

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
100TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
11TH APRIL 2019

Welcome to the 100th Annual General Meeting of the Institute. It is a great pleasure to present this address on the Gold Coast, a well-known destination for me growing up in Brisbane just up the road.

The last year, our Centenary year as an Institute, has been a special year in the history of our Institute.

First, we celebrated our Centenary with a terrific educational programme and also with great elegance illustrated by a dinner at the National Gallery of Victoria, supported by an exhibition showcasing our history. Second, we were successful in progressing a number of initiatives to the benefit of all members.

I'd like to reflect, if you'll allow me, on the Centenary and the opportunity it presented not only for celebration but also reflection and a potential reset on IPTA's strategy to engage with our members. This was no occasion to live in the past but rather the opportunity to build a platform for the future. The security of such a platform must begin and end with engagement with you: our members. We need to continuously work together on this project as it will be essential as intellectual property becomes more and more important to the economy and public sector interventions correspondingly become more likely and frequent. We live in a dynamic world and this is a good thing but it also requires a team approach to deliver the best outcomes for our clients through an IP system that is easy to access and is world class. We will need to work together to achieve this.

Such a team approach must necessarily take into account the changing business model and structure of our profession. 65% of our members, it has been reported, now work with listed entities. Many other members work in mid-tier and small firms and we have a significant number of individual practitioners. Our in house membership is growing and its increasing recognition through membership on Council is a terrific development. We have 2 Councillors and that will shortly increase to 3 Councillors. We must collect the lived experience of all our members, wherever they are, to provide the best outcome for all our members and our clients.

Demographically, there are some pleasing developments. Recent membership applications show an increasing number of younger members, many of whom are women. On Council, we are alert to the need for us to properly engage with all of our members but with a focus on younger members and increasing the involvement of women. To that end, our Future Directions committee – ably led by Andrew Jones and in whose activities I also take a keen interest – is working on initiatives including the development of a diversity and inclusion policy.

We have sought to do this with the valued contributions of members who have, rightly, been critical of some behaviours in the past. But we must move on and in an inclusive way. I look forward to seeing undoubted progress in this policy in the months and years ahead. I'll leave the important topic of working on Reconciliation for another day.

I also welcome, with enthusiasm, the increased engagement of our younger members and the work to progress YIPTA to a more prominent role in the governance of the Institute. A realistic ambition is to have a national YIPTA committee, with state branches quite possible for Queensland, NSW and Victoria with one, perhaps two, members becoming members of Council in the future. At the right time, the necessary Constitutional amendments to do this will be moved forward as you will see was done recently in a move to make part time engagement easier, make membership easier and properly recognise Trade Mark Attorneys. This is not a radical suggestion, many organisations are moving in this direction.

More generally, the Institute is working on Strategy and Vision since this will assist us to promote properly focussed service delivery. Council has taken note of the Survey results last year and there are several initiatives we are looking at, a range of which were discussed in detail at a Strategy meeting in Sydney in February. I have addressed inclusion above but there are other opportunities. We see the need to engage with members around Australia and on a more frequent basis as we are a national profession. We held a first such event in Brisbane on Tuesday night to draw on ideas our Brisbane members have for helping IPTA engage in a meaningful way.

I would now like to move to noting some significant successes in the last year. You knew I would do this! First, our efforts almost certainly delayed – and we hope halted – the abolition of the Innovation Patent System. While there are well intentioned criticisms of the system, there can be no question that a simpler mode of access to the patent system to many enterprises, especially SMEs and MSMEs, is needed. Even with access that is simple in principle, the 'day job' will still create barriers for them. I am sure that you will agree that one of the great challenges for innovation policy, and there are many, far too many to properly address today, is engagement of SMEs and MSMEs with the IP system. The IP system should be there to protect their hard earned investment in innovation in their businesses. The innovation patent system plays a major role, along with an easier to access trade mark system, by allowing protection of incremental innovation. I am grateful to Michael and Grant for their efforts in engaging with business and with IP Australia in opposing the abolition of the innovation patent system. There was little luck in this outcome. Make no mistake, had IPTA not opposed abolition, we would now be working through the wind down phase. Political events would not have become relevant.

Another really important initiative has been formation and operation of the Working Group on Manner of Manufacture. This group, ably led by Phil Gehrig, has done a great deal of work on engaging with IP Australia on the s 18(1)(a) issue. This has been a positive and improvements must surely come from this engagement. IPTA is not and will not be shy in making our presence felt in this important field of policy.

It affects every patent attorney, not just those working in the ICT sector though the bite may be sharper there. Thank you to Phil and the group.

I would also like to thank Janelle and John, in particular, for running a very solid webinar programme during the last year. Our educational focus is essential and should not go unrecognised.

I am now nearing the end of my address and would like first to recognise Jeremy Dobbin, our immediate Past President up to the meeting today. Jeremy has made a terrific contribution to Council, not least through co-ordinating IPTA's comprehensive response to the Productivity Commission review into the IP System, and I have a feeling he will continue to contribute to IPTA into the future. Many thanks Jeremy.

I would also like to thank Tracey, Katharine and Chris who are wonderful, efficient and hard-working members of the Secretariat. Nothing would happen without their efforts. They have also greatly helped me, in the context of what is now a very busy role as President, not to forget what should not be forgotten.

In closing, it has been a tremendous honour and privilege to have been your President for the last 2 years (which have gone extraordinarily quickly). I really wouldn't have missed a minute of it. I am grateful to all Councillors for their work as well as their support and encouragement. Michael, who will very shortly now be your new President, has been a fabulous Vice-President and we have worked well together on a range of initiatives some of which I discussed earlier. He will be a terrific President and much will happen.

As immediate Past President, I look forward to continuing to contribute, especially on our strategic initiatives. Thank you all for the greatest 2 years. Enjoy the rest of this terrific conference.

Thank you

Richard Baddeley
President