

Have your say!

by Eva Scheerlinck



Having the opportunity to have a voice is considered by many to be a cornerstone of democracy. The opportunity to be heard, to critique, to compliment, and of course to oppose, is vital to the democratic process.

MEMBER SURVEY

The Australian Lawyers Alliance is a democratic association and we encourage all of our members to have their say. Over the next few months, we will be inviting our members to have their say in various forums. In a few weeks' time, the Alliance will circulate an online survey to all of its members requesting feedback on a variety of things from the provision of services to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of our lobbying and public awareness campaigns.

The Lawyers Alliance has not carried out such a survey in some time. Our last comprehensive survey was in 2003, and much has changed since then.

The association has undergone many changes but so, too, has the practice of law. This is why it is vitally important that all of our members participate in the survey. We hope that the results will help us to understand our members better as individuals and also to appreciate what your ongoing needs are, so that we can tailor our services to better accommodate your needs.

Watch out for the online survey advertised through our weekly email

news bulletin, ALAN, and your email inbox. As an added incentive to participate with your feedback, everyone who completes the survey will be entered into the draw to win a Samsung 37" LCD television.

ELECTIONS

Another democratic process coming the membership's way soon is the 2009 Lawyers Alliance elections. In early March, we will be sending all of our members with voting rights (all barristers and solicitors) nomination forms for the 2009 ballot. We are seeking committee members for each of our state and territory branches, branch secretaries and branch presidents, as well as directors for Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and the Northern Territory. The national president-elect role is also open for nominations.

The most effective way for the membership to have a say in shaping the organisation and its work is to be an office-bearer. While being an office-bearer of the Australian Lawyers Alliance requires a level of commitment and some of your time, the experience can be very rewarding. I encourage those of you who have not considered joining a committee in the past to give it some thought. For those of you who are not sure whether being on a committee is for you, please feel free to call one of your local committee members or speak with me directly about what is involved.

EVENT EVALUATIONS

Following every conference and every branch seminar or workshop, the Lawyers Alliance seeks feedback on the event from each of the participants. This, too, is a great way to have your say on how our CLE/CPD is organised, the topics we cover and the format of delivery.

Last year the Australian Lawyers Alliance set a new record, with 37 events held across the country, including our first seminar in the Northern Territory. To help us continue to grow and improve our CLE/CPD program, we need your participation in shaping future events.

An effective democracy requires participation. So why not have your say in the forums available to you? Complete the member survey, nominate someone for a committee position, maybe even yourself, and let us know what you thought of that last conference or seminar you went to. We make decisions on the information available to us, so help us to make sure we have all the information we need to satisfy your needs. ■

Eva Scheerlinck is the Australian Lawyers Alliance's Chief Executive Officer.

PHONE (02) 9258 7700

EMAIL eva@lawyersalliance.com.au