

Victorian Conference 2009

By Geraldine Collins

The annual Victorian conference was held on Friday 8 and Saturday 9 May 2009, at the lovely Peppers The Sands Resort, Torquay.

It was the biggest and best conference held to date, with the conference being sold out to delegates some four weeks prior to the event and a waiting list to boot.

Victorian branch president and director, Geraldine Collins, commenced the proceedings by providing delegates with an update of the activities undertaken by the branch over the past 12 months, and an outline of the anticipated activities for the next 12 months. National president, Clara Davies, advised delegates of the conduct undertaken on the national level with respect to the Bill of Rights campaign.

Mr Michael Gorton, AM, chairman of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, provided an outline of his longstanding work in the field of human rights, highlighting the importance of the development of definable and protected human rights and the future direction of the Commission.

Jim Kennan SC 'stoked the fires' of many delegates by voicing opposition to unjust laws through his discussion of the implementation of Victoria's 'terrorism laws', with his experiences drawn from his involvement in the high-profile criminal prosecutions brought to date.

Delegates received an update in the practice area of Workcover claims from barristers Gavin Coldwell and Michael Roche.

Barristers Robert Harper and Marietta Bylhouwer discussed the intricate area of medical negligence and how it relates to transport accident and workplace injuries.

Andrea Tsalamandris tackled the complex question of discoverability for the purposes of the application of limitation laws.

Audrey Jamieson, magistrate and coroner (and past president of the Victorian branch of APLA) educated the delegates on the workings of the coroner's court for plaintiff lawyers. We were also briefed on the extraordinary work undertaken by the coroner's office in the wake of the Victorian 'Black Saturday' bushfire tragedy.

Dr Ian Freckelton SC enlightened practitioners of the potential pitfalls in undertaking s85B Sentencing Act applications on behalf of victims of crimes.

The conference dinner was held on the Friday evening. Pre-dinner drinks were served while delegates enjoyed the live entertainment provided by 'The Long and Short of It', the acoustics duo which includes ALA member, Patsy Toop (incognito).

The dinner was a terrific success, with over 180 delegates and guests attending. We were treated to hilarious stories of working with juries by John Jordan SC. Dancing continued until the wee hours, post-dinner.

Saturday morning saw a large crowd attend the first session of the day, presented by John Philbrick SC and Paul O'Dwyer SC, on the topic of negligence in transport accident claims.

Dr John Malios, deputy convenor and Ross Sicilia, legal adviser, of the Medical Panels, discussed hot issues regarding Medical Panels.

The final session was the ever-popular 'annual case update', presented by the usual trio of barristers of Tim Tobin SC, Andrew Keogh and David Purcell.

The conference was a roaring success, and delegates will no doubt be diligent about early registration next year; so as to not miss out again! ■

Geraldine Collins is the Alliance's Victorian branch president, and a principal at Maurice Blackburn in Melbourne.

PHONE (03) 9310 2966 EMAIL gcollins@mauriceblackburn.com.au



L to R: 1 Wasi Muthumala, Maurice Cruz and Joe Paz from State Trustees, with Clara Davies, National President, Australian Lawyers Alliance. **2** Michael Gorton AM, Chairman of the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission, delivering the keynote address. **3, 4, 5** Delegates and sponsors enjoying pre-dinner drinks and the conference dinner.

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