

Virtual 13TH ALA CONFERENCE

MODERN LYMPHATICS: 2020 VISION

28 MAY – 25 JUNE 2020



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Our formula for a successful virtual conference ...

Barely three weeks after a scheduled Board meeting at the end of February 2020 and with less than 10 weeks until our highly valued biennial conference was to be delivered in Hobart, the conference sector was effectively shut down. This is one of just hundreds of stories in the sector ...

Sharing some of the solutions that the [Australasian Lymphology Association](#) and their long-term association management partner [Association Professionals](#) have spent hours developing is our way of celebrating today - Day 1 of the biennial conference. This day has been scheduled as Day 1 of the ALA's 13th biennial conference for more than 3 years – and while we are not all under the one roof in Hobart, and there will be no gala dinner where we dance the night away or conference bags, we are beyond proud of what we are able to deliver.

Challenge No. 1 - Finances: Without exception all Hobart suppliers transferred the contracts and deposits to a future date and for that we are truly grateful. This provided the opportunity to focus on delivering a virtual conference without the distraction of an overwhelming financial impact. **Result:** Not unexpectedly, there has been an impact as the biennial conference is the association's biggest income stream and delivering online has reduced the profit significantly but, with some creative thinking and industry support, the overall impact is a manageable setback rather than catastrophe.

Challenge No. 2 - Program: With 5 acclaimed invited speakers including 4 from overseas and 117 submitted abstracts, the conference presents contemporary research that makes a difference to how our members assist people living with lymphoedema. **Solution:** As research goes out of date quickly there was an imperative 'not to waste all the work done' and hence a virtual conference, with a mix of live and pre-recorded sessions – all of which will be accessible for the next four weeks was considered ideal for our community.

Challenge No. 3 – The reality check: Many of our members and sponsors are facing uncertain financial times due to lockdowns and restrictions on both sides of the ditch limiting their ability to work. Initial environmental scans had our proposed registration fee as too high, while the cost of delivering a virtual conference was anything up to \$80,000! **Solution:** Work with industry partners to develop meaningful packages which provide financial support to the event and search for cost-effective ways of delivering the conference to keep the cost of registration as low as possible – here's where our five-year relationship with association and conference managers [Association Professionals](#), along with existing suppliers [Membes](#) and [InTuto](#), along with minimal cost [Zoom](#) and [Vimeo](#) subscriptions saved the day.

Challenge No. 4 - Attendance: Build it and they will come – we hoped! Confident communication, even as we were grappling with how to pull it all together, has paid off. **Result:** Just a few short of 400 have registered to date, and we hope they all give glowing reports to their colleagues over coming days so that we can reach 400 – this number wasn't even on our original forecasts, and represents around 50% of our membership.

Challenge No. 5 - Engagement: We all know that so much of the value of attending a conference is the interactivity between delegates, speakers and sponsors. **Solution:** Introductions recorded outside the original Hobart venue, live Q&A sessions via Zoom with presenters from across the world throughout the next 4 weeks (recorded for those who can't attend at the scheduled time) along with a collaboration hub courtesy of a free [SLACK](#) subscription with channels dedicated to specialties and some just for socials.

For the Australasian Lymphology Association and our conference managers Association Professionals, team work really does make the dream work!

Find out more ...



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