

## MELBOURNE HOSTS AIAL NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE LAW FORUM

*Stephen Argument\**

On 7 and 8 August 2008, the Australian Institute of Administrative Law held the eighteenth National Administrative Law Forum. The Forum was held in Melbourne and organised by the Victorian chapter of the Institute. The Institute has organised Forums every year since 1991. For over 15 years, the Forum venues have alternated, with Forums being held in Canberra in odd-numbered years and being held in a State or Territory in even-numbered years. All State and Territory chapters of the Institute have organised a Forum at least once.

The Forum is now Australia's pre-eminent administrative law conference and it regularly attracts a high quality of speakers who, in turn, attract consistently strong audiences. The 2008 Forum was no exception, with an impressive array of parliamentarians, judges, senior administrators, administrative law practitioners and academics addressing the Forum and over 200 registrants attending.

The theme for the 2008 Forum was 'Practising Administrative Law' and it was chosen to encourage participants to discuss contemporary issues in administrative law, share practical experiences and consider future changes to administrative law.

The Attorney-General for Victoria, the Hon Rob Hulls MP opened the proceedings and he was followed by the President of the Victorian Court of Appeal, Justice Chris Maxwell, who posed the question 'When words fail: adequate remedies for inadequate reasons?'

In giving the keynote address, the Attorney-General for Australia, the Hon Robert McClelland MP outlined the new Government's views on issues relevant to administrative law and foreshadowed some of the initiatives that the Government would be taking in the next few years. Other speakers on the first day of the Forum included the Legal Services Commissioner for Victoria, Ms Victoria Marles, Justice Richard Tracey of the Federal Court and also the Hon Murray Wilcox QC.

As has been the practice for more than 10 years, the Forum dinner featured the famous (or infamous) Administrative Law Trivia Quiz. As always, the Quiz was hard-fought. Unfortunately, the vile spectre of cheating may have again reared its ugly head (with BlackBerrys and other hand-held devices later reported to have been in use), but certainly not by the winning table (which featured some of the Forum's illustrious speakers).

The second day of the Forum opened with a session on the Ombudsman, addressed by the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Professor John McMillan and featuring commentary by Mr John Carroll, of Clayton Utz. Other speakers on the second day included Mr Tony Piccolo MP, of the South Australian Parliament, who gave an interesting presentation on the role of MPs in practising administrative law. The second day was concluded by a session in which

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the chair of the Victorian chapter of the Institute, Mr Stephen Moloney, gave a presentation on the finality of administrative decisions and the President of the WA State Administrative Tribunal, Justice Michael Barker (a former chair of the WA chapter of the Institute), spoke about harmonising administrative law.

This concluded another most successful Forum. The Forum was a success in every respect, with excellent content, strong attendance and a solid financial outcome for the Institute. This was a credit to the Victorian chapter of the Institute, ably-led by Mr Moloney, to whom the Institute is grateful.

The Institute intends that selected papers from the 2008 Forum will be published in the *AIAL Forum*. It is hoped that the first of those papers will appear in the next issue.

As to the 2009 National Administrative Law Forum, in line with the policy of alternating the organisation of the Forum between Canberra and the State and Territory chapters, it will be held in Canberra, probably in August 2009. Preparations are already under way and a Call for Papers can be expected in the coming months.