

# **MINUTES of the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Cartoonists' Association**

**Old Parliament House  
Canberra  
7th. December, 2019**

The meeting opened at 9:00am.

## **Present**

Jules Faber (Chairman), Steve Panozzo (Minutes)

*Committee:* Robert Black, David Blumenstein, Ian McCall, Judy Nadin, Cathy Wilcox and Martina Zeitler

*Members:* Matt Bissett-Johnson, Jim Bridges, Jock Brodie, Grant Bown, Kerry-Anne Brown, Queenie Chan, Jed Dunstan, Roger Fletcher, Lindsay Foyle, Christophe Granet, Paul Harvey, Mick Horne, Edmund Iffland, Dean Rankine, Alan Rose, Glenn Robinson, Danny Zemp

## **Apologies**

Peter Broelman, Rod Emmerson, Rolf Heimann, Nat Karmichael, Vane Lindesay and Alan Moir

## **MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS AGM**

Minutes for the 2018 AGM were recorded by Kerry-Anne Brown and have somehow been misplaced. Recollected consensus is that ballot-counting occupied most of the time allocated for the meeting and very little business was addressed beyond declaration for office-bearers for 2020-2021.

## **BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS AGM**

Jock Brodie proposed that we enact a procedure change for ballot-counting ahead of the next AGM.

## **FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND TREASURER'S REPORT**

Martina reported that over the course of the past 12 months, the ACA's bank balance has increased meaning that "we are no longer going backwards". Much of our good financial news is due to the support of new sponsors. Our working account currently boasts a balance of \$33,000, putting us in a good financial position as we move into 2020. Jules added that holding the Stanley Awards in Canberra has saved the ACA a considerable amount of money and that we are (collectively) very grateful for the support from the Museum of Australian Democracy.

Roger Fletcher proposed that we send a certificate of appreciation to our sponsors as a "thank you" for supporting us. Martina asked the meeting if anyone knows a potential sponsor, or perhaps a group of supporters who might like to group together to form a sponsorship "syndicate", please let us know and the ACA will send a support prospectus. Mick Horne enquired about the ACA's investment account balance; it currently sits at between \$85,000 and \$92,000.

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Jules did not table a formal report, however he made a point of acknowledging the continuing support of our sponsors and outlined tentative plans for the Stanley Awards weekend to be held in Melbourne in 2020 (confirmation to be forthcoming). As the ACA surges towards its centenary in 2024, there is much to do, even in the face of dramatic changes to the media landscape.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

The Annual General Meeting has received a letter of complaint from Rod Emmerson, regarding a cartoon drawn by David Blumenstein in March 2019, whilst holding office as ACA Deputy President (*please refer to the attached documents: 1. Letter from Rod Emmerson, 2. The Complaint, 3. Response from David Blumenstein and 4. Response from the ACA*).

Lindsay Foyle congratulated the Board on its response and dealing with the matter professionally. Jock Brodie asked if the complaint and the response from the ACA will be communicated to members; Steve responded that it will be posted to the members' page on Facebook and will be sent to any ACA Full members who requested it. Roger Fletcher asked that all documents be included in the Minutes.

## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **Stanley Awards**

Roger Fletcher was concerned that the Stanley Awards dinner has become a "bit of a boys' club", with most members attending without partners, family members or friends. Cathy mentioned that part of the problem is, as a result of holding the Awards in Canberra, most attendees are away from their "support crew" - a change of location to major population centre (Melbourne) in 2020 should help with that problem.

Lindsay Foyle and Kerry-Anne Brown both commented that interest in attending the Stanley Awards has waned when we have lowered the bar on dress code.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00am

-

# 1. LETTER FROM ROD EMMERSON

To the Secretary  
Australian Cartoonists' Association

*Correspondence for the ACA AGM, December 2019, Canberra*

I wish to raise an unpleasant matter regarding the Vice-President of the ACA, David Blumenstein.

In March 2019, the V-P posted a cartoon and supporting statements on social media, depicting *News Ltd* cartoonists licking the arse of Rupert Murdoch, titled 'Easy Bigotry'.

His clarification said the cartoon ...' seeks to vilify a minority ( cartoonists working for Murdoch newspapers ) by smearing it in an ugly fashion...' It continues with ..' like some other cartoons I can think of..' with a link to Warren Brown's work. Blumenstein also states that he does not speak for the Australian Cartoonists Association.

The Board may argue that this matter has been dealt with. It clearly hasn't. Members of the ACA are always entitled to express their views publicly and privately. However, all senior office bearers need to be reminded to exercise discretion when publishing inflammatory statements regarding professional members. Declaring *News Ltd* cartoonists are pandering to systemic racism and bigotry through their employer, is completely untrue and clearly defamatory.

In this case, my advice is that Blumenstein has blissfully exposed both himself and the ACA to possible litigation from any number of potentially aggrieved parties from *News Ltd*. This anomaly alone would need to be rectified asap by way of apology to all parties concerned, and the post on social media would need to be taken down immediately.

As a financial member and former President of this association, I wish to lodge a formal complaint with the Board, using Part 13, Clause 1 of the ACA Constitution.

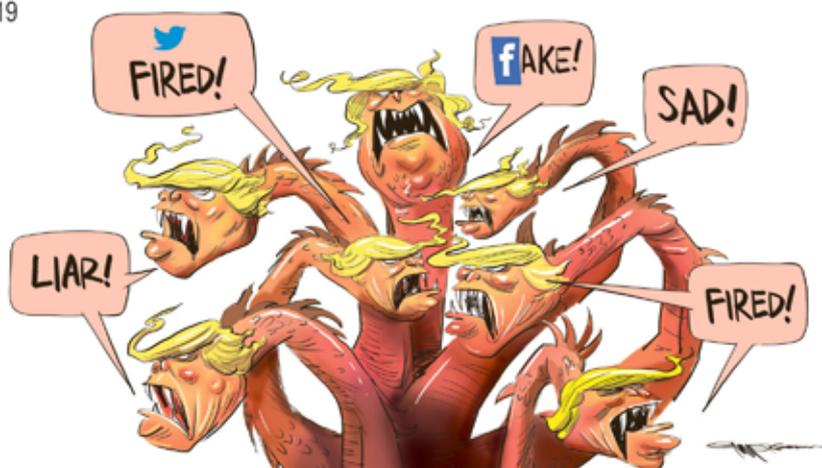
Complaint attached.

Sincerely



Rod Emmerson  
Editorial Cartoonist  
The New Zealand Herald

12th Nov 2019



## 2. THE COMPLAINT

### The Complaint

Blumenstein's cartoon and statements are a response to the controversies surrounding the *Warren Brown Medivac cartoon* published in the Telegraph, February 2019; the *Serena Williams cartoon* by Mark Knight published in the Herald-Sun in late 2018, and the late *Bill Leak's Father - Son cartoon* published in the Australian in 2016. Given he identifies '...cartoonists working for Murdoch newspapers', his grievance extends to other professional cartoonists within the News Ltd stable at the time. Blumenstein obviously has an issue with professional members who are employed by *News Ltd*.

*News Ltd* chose to stand by their cartoonists and defend them, and should be praised for this. Leak, Knight and Brown were all subsequently cleared of allegations of racism after scrutiny by the Press Council. Juxtaposed, *The New York Times* recently chose to sack all their cartoonists following a complaint of racism against one syndicated cartoonist. They have been publicly berated for this action, and have now re-evaluated this stance.

Lost in this maelstrom, is the well known fact that neither Leak, Knight or Brown is a racist or a bigot, and have in fact dedicated years of extraordinary work challenging prejudice, intolerance and inequality. Also lost is the human toll taken on the individual and their respective families, to live with death threats and to be publicly vilified for something that you are clearly not. Remembering here, that the stress eventually claimed the life of Bill Leak.

For the Vice President of the ACA to then publicly accuse them of wilfully pandering to systemic bigotry through their employer is regrettable. The response to this has been one of great disappointment. The ACA is fortunate to have not yet lost News Ltd as a long time sponsor, but we have definitely lost membership as a result. For those who remain, we now have members who are divided, maligned and marginalised. My absence in the Year Book and reluctance to be associated with the ACA is a direct result of the internal handling of the Leak, Knight, Brown controversies. The ACA has had a long history of mutual respect, inclusiveness and tolerance, no matter who your employer was.

Given the board's lengthy intransigence and Vice-President Blumenstein's subsequent public remarks, this is obviously no longer the case and can be accepted as consensus.

Prejudice and intolerance comes in many guises and has no place in our organisation, and should be rooted out at every opportunity to maintain the integrity and survival of the association.

I call on the board to formally request Blumenstein apologise to the ACA and the parties concerned, remove the post, and call into question his fitness to hold office.

I also call on the board to re-evaluate its approach to future controversies surrounding their members.

ENDS

### 3. RESPONSE FROM DAVID BLUMENSTEIN

I write in response to Rod Emmerson's committee correspondence of Nov 12.

For reference, Emmerson is objecting to my tweet and cartoon of February 13, 2019 and my tweets on the same subject of March 16, 2019. I'm attaching them to this letter.

Here are some points I'd like to make regarding Emmerson's letter and complaint:

1. Emmerson selectively quotes me to imply that my actual intent is to smear all News Ltd cartoonists as racists or bigots. His omissions remove all humour and nuance from my statement. In particular he leaves out the line "You will notice that my political cartoon™ is of poor quality," the line "Obviously many wonderful cartoonists write for Murdoch papers", and the line "I'm not suggesting individual writers, politicians or cartoonists should be held responsible for what murderers do".
2. I do not have "an issue with professional members who are employed by News Ltd".
3. I do not believe the cartoonists Emmerson mentions are racists or bigots.
4. I would not take as "fact" any judgment by Emmerson or the Press Council as to what is or isn't "pandering to systemic racism and bigotry".
5. I stand behind the content of the cartoon and my right to make satirical commentary on the behaviour of public figures, including cartoonists.
6. I think Emmerson is correct when he says that officebearers should exercise discretion when making statements regarding members, so I have deleted the tweets in question and I apologise to any member who sees my cartoon or statements as harmful to the ACA.

David Blumenstein

#### **Tweet Feb 13**

If you would like to know my policy on dumb race-baiting editorial cartoons, please see attached whitepaper



## Tweets Mar 16

[repost of original cartoon]

You will notice that my political cartoon™ is of poor quality, and seeks to vilify a minority (cartoonists writing for Murdoch newspapers) by smearing it in an ugly fashion.

Little bit like some other cartoons I can think of.

(link to: [Press Council considering complaint about Warren Brown cartoon | The New Daily](#))

Obviously many wonderful cartoonists write for Murdoch papers.

Notice I say "cartoonists write", as opposed to draw, because they do write their cartoons. Cartoons are like little tiny opinion columns.

In light of yesterday's terrorist attack, you might think (and people are certainly asking) "Surely those who incite hate against minorities can see a link between what they say and what then happens?"

I assume they can't, or won't. It's inconvenient to think anything you did might contribute to innocent people's deaths. Better to decide it was inevitable. Or those people who died weren't innocent.

I'm not suggesting individual writers, politicians or cartoonists should be held responsible for what murderers do. You'd just like them to see the link.

"How does what I do affect others?"

They seem to believe strongly in free speech. In the power of oratory, of writing, of cartooning to have power and change minds. Except when something awful happens. Then, "speech is powerless in the face of history and nothing I say could ever affect anything".

Or maybe they don't believe that strongly in the power of speech and words and pictures. Maybe they just write, draw and politicise for a job. Earn a crust. What's the problem maaaaate. We're all friends here maaaaate.

Again, I don't speak for the @AUcartoonists. As I understand it, a prominent cartoonist has quit the @AUcartoonists because he felt it unseemly that an officeholder (myself) would draw a political cartoon™ he saw as insulting a member (him).

I designed my political cartoon™ to be ugly and insulting. I take responsibility for its content. I don't speak for anyone but me. Drawing political cartoons™ is not my day job maaaaate.

Consider what you're about to say, stand behind it, don't deny its power. It's a big world and everyone's listening.

#### **4. RESPONSE FROM THE ACA**

##### **Statement from the Australian Cartoonists' Association**

##### **Re: Complaint Tabled by Rod Emmerson**

The ACA Committee has received a complaint from a member in relation to a cartoon drawn by the ACA's Deputy President and published on social media that offended some other members. The Committee has discussed the complaint at length. The Committee acknowledges the grievances of those members. The Committee responds with:

- 1) The ACA Committee acknowledges that codes of conduct were not instructed to new Committee members and apologises that this did not occur.
- 2) The Deputy President acknowledges that he was not made aware of the codes of conduct.
- 3) All Committee members will view and sign the codes of conduct at the first committee meeting after the Annual General Meeting.
- 4) The offending cartoon has been removed from social media.
- 5) The Deputy President apologises to the ACA, members and committee.