

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

By Noor Blumer



Top: Delegates enjoying the conference dinner at Hobart City Hall
 Middle: (L to R) Clara Davies, National President-Elect, Australian Lawyers Alliance, Melissa Zombolas, Impact Capital, Peter Burt, Burt & Davies, Aimee Reynolds, Impact Capital
 Bottom: (L to R) Major Michael Mori, His Excellency the Honourable William Cox, The Governor of Tasmania and Mrs Cox, Eva Scheerlinck, CEO, Australian Lawyers Alliance at the welcome reception, held at Government House.

What binding spell ensures that on the second weekend in October, so many of us progress like migrating penguins to the far corners of our nation? Even to the bits at the bottom, like Hobart?

Is it the heady mix of fascinating and inspiring speakers?

The stunning social program?

The opportunity to learn and improve our practices (so we can afford to get to the next conference)?

The chance to meet and kick up our heels with our colleagues?

Or just the possibility that if we sit through 50 significant recent cases, the overview of the various jurisdictions and the other 'hands-on' subjects, some skerrick of legal knowledge may actually permeate the dermis sufficiently to stop us from making fools of ourselves in our next case?

Thanks to Major Michael Mori (who those of us at the conference now call 'Dan') for travelling to Hobart to accept the Civil Justice Award. What a great guy, what a great guest and what a worthy recipient.

Sir Anthony Mason, 12 years after his retirement, continues to provide fascinating insights into the state of the rule of law in Australia. Sir Anthony most elegantly submitted the case for a Bill of Rights model, now formally part of the Alliance's mission.

Julian Burnside QC followed up his 'porridge' moment from the Melbourne conference with further reflections on the state of the law and human rights in Australia. Those of us there will never forget his approach to abusive emailers, but few of us will ever match his superb ability to turn an argument.

Claire O'Connor was one of many standout speakers, sharing her chilling knowledge of the appalling state of the mental health of immigration detainees.

Those of us brave enough to venture out for litigation at sunrise were treated to President Ian Brown's psychotic administration of the citizenship

Major Partners



2007

test – he was so disappointed with the results that he administered it to the whole conference later in the day! Those of us there earlier could cheat, as we already knew the answers, so we're still here; but the rest have been deported!

Personally, I would have turned up just for the privilege of being entertained at Government House by the Governor of Tasmania, His Excellency the Hon. William Cox.

And don't forget the Black and White ball. Such a glamorous event, all decked out in our finery (as best we could manage) – so much dancing. Bit of a shame my fabulous time was ruined by President Ian Brown's face appearing at odd times saying 'Don't forget litigation at sunrise. Can you be there at 6.45?'

The conference warmly acknowledged the outstanding contribution of retiring president, Simon Morrison.

And even the AGM was exciting! Highly controversial! The cause of much discussion and consternation. And don't forget Tom Percy QC's motions on current legal issues. This time it was a condemnation of the actions of the attorney-general and the police in WA in announcing that the husband in a murder investigation was the 'one and only suspect' without laying charges. You weren't there? Make sure you are next time.

We took two junior solicitors from our firm who had never been to an Alliance conference before. They had a fabulous time.

Thanks to Eva and Maja and the team from ALA executive for organising such a memorable conference, and see you in New Zealand next year! (Sorry, yes, that's not in Australia, but watch this space.) ■

The 2008 National Conference will be held 16-18 October in Auckland.

Noor Blumer is a lawyer at Blumers Personal Injury Lawyers, Canberra. **PHONE** (02) 6208 2600
EMAIL noor@blumers.com.au



Top (L to R): The Hon Sir Anthony Mason AC KBE delivers the keynote address; Julian Burnside QC; Steve Mark, NSW Legal Services Commissioner

Middle: (L to R) Dr Andrew Morrison SC, Peter Semmler QC and Dr Peter Cashman at the welcome reception, hosted by His Excellency The Hon William Cox and Mrs Cox.

Bottom: (L to R) Eva Scheerlinck, CEO, Australian Lawyers Alliance, Ian Brown, National President, Australian Lawyers Alliance, Greens Senator Bob Brown and Major Michael Mori, 2007 Civil Justice Award Recipient.

Partners

