



DEPARTMENT of the  
HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

ISSUE 27 :: APRIL 2023

# ALUMNI Newsletter



## Clerk's Message

Dear Alumni

As this is my first message for 2023, I feel I can still say Happy New Year!

I was pleased to learn that more than 30 alumni attended last November's reception in your honour, and brought the fine weather with you. I'm sorry I was not able to attend but I know you would have been warmly welcomed by Peter Banson, the Deputy Clerk.

The break between final sittings for 2022, and a return to the office in 2023 wasn't nearly as long as some of us had hoped, due to a late extra sitting on Thursday, 15 December, and early hosting responsibilities for the 26th CSPOC from 3 to 6 January. I know that some of you will remember working on the last occasion the Australian Parliament hosted the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth in 2000. It was an interesting way for our newly elected President Sue Lines and Speaker Milton Dick to meet their counterparts from other Commonwealth parliaments.

You might be interested to read that on Wednesday, 8 February, the Speaker made a [statement on implementation](#) of the recommendations of the *Set the standard* report *On improving and reforming the parliamentary workplace* as he

presented the [Taskforce 2022 Annual Report](#). The annual report captures implementation of the recommendations made by Kate Jenkins in *Set the standard*. The department, together with parliamentary service colleagues, continues to contribute to the implementation process.

After Question Time on the last sitting day in February, the Speaker announced that Colin Christian is soon to retire from the department after working for some 43 years in support of the Parliament. As some of you might remember, he commenced in 1980 in the Joint House Department at the provisional Parliament House. In 2004, Colin joined the parliamentary relations office in our department following changes in parliamentary administration which saw the advent of the Department of Parliamentary Services. If you want any further details, you will have to wait until you catch up with Colin yourselves!

With best wishes until next time.

**Claressa Surtees**  
Clerk of the House



February 2020. Despite the best of intentions, health restrictions made planning very difficult, and it is with relief that we were able to meet today after such a long hiatus.

In the absence of face-to-face meetings, the Alumni has been well served by Jim Pender continuing as newsletter editor, and it has been one way in which the members of the Alumni have kept in contact. Alumni are encouraged to put forward articles or suggestions of people who might be approached to contribute something to the newsletter.

We would like to place on record our thanks to Dean DaCosta (see Issue 9, December 2012) who has indicated he is not able to continue in his role as secretary. Dean has been a great contributor to the Alumni, fulfilling his role efficiently and with good grace. We wish Dean and his family all the best for the future and hope to see him at Alumni events in the years ahead.

This is also the final AGM to be chaired by Mike Salkeld (see Issues 3 and 14, August 2009 and May 2015). Mike has been a long serving Chair and his enthusiasm, quick wit and gregarious nature has been a real asset to the Alumni. Thank you Mike for your leadership, and in particular, your very swift chairing of formalities. We look forward to also catching up with you and Carolyn at future events.

**Joanne Towner and Mike Salkeld**  
Co-chairs

### CONTENTS

Meet your 2022-23 executive	2
Julia Agostino	2
Kathryn (Kate) Leonard	2
2022 alumni reception	3
Further information	3
VALE – Douglas (Doug)	
Maurice Blake AM VRD	4

### CO-CHAIRS REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND THE ALUMNI ANNUAL RECEPTION - THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2022

As with almost all other areas of life, the Covid pandemic had a significant impact on the operations of the Alumni. The most recent AGM was held in December 2019, with the Annual Reception held in

# Meet your 2022-23 executive

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At the annual general meeting Joanne Towner (*see* Issue 18, July 2017) and Julia Agostino were elected as co-chairs and Kate Leonard is our new secretary. Jim Pender was reappointed Newsletter editor. All alumni present at the meeting, those who tendered an apology and others who are currently listed as Board members were deemed to be Board members unless they had indicated otherwise. No one had so indicated therefore all were welcomed to the 2022-23 Board.

## JULIA AGOSTINO

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I joined the Department of the House of Representatives (DHR) in 2016 as a Committee Secretary to the Standing Committee on Education and the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. Both committees had interesting inquiries over the next year and there was rarely a dull moment over that time. My team also became responsible for supporting the Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation. I enjoyed working

with a great team of people, including colleagues across the department who were willing to share their knowledge and experience, participating in some excellent learning and development opportunities including a leadership course, and supporting a parliamentary delegation to Papua New Guinea. It was a happy and engaging time for me and I learned a great deal. I left in early 2018 when I was offered the role of Deputy Clerk to the ACT Legislative Assembly.



## KATHRYN (KATE) LEONARD

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I came to the Department of the House of Representatives (DHR) after being recruited as an Assistant Director in the People Strategies Team. The team was amazing, with an extensive range of experience and expertise in people matters. Everything we did was done with a passion and commitment to the employees of DHR and our roles as human resources professionals. I was given the opportunity during my time with the department to undertake activities and projects that

were innovative and supported the broader departmental goals including the development of a structured rewards and recognition framework, oversight of learning and development and diversity and inclusion. Because of the experience I gained in DHR I was successful at securing an EL2 position with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) leading a national team responsible for the provision of people advice and support, case management, WHS and wellbeing and diversity and inclusion.



# The 2022 alumni reception in the House of Representatives Formal Gardens

From Merimbula to Mudgee, from Sydney, Port Macquarie, Canberra and Queanbeyan 47 alumni came to attend the 2022 reception. They were welcomed by the Deputy Clerk, Peter Branson, and were able to spend a pleasant evening mingling with many current DHR staff exchanging stories of current circumstances and reviving memories of past experiences.



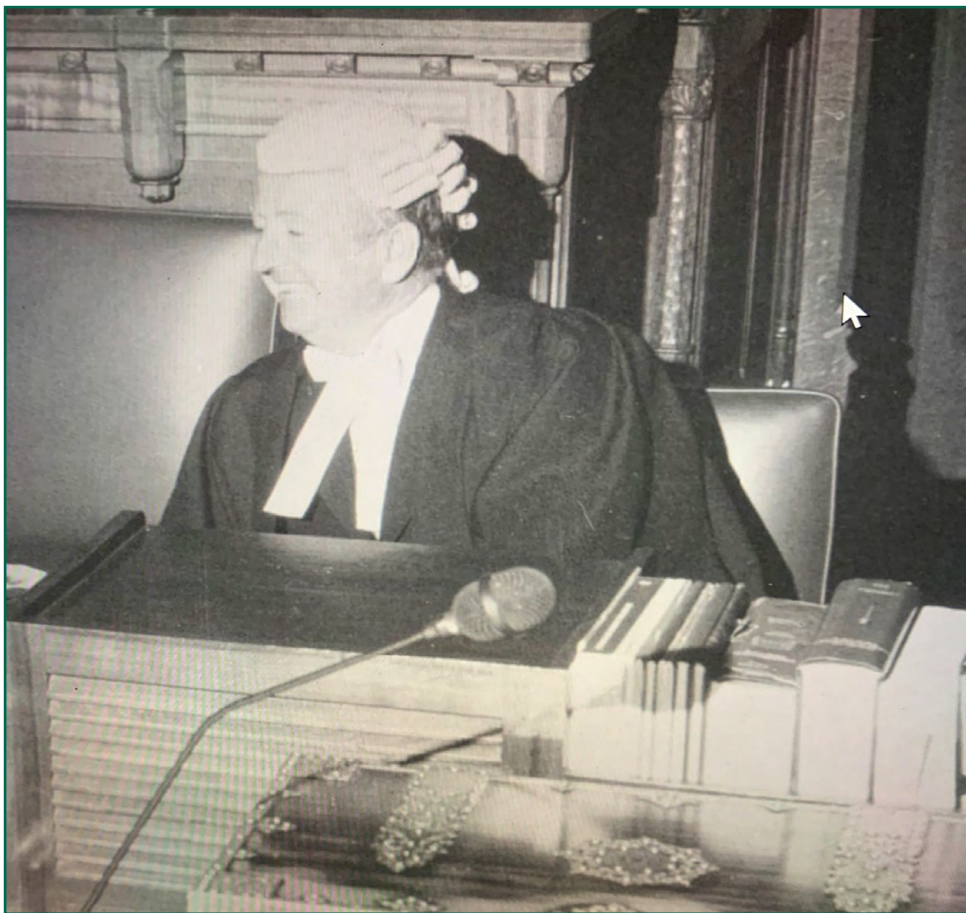
## FURTHER INFORMATION

For any further information on alumni events or information please contact email - [DHRalumnisec@gmail.com](mailto:DHRalumnisec@gmail.com), [Alumni.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:Alumni.reps@aph.gov.au) or go to the blogspot - <http://dephouseofrepsalumni.blogspot.com.au/>.

# VALE – Douglas (Doug) Maurice Blake AM VRD

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Doug Blake, who died on 20 December 2022, was the 11th Clerk of the House from 1982 until his retirement in 1985. He had a long and distinguished career in the Department of the House of Representatives. Alumni can read his reminiscences in Issue 4 (August 2010) of the Newsletter. His funeral was on 29 December 2022.



Doug Blake (circa 1980) ▶