

# APLA ACT report

Michael Higgins, Canberra

Although the ACT branch of APLA was formally launched at the time of the National Council meeting in Canberra earlier this year, it took the impetus of the 1997 National Conference to push membership numbers to the level where a viable branch committee could be formed. The first general meeting was held on 11 November. Although a "boutique" branch with only 16 members, the percentage of total lawyer numbers this represents is

about the same as for the New South Wales or Victorian branches, and involved a 150% increase in the 12 month period between conferences. The meeting considered that there were still plenty more members to be approached and the target is now to try and challenge Queensland for the best percentage APLA penetration rate.

The meeting unanimously confirmed as President Michael Higgins who has

been the ACT representative on the National Council since the formation of APLA. The Vice President is Thena Kyprianou, the Secretary Bruce Howes, the Treasurer Jennifer Saunders and the *Plaintiff* contributor/editor for the ACT is Richard Faulks. ■

**Michael Higgins** is ACT President of APLA. He can be contacted at Higgins Solicitors, on **phone** 02 6248 0488.

# APLA WA report

Sukhwant Singh, Perth

## APLA Sunset Seminar

The latest APLA WA seminar was on 24 November 1997 and the Chief Assessor, Criminal Injuries Compensation presented a talk on criminal injury claims, procedures and what claimants' lawyers should be doing to enhance their clients' claims.

In addition, I reported on the current status of Civil Procedure Reforms in the District Court and procedures relating to negotiations in motor vehicle accidents.

## APLA WA campaigns

We are running the following campaigns and all WA members are urged to provide information to me to assist and where appropriate initiate their own correspondence:

a) I believe that the relevant Ministers do not realise that the changes in the law relating to motor vehicle accidents and workers' compensation which were initiated in 1993/1994 have had a disastrous effect on the rights of injured claimants. I am writing to Mr Max Evans, MLA, Minister for Finance (with the responsibility for SGIC) and Mr Graham Kierath, MLA, Minister for Labour Relations, raising examples of how the changes in the law have

adversely effected injured claimants and their rights. I have pointed out that the large number of claimants are not able to make any claim at all and have effectively been removed from the system. Copies of my letter can be made available upon request and I urge all WA members to write to the Ministers to point out the inequities of the changes in the law;

- b) I am also writing to the Attorney General (WA) raising concerns about the recent increases in the court fees which have been implemented without consultation with the profession or the community. Copies of my letters are available on request and, again, I urge WA members to write to the Honourable Attorney General pointing out the unfairness of the system and the substantial financial burden on lawyers who fund personal injury claims;
- c) APLA WA has resolved that no comment on the legal profession affecting or likely to affect APLA members should go without a response (whether or not published in newspapers or other media). I urge members to forward copies to me of any media comment, positive (and if positive, we ought to be

making comments supporting the view) or negative (and if the negative view is not based on accurate facts, to present a balanced view on accurate facts).

## APLA WA seminars

I will be working with a new Committee to enhance the WA seminars. To encourage membership of APLA, there will be a significant price difference between the cost of seminars for members and non-members. Consequently WA practitioners are urged to join APLA and take advantage of the services provided not only by the WA branch but by the Association nationally.

## APLA National Conference, Queensland - October / November 1997

This was an excellent conference and regrettably many WA practitioners did not attend and did not gain the significant benefit that this conference provided. I received excellent reports of the value of the conference to delegates particularly from those who attended the October 1996 conference. ■

**Sukhwant Singh** is President of the WA branch of APLA, and a partner at Friedman Lurie Singh in Perth. **Phone** 08 9421 1953, **email** fls@iinet.net.au