

Member Awards - Barry Davidow

In this series we feature IIA-Australia Members who have been recognised with awards past and present.

Name

Barry Davidow

Location

Sydney – with the harbour, parks and tree-lined streets - one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

Professional role

In the corruption prevention division of the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). Before that I held directorships in Fraud Prevention and Governance Pty Ltd and The Ethics Company Pty Ltd.

What award did you win?

Bob McDonald Award

How did the award come about?

Changing from external to internal auditing was like the guy who was banging his head against the wall. When asked why, he explained: "For the sheer pleasure of when I stop." What I learned very quickly was that internal audit was not only a more pleasant environment, but also one where the work was far more meaningful.

Some years ago I heard a great comparison. I was told that internal controls are like traffic lights. To some people they are instructions, to others they are suggestions, and to some people they are Christmas decorations. As internal auditors we help make those accountable who treat controls as meaningless decorations, help those who treat them as suggestions to improve their effectiveness. and highlight and acknowledge the efforts of those who regard controls as important.

Internal audit is critical in providing transparency and accountability and helping organisations improve their processes, structures, cultures and management. People want to work in a positive, ethical and effective environment and we help them achieve that.

Without internal audit many organisations would be limbo organisations – where they set the bar as low as possible and still manage to go under it.

One of my favourite Warren Buffett quotes is: "It's only when

the tide goes out that you can see who is swimming naked." Without internal audit it would only be after the disasters that we would see where the problems are.

Some years ago I was told: "Asking an audit client what we think of auditors is like asking a lamppost what it thinks of dogs." As internal auditors we are not always appreciated, which is one of the reasons why the work of the IIA in explaining internal audit's role and mission is so important.

Internal auditors do important work and the IIA champions what we do and makes it easier for us to be internal auditors. For that reason I became involved in many IIA activities and helped the IIA wherever it was practical for me to do so. The award was the IIA, frankly, overvaluing my small contribution.

What came out of receiving the award?

They stopped serving free alcohol at meetings of the awards committee. (A joke to highlight that there are many dedicated internal auditors who are worthy of this award, no doubt many more deserving than me).

What are you doing now?

Relaxing with a cup of tea. Not proper tea, because as Karl Marx said: "Proper tea is theft." Besides that I am continuing the fight for integrity, transparency and accountability and against fraud and corruption through my work at ICAC.

When I first started internal auditing my hair used to blow in the wind. My hair still blows in the wind but now I am too proud to chase it. Internal auditing still excites me as much as it used to and the IIA's role is just as important as it ever was.

