



2020 ACC CHAPTER GRANT SUBMISSION

FINAL REPORT: STRESS, HEALTH AND LIFE-BALANCE IN THE IN-HOUSE LEGAL PROFESSION

SUBMITTED TO:

Tori Payne, Vice President and Chief Membership Officer

BY:

Ingrid Segota, Executive Director, ACC Australia
Karina Butera, Head of Programs, ACC Australia

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Australian chapter was awarded a grant of **US\$6,000 (AUS\$9000)** to progress the In-house In Health (IHIH) initiative, which was established at the beginning of 2020.

Original

The grant was to be used to help fund the research component of our 2020 plan whereby we would:

1. partner with [Minds Count](#) to obtain a copy of their survey used for their “Courting the Blues” research project as a benchmark;
2. engage a research organisation to conduct a first-of-its-kind survey of in-house legal professionals in Australia to gain a better understanding of the unique health and wellness issues being faced; and
3. distribute and publish the research findings undertaken.

At the time of submitting our proposal, we had not foreseen the magnitude of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the impact this would have on our focus, opportunities, and priorities. We were able to advance discussions with Minds Count regarding the research project, which was due to be completed by August 2020, however, contracts are yet to be drawn up. Professor Ian Hickey (Co-Director, Health and Policy, Brain and Mind Centre, University of Sydney) and Associate Professor Greg de Moore (Board member of Minds Count and Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Westmead Hospital, Sydney), who both will be managing the research project, have been swept up in responding to the coronavirus crisis in their roles. It is the intention of Minds Count to re-prioritise the second wave of *Courting the Blues* research later in 2021.

NEW FOCUS

The stress currently being experienced by the in-house legal profession during these difficult and uncertain times has now become a key and urgent concern of the IHIH committee. As a response to members’ needs for private, online support during times of duress, we have opted to put the funds from the global grant towards the costs of piloting a program with members titled **Kickstart 2021**, with marathon runner and ironman, Andre Obradovic.

Although we did not use the grant funds as first proposed, we believe the new purpose is crucial at this time when in-house lawyers are under even greater than usual pressure both on the job and in their personal lives.

Kickstart 2021, commenced with an informational webinar with over 150 registrations. Jeffrey Compangano, co-chair of the Southern California chapter, registered and was keen to learn how the program runs, as they would like to run something similar in the US.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

A dedicated in- person panel session at the Victorian In-house Counsel Day was conducted and we then pivoted to running virtual events.

Mind Matters - how to ensure you and your team care for your most important collateral (March 4, 2020) - \$ AUS 3,000 (venue, catering)

“Self-care” is a label given to practices that ensure our bodies and minds are capable of functioning. However, by referring to it as “self”care, do businesses exempt themselves from responsibility for employee health? Where does an employer’s duty of care for staff health and safety stop and the employee’s responsibility of selfcare begin? When the tools of the in-house lawyer’s trade are mental, not physical, what tangible ways should managers be managing their people? With the prevalence of conscious and unconscious bias regarding mental illness, how does a lawyer overcome the fear of reputation loss and stigmatisation and ask for help when they are experiencing overwhelm?



Webinar - Navigating the “Brave New World” with optimism and resilience (June 12, 2020) Workplace Mental Health Advocate and Award-Winning Senior In-house Lawyer at Spark (NZ), Grant Pritchard, to unpack the challenges felt by in-house legal teams at this time. Identifying what we’re seeing in management strategies as we collectively adapt to the new environment and care for the

mental health of teams while maintaining high productivity through this trying time. This webinar tackled the topic of stigma and provided tips on how to maintain a sense of privacy and security in dealing with whatever struggles members were experiencing. The session provided a forum to share practical tips on how to manage differently in this changing time.

Webinar - Strength without Stress (September 23, 2020)

Amanda J. Scott, specialises in stress management and helps people identify which of the eight types of stress they have the most difficulty with, and which of their strengths they can call upon to turn negative stress into positive stress. According to Amanda this is key to remaining calmer, in-control, confident, happy, and productive under pressure.

Amanda's approach is unique, and, in this webinar, she demonstrated how stress is the symptom and not the cause, provided clarity on how the stress got there and provided tools to reconnect with your inner strength. Most importantly, Amanda provided vital tips that are immediately accessible to help you deal with anxiety, overwhelm, and fear and develop a new mindset for dealing with stress.

Program Kickstart 2021 Health & Wellness Program Information [Session](#) (June 27, 2020) – \$ AUS 12,500

We engaged healthy living activist, health coach, ironman Triathlete and marathon runner, Andre Obradovic, to run a pilot health and wellness program to help kickstart your 2021. The program involved regular webinars focused on a range of ways to improve levels of health, fitness, and vitality over a four-month period. Members were provided with access to Andre's Health and Wellness app which provided a wide range of health and wellness content.

Andre Obradovic planned a pilot program for 30 members, which ended up three groups of 20-25, because the demand from members was so high. The pilot offered members free participation in return for completing program commencement and conclusion surveys, to enable us to evaluate the success of the program and viability for future versions.

Provision of a 20-week health and wellness program for ACC Australia members, including:

- 1 x 60-minute introduction webinar
- Benchmarking report at commencement of program
- Presentation slides and handouts as required
- Weekly text to the group between coaching sessions with hints and tips regarding the relevant points of work to focus on
- 6 x 45min one on one coaching sessions (gifted to best achiever from previous session)
- Participant access to health and wellness app
- Free subscription to Members Only section of Which Path Coaching website for all participants for the length of the program
- Program evaluation report at conclusion of program
- Sponsor logo to the relevant section in health and wellness and on course materials
- Currently collating survey responses which on initial glance have very positive feedback.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Since submitting the grant submission, we have:

- Established the In-house In health committee with a committee chair and three subcommittees with terms of reference (attached). The committee is responsible for advocating for workplace practices that lead to improved levels of health and wellness for all members of the in-house legal profession, identifying and developing resources and events which will drive those practices.
- Developed a multi-levelled resource centre on the ACC Australia chapter website providing member resources and awareness of services [here](#).
- Created a research framework with [Minds Count](#), whereby Minds Count will conduct the research with ACC Australia as a sponsor – this will mean Minds Count will manage the research, which will reduce our head office operational load significantly. We will have some input into the survey design and research questions along with rights to co-branding on the publication. Developed partnership with Minds Count and promoting Minds Count seminars (3) to members.
- Collaborated with the Legal Leaders Committee and New to In-house Committee to explore options to establish networking hubs.
- Partnered with [Beyond Blue](#) and had a session in the Vic IHCD with a representative from Beyond Blue.
- Acquired a program sponsor [Vario](#) from Pinsent Mason.

