

# 2008 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

16 –18 OCTOBER 2008, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

By Peter Long

**D**espite the overwhelming preference of its 10,000 members for the National Conference to be held in Dubbo this year, the organisers chose East Bondi. This was apparently due to the number of spare beds available in that quaint city since the osmotic re-distribution of Auckland's population through the Tasman Sea.

Proudly boasting at least seven more floors and three more lifts than the tallest building in Dubbo, the chosen conference venue, the Langham Hotel, proved to be a winner, with all delegates enjoying its quality facilities.

The subcommittee charged with providing a stimulating and educative program exceeded themselves once again: the introduction of a criminal law stream went down very well with members, as did the excellent range of topics overall.

The 2008 National Conference kicked off with three well-attended workshop sessions on the Thursday followed by a fine round of welcoming drinks before members spread out like marauding Visigoths to find the best eateries in town.

The more formal proceedings commenced on Friday. The presentation of the Civil Justice Award to Claire O'Connor was unanimously popular. Members clearly appreciated the >>



Robin Napper, forensic investigator from WA, presents on the dangers of forensic contamination.



Ian Davy and Katrina Henderson from Evidex, enjoying the gala dinner at Auckland Museum.

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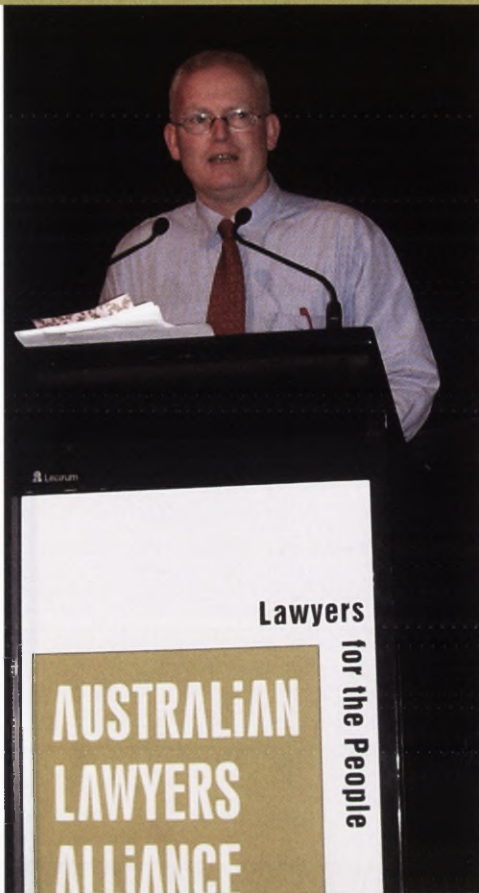
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Above: Julian McMahon, Victorian barrister, presenting on the death penalty debate.

Top Right: (L to R) South Australian delegates, Murcia Walters and Gary Allison from Tindall Gask Bentley and barrister, Jo-Anne Deuter.

Right: (L to R) Ian Brown, Immediate Past National President, Kylie Brown, Pam Faulks, Eva Scheerlinck, CEO, Clara Davies, National President and Richard Faulks, Past National President (2005-2006)



recognition of a colleague who, rather than achieving justice for others through one major case, had repeatedly and at significant personal and financial cost to herself made an outstanding contribution of the delivery of justice to the most needy in our community.

Attendees were then treated to a day of plenary papers on subjects including indigenous rights, compensation for the Stolen Generations and disenfranchised, our long hoped for but yet to be delivered Charter of Rights, the death penalty, and what Janet Albrechtsen may describe as the ultimate oxymoron – the ethical plaintiff lawyer. A motion to re-introduce the death penalty only for the limited purpose of educating right wing journalists was narrowly defeated due to members heading back to their rooms to scrub up for the gala dinner.

This year's dinner was held in the Auckland Museum: not, as suggested, because of the average age of conference delegates, but because it is truly the premier venue in New Zealand. A great night was had by all except for those who would prefer not to be sung to sleep by the headlining act, *Mariano and the Boys*.

Saturday saw three streams of speakers covering a wide range of extremely topical issues, and members unanimously lauded the choice and quality of the presentations which covered the significant issues facing lawyers acting for plaintiffs in civil matters and defendants in criminal matters across Australia. Many plaintiff lawyers 'crossed over' for the sessions on forensic contamination and serial killers.

Conference organisers advised that Gunnedah and Las Vegas had been narrowly pipped at the post as the venue for the 2009 National Conference and Sanctuary Cove had been selected. Be there or be less informed.

Delegates drifted off back to the West Island tired but wiser than when they had arrived, and hungry to get back to the office and dig out all those closed files that would have been run differently had they known then what they know now. ■

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