

Name: Phillip Draber

Location: Applecross, Western Australia

Work role: Active retirement, formerly Chief Risk & Assurance Officer at Edith Cowan University (ECU).

Professional role: Member of the IIA–Global Academic Relations Committee, public member of a number of WA Local Government Audit and Risk Committees Board member of Kinross College.

Community role: Member of the Rotary Club of Melville, Chair, Policy Committee, South of Perth Yacht Club, Race Officer, South of Perth Yacht Club and Justice of the Peace (WA)



How did you get a start in internal audit?

When we shared the office computer. I was part of the WA Auditor General's first performance auditing team and the Assistant Auditor General (Value-For-Money Audits) was an ex-internal auditor and as internal audit (at least overseas) was doing more than financial attest work, he suggested it was a good idea. The IIA in those days also had some professional development and networking which was not for the faint-hearted. The Auditor General at the time got me to assist a number of agencies with writing up some internal audit charters and that led, over time, to my first internal audit appointment at what was the Building Management Authority in 1988.

What's the coronavirus drama effect on you?

I've had the time to actually do a lot more professional reading as I piled on the COVID kilos which has in turn been very useful for the board work I've been doing. Being in WA has made me really appreciate how lucky we have been to have escaped relatively unscathed in comparison to the rest of the world – something that has been really reinforced by daily walks at first light along the Swan River. Having family in the USA makes you sympathise with our colleagues in other States. This has also driven me to be more mindful and considerate of those around you in the community and to go out of your way to make a small difference to at least someone else every day.

Working from office or home?

Mostly from home now that I'm semi-retired. Escapes from home are gratefully accepted. Coffee shops are safe havens.

How has coronavirus changed the way you work?

A good exam question for someone who retired from the daily grind immediately prior to the coronavirus onset. In terms of technology understanding and use, the answer is yes but universities have always been good with working from home.

What risks would you say are heightened by coronavirus?

Public health and communal threats that put at risk the health and wellbeing of individuals and in turn our economic risks. Economic risks in turn put at risk cashflows that undermine organisational sustainability – and that's a real concern for the not-for-profits that deliver an immense amount value to the community. Coronavirus also diverts attention as it must from longer-term risks associated with climate change. But that also is an opportunity by using the crisis to make positive change with sustainability in mind.

Alas, misery is also a great opportunity for those with sinister intent. Cybersecurity risks are heightened in an already conspiracy theory laden world as is the risk of fraud due to the changed control environments and use of expedient measures that with good intent, weaken them.

What is the biggest challenge facing internal auditors?

The ongoing supply continuity of professional auditors who've actually worked as internal auditors in organisations on their payroll. I have nothing whatsoever against internal audit

service providers and indeed they are necessary and great supporters of the profession. My concerns are:

1. A lot of management teams are falling for the trap that entirely outsourced models bring better independence at a cheaper cost. In larger organisations this weakens the third line of defence and reduces accountability which in turn increases risk. A staff internal auditor understands culture and the nature of the business and while we may on occasions be that turbulent priest, we can add genuine value to the core business that outsourced providers can only do with continuous and ongoing exposure to the business – particularly in government and not-for-profits.
2. By not having this pool, even the service providers in the longer term will struggle to get the professionals they need. The profession then goes back to an era where internal auditors will need to come from external audit or those with a quality or regulator background.
3. The absence of internal audit education in our higher education curricula. With the exception of one university in Australia, this is missing. How can we as a profession change this as I believe this can be a real multiplier for us as we have the power of good research to improve the education of those who aspire to enter the profession.

What has the IIA-Australia been doing lately?

Continuing to deliver good quality material to our membership, as well as using technology to deliver professional development. Unfortunately, sharing a drink and important social networking doesn't lend itself well to Zoom and WebEx.

What is your most memorable internal audit moment?

What happens on tour stays on tour. Seriously, the most satisfying was the team members I've worked with over the years. They've all been better than me and that's a really good outcome. In terms of audit outcomes, overseeing the delivery of an audit that led to instant and competitive advantage providing improvements in undergraduate English Language proficiency. The audit was timely and added value, as well as being a great vote of confidence in our team by the Senior Leadership Team at ECU.

What are you working on at present?

Writing this up, a pile of Audit & Risk Committee agendas, establishing a compliance program in my capacity as Governance Officer for my Rotary Club and establishing a policies framework for the South of Perth Yacht Club.

What are you reading at present?

To use proper citation:

- Bolton J., The Room Where it Happened – A White House Memoir, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2020.
- De Bellaigue C., The Islamic Enlightenment – The Modern Struggle between Faith and Reason, Penguin Random House, 2017.

What is on your desk right now?

Does pieces of Lego count? My big beautiful wall (a Lego version of the Great Wall of China) only cost my wonderful wife \$80.

Concert or event you would most like to attend?

I'd love to attend a performance of a famous opera at La Scala in Milan or watch Test Cricket in England, preferably from the members' bar.

What would you change if you could?

Not being able to freely travel outside WA (but then again WA is one of the world's hidden treasures), as well as the fabulous Fremantle Dockers ability to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.