

Name: Tania Stegemann

Location: Melbourne, Victoria

Work role: I am currently completing a special assignment as Director of Compliance for Catholic Professional Standards, where I am responsible for the development of an audit, risk and compliance framework for the Catholic Church in response to the recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse. It is a unique and challenging role, but very rewarding in terms of the potential impact on our communities and on the protection of future generations.



Professional role: I have been involved with the IIA at the state, national and international level for almost 20 years and am currently the Chair of the IIA–Global committee for research and education. This committee oversees the production of the internal audit books and publications that you see in the IIA–Global bookstore. It’s a very rewarding role and a great moment when you see a book or publication you’ve been working on going into print!

How did you get a start in internal audit?

I first started working as a trainee internal auditor for the Queensland Industry Development Corporation (QIDC), a state body providing financial services to Queensland industry. This was in 1986 and I was still completing my undergraduate degree part-time. Once I completed my studies, I went to work for KPMG in external audit, before eventually moving to BHP and formally starting my career in internal audit. I have had many varied internal audit roles since those days.

What’s the coronavirus drama effect on you?

We started working from home even before the official lock-down, so I am really missing the face-to-face social interactions with other people, even if it’s just saying hello in the elevator or exchanging a couple of words with the cashier at the shops. In addition, after many years of commuting up and down the eastern seaboard, as well as a fair bit of long-haul travel, I thought I would enjoy staying in one place, but I am actually missing the travel and will be happy to be one of the first ones on a plane (with the correct safety precautions!) when they open up the skies again.

Has coronavirus changed the way you work?

The coronavirus has not really changed things too much – we are still conducting our audits remotely and having discussions and interviews with Dioceses and Religious Institutes over Zoom and Skype. I have also taken this opportunity to tighten up our audit methodology and create training for external contractors which will be rolled out by the end of the year.

What risks would you say are heightened by coronavirus?

I think in addition to the immediate risks such as workplace health and safety, cyber-security, financial stability etc there will be many long-term risks which will emerge as we come out of lockdown. These include risks around ongoing and reliable supply chain management, workforce planning and changing consumer preferences as things that people once took for granted no longer either hold appeal or have been replaced with other (online) products, services or delivery methods.

What is the biggest challenge facing internal auditors?

The coronavirus should be seen as an opportunity for internal auditors to ‘think beyond the curve’. Internal auditors need to consider how the business will cope with the ongoing effects of the pandemic, how processes will have changed, how the economy and the external environment has changed, and how this affects the assurance that internal audit provides going forward. I believe there will be a blurring of traditional assurance with advisory and consulting work to help the business understand its future direction and challenges and survive beyond the crisis.

What has the IIA-Australia been doing lately?

I really enjoyed the factsheet on 'Internal Audit and Pandemics' and have shared this with my global committee, with great comments from practitioners in Europe and the Americas. Judging by the remarks, I think we were one of the first Institutes to put out such a publication which is testament to the quality resources and skills we have access to. I am also looking forward to SOPAC Online on 16 June which is a great way to keep up your CPE and connect with fellow IIA members.

What is your most memorable internal audit moment?

I established an internal audit unit in Mongolia when Rio Tinto began developing a mine there. As part of this, I had to present to the Mongolian Government on the value of internal audit and how it would benefit the operations of the mine as well as providing comfort to the joint venture members. I found out later that the government officials were really impressed and had said "This internal audit thing is exactly what we need ...". Another tick for our profession!!

What are you reading at present?

As Chair of the global research and education committee, I seem to live and breathe publications on internal audit, risk and governance! I recently reviewed a research paper on defining and measuring internal audit's value, as well as a proposal for a handbook on auditing third party risks.

What is on your desk right now?

My desktop pro, three screens and a bottle of hand sanitiser.

Concert or event you would most like to attend?

I love going to the movies and can't wait for the cinemas to re-open! Until then it's choc-tops and homemade popcorn for movie nights at home!