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| 27 October 2020 | Peter Sutherland  Convenor, Legal Aid Clinic  ANU School of Legal Practice  peter.sutherland@anu.edu.au  Canberra ACT 0200 Australia  www.anu.edu.au |

By email: businesscomms@treasury.gov.au

**Submission: Making permanent reforms in respect of virtual meetings and electronic document execution**

I wish to express my support for much of this Bill except for the intention to allow virtual general meetings of shareholders (including the AGM).

There has been efficiency gains and little downside from some of the measures adopted during 2020 on a temporary basis:

* Execution of company documents using electronic means;
* Giving documents relating to a meeting electronically;
* Signing documents electronically;
* Minutes taken and kept electronically.

I support these provisions becoming permanent as an option for the conduct of meetings.

However I am opposed to allowing general meetings of members (including the AGM) to be conducted electronically. Experience this year has shown that remote technology such as Zoom and Webex provide a much reduced quality of meeting where the subject matter is contentious or there is substantial division and tension among the participants. Accountability of the Board to shareholders would be gravely affected by adoption of this measure.

It can be expected that these changes will flow on to charities and similar accountability issues in relation to general meetings arise in that sector.

In my experience, holding Directors’ meetings electronically is appropriate and has in fact been common in the charity sector for years.

Yours sincerely

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