

Edmund Barton Chambers celebrates its silver jubilee

By Philippe Gray-Grzeszkiewicz

In 1979, Edward St John QC, barrister and member of the House of Representatives, collected some barristers together and formed the first set of chambers off Phillip Street. Those barristers took the name of Australia's first prime minister, and became known as Edmund Barton Chambers. Legal quidnuncs predicted it wouldn't last.

Twenty-five years later, on 9 October 2004, Edmund Barton Chambers celebrated its silver jubilee. In terms of years, Edmund Barton Chambers is a relatively young organisation, but since beginning it has produced two attorneys-general, 10 judges, and many silks.

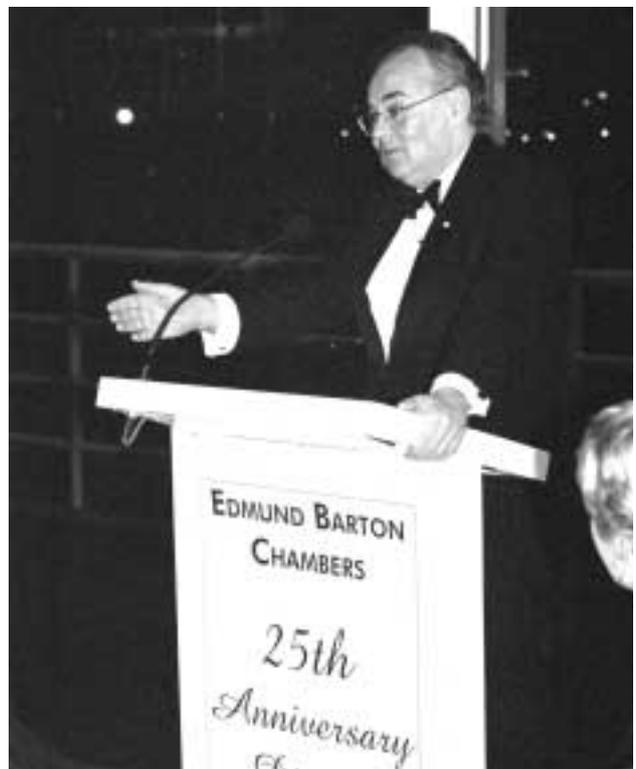
Past members and politicians Peter Collins QC (former opposition leader) and Kevin Rozzoli (former speaker) of the NSW Legislative Assembly attended. The late Greg Sullivan QC (former solicitor general for NSW) was fondly remembered in speeches. In keeping with the political flavour of chambers, Prime Minister John Howard was kind enough to call an election for the night.

A thriving set of almost 50 current members gathered for a dinner dance at the Maritime Museum in Darling Harbour. Along with their partners, also in attendance were past members, including Justice John Dowd, Judge James Black QC, Acting Judge Phillip Twigg QC, Rod Craigie QC and Robert Lethbridge SC to name but a few. Members of the Bar Association executive, including President Ian Harrison SC, Senior Vice-President Michael Slattery SC and Junior Vice-President Anna Katzman SC, attended with their spouses. Gordon Salier, president of the Law Society, and his wife were among several solicitors joining the celebrations.

Pre-dinner drinks on board HMAS *Vampire* preceded speeches. Mark Stevens, chairman of chambers, gave a brief history of chambers. In choosing to honour Edmund Barton by the adoption of his name for these chambers, it was the hope of the founders that his ideals of fairness, his generosity of spirit, his love of classics, of cricket, of good fellowship and, above all, his remembrance at the Bar as being always most courteous and helpful to younger barristers will be perpetuated by all who practice within those walls.



The Beatniks entertain the guests



Chief Justice Spigelman AC addresses the gathering to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Edmund Barton Chambers.

Ian Harrison SC spoke about the importance of vibrant chambers in these uncertain times. Conspicuously absent was any mention of the success by the chambers cricket team against 11th Floor Selborne, or the extensive collection of original Don Bradman memorabilia jealously guarded but on display in chambers.

Malcolm Broun OAM QC, a founding member of chambers, told some very amusing anecdotes of the last 25 years, including one of the late Patrick Lanigan, a member of the floor, and upon whom it is rumoured Barry Humphries has modelled the character Sir Les Patterson.

The chief justice of New South Wales, the Hon Justice JJ Spigelman AC, spoke of the integrity of Edward St John, and the lasting effect that has had on the legal community, and made some interesting suggestions as to what opportunities China held for Australian advocates over the next 25 years.

Regrettably, Sir Lawrence Street, who opened chambers, was unable to attend at the last moment, but will be the guest later in the year at another function.

After speeches, guests were transported back a little more than 25 years to the sounds of McCartney & Lennon courtesy of the talented *Beatniks*, and Edmund Barton Chambers further cemented its reputation of throwing the best parties in town. Bookings have already been taken for the golden jubilee.