



*Supporting and transforming the community of dispute resolution practice  
By providing leadership, direction and growth*

ABN 75 535 099 840 ADRA is not registered for GST

ADRA acknowledges the traditional owners of this land and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Meeting started at 5.00 pm.

Guests: Terry Sheahan

Attendance:

Apologies:

1. **Approval of the Minutes** from AGM on 22 August 2023

Moved:

Seconded

2. **President's Report: 27 AUGUST 2024 AGM**

27 AUGUST 2024 marks ADRA's 38th AGM and the end of my term as the current President of ADRA.

a. **Website**

Upgrade: 2024 has been a very productive year for the upgrade of the ADRA website and for the initiation of ADRA's Inaugural International Conference. We are delighted that the membership applications and renewals and the accreditation and reaccreditation applications that began the automation process in 2022 have been very successful and generated more income with which we were able to hold the Inaugural International Conference. Tony and Kristan from Trender have done an excellent job and continue to do so with the monitoring of the website. We have also completed the *Find a Mediator* project where ADRA members who cannot afford a website of their own, can create a profile equivalent to a website on the ADRA platform. The *Find a Mediator Platform* not only has the potential to generate income for ADRA but also to make it easier for the public to *Find a Mediator*. ADRA will be refining this aspect of our website in the following Year.

*Security measures:* ADRA's control of the Website appeared to seriously come under threat earlier this year when an **informal position** of **Social Media Officer** was created by the Board specifically for the sole purpose of marketing ADRA's Inaugural International Conference. It was always clear from the start the

Board's intention was to cancel the role of the **Social Media Officer** after the conference. Once the position was filled, the Social Media Officer (SMO) was given the settings to access the "back-end" of the Website to enable the marketing of the ADRA conference on various sites.

***Unbeknown to our IT officers, Kristan Bekus and Tony Enderby of Trender and without the authority of the Board***, the SMO **changed the security settings with which they were entrusted** so that the security numbers for access only came to their mobile phone. *This had the result that the SMO alone had control over access to ADRA's Website, its account with Google, and Zoom.* This action was only discovered in early February by Trender. Both Kristan Bekus and Tony Enderby had asked the SMO to share the security settings with them several times and after about 3 weeks of excuses, Trender alerted me as President, to the problem.

My requests to the SMO to share the settings were similarly met with obfuscation. ADRA could not call meetings as the SMO had administrative access to ADRA's Google workspace account which was responsible for ADRA's email exchange, and the SMO also had administrative access to ADRA's Zoom account with which we held monthly meetings. The SMO's access to Google and Zoom occurred at a time when ADRA needed consistent flow to its emails in order to launch the marketing of the International Conference. Thinking that our Accreditation Officer, Geoff Charlton had a warm relationship with the SMO, I asked Geoff to call the SMO to request the release of the security settings on the weekend before the planned launch. He tried by leaving a message both verbally and via Messenger.

The result was emails and text messages from the SMO, accusing myself, Geoff and others on the Board of bullying and harassing them at a time when there was personal stress in their lives - a fact that was unbeknown to me, Geoff and to the ADRA Board when the SMO was asked to share the settings.

Trender was then instructed to find ways to get around the SMO's control over ADRA's IT assets so that we could continue with business as usual and find alternate ways of marketing the conference. This they managed to do over the following two weeks at an additional cost to ADRA and a delay to the launch of the marketing of the International Conference. At every step, the SMO was given an opportunity to explain their actions, and, on every occasion, they came up with reasons why they should not and/or could not explain. After a series of special meetings were held by the Governance Committee and the Board of

ADRA, to address the situation and decide whether to continue with the International Conference, it was resolved to continue with the conference and to immediately cancel the position of the *Social Media Officer*.

To counteract such actions from happening again, Trender prepared an ***IT Code of Conduct*** primarily for anyone gaining access to the backend of ADRA, but also to include behaviour expected from any member of ADRA whether on the Board or not, to behave only in ways that enhance ADRA's wellbeing and good functioning. The updating amendments of this Code of Conduct commenced by the current Board are now being incorporated into ADRA's Constitution and Governance Manual which will be completed by the incoming Board of Management. The enhancements will also involve a tick-box approach for future members and renewal of membership so that every member of ADRA agrees to work WITH THE BOARD for the good governance of ADRA and not act in a solo capacity for what they believe is in the best interests of ADRA.

Unfortunately, the previous SMO's apparently questionable behaviour continued during the time of nominations for the 2024 Board when again, without authority and against the provisions of the Constitution, the previous SMO nominated 12 people for the ADRA Board in the last two hours of the cut-off date and time of 5.00 pm on 12 July. A Governance Committee special meeting was held on 18 July 2024 to which Trender was also invited to discuss this anomaly and it was resolved to make future nomination forms more explicit **so that each candidate nominates themselves only, as has been the practice in the past**. It was also resolved that the current nominations emanating from the previous SMO's computer, including their own nomination, were to be disqualified once it was confirmed **that at least two of the twelve nominees did not give their consent to be nominated and that it was against their express wishes to be nominated**.

When Geoff as the Returning Officer sought to contact the SMO to discuss their apparently questionable behaviour about why 12 nominations came from their computer whilst they were logged in during the specified times, the previous SMO again refused to return his call and again accused Geoff of bullying and harassing and referred to their contacting their lawyer.

Instead of explaining their unusual behaviour in nominating others or offering an explanation about why they did not share the settings with which they were entrusted to do the marketing of the Conference, the previous SMO expressed a wish to be sent the AVL link to participate as a member of ADRA in the ADRA

meeting held on **Tuesday 23 July**. When they were informed that the Governance Committee specifically directed them not to attend until they could explain what appeared as very questionable behaviour as the previous SMO who was a Board member, they totally ignored the direction, managed to receive a link, and attended the recorded meeting as if they had never caused any difficulty at all for ADRA.

Whatever the reason for the previous SMO's apparent lack of insight into the on-going difficulty they created for ADRA, they do not seem to be prepared to take responsibility for their actions which is what the Governance Committee and the Board of ADRA has repeatedly requested and given them many opportunities to do so.

It was a unanimous decision of the Governance Committee on 18 July that the previous SMO's behaviour remains questionable to date and until such time as they can explain their actions without what appears to be threatening references to lawyers, doctor's advice, and/or various bits of legislation, and referring to perceived threats of bullying and harassment, the previous SMO can remain an ADRA member but cannot participate as an ADRA Board member nor can attend any Board meeting. Although the current Board did everything possible to finalise this matter, unfortunately it will be left for the incoming Board to finalise it.

I wish to particularly thank Tony and Kristan of Trender for their very valuable assistance during this unusually testing time and I also wish to thank the Board for their unwavering support throughout the unnecessary stress caused for the Board by such unexplained behaviour. The actions of the SMO have however served to strengthen ADRA.

ADRA is now in the best position that it has ever been, having a very robust and very secure website capable of handling the digital 21<sup>st</sup> century and capable of serving its members via user-friendly access to CPD points, Mediator Practice Network sessions, Personal Membership profiles that link with mediator websites and National Accreditation in a fast-moving technological age.

ADRA's established affiliations with the World Law Alliance, IMI and other international organisations also makes ADRA a viable force for international accreditation purposes and will hopefully ensure its ongoing existence for another 38 years.

***New Initiative:*** ADRA is currently in the process of addressing the very vexed issue of how to best assist newly accredited mediators to establish an ongoing mediation practice especially if they do not come from a profession like Law where they may have already established a client base of their own. Discussions with the Personal Injury Commission to establish some type of ‘apprenticeship’ system for newly accredited mediators are still underway and we look forward to seeing how this space will unfold.

***Training:*** Having completed the major work of the website, the Board agreed with Trender that two ADRA members proficient in IT could be further trained to access the back end of the website so that they can assist ADRA members with their membership and accreditation application difficulties. Training to that effect has been ongoing since May 2024 and both IT ‘apprentices’ Hoi Son Le and Theodore Johnson will shortly be at a stage where they can assist ADRA members with their IT difficulties at a much lower cost to ADRA than what Trender must charge. ADRA thanks the two volunteer trainees for their dedication and time taken for training to assist ADRA members.

#### **b. CADR**

In 2022, CADR sent submissions to the Government expressing concern that Australia was still not a signatory to the Singapore Convention and shortly thereafter, as presented at the international conference by Dr Rajesh Sharma, Australia did become a signatory. Dr Sharma’s presentation on 15 August outlined the next steps to be taken for Mediation to become a World-wide effective dispute resolution measure and for Australia to take a leading role therein. It is hoped that ADRA’s initiative that co-created CADR with the other leading Dispute Resolution organisations in Australia such as ADC and RI can prompt the Australian Government to become a leader of services to World Mediation. More follow-up of CADR should occur in 2025.

#### **c. Student Engagement Committee.**

Much discussion has been held throughout the year to rejuvenate the Student Sub-committee in 2024 especially in relation to attendance of students at the International Conference and affiliate membership of students from Asia-Pacific Law Schools. ADRA thanks Josephine Reyes and Victor Berger for their support with this project

#### **d. Mediator Standard Board and FDRP's**

In 2022, the AG's Department set new standards for FDRPS where each practitioner had to upload their profile on the AG's website with the latest requirements being fulfilled. The current changes in the AG's Department require Complaints of FDRPs that have been substantiated by the current RMABs to be forwarded to the AG's department. These requirements will take effect in June 2025 and need to be in place on ADRA's website before June 2025.

The current changes with MSB from NMAS to AMDRAS are also currently being put into place and will be presented on ADRA's website by July 2025. ADRA provides a complaints' mechanism accepted by AG's Department for registration of FDRPs and for the new positions of **Divorce Coaches** once their criteria for eligibility are approved by the AG's Department. This is another initiative of ADRA and testament to ADRA's leadership in the field. Recent requests have been made for the positions of Expert Determiners to be accredited by ADRA and this remains a work in progress.

#### **e. Mediator Network Sessions**

ADRA thanks the NSW Law Society for offering its rooms for our monthly meetings and offering its rooms to conduct the *Mediator Practice Network sessions*. Focus on the International Conference and acceptance of changes to the MSB from NMAS to AMDRAS has changed ADRA's status from being a Registered Mediation Accreditation Body (i.e., an RMAB) to being a Registered Accreditation Provider (a RAP) by June 2025. This will require further changes to our Constitution and to our Governance Manual which will have to be registered with the Department of Fair Trading once another Special Meeting is conducted for ADRA members hopefully by October 2025. All this extra work did not leave time for MPN sessions this year but hopefully next year, the MPNs will become a monthly event in ADRA.

#### **f. Other Events of 2024:**

##### **January:**

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ADRA and Resox Linda Heng from Singapore

##### **February:**

MOU between Sabela Goya from Indonesia and ADRA + dinner at the Palace and talk by Sabela Goya and the Indonesian Delegates. ADRA awarded a trophy for the occasion.

**March:** Talk by Astrid Gerrits

**April:** Linda Fisher Memorial -at NSW Parliament House

- May:** Tokunbo Olabinri – Talk on Governance
- June:** Tony Enderby – New **IT Code of Conduct for ADRA**
- July:** Margaret McCue and Katherine Johnson made Life Members by resolution of the Board. Special General Meeting, to confirm Life Membership of **Margaret McCue and Katherine Johnson**, was held at 5.00pm on **Wednesday 7 August**
- August:** Life Membership ceremonies for Margaret and Katherine were held on **15 August 2024** at ADRA’s International Conference Dinner.
- August:** AGM and Board Meeting for election of Office Bearers.
- September:** New Board pathways, finalising Code of Conduct with new Constitution.
- October:** Planning Meeting for 2025
- November:** Xmas party – Palace Restaurant

**Katherine Johnson**

**President**

19 August 2024

**Moved to adopt President’s Report:**

**Seconded:**

## **TREASURERS REPORT – ADRA**

### **REPORTING PERIOD – 1 JULY 2023 to 30 JUNE 2024**

Balance 30 JUNE 2024 as per Bank Statement <b>TRADING ACCOUNT 6359</b> [includes transfer \$ 15,000.00 from term deposit account]	<b>\$ 13,510.34</b>
<b>[\$ 9,033.41– 30 June 2023]</b>	
<b>REVENUE</b>	
Seminars, functions, membership subscriptions, accreditation	<b>\$ 36,944.53</b>
<b>[\$22,229.51 – 30 June 2023]</b>	
Interest earned on Trading account	<b>\$ NIL</b>
Donations/ATO refunds	<b>\$ NIL</b>
<b>Total revenue [\$22,229.51– 30 June 2023]</b>	<b>\$ 36,944.53</b>

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Seminar/Functions/room hire/MNM/accreditation*	<b>\$ 16,062.07</b>
Postage and post box charges	<b>\$ 409.75</b>
Constitution /government fees/bank charges	<b>\$ 86.39</b>
Administration	<b>\$ NIL</b>
Google Suite	<b>\$ 643.13</b>
Campaign Monitor	<b>\$ 501.56</b>
Accreditation costs [see also above – in part]*	<b>\$ 1,910.00</b>
Miscellaneous flowers/gifts/unposted to other ledger accounts	<b>\$ 363.11</b>
PayPal fees	<b>\$ 320.99</b>
Room Hire fees/Zoom	<b>\$ 686.48</b>
Computer Service Fees	<b>\$ 23,755.00</b>
Insurance	<b>\$ 902.84</b>
Stripe Service Fees	<b>\$ 725.00</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE [\$26,303.20– 30 June 2023]</b>	<b>\$ 46,366.32</b>

**TOTAL OPERATING “SHORTFALL” 30 June 2024 (-) - \$ 9,421.79**

**TOTAL OPERATING “SHORTFALL” 30 June 2023 (-) \$ 4,073.69**

<b>INVESTMENT TERM DEPOSIT – 30 June 2024</b>	
	<b>\$ 36,928.89</b>
<b>30 June 2023 - \$ 46,012.50</b>	



## OVERVIEW

<b>BALANCE</b> as per bank statement 30 June 2024	<b>\$13,510.34</b>	<b>\$15,000.00</b> less transfer from term deposit	<b>(-) \$ 1,489.66</b>	<b>\$ 50,439.23</b> Total bank funds
<b>LESS</b> <b>BALANCE</b> as per bank statement 30 June 2023	<b>\$ 9,033.41</b>	<b>Less \$ 4,476.93</b>		<b>\$ 36,928.89</b> [less term deposit]
	<b>\$ 4,476.93</b>	<b>\$ 10,523.07</b>		
		<b>Less (\$1,489.66)</b>		
<b>Cash book balance as at 30 June 2023</b>		<b>\$ 9,033.41</b>		
<b>Cash book Balance</b>	<b>\$13,510.34</b>			<b>\$13,510.34</b>

This is my eighth year as Treasurer of the ASSOCIATION. The operating costs for the year exceeded the revenue by an amount of - **\$ 9,421.79, reflective, in part, of advance payments made to the International Conference Venue of \$ 12,462.64.**

Having said that, in 2024 the total revenue generated from seminars, functions, membership subscriptions and accreditations is **\$ 36,944.53**. The figure is to be contrasted with the revenue generated in previous years: **\$ 22,228.51 in 2023** and **\$ 15,106.40 in 2022**.

We look forward to changing times.

The SOLE current trading account is **\$6,359**.

We can never forget the past contribution and dedication of our former secretary, Ms Wendy Buchanan, the strength of Ms Katherine Johnson's indefatigable enthusiasm and leadership and the reliability of our former assistant treasurer, Mr Andrew Wong, in assisting me in the role of treasurer.

**MARGARET MARY McCUE – TREASURER**

18 August 2024

**Moved to adopt Treasurer’s Report:  
Seconded:**

**3. Membership Officer’s Report for 2024**

September 2023	Patrick Black Peter Hanson Michelle Reithmuller Maureen M Dawson-Smith Melissa Consulting Josephine Reyes Marilyn Waugh (First Step Mediation Pty Ltd)	March 2024	Terry Boyle Paul Lewis Nicholas Richards Luke Reeves Ruwan Wathukarage Joanna Chayna Hawkshaw Lucia Sandra Odger Edward Gatel Martin Johns
October 2023	Richard Curie Nola Hennessy Jessica Eldridge	April 2024	Dennis Nolan Salli Browning Evan Gainsford Mayo Materazzo Brigit Gurton Jacqueline Townsend
November 2023	Shaun Wetherill Leonard Strachan Brooke Harris	May 2024	Kate Robinson Susan Tambling Sharthine Anarndarajah Lusha Zhang
January 2024	Kate Ganley Janaya Wiggins Jennifer Scott Andrew Johnson	June 2024	Sandra Hiley Maureen M Dawson-Smith Yvonne Monaghan Lion Mesler Sharon Sims Amy McGlynn Beth Barclays Abraham Quondan Jean Marcel Malliate

February 2024	Jacob Matysek Leo Strachan Katherine Alexander Carolyn Hernandez Geoff Charlton Lisa Ashley Madeline Lewin Robyn Ann Mathews Theodore Paul Johnson	July 2024	Courtney McGaw Elizabeth Morley Wayne Black Jackie Leech Julie Hession Lana Hamilton Jacqueline Brocon Ian Cannop Jane Houselander Ilknur Bayaa Lisa Herboreau La Chaise Melinda Monaghan Rebecca Foley Sharon Connel
		August 2024	Robert Lopidi (Mediate Today Pty Ltd) Helen Miedzinski Paula Willin Joe Harmon

As at 19 August 2024, ADRA's membership is comprised of 73 new and renewing Practitioner Members, not counting Life Members and Fellows, nor non-practitioner members.

**Dennis Nolan**

Membership Officer                      19 August 2024

**Moved to adopt Membership Officer's Report:  
Seconded:**

**4. ACCREDITATION REPORT FOR 2023/2024**

I commenced this role as Accreditation Officer in October 2023 knowing nothing about the role. I had a fast-learning curve in terms of ADRA's IT system and the National Mediation Australian Standards (NMAS). In this I was assisted by Josephine Reyes who was then the Accreditation Officer, and for that I thank her. I also was patiently trained in ADRA's IT systems by Tony and Kirstin of Trender, who I also thank.

Early on, I identified problems with ADRA's accreditation systems and in association with Trender, revised the system and the forms for accreditation and Re-accreditation to conform with NMAS.

With AMDRAS replacing NMAS on 1 July 2025, there is a need during the transition year 2024-25 to again revise and expand the systems and forms involved. Another task for the in-coming Accreditation Officer is to propose the practice and procedures for complaint handling not only for complaints against Mediators but also separate process and procedures for complaints against Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner (FDRP's).

During the year, 7 members were accredited and 20 re-accredited. Until recently, the MSB has updated the Register of Accredited Mediators for ADRA. Often this was done on a batch system and members would often enquire why their names were not on the Register. In June this year, Josephine and I were trained by the Secretary of the MSB, Jenny Watson on how to up-date the register for ADRA's members who have satisfied the accreditation criteria. This learning will need to be passed on when there is a change in the Accreditation Officer.

Another 6 members have paid their fees but have not completed their accreditation forms. They have been reminded (in some cases more than once). It was resolved at the last Board Meeting that if nothing further is heard from them by 31 August 2024, their payments will be forfeited and they continue to remain unlisted on AMDRAS's Register of accredited mediators. If a member knows any of the following persons, please prompt them to get in contact with the Accreditation Officer:

Richard Olivares

Nadia Messiha

Edward Gatei

Gabrielle Passlow

Jen Halbert

Finally, a special email address, [Accreditation@adra.net.au](mailto:Accreditation@adra.net.au) , has been created to avoid the use of the personal email of the accreditation officer or anyone who volunteers to step in temporarily. It also allows the accreditation process to have continuity between holders of the accreditation office.

**Geoff Charlton**

Accreditation Officer

19 August 2024

**Moved to adopt Accreditation Officer's Report:**

**Seconded:**

**5. SECRETARIAL REPORT FOR 2024**

I have only held the Office of Secretary for the last couple of months. In that time, I have:

1. Standardised the notices that need to be issued for:
  - a. The call for Board nominations;
  - b. Notice of Special General Meeting;
  - c. Notice of Annual General Meeting;
  - d. Agenda for the Annual General Meeting;
2. Acted as Returning Officer for the election of Members to the Board of Management;
3. Accepted the responsibility to prepare procedures for handling any complaint against a Member acting as either a Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner or an NMAS / AMDRAS Accredited Mediator.

**Geoff Charlton**

Secretary

19 August 2024

**Moved to adopt Secretary's Report:**

**Seconded:**

**6. General Business for which 3 days' notice has been given pursuant to ADRA's Constitution:**

Meeting ended at .....