



GOVERNMENT HOUSE
SYDNEY

Message from

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC

Governor of New South Wales

On 1 October 2019, Eric Holdeman in Disaster Zone, declared that the '2019 Word of the Year' was '*unprecedented*'. His prophecy was made in the context of US politics and climate change. He concluded: '*Hopefully 2020 will be a little less 'unprecedented' in what happens in the world*' – a prophecy about as accurate as that which predicted President Trump would not win the 2016 US election.

This is a very difficult time for everybody and barristers are as affected by and as vulnerable to the vagaries of COVID-19 as anyone, whether that be risk to health or to its economic impact. Indeed for barristers, there are particular stresses: the downturn in work; receiving briefs online - although an increasingly common practice, I heard one story of an online brief of 5000 pages; the difficulty of preparation at home without ready access to familiar resources; the variable quality of online technology; the uncertainty of whether a hearing will proceed; the difficulties of working from home with children being home-schooled or one's spouse or partner also working from home.

The Bar is of course a unique profession – where more than 2000 sole practitioners nonetheless 'do collegiality' well, as is apparent from the daily briefings from the Bar Association in *InBrief* and the various initiatives it is taking to help you manage the impacts on your practices. It is important to maintain that collegiality.

At the moment I am reading Albert Camus' '*The Plague*'. Putting aside its allegorical intent, the parallels to the reality of this pandemic are uncanny, right down to this reference: '*the long rising curve had flattened*'. Thankfully, '*unprecedented*' doesn't feature. So, to a profession which is so much part of my DNA and very dear to my heart and where I have wonderful friendships, can I say '*chin up*' for a bit longer. It is really tough but at least things seem to be getting back on track. If it would help anyone to ring and have a chat or to 'zoom in' I am more than happy to engage.

The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC
Governor of New South Wales