

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS
Friday, 9 October 2020

The past year has been one of the busiest in VHIA's history. Bargaining is always a high activity period for us, but this round has been especially challenging as the pandemic has fundamentally altered how bargaining is conducted.

The introduction of the '4 stages of bargaining' three years ago which resulted in a 'continuous improvement' approach to bargaining has had a significant impact. It has highlighted shortcomings in the bargaining process that drive an (at times) adversarial approach to industrial relations instead of one based on shared interest. This must change. Specifically, our industrial environment needs to mature if it is to be fit for purpose.

The service demands and workforce challenges are immense. The industrial relations environment needs to support rather than oppose the response to those challenges.

To be negotiating an agreement as the first lockdown took effect was a unique experience. So too is bargaining over the Internet. Whilst there's a huge diversity of available platforms (Microsoft Teams, Cisco Webex, Blue Jeans, GoToMeetings and others), the thing that binds them together is that somebody will, at some stage, say something profound and important whilst still on 'mute'. Whilst this has presented challenges for all parties, there are advantages too. The shift to 'on-line' bargaining, has created more opportunities for rural and regional members to participate in bargaining meetings. This has been a welcome development.

We are grateful to those members who have made time to join a Reference Group or attend a bargaining meeting. It has been a great pleasure to show more members what happens in bargaining. It has been a great benefit to have a broader range of expertise present at those meetings.

I would also like to thank everyone who made time to talk with us over the past year. CEOs, DONs, CFOs, People and Culture Teams, Payroll and various manager groups all took time to ensure that we were informed as possible and ready for bargaining. I'd also like to thank and acknowledge VHIA's staff, who have made a tremendous effort this year, even as circumstances required huge changes to how we work. Despite these changes, our member engagement measures increased across the year. This is a direct result of the hard work and dedication of the VHIA team.

We have been encouraged by the number of members who now use the VHIA Yammer Network – which has been a pivotal part in providing ‘meeting by meeting’ bargaining updates. We were delighted that so many members have used our new website and have continued to watch our podcasts. We are grateful that members have attended, contributed and generally done all the things necessary to make a difference.

The next year brings further challenges as we move to implementation for several major agreements. We look forward to supporting members through this process and, in particular, to re-introducing ‘Know Your Agreement’ training. Having made a number of changes to our technology platforms, we will take that work further in the coming year as a means of providing members with clear, timely information and giving them a platform where their views can be heard and shared with others.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart McCullough". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Stuart McCullough
Chief Executive Officer