

CORONA VIRUS AND ACADEMY EVENTS

This pandemic has had serious effects on planned activities of the Academy.

We have had to postpone indefinitely the following events:

- the symposium on “Whistleblowers” that was to be held in Sydney last Wednesday evening 25 March 2020;
- the Michael Coper Roundtable to be held in Canberra this evening Wednesday 1 April;
- the annual Austin Asche Oration to be held in Darwin this Friday 3 April 2020;

The planning of other events, for example in Western Australia, had commenced but has had to be suspended.

We are still hoping to hold the annual Australian Academy of Science/Australian Academy of Law symposium in Sydney on Wednesday 19 August 2020 but the Organising Committee is reluctant to issue a flyer and register people to attend at this stage. The topic is *“The Reception, Quality and Evaluation of Expert Scientific Evidence in Australian Courts”*.

We have been particularly fortunate that The Hon Justice Virginia Bell AC of the High Court has agreed to chair the symposium.

At this stage I do not know who the two nominees of the Australian Academy of Science on the Panel of speakers will be, but again we are fortunate that The Hon Mark Weinberg AO QC and Mr Tim Game SC have agreed to be panellists.

A decision whether to issue a flyer and invite people to register will be taken in due course.

PUBLICATION OF A COLLECTION OF PAPERS AND SPEECHES OF THE HON ROBERT FRENCH AC

The Board resolved some time ago to publish a collection of the speeches and papers of former Chief Justice French.

Mr French was the Patron of the Academy during his term as Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia.



Like his predecessor and successor Chief Justices and Patrons, the Hon Murray Gleeson AC QC, and the Hon Chief Justice Susan Kiefel AC, Mr

French was a strong supporter of the Academy and its activities.

A committee of the Directors has had the oversight of the project and the editor is a long-time friend of Mr French, Professor Rob Pascoe, Professor of History at Victoria University.

The publisher is Federation Press.

The book will comprise 29 speeches and papers divided into ten sections according to subject matter.

Each section will be introduced by a person who is well known in the particular subject area.

Present indications are that the work will be published in July.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Prizes Committee

(Chair: Professor Bee Chen Goh)

The Board has approved of the topic for the Annual Essay Prize and of a change to the rules on eligibility.



The topic is:

“The impact of a new and widespread contagious disease on pre-existing contractual obligations.”

Note: Earlier “new” outbreaks of infectious diseases may be taken into account.”

The change to the rules relating to eligibility reflects a more targeted approach, which, it is hoped, will encourage recent law graduates to submit essays.

To that end, the Board has amended rules 2 and 3 of the Annual Essay Prize Rules as follows:

2. The Prize is open to anyone, wherever resident, who possesses a recognised legal qualification suitable for legal admission purpose in any jurisdiction obtained not more than eight years prior to the closing

date for the submission of essays. A copy of the relevant testamur or equivalent documentary evidence must accompany the essay submission.

3. Apart from Rule 2, there is no limit by reference to the age or seniority or experience of, or position held by, a person who may submit an essay.

A copy of the notice of the offering of the Prize is [attached](#). Please make it known to those who, you think, may be interested to submit an essay.

While the Annual Essay Prize of \$10,000 is the most significant prize awarded by the Academy, there are two other annual prizes, each of \$1,500.

One is the prize for the best presentation at the Annual ANZ Law Honours Conference held at UTS every December.

The other, which was offered for the first time last year, is the Michael Coper Memorial Prize for the Best Paper Presentation at the annual conference of the Australian Law Students' Association (ALSA).

Last year that Conference was held on 10 July 2019.

We have just learned that, unfortunately, the ALSA Conference for this year has been cancelled on account of the corona virus, and so that Prize will not be awarded this year.

Membership Committee

(Chair: Justice Alan Robertson)

This Committee has met once so far this year and its recommendations to the Board were approved by the Board on 17 March 2020. In the result, letters of invitation have been sent to seven invitees, the responses to which will soon be received.

At the date of this Newsletter the Academy has 376 members comprising:

- 354 Fellows;
- 14 Overseas Fellows; and
- 8 Life Fellows.



Finance Committee

(Chair: Justice John Digby)

The AAL Finance Sub-Committee continues to manage the Academy's strong financial base. Even in these especially challenging times the Academy is increasingly focused on funding more annual projects throughout Australia, consistent with its educative purposes.



Website and Communications Committee

(Chair: Mr Michael Murray)

The Academy is pleased to announce that we have a new website, which is still at the same link of www.academyoflaw.org.au with a new 'look' and added features.



The new site has been the result of a period of assessment, consultation and development in order to ensure that it will have the potential to meet the Academy's needs in the future. Obviously, it is important for the Academy to have an accessible and informative website.

The site has been created professionally. Many of its features can be developed further according to the Academy's needs. The website has the capacity for new features including a rotating banner of current news and events, profiles of the Academy's Fellows, and introductions of new Fellows. As well, it has an increased capacity to communicate details of the Academy's publications and events, the various Prizes that it offers and other matters of interest to the legal community and the general public. Details of the Academy's directors and its various committees, its charity status and statutory reports, and its other governance arrangements will also be accessible on the site.

The Academy's secretariat, Ms Susan Jenkins, has provided much assistance in the development of the new website and now in the updating of it and the realisation of its full potential.

Views and suggestions of Fellows and other users of the website are invited. They can be communicated to the Chair of the Committee, Michael Murray, at Michael@murrayslegal.com.au.

Governance Committee

(Chair: Professor Gino Dal Pont)



The Governance Committee was established in the wake of last Year's AGM. It has sought and received pro bono legal advice relating, inter alia, to matters touching its status as a charity and its forthcoming DGR status (upon the passing of the necessary legislation). The Committee maintains a watching brief over changes to the Academy's Constitution that would be desirable. It is investigating:

- the provision of an "induction pack" for directors and the preparation of an annual report; and
- matters of documenting process and record keeping.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Lindgren".

Kevin Lindgren
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