

## From the President

The motto of the Bar, servants of all and yet of none, embodies two elements which are of the essence of barristers. We must meet the needs of those who require expert legal representation and advice. At the same time we must maintain an independence from influences which distract from the provision of that representation and advice, whilst at the same time maintaining an independence from the client. Barristers are not merely mouthpieces in the way in which our American counterparts have come to be painted. We are professionals. Our continued existence depends upon the maintenance of professionalism and excellence.

Collegiality has always been part of the ethos of the Bar. At a time when there were only male barristers they were described as "brothers-in-law". I am not sure what the appropriate description would be in gender-neutral terms, but the concept remains unchanged. The most senior should be available to assist the most junior. That is our tradition. It is a tradition which should not be lost as a consequence of changes in the Bar.

The great dream of people such as Barwick, Manning, Kerr, Toose, McGuire and others in the early 1950s was to provide the Bar with a home of its own. By bringing all, or nearly all, members under the one roof they saw that the collegiality of the Bar would be strengthened, the quality of practice further improved and the Bar united so as to be a force to be reckoned with. Strength and excellence were considerations which helped motivate the construction of Wentworth and Selborne.

The numbers at the Bar have increased dramatically over recent years. At the same time there has been a dispersal of the

courts within the central business district. The opening of the Downing Centre and plans for the extension of that Centre, so as to house even more courts, have highlighted this tendency. A proliferation of Chambers housing small numbers of barristers has taken place. There is a possibility that this could lead to feelings of separation and hamper the free interchange of experience between the senior and experienced on the one hand and the junior and less experienced on the other. There is a real risk that all these factors in combination could weaken the cohesion and collegiality of the Bar.

I believe passionately in the value of an independent Bar. The experience in other States and parts of the Commonwealth has demonstrated that the market shares that belief. How then can the Bar retain its cohesion and collegiality? How best to meet the challenges? Do we, for instance, establish a second home for the Bar? If so, where should it be? Should there be refurbishment of Wentworth and Selborne, and if so what form should this refurbishment take? When and how should this be undertaken? These questions will no doubt continue to exercise the minds of the Bar Council after my term as President

has come to an end. They are, however, questions which must be addressed by the Bar as a whole, senior and junior alike. I would welcome suggestions from as many members as possible so that the plans which are formulated to meet the challenges which confront us will be soundly based and enjoy the support of the Bar as a whole.

□ Barry O'Keefe QC

