

Law Council awards President's Medal to Bret Walker SC



In September 2009, Bret Walker SC was awarded the Law Council's highest honour, the President's Medal. He was nominated for this award by the New South Wales Bar Association for his outstanding contribution to the legal profession and the wider community in his various capacities as a community lawyer, barrister, senior counsel and philanthropist.

Speaking at the presentation ceremony, during the Australian Legal Convention,

in Perth, the president of the Law Council, John Corcoran said: 'Mr Walker is held in high regard for his sharp legal mind and his advocacy skills, as well as his strength of character and integrity. His contribution to social justice and the rule of law in this country has been extraordinary. He is often involved in matters in which the more disadvantaged in our community come face-to-face with the law. Both his practice at the bar and his time spent giving pro bono assistance to a wide range of causes reflect both his incredible legal skill and deep understanding of people from all walks of life. His commitment to social justice and his ability to interpret and apply the law at the highest level make him an invaluable member of the profession, as well as of the wider community. On behalf of the Law Council and the wider profession, I congratulate Mr Walker on this award. It is formal recognition of his substantial contribution to the law and the community.'

Bret Walker SC has been a practising

barrister for nearly 30 years, and was appointed senior counsel in December 1993. He regularly advises the Australian Government on a wide variety of constitutional issues. He has also been appointed by the NSW Government to conduct inquiries into Campbelltown and Camden hospitals, the management of Kosciusko National Park in the wake of the Thredbo landslide, and the Sydney Ferry Service. He was president of the Law Council of Australia from 1997-98, and president of the NSW Bar Association from November 2001 to November 2003. He is the primary author of the New South Wales Barristers rules, the Australian Bar Association's Model Conduct Rules and the Law Council of Australia's current Model Conduct Rules.

In December 2003 he was made a life member of the New South Wales Bar Association, in recognition of his exceptional service over many years to the Bar Association and the profession.

Sherlock Holmes in Australian judgments (continued)

In an attempt to test Holmes's theory about the limited nature of Bradshaw's vocabulary, I searched the *OED* (2d) electronically for words or phrases whose meaning was illustrated by quotations taken from pre-1890s Bradshaws. I found only six such words or phrases: express (as in 'express train'); mixed (as in 'mixed train'); parliamentary (as in 'parliamentary train'); second-class (as in 'second-class railway ticket or compartment'); slip (as in 'to slip a railway carriage'); and third-class (as in 'third-class railway ticket or compartment'). Not much Shakespearean-style eloquence in that lot!

Incidentally, the book that Holmes correctly concluded had been used to create the coded message was *Whitaker's Almanack* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitaker's_Almanac>.

22. Completeness dictates that I mention here two references that I've found in the Sherlock Holmes canon to a railway timetable, with no mention of whether or not that timetable was one that had been produced by Bradshaw. In the story, 'The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans', from *His Last Bow* <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2350>>, a question arose as to the first train that someone could've taken from Woolwich to London Bridge after a certain time. According to Watson, 'A reference to the timetable showed that the 8.15 was the first... In the story, 'The Adventure of the Dancing Men', from *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/108>>, Holmes asks Watson whether there is a train to North Walsham that night. According to Watson, 'I turned up the timetable. The last had just gone.'
23. (1981) 29 SASR 16.
24. At page 33.
25. The case was *Lee Transport Co Ltd v Watson* (1940) 64 CLR 1 and the quotation from the reasons for judgment of Rich J is at page 5. At pages 5-6 in my paper, *Homer in Australian reasons for Judgment or Decision* <<http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1322208>>, I mentioned, without providing examples, that one could find in such reasons reference to someone's being between Scylla and Charybdis. The passage from Rich J's reasons for judgment that I've quoted in the text provides an example of such a reference.
26. <<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/AATA/2000/959.html>>.
27. At paragraph [64].