

WA State Conference

6-7 May 2005

By Greg Burgess

This year we returned to the Swan Valley at the Vines, which is a favourite venue of many members, including the President!

The speakers showed some passion this year, highlighted by a very enlightening (and none too flattering for the medical profession) lunchtime speech by John Flint, investigative journalist at the *Sunday Times*. He spoke passionately, and at times emotionally, about the plight of accident victims who then subsequently become victims time and time again of the so-called compensation system especially at the hands of medical practitioners, who are clearly just delivering to insurance companies what they want and pay for with little or no regard for their 'patients'. These were no empty, baseless claims, as John has a very good background of investigative journalism in the UK and Asia before coming to Australia.

Professor Rob Guthrie disappointed us by telling us that the Queensland workers' compensation system is not as good as some people advocate, and in many respects delivers a lot less to

injured workers than the WA system. However, many delegates were not entirely convinced by his study and want it examined by an appropriate expert in Queensland.

Professor Andrew Harper explained how unjust and inappropriate the *AMA Guides* are to the workers' compensation system, but admitted that he, like all of his medical colleagues, would simply have to 'toe the line'. John Fiocco made some rousing comments about the Alliance's lobbying efforts in the past year and the government's diabolical tort reforms contained in the new *Workers Compensation & Injury Management Act* and the *Civil Liability Act*.

On Saturday morning, Tom Offer gave an outstanding expose on the changes to the new workers' compensation legislation. Geoffrey Hancy again helped us through the maze of predicted changes to the limitations laws, and Maria Saraceni enlightened us on the far-reaching scope of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

The new district court judge, Phillip McCann, gave a stirring speech about the changes to the profession in the last 20 years, and the importance of lawyers

today. Matthew Glossop did his best to send up everyone in the room (except thankfully the judge and his wife!) in his role as MC at the dinner. He was particularly punishing on the current President, which does not augur well for his prospects as MC next year!

The conference was a resounding success financially, with more than 60 delegates, which was very pleasing for the organisers. Thanks to Eva, Kim and Jake for their assistance, especially Eva for giving the keynote address.

I would also particularly like to thank Brendon Lyle from Impact Funding and Jan Bishop of Benu International for their generous sponsorship of this year's conference.

Finally, I'd like to thank our Education Sub-Committee, consisting of Rebecca Sorgiovanni, Sukhwant Singh, Greg Nairn and yours truly. I believe it was the most successful conference we've had; certainly the best in the last four years. ■

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Alliance CEO Eva Scheerlinck with guest presenter, John Flint of the *Sunday Times*.



Conference committee chairman Sukhwant Singh with conference sponsor Kath Collins of Benu International.