

## Reflection and remembrance

By Jane Needham SC



In my last president's column for Summer 2014, I noted the number of obituaries in that issue – six in total. Since that edition of *Bar News*, the bar has undergone an horrendous event which culminated in the loss of another of our members. Jason Potts's moving obituary for Katrina Dawson appears in this issue, and the editor has added his own personal reflection of her in his column.

*The events of 15 and 16 December 2014 will be etched in the minds of the members of the New South Wales Bar Association for a long time to come.*

The events of 15 and 16 December 2014 will be etched in the minds of the members of the New South Wales Bar Association for a long time to come. The Sydney Siege, as it has come to be known, tested the association and its members in many ways.

Early in the course of the siege, the Bar Association notified Penny Johnston, the director of BarCare, who in turn was in contact with her team of mental health professionals in order to ensure that any calls on her time and theirs were able to be answered. The specialists on the BarCare panel responded magnificently. They took calls outside of usual hours, took urgent appointments, and generally only charged their usual rate for their unusual workload.

In particular, the services of BarCare were offered to those most directly affected by the siege. Penny has conducted a number of floor de-briefings as well as arranging individual contact and counselling to our members. She has personally assisted many of our members and their (and the Bar Association's) staff. Penny's work was the subject of a number of letters and calls of personal thanks to the association, and I know that she has made a difference in many lives.

With the various inquiries, including the inquest, and the likely continued emergence in the media of details of the siege and its aftermath, it is likely that there will continue to be a higher level of calls on Penny's time than is usual. I encourage our members to contact BarCare in relation to any ongoing issues arising from the siege, whether it is you or a colleague who is having difficulties.

**Penny Johnston**  
**Director**  
**Phone: (02) 9331 3872**  
**Email: [pjohnston@barcare.org](mailto:pjohnston@barcare.org)**  
**[www.barcare.org](http://www.barcare.org)**

On 16 December, on being informed of the death of Katrina Dawson, the Bar Association issued a media statement and Vale notice. That statement was covered by international media, from major international newspapers and media outlets down to the *Contra Costa*

*Times* (my brother's local newspaper in Martinez, California). It received tens of thousands of views on our website and on Twitter.

On the morning of 17 December, the Bar Association announced that it would be hosting an Afternoon of Reflection and Remembrance in the Common Room. The need for this arose out of the isolation felt by many at being locked out of chambers, and gave members a chance to come together and grieve. This afternoon was very well attended (an estimated 150 members and staff attending). Penny Johnston and I made an effort to speak to every person who was there, although some people came and went before that was possible. The Afternoon was particularly well attended by our female members. A number of Bar Association staff – including those for whom it was beyond their job description – also attended to offer support to our members.

*I was particularly heartened at the way the community of Phillip Street came together.*

The siege and its aftermath put an enormous strain on the resources of the Bar Association and its staff. I have thanked the staff personally, and the Bar Council has also expressed its thanks for their assistance and devotion to duty – keeping the association going over two days when the office was unreachable, and working from home in circumstances of real difficulty.

I was particularly heartened at the way the community of Phillip Street came together. There was a very broad response, from local cafes supporting the Afternoon on 17 December, to offers from other organisations of assistance

by way of counselling and support. I was very moved amongst the horror of that week to have a huge outpouring of support, both from Australia and overseas.

Our thoughts are often, of course, with Katrina's family, her husband Paul Smith, her children, and her brother Sandy Dawson, himself a member of our association.

In more mundane ways, life does go on. The Bar Council has been considering its usual range of issues, and has issued a statement of policies for consideration by the various parties in the election campaign. Those issues cover areas of criminal law including bail and mandatory sentencing, Indigenous incarceration, compensation of accident victims, and more. It is available on our website, although by the time this edition of *Bar News* is published the outcome of the election will be known. I trust that the matters in the election policy are of more than mere historical interest.

Picking up on matters which I wrote about last year, the Martin Place childcare centre, at which the association guarantees ten spots per day for its

*Twenty-two chambers have now adopted the Best Practice Guidelines, and a number more have considered their existing policies in the light of the guidelines.*

members, is now at 80 per cent capacity and providing regular or emergency care to a number of bar families. A number of courts (the District and Local courts, as well as the Land and Environment Court, in addition to the Supreme Court and the Federal Court whom I wrote about last year) have picked up the 'certainty in sitting hours' suggestion and have implemented consideration of family or carer responsibilities in regulating sitting hours. Twenty-two chambers have now adopted the Best Practice Guidelines, and a number more have considered their existing policies in the light of the guidelines.

Our NARS response working party and equitable briefing working party continue to look for ways to deal with the issues raised by the Law Council survey. The

Equal Opportunity Committee and Women Barristers Forum are each working hard on these issues as well.

On 20 March I presented Ian Temby QC with a life membership of the Bar Association. Ian has served (and continues, as chair of a PCC, to serve) the bar in many ways since his interesting career path brought him to Sydney, and his life membership is well-deserved.

Finally, I would like to thank those members of the Bar Association who have contributed to the February–March landslide of CPD. In addition to the regular Sydney lectures, of which there are many in that period leading up to the deadline for CPD points, our members have attended at Newcastle, Orange, Ballina and Parramatta as well as the all-day event in Sydney. I attended Newcastle and Orange and found each a very enjoyable occasion (particularly an excellent dinner with the local profession in Orange!). The quality of the presentations is remarkable and those who give up their weekends to present papers should be congratulated.



**BLASHKI**  
ESTABLISHED 1858

*Makers of Fine Regalia and Academic Wear*

Melbourne  
12/5 Kellista Road,  
Rowville, Victoria 3178  
1800 803 584

Adelaide  
"The Regalia Shop"  
43/81 Carrington Street, Adelaide, SA 5000  
08 8232 2955

Echuca  
91-93 Nish Street,  
Echuca, Victoria 3564  
03 5482 4788

## The Best Australian Made Legal Regalia Available

Manufactured in Rowville, Melbourne

- Genuine E & R English Made Wigs
- Packages available



Buy Directly Online -  
[www.blashki.com.au](http://www.blashki.com.au)