



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



President's Message

In the wake of the current coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak we have a momentous announcement to make – the planned 2020 MLAANZ Annual Conference, scheduled to be held in Perth (Western Australia) in October, will be postponed to 2021.

The decision to postpone the conference was made by the board of MLAANZ at a meeting late last week after careful consideration of then-available information. Further developments over the past week – including the World Health Organization's characterisation of the coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic – have affirmed this to be a prudent decision.

Apart from the obvious health risks associated with large gatherings in the current climate, there is a financial side to the decision. The currently-forecast reductions in air travel for the balance of the year – with many organisations placing restrictions on long-distance air travel by their employees – mean the originally-projected attendance numbers for a MLAANZ conference in Perth in October would be unlikely to be achieved. There is a risk that an annual conference this year would incur a large financial loss.

This will be the first year in the 47-year history of our association without an annual conference and we regret any inconvenience or disappointment this decision will cause for any of our members.

In place of the annual conference, the board will be encouraging each of our major branches to consider holding additional events, which in some cases may take the form of one-day mini conferences, during the October-November 2020 period. The idea will be to focus on smaller regional gatherings that will assist members to attain Continuing Professional Development points, but which don't involve significant air travel during this potentially turbulent timeframe.

We will notify you of proposed new dates for a postponed annual conference in Perth in 2021 as soon as they are determined.

Should any member wish to discuss this decision please feel free to contact me (my details are set out at the foot of this message).

Whilst on the topic of coronavirus, a number of people connected with MLAANZ appeared this week on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Business Report program talking about the effect of COVID-19 on shipping. See <https://www.abc.net.au/news/programs/the-business/2020-03-09/virus-crisis-leads-to-big-fall-in-shipping/12040550>.

Upcoming Mini Conferences

Preparations are well advanced for the maritime law mini conferences being held later this month under the auspices of our New South Wales and New Zealand Branches.

The Sydney event will take place at the offices of Mills Oakley from 2pm on Friday March 20. This will feature presentations by Justice Angus Stewart (Federal Court of Australia), Stuart Hetherington (Colin Biggers & Paisley) and Matthew Harvey SC (Victorian Bar).

The New Zealand Branch's conference will be held in Wellington at Parliament House, in the Legislative Council Chamber and the Grand Hall over March 26 and 27. There will be an array of speakers drawn from a wide cross-section of our New Zealand membership.

It is not too late to book a place at either conference – this can be done via the links you will find on the MLAANZ Website. We wish everyone participating in these events safe, happy and successful conferencing.

MLAANZ Submission on Judicial Sale of Ships

On March 2, MLAANZ forwarded a submission to the Australian Attorney-General's Department providing comments on upcoming Judicial Sale of Ships deliberations for a UNCITRAL meeting in New York in April. A copy of this submission can be viewed via the [MLAANZ Website](#).

The submission contained the comment that: "The views expressed in this letter are the result of consultations with a limited number of MLAANZ members who have subject matter familiarity – experience with judicial sale of ships. We are continuing to consult with our broader membership and will keep you informed of any additional viewpoints that emerge." Should anyone wish to inject additional views into the process, please feel free to forward them to me.

News from Around the World

In this edition of *Semaphore* you will find recent articles drawn from United States shipping media on wreck salvage, limitation of liability and the meaning of the word "vessel". These topics are perennial favorites for many of our members. We also cover comments from Japan's Foreign Minister on the importance of paying due respect to international maritime laws. These comments were made during an address to the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta in January.

Other News

Closer to home, we republish articles from the newsletter of the Australian Association for Maritime History on a Review of the 1942 "HMAS Yarra disaster" and from the Shipping Australia Annual Review 2019. In the latter story, representatives of Holding Redlich discuss the topic: "Blowing the Whistle on Cartel Cases". We also profile recent newsworthy transport law developments at the Sydney law firm Norton White.

If other members have similar informative news stories you would like to put forward for future publication in *Semaphore*, we would be happy to receive your submissions.

Finally, please join me in welcoming the following new members to MLAANZ:

- Ellen Pen (Norton Rose Fulbright, Perth)
- Kendall Messer (Hall & Wilcox, Perth)
- Glenn Kolomeitz (Cardinal Strategic, Gerroa NSW)
- Ifeoma Obi (University of Tasmania)
- Gary Coveney (Barrister, Brisbane)

We hope you enjoy this edition of *Semaphore*.

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