

Minutes of QLS Annual General Meeting 2020

Date:	9 December 2020	Time: 5:02–5:35pm
Location:	Auditorium, Level 2 Law Society House, 179 Ann Street, Brisbane	
Ordinary Members Present:	President Luke Murphy (Chair), Deputy President Elizabeth Shearer, Vice President Kara Thomson, Councillor Chloe Kopilovic (5.11pm), Councillor Kirsty Mackie, Councillor Rebecca Pezzutti, Councillor Phil Ware, Councillor Justin McDonnell, Ms Karen Simpson, Ms Georgia Athanasellis, Mr Bruce Doyle (QLS President 2012), Mr Timothy O'Dwyer, Ms Kate Pidgeon, Mr Simon Playford (5.11pm), Ms Mary-Louise Shearer and Councillor Bill Munro (5.20pm).	
Online Attendees:	Councillor Michael Brennan, Ms Jessica Brake, Ms Minnie Hannaford, Mr Ross Lee, Ms Zoe Navarro, Ms Storm Scarlett and Mr Eugene White (5.27pm).	
Guests in attendance:	Mr Carlo Silipo (in person)	
QLS Staff Present:	Mr Rolf Moses (CEO), Mr Matt Dunn, Mr Stafford Shepherd, Ms Louise Pennisi (Corporate Secretary), Ms Megan O'Brien, Ms Felicity Culnane, Ms Libby Ellem, Mr Jason Olsson-Seeto, Ms Leanne Perry (CFO), Ms Sandra Pepper and Ms Leanne Hughes.	

1. AGM BUSINESS

5.02pm – OPENING:

President Luke Murphy: My name is Luke Murphy and I have pleasure in welcoming you all to the 92nd Annual General Meeting of the Queensland Law Society.

I will be chair for today's meeting and I thank you for your attendance both in person and more significantly virtually, the first time in QLS history.

I note that it is now 5:02pm, due notice of the meeting has been given and a quorum of at least 15 members is present in accordance with our Society Rules.

Firstly, in keeping with our commitment to First Nations Culture it is important to acknowledge the First Nations Peoples as the original inhabitants, owners and custodians of the land on which this meeting is taking place here in Meanjin. We recognise the remarkable country north and south of the winding Brisbane River, home of the Turrbul and Jagera nations. Following cultural protocol, we pay our deep respects to all Elders past, present and emerging, as they hold the memories, traditions and culture of this land. I extend my respect to all other First Nations Peoples who may be present and acknowledge the traditional inhabitants, owners and custodians of the lands and Country you are joining us today.

2. RECORDING OF PROCEEDINGS

For the purpose of Rule 80 of the *Legal Profession (Society) Rules 2007*, I advise we will be both audio and video recording proceedings and the Minutes will be taken by the Society's Corporate Secretary, Ms Louise Pennisi.

3. APOLOGIES

We have received one apology from:

- Immediate Past President Bill Potts

There are no other apologies to record.

4. PROXIES

No proxies were received by the due date for this meeting.

I remind all present that only full members are entitled to vote so any Honorary, Student or Associate Members present, are not eligible to vote.

5. MEETING PROCEDURES

I will now run through our meeting procedures.

In accordance with Rule 68(1) of the *Legal Profession (Society) Rules 2007* provides that the Chairperson of a General Meeting is responsible for the general conduct of the meeting and for the procedures to be adopted at the meeting.

I propose to conduct the meeting in accordance with the Agenda set out in the Notice dated 6 November 2020. The Agenda has been prepared in accordance with the *Legal Profession (Society) Rules* and copies of the Agenda are available online, if you don't already have one.

As this is the first AGM where we have members joining us both online and in person, to ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate, voting will be conducted using slido on your mobile, laptop or tablet device

Displayed on the screen are instructions on how to access slido:

- Go to [slido.com](https://www.slido.com)
- Enter the code qlsagm2020.

Is there anyone who is yet to logon? Or anyone who requires any assistance to do so. (Silence)

For completeness, to accurately tally the online votes, we do require you all to provide your full name, email address and full member status.

Please note your individual personal details will not appear in the voting – voting results will be displayed in the aggregate without personal identification.

With respect to the resolutions and their consideration at the meeting, I will adopt the following general procedure:

- I will read and introducing in turn, each resolution and whilst not required strictly by the Rules, I will ask for a member to second the motion.
- I will invite comments from the membership and I ask that if you wish to address the meeting to please raise your hand if you are in person OR if you are online, please unmute and speak.
- I will then proceed to a vote utilising slido.
- Once a motion is determined, the Society's Corporate Secretary will advise the outcome and we will move to the next item on the Agenda.

Are there any questions at all? *No*

The first order of business is confirmation of the minutes of the last AGM.

6. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

5.08pm – The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 11 December 2019 are available on the website.

Are there any questions regarding the Minutes? *No*

Can I have a mover that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 11 December 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record?

*Moved by: Councillor Kirsty Mackie
Seconded by: Mr Bruce Doyle (QLS President 2012)*

Please raise your hand in person or unmute your mic if anyone would like to speak to this resolution. *Nil*

We will now move to a voting using slido.

By now you should have the first motion in front of you.

Motion 1: That the minutes of the AGM held on 11 December 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record. Please indicate if you are in favour, not in favour or wish to abstain.

Counting the vote, in total we have:

15 in favour
0 against
4 abstain

I **DECLARE** that motion carried.

The second item on the Agenda.

7. RECEPTION OF ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

5.10pm – The *Financial Accountability Act 2009* and Rule 76 of the *Legal Profession Rules* require Council to keep proper accounts.

The *Financial Accountability Act*, also requires the Auditor-General to audit the Society's accounts.

The Auditor General has provided the report about the certified the Financial Statements as required by the *Financial Accountability Act*.

The Annual Report for 2019-20, contains the financial statements as well as an overview of our year's activities, it has been available for inspection and accessible on the Society's website.

I should also inform the meeting that the Society's Chief Financial Officer, Leanne Perry is present in person to elaborate on any financial issues arising out of the Society's finances.

I table the Annual Report and Financial Statements for financial year ending 30 June 2020.

Are there any questions about the Annual Report or the Financial Statements? *Nil*

(Councillor Chloe Kopilovic and Mr Simon Playford joined the meeting at 5.11pm).

I ask that someone move that the 2019-20 Annual Report and the Financial Statements of Council for the year ended 30 June 2020 be received by this Annual General Meeting?

Moved by: Councillor Chloe Kopilovic
Seconded by: Councillor Phil Ware

Please raise your hand in person or unmute your mic if online if you would like to speak to this resolution. *Nil*

We will now move to a vote using slido.

Motion 2: That the 2019-20 annual report and financial statements of Council for the year ended 30 June 2020 be received. Please indicate if you are in favour, not in favour or wish to abstain.

Counting the proxies vote, in total we have:

18 in favour
0 against
3 abstain

I **DECLARE** that motion carried.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

The Secretary has advised me there is no notice of any other business.

Do members have anything they wish to raise in general business? *Nil*

If not, will you indulge me to say a few words?

9. PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

Following my confirmation as the President elect of the Society for 2020, a number of people asked what is it that I wanted for 2020 QLS Council to achieve or somewhat will be the 2020 Council's legacy?

It is fair to say I think that nobody could ever have imagined that the achievements of the 2020 Council and Society would be what they are and I say with a great deal of pride that those achievements are significant.

Those achievements have only occurred as a result of an enormous effort by all Councillors and the hard work of our volunteer committee members and QLS staff. It goes without saying that efforts of Councillors, Committee members and QLS staff in most years are deserving of recognition but this years combined efforts in responding to the diverse challenges we confronted are simply extraordinary.

The fact that Council which usually meets seven times in a calendar year held its sixth meeting on 27 April tells a lot. All Councillors made a significant commitment and contribution to ensuring the Society's response to COVID-19 was one that supported our members and enabled them to continue to serve their communities.

The Society's response objective was to keep as many of the professions doors open so that the vast majority of our profession could continue to provide legal services to their communities. This was achieved through financial assistance in reduction in fees and rebates on insurance levies through the provision of complimentary advisory panels to ensure informed considered business decisions would be made and through professional outreach by way of firm visits and telephone calls to practitioners touching base, checking in and ensuring there was an awareness of the support that was available.

I would like tonight to acknowledge the exceptional work of the QLS Finance team in providing us with the timely data and statistics that allowed Council to make informed decisions and also the efforts the Practice Ethics and Guidance team for their care and consideration of our members in their outreach.

I should also acknowledge the support of the Board and Management of Lexon Insurance and the Queensland Law Foundation without which the Society's support package could not have been possible.

The demands in addressing the COVID-19 requirements also meant that the work of our Advocacy, Guidance and Governance departments in promoting good law for the public good has never been more necessary nor more evident. The Society employees worked tirelessly in ensuring the requests of the Department of Justice and Attorney General were accommodated. They were of course very ably assisted by a number of our policy committee volunteers who gave of their time without hesitation to ensure that the Government's response to COVID-19 addressed the issues our profession faced. The work done, the advice given and the assistance provided all at such short notice over a sustained period of many months by so many of our members and employed policy solicitors was simply extraordinary.

There was also then other members and policy solicitors who participated in weekly and quite regularly biweekly meetings with other stakeholders. They addressed issues that initially seemed insurmountable but which with the spirit of cooperation and collaboration that was so willingly embraced by all were overcome. Again a truly phenomenal effort on the part of all. During the same period there was also regular constructive engagement with the District Law Associations to ensure all regional practitioners were better informed and to provide an avenue through which local issues could be addressed. This engagement has had very positive benefit for the entire profession.

As a result of all of this extraordinary work and most importantly for the Society and the profession we have been gifted a once in a generation opportunity for the Society to better engage with our members and other legal stakeholders.

It is this opportunity that our Society and our profession should be most excited about. It is an opportunity that the Society has begun to seize and in doing so, our profession will benefit.

One of early opportunities that the Society adopted was to fast track the launch of Proctor online. This has been a wonderful success and continues to build momentum. This is due to the efforts of the Society's communications, marketing, business development and public affairs teams and most excitingly we have only just scratched the surface. The potential for this electronic publication is enormous, particularly when it is so ably supported by the Society's Information and technology teams who have done a fantastic job in enabling this development.

That change was very quickly followed by others in particular the provision of virtual Practice management courses, and Specialist accreditation courses both are inspiring examples of the Society and the profession seizing an opportunity, and embracing innovation and new ideas. They have served us well and the Society's education department and membership services should be thanked for them.

(Councillor Munro joined the meeting at 5.20pm).

Very fortuitously the Council is developing its Strategic Plan for 2021 to 2025. Council has embraced this process and adopted an intensive engagement process working closely with senior QLS staff on working groups to identify the issues that will be the focus of our Society's work over the next 5 years. It goes without saying that those issues have been

heavily influenced by our COVID-19 experiences. This work will further enhance what has already begun to be implemented.

That includes further strengthening the relationships that were formed or enhanced through the COVID-19 response efforts. There were new lines of communication opened or lines of communication fortified with the Attorney and her Department, other Government departments, the leadership of the courts, the court administrators and with other legal service stake holders. The Society must continue to work at maintaining these lines of communication and to identify issues that need to be addressed and solutions that may do so. They have worked well so far assisting in taking initial steps to advance government programs like the implementation of electronic filing processes in the State courts and in agreeing priorities with our new Attorney that we agreed to work co-operatively for the benefit of the profession over the next four years of government.

Our membership engagement has also in recent months been further strengthened. We have held eight recognition ceremonies for our 25 year and 50 year members. These events were held throughout QLD, in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Toowoomba as well as one in Brisbane. We presented 31, 25 year pins and seven, 50 year pins. Each event was a wonderful occasion enjoyed by all but particularly by the pin recipients and their families. We were able to gather in each centre as a group of senior members of our profession to celebrate and recognise publicly the significant contribution that our members make not only to our profession but to their local communities.

I left each event convinced that most organisations in our local communities could simply not function without the ongoing voluntary contribution that solicitors make to them, it is inspiring and it is worthy of more public recognition.

These events were also an opportunity to further strengthened our engagement and support of the District Law Associations and other legal profession support organisations. This is something that we will continue to work on and that it forms a central pillar of our next strategic plan.

Our engagement with the profession also extends to the extraordinary and thankless work carried out by the Society's regulation department who work with our members to assist them in ensuring compliance with our statutory obligations. This department is very often the face of the Society to many of our members and they have worked extraordinarily hard in implementing programs that will better protect our professions reputation and will enhance the Society's standing in the eyes of our profession and for their efforts they are more often than not the subject of ill-informed criticism and are rarely thanked. Their work is much appreciated and it is a pleasure to publicly thank this evening.

We have also in recent weeks launched our Future Leaders Committee which was very enthusiastically embraced by our future leaders and it is a pleasure to have many of the committee members here with us this evening.

(Mr Eugene White joined the teleconference at 5.27pm)

We have also launched our new First Nations Cultural Strategy, and a new Sexual Harassment training program which has created significant interest in the local profession.

Ladies and gentlemen there is a lot happening, it is all very positive, the Council and Society are excited at the opportunities that are now available and will continue to seize them and to build on the wonderful work that has been undertaken this year.

Can I also before I finish express our thanks to our Immediate Past President Bill Potts. Bill will attend his last Council meeting tomorrow, virtually and also his last executive meeting next week. Bill has for 9 years now worked tirelessly for the benefit of the Society and the profession. It is a pleasure to express on behalf of the profession our thanks and appreciation to Bill for his significant contribution. His wise guidance and counsel based on years of experience in practice and on the Society's Council will be missed. I ask you to join me in acknowledging Immediate Past President Bill Potts contribution in the usual way.

Finally can I also just formally thank Deputy President Elizabeth Shearer, Vice-President Kara Thomson and all Councillors for their support and contribution to what can only be described as a somewhat taxing but exciting year.

Thank you.

10. CLOSE

Before I formally close the meeting, is does anyone else wish to address the floor?

5.29pm - Deputy President Elizabeth Shearer addressed the floor.

Deputy President Elizabeth Shearer. 2020 is a year we will always remember. "Unprecedented." "A year like no other," with the only comparison being times of war, or the pandemic of a century ago.

Of course, as lawyers we know that few events are truly unprecedented - it's just a matter of hard work and using our skills and judgment to discern the correct precedent and find the best way forward.

How fortunate then, we have been, to be lead in this year by Luke Murphy, certainly a man for the times.

It's a year when we have needed exactly the leadership qualities that Luke possesses.

The job of the president always requires hard work. But this year the demands have been truly unrelenting. Luke's prodigious capacity for hard work has been put to good use in the interests of QLS and our members.

His calm and considered approach and his sound judgement has ensured that QLS has made good decisions in a year where we could easily have been blown off course.

His collaborative approach and focus on building strong relationships have created enormous good will for the Society and, combined with his unfailing good humour, have made working with him a privilege for all of us who have had that opportunity.

If we search for a precedent from times of war, I think we can find some resonances in Australian's wartime Prime Minister, John Curtin.

The attack on Pearl Harbour occurred two months after Curtin became prime minister, soon after followed by the bombing raids on northern Australia. Curtin had to make decisions about how to chart a course during times of existential threat. In his pivotal speech in December 1941 he said "we shall exert all our energies towards the shaping the plan, which

will give to our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy”.

This is the same path taken by our QLS President in 2020, who, two months into his presidency was tasked with leading us, in consultation with our allies, to develop a plan that would assist our branch of the profession to hold out through 2020. He did this with similar success to our war time prime minister.

There is also resonance in that Curtin's leadership skills and personal character were recognised and acclaimed by his political contemporaries and he enjoyed great electoral success. Luke's leadership skills and personal character have been recognised not only by those of us who have worked with him in Queensland, but also by his peers nationally, with his election to the executive of the Law Council of Australia for 2021.

Of course, unlike, Curtin, who sadly did not survive his prime ministership, Luke has survived.

If Nietzsche was right, and that which doesn't kill you makes you stronger, Luke will start the New Year very strong indeed.

Just as John Curtin is cited as one of Australia's great prime ministers, Luke Murphy will be cited as one of the Queensland Law Society's great presidents who lead the Society in a year when there was much more work than play. He met the challenges of the times with good grace and without complaint, rolled up his sleeves and got on with it. For this, he has earned our respect and gratitude for his service, and I would ask you to join with me in thanking him for his service.

President Murphy: Elizabeth, thank you very much. I should say though, that I certainly could not have done it without the support of the Council and also other wonderful leadership of the QLS in particular out CEO Rolf Moses, with whom it has been a great pleasure to work.

Before I formally close the meeting, does anyone else wish to address the floor? (*Silence*)

In closing, I note that all of the business set out in the notice of the meeting has been conducted and that there is no further item of business to be raised.

Thank you very much to everyone for your attendance today.

There being no further business I formally close the 92st Annual General Meeting of the Queensland Law Society at 5.35pm.

Elizabeth Shearer
Queensland Law Society – 2021 President