

16 June 2017

Statement from the Chairman of CPA Australia, Jim Dickson

CPA Australia is currently undergoing a very challenging period. However, as someone who has been a member for 47 years, I firmly believe the organisation will get through these challenges.

Not only that, we'll be stronger for having addressed them.

Board membership

There is no doubt that the actions of a media outlet repeatedly and aggressively contacting some directors, their employers and families have created unreasonable pressure on those individuals.

Recently, my wife received an unannounced knock on the door at our home from a journalist. They had a photographer positioned down the drive. It was a public holiday. I was not at home.

This systematic campaign of targeting our directors has taken a toll.

Watching these media tactics play out, I called our directors together for a Board meeting this week.

My clear message to our directors was that they needed to prioritise their families and careers, and that it would be perfectly understandable if they needed to resign.

I formally advise that directors Deborah Ong, Jennifer Lang and Martin Hourigan have stepped down from the Board.

They have my best wishes and sincere thanks for their substantial contributions to our organisation. They also have my empathy for the circumstances they have been forced to endure.

I would like to place on the record that there have been no premature resignations from the Board, in the last decade at least, until this current campaign began.

Consistent with the Constitution, which enables us to appoint a director in circumstances such as these, I can advise that Tim Youngberry has been appointed to the Board, until 30 September.

Tim has served as CFO for two large government agencies. He has also been a consultant with the International Monetary Fund where he worked in China, East Africa and Latin America. He is also a former ACT Divisional President. We welcome his expertise, skill and commitment.

Our annual director renewal process is continuing and all positions will be filled as per standard procedure by 30 September.

We are determined that the protracted campaign by the media and some small elements of our membership will not detract from our mission to represent and support members. To that end, we will have these issues examined independently.

Independent Review

Also at our 13 June Board meeting, we began the process of establishing an independent panel to conduct a thorough review of all claims made in relation to CPA Australia. It will make recommendations for improvement.

I can advise that the panel will be chaired by Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston AK AFC (Ret'd) former Chief of the Australian Defence Force.

Sir Angus is a man of great stature, character and integrity. He is universally acknowledged for his pre-eminent achievements and service to Australia.

I can also advise that Mr Ian McPhee AO PSM FCPA, a former Auditor-General for Australia will assist Sir Angus as a panellist. Ian's contribution over many years to our country's good governance is beyond reproach.

We are currently in discussion with a third person with a view to joining the panel. We will advise further details in regards to this as available.

Sir Angus and his panel will work directly with me as chair to finalise the terms of reference.

The review will be fiercely independent. It will have all the resources it needs to do its work and the review team will operate independent of the executive, reporting directly to me.

More engagement with members

At this week's Board meeting we also resolved to commence a special comprehensive program of grassroots engagement with members.

While we call for feedback consistently and engage with members all day, every day through forums, committees and events, we are delighted to offer members yet more engagement opportunities.

We will be holding this new series of open forums in our divisional offices. Representatives of the Board will be attending each of these forums.

This will be open dialogue. We will have more to say about the details of these forums in due course.

Matters pertaining to the chief executive

As we have made clear in our annual report, at our AGM and in a range of member communications, CPA Australia is enjoying unprecedented success.

In so many ways this is due to the leadership and vision of our chief executive.

Alex is executing the strategies set and monitored by the Board over his tenure. He is delivering at the highest possible level and he is doing it under considerable duress.

In spite of the last two-plus years of often very personal attacks from the media, Alex has exhibited grace and calm.

Alex has consistently exceeded the expectations of the Board over time and the KPIs the Board has set for him.

For the record, every board member during Alex's tenure – all 23 of them – has unanimously endorsed his performance over time.

Director COOPER
Director CHAPMAN
Director BIRD
Director CAHILL
Director LOW
Director FOO
Director GREY
Director TREBILCOCK

Director EGAN
Director EBBECK
Director DOWLING
Director CARLIN
Director ALSTON
Director RYAN
Director SPONG
Director DICKSON

Director ONG
Director PETTY
Director DOLIN
Director PORTELLI
Director WADE
Director HOURIGAN
Director LANG

The composition of our Board has come through Representative Councils, which over the period of time of Alex's tenure has totalled around 75 individual and independently minded members.

It is critical that we continue to run our membership organisation successfully and Alex has full support to continue leading our team.

We are moving forward and we are positive about the future.

Chief executive Alex Malley said:

President Jim Dickson is widely respected across our membership. He has demonstrated a deep affection for our organisation over nearly 50 years.

Jim has taken over as President and Chairman of the Board at an important time and I have no doubt that he is the right man at the right time.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge each and every one of our wonderful CPA Australia staff who have continued to provide unstinting support to members, even during sometimes challenging circumstances.

Their focus has never wavered and I am grateful for their enduring resilience.

In circumstances where I have been personally targeted in more than 100 negative articles with a range of claims and assertions, the announcement of an independent review is welcome.

I, along with the rest of CPA Australia's dedicated staff, look forward to continuing our work on what's important - the operations of the organisation and the outcomes we can achieve for members and the profession more broadly.

ENDS

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