**Summary of the meeting with APODC 17 October 2017**

**Pre AGM presentation with Podiatry WA members and board**

**Nello Marino - Interim CEO APODC**

**Katrina Richards – President APODC**

**Opening Discussion**

**Katrina Richards – APODC President**: It’s amazing to see so many people come to an Annual General Meeting. We certainly struggle in some states to get people to come to the AGM’s so it’s fantastic that you’re all taking a keen interest. So we’ve got a really exciting process happening in the Australian Podiatry Association at the moment, I think it’s possibly the most exciting thing that’s happening in Podiatry of all time and that’s basically seeing the merging of all our state associations with the national body in to one organisation which will be called the Australian Podiatry Association. This has been a process which has been in motion for a couple of years. It was led by the boards of the states and by all the states presidents. We’ve called the process “One Podiatry Project “. So you may have heard a little bit about One Podiatry possibly from your state president and myself as APODC president.

There is an external consultant overseeing the transition because one of the things that we were very focused on was for this process to happen was that it couldn’t be a personality or a volunteer driven process. As you know with professional associations this can happen a lot. I think this is actually the best decision we made because our former CEO went to an amazing job with the Dental Association. We were very fortunate to find Nello (Acting CEO) who started in January and the fact we had this process was driven by external consultant as well as through all of the state associations really meant that we had a pretty seamless transition.

The “One Podiatry project “ didn’t stall and kept getting momentum so one of our really exciting junctions has been that we’ve had Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland all have voted unanimously to join all the Australian Podiatry Association. New South Wales has their vote next week and we are very positive about that outcome.

We are keen to have a presence in WA and have some staff in Perth and also starting to work on delivering all the things you would expect from your national association operating from within your state. All of the states are moving forward together and we’ll have a state based committee that will inform the national body about the things that they need in their own state.

It’s so much easier as one organisation as we have a central point coordinating all of these things and that sense of collaboration comes straight back and is really exciting.

I’ll just close and the reason why this is happening is because the Australian Podiatry Association is in the strongest position it has ever been in and all of the states are bringing in very large resources that we are able to pull together to provide the most exciting opportunity and the best division for our profession that we’ve had in a long time. We really would like you guys to be a part of it.

**Nello Marino – Interim CEO- APODC**: I’ve been with the organisation for about ten months and what has been evident to me over my time here is that this is a true collaboration. Ultimately, it has been the states that have come up with a national constitution, a single national constitution that everybody has to subscribe to. As Katrina mentioned the states voted to accept that in June this year and subsequently the states have moved to form one company, lining up and changing their own structures to move forward in the single association.

One of the goals of APODC is to really develop the members and more importantly lead and cater for the profession of podiatry. The strategic vision for the organisation is to influence and advocate for the profession, to develop our members and ultimately improve patient outcomes. We certainly want to advocate, through our key platforms and advocate for the advancement of podiatry through our leadership. We certainly see one of the goals of the organisation is to develop through CPD, through professional standards and through our career path way which is actually being developed in various podiatrics, high risk foot and sports podiatry.

Our current structure is that we have a very strong board and certainly a strong leadership around the country, and that’s been emphasised by the fact that a number of states are genuinely collaborating for the greater good of the profession. We are future focused and have a strong representation of membership across the country of 2000 plus members; we are quickly becoming far stronger than individual states representing themselves and I think that’s probably where the key point is. One of the things that’s been very noticeable and again it points to this issue of collaboration is that we’ve moved towards this single structure.

An example of a way we have collaborated towards some of the initiatives was one you may be familiar with. This was in fact put together by the leadership of a particular state with collaboration of all the states, it was put together immediately as a campaign to 1200 medical practices including pharmacies and hospital waiting rooms TV.

It is examples like the success of this campaign that emphasize the sort of structure and representation that’s being proposed around the country. Natalie is here with us tonight and Natalie like many of the other State Managers around the country or around the state leadership offices, in Natalie’s case it will be membership in the case of a number of executive officers it’s communication and a number of them will be CPD. Ultimately that’s the sort of approach that’s been taken to develop a national body that have those 3 key platforms to ensure that we do get consistency and we do get that level of cooperation.

So this idea of national strength isthe key really and the key objective of tonight was to answer questions you may have.

We can stand up here and present all night but what I think is important is that you also get the opportunity to voice any concerns and to ask questions to seek clarification.

**Discussion and question time**

**(Combined under key discussion topics)**

**National Membership and Fees**

**Member: What does this change mean for members?**

Nello: Yes, so to explain what actually occurred when changing constitution is the National organisation is now capable of taking direct membership, which in the past was taken through the states. So you can effectively now join the national organisation.

**Member: Can I ask about the Fees for Western Australian members? We have certain concessions offered for membership such as part time and rural. Last time, I looked that was not the case with APODC. Is that going to be the case and what is your current level of fees?**

Nello: So the current fees across the country vary. Currently there is a differentiation across different states from $1000 to $850 per annum. There will be a standardisation of the fees over the next two years, so those that are currently above that will drop to $950 as a full membership fee and those below will increase. We are at the point of trying to accommodate variations, we are starting to look at this for some specific groups, and we are starting to look at the state rather than the location. I think it is reasonable to look at it.

**Member: So private practice versus public but not part-time?**

Nello: Not at this stage, No.

**Member: I don’t mind paying but I would like to know what is in this for us that we are not already getting with our local association?**

Katrina: That is what we are saying to you and that is our challenge, that is our commitment to you we are going to prove to you how good we are.

Jeff: Ultimately, what would happen at the end of 12 months if people are dissatisfied then people will vote with their feet, won’t they?

Let say Member X has now reached Western Australia and he will move to QLD how he will do that?

Katrina: There is no change and the member would just email APODC.

**Member: How many members are there and how many Podiatrists are there in Australia?**

Nello: There are 2000 members around the country. There are about 4800 podiatrists around Australia.

**Member: You mentioned New Zealand. What is your involvement with New Zealand?**

Nello: At the moment, the only involvement is just a dialogue, there is no real involvement. They are not part of this structure.

**Member: What is your involvement with the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory?**

Katrina: ACT is with NSW and there was certainly some debate round that at the time. Northern Territory has been out of scope, I know that there are a small number of podiatrists in the Northern Territory. Some of those members are with are with QLD or SA.

**Member: I hope you don’t take this too personally but why should we trust you at all? I have been paying my fees since I came to Australia in 1989. I have not seen anything of benefit what so ever from APODC. I would like to see a formal apology from that body to the podiatrists of WA for causing the disharmony.**

Nello: I think this is really about winning your trust, what I have heard from this comment is that you will see what we have to offer and we need to prove to you. The proof is in the unity. We will continue on our path and how we go about demonstrating this by making the offering and then by services to local podiatrists that hopefully will win your trust. I am not trying to believe to change it tonight, our commitment to WA and make sure we continue to build our services in WA and then we will look to win your trust by doing that.

**Conferences**

**Member: We have had state conferences in the past and they’ve been fantastic and I personally prefer the state conference than the national conference, so what happens with things like that in the future?**

Nello: State conferences will continue there’s no reason why they wouldn’t continue. From our perspective that conference is how you get responses from a lot of states and not everyone wants to go to a national conference .We’d love for everybody to come to a national conference, we understand there are barriers, the current format of the national conference is one year and the state conference is the alternate year.

**Local Staff and Committees**

**Member: You said there would potentially be staff in Western Australia and would you have a committee as well?**

Nello: Yes, so it’s not exclusive to Western Australia that’s across all states.

Katrina: The social things require a lot of coordination, because sometimes you run events that are really small, it’s sometimes hard to get that mix right, where do you have it? What time? What day? It’s good to have that local presence and sometimes you need to experiment and try different things and see what works and we’re prepared to have a go and try a lot of things and come up with a really good formula of what works and build on that. So starting at a base point of what is currently happening and maintaining current services.

**Would Western Australia have its own committee and how would that work?**

Nello: The structure that all the states will adopt will be one of having a regional committee to use the example, recently Queensland had the decision they didn’t just want a committee based in southern coast of Brisbane but also one north of Queensland. So the local State Manager or Executive Officer will work with that and have direct feed back to the national board. So regionally based as well as issues based.

**Member :Can I ask about local representation, so what happens if you maybe get 20 numbers from Western Australia, are you still planning to put a staff member in Western Australia?**

Katrina: We realise that we need to get some runs on the board and prove ourselves to West Australian’s so we don’t think it’s a numbers game where we say to start in Western Australia we need to have 47 members before we throw the resources in to Western Australia. We’re very committed to saying we want Western Australia as part of our association and we are prepared to do whatever it take takes to get you involved and prove to you that we are a strong association that represents our association. We are prepared to do whatever it takes to get you involved and keep you involved.

**Member: Whatever it takes. What is the scope for that?**

Katrina: We are not going to be taking over the BHP building here in Perth, we do think we would have an office manager or someone here to coordinate events that but the benefit would bring with the technology is something that we would move to.

This is half the reason why we have finally moved towards this structure.

In the 60’s, you had to be in the same location but now we are running our communication from Sydney, we have our Membership Services in South Australia and we have our Head Office in Melbourne. We are proving that we can ensure that you are speaking to someone from the Australian Podiatry Association. When you call you may be speaking from someone from the Association however it may be that you speak with someone from Melbourne and someone from Sydney but we think that we will have a unified approach. We are certainly committed to Western Australia. It may be that this expands too we just don’t know.

**The APODC Board, voting process and the Constitution.**

**Member: Is the constitution available on the website? How will the board be elected?**

Nello: The change in the constitution is such where the membership of the board will be individual members, so what needs to be noted there is a maximum number of members on the board from a particular state. The board is made up of six members plus an Executive Officer. There will be only a maximum of two elected from one particular state. The Executive Officer does not have voting rights.

**Member: How will those individual people be voted in? Is there a voting process?**

Nello: In short, the board is made up of the existing board. They are representatives of the five states. As of 2019, then after an amendment of the constitution ,then up to three of the board members, long serving board members will be stepping down and vacating their positions. So technically come the 1st of August ,2019 then any member will be able to nominate. In the following year 2020 then the remainder of the positions will be vacated. So come the first board meeting, effectively any member is able to nominate.

Katrina: I will be one of the first people up for renomination or step down, my decision will be to vacate so I can either choose to go to the member vote or to retire and then that position would be up for election.

Nello: Katrina is currently our Victorian representation; her position will not necessarily need to be filled by a Victorian. There’s only a maximum of two members from each state

**Member: Is Western Australia a chance of having a board member? Why not say each state has a representative?**

Nello: That’s because the best practice as far as boards are concerned, if you went down the best practice line you have the best people for the job.

**Member: I don’t know that people would agree with that, as people from NSW might not have same opinions as West Australians.**

Nello: We are moving away from letting us think that a person who is representing the state is always going to be the person, when you come to a national board regardless the circumstances

**Member: I don’t think that sounds right, that might be the ideal but it doesn’t sound right.**

Katrina: Look, it’s actually the culture of our board. I’m very confident that people will come onto the board with a very heavy duty to stay state focused but they do not stay that way for long, we work very hard on our board culture which has changed a lot from the last few years and part of that is investing in our board members to have the correct training in corporate governance. As a board director their roles and responsibilities are to do what we need to do to lead the organisation.

**Member: Our podiatry surgeons across Australia, how do they get aligned and what happens there?**

Nello: The Podiatric Surgeons their associations aren’t necessarily a part of the podiatry association they have their own association. We will work with the Podiatric Surgeons on having a mutually beneficial relationship with them.

**The Future**

**Member: How will we find out what is going on? With the changeover and stuff how are we going to get information?**

Nello: Our primary contact is with the Podiatry Western Australia board, obviously we have been very focused on our own membership to date but I think tonight is a demonstration that we do want to keep the dialogue and communicate with the board. We will continue to communicate with the POD WA board.

**Member: Does this mean Podiatry Western Australia will be closed?**

Jeff: Unfortunately, we can’t compete. We need a certain number of members to make it viable for POD WA to survive. If all of the members joined the APODC it would not be viable for us to continue. All services that we provide, they can provide.

**Member: I would like to make a comment, when they separated, I joined the APODC and then I joined Pod Western Australia as a member.I had virtually no help from the APODC whatsoever.**

Jeff: We have been excluded and that was because we opted out from the APODC, we are trying to re-establish ties as we can see the benefits and there are only three of us doing all of this. Honestly, we are burning out really quick, we need help, or we need to find a better way to do it. As there are only three of us. *T*he national body can provide all of the services that we can, if they can provide those services required then that is a win win.

**Member: It’s just too much work for just the three of us.**

Jeff: I would hope that when these guys get around getting a group in Western Australia because really that’s very important. We’re a very isolated profession and socialisation is one of those things that can lack.

Nello: I think that again highlights the importance, you guys have been inherently involved in both the profession also accommodating in a range of issues

**Member: It’s nice that you’ve got an advocate for that profession on the east coast but when HBF come to us with an issue, we do need someone on the ground here that can advocate for us. The other thing, after the succession there was legal action against the board that kept us all quiet. We’ve been trying to do everything right and put money in the bank. That stigma needs to go, somehow you need to tell us that that is no longer there that’s still a concern, that could make us insolvent really easily, admittedly whether we fold that’s not an important issue, if we become insolvent the current board cannot be directors again. I don’t think any of us would like to see that happen to any of them.**

**Member: How long will Podiatry Western Australia exists as an entity?**

Jeff: You’ve all paid your fees so June 30th 2018.

**Member: Will it continue if you don’t have members? Is there something for us to fall back to if we’re not happy with the National Body, do we have Podiatry Western Australia to go back to in two years?**

Jeff: If we wind up, then we’re done.

**Member: So do you have a time frame?**

Jeff: It’s got to go to the members. It will have to go to a special general meeting there’s a 13 step process we have to go through.

Katrina: A similar thing in Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland cease to operate, you’ve got three states who are going through the same thing, they’ve thrown themselves whole heartedly and said we think this is going to work, if it doesn’t well we’ve got to come up with a contingency down the track. We are every, all the leaders from the Podiatry Association throughout Australia are completely confident that this is the way to go, I think it is the structure we are moving towards is a far better structure a more sound structure that our current business practices compared to historical structures.

**Member: I think Western Australia is at a bit of a disadvantage because I think other states have taken months maybe years to absorb what has happened and ask the questions and hear the answers and so on and so forth, to make a decision and some people want a bit of time**

Jeff: We need to formulate a plan.

What we’ve got to is a point to asking questions of each other and call this meeting to an end if that’s alright and lets have a little chat about what you guys are thinking and how we are moving forward if that’s okay. Thank you very much to Nello and Katrina for coming to WA.

**Meeting Closed**

**Next Meeting date: TBA**