voice, a respected voice which has led to the respect we now appreciate with the Union movement.

While I am probably the longest serving member of the Board who has grown with Alec in fostering the welfare and concern for all spanning from my association with him when he was an Industrial Relations Advocate then working with the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) and initially acted as Advisor to the Minister for Health on industrial matters in the public health sector, through to the establishment of the Victorian Hospitals Industrial Association as we know it today.

It is quite humbling to find words to aptly describe Alec Djoneff's talents and skills and indeed recognise the knowledge which has enabled him to skilfully and strategically advance employment professionalism and integrity on our behalf.

We owe Alec Djoneff a great deal for what he has achieved which must be remembered, respected and appreciated. The recognition of his contribution to this industry must be recognised and endorsed at the highest level and this I believe was the case when the Board of the Victorian Hospitals Industrial Association deemed it proper to retain him in a consultancy/advisory capacity to ensure that his unique knowledge is not lost either to our organisation or the field generally.

Alec, I wish you well in your new role and on behalf of all Board Members and all associated with the Healthcare Industry in this State, I say Thank You!

Mr John Smith, PSM
Acting President
Victorian Hospitals' Industrial Association