



L to R: Rob Davis, Richard Faulks, John Gardon, Peter Semmler SC, Tom Goudkamp, Peter Carter, Peter Cashman

PAST PRESIDENTS' DINNER

By Richard Faulks

In 2005, Tom Goudkamp instigated an annual dinner in Sydney for all of the previous national presidents of the Australian Lawyers Alliance. This year I hosted a dinner in Canberra on 29th April. All of the past presidents travelled from far and wide to stay for the weekend and attend a dinner at the Ottoman Restaurant.

In organising the dinner I was reminded of the significant contributions made by each of our past presidents. From the first days when Peter Semmler helped form what was then APLA, through the development of the incorporated association overseen by Peter Carter and Peter Cashman, to the important nationalisation and re-structuring of

the board, which was initiated by Rob Davis, the involvement of all of our presidents has been significant.

Rob also was up to his neck in the then so-called 'torte reform' debate, and his significant policy work, carried on by John Gordon and then Tom Goudkamp in that area, has been a major highlight for our organisation.

At the dinner I commented on the personal and financial sacrifices made by each of the past presidents and the importance of the legacy that they have left the organisation and, indeed, the importance of their ongoing contributions. A US journalist, Walter Lippmann, once said "*The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him or her in other people the conviction and the will to carry on.*" It seemed to me that all

of our past presidents have done just that. All of them clearly represented in the most positive way our mission statement to protect and promote justice, freedom and the rights of the individual, even when that fight is a tough one.

It is important that we do not lose sight of the contributions of the past presidents and all of those who have served on the board or on the state committees. In many ways they represent the fabric or building blocks of our organisation, and I hope that the annual meeting and dinner of the past presidents is something that will continue into the future. I was certainly very proud to have the opportunity to share a few hours with this group. ■