

2009 AIAL NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE LAW FORUM, *Hotel Realm, Canberra, 6 and 7 August 2009*

On 6 and 7 August 2009, the Australian Institute of Administrative Law held the 2009 National Administrative Law Forum. The Forum was held in Canberra and organised by the National Executive Committee of the Institute. It was the 19th such Forum. 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. It regularly attracts high quality speakers who, in turn, attract consistently strong audiences. The 2009 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 2009 Forum was "Administrative Law Reform". The thinking behind the theme was that it would allow those participating in the Forum to discuss contemporary issues in administrative law, share practical experiences and, in particular, consider future changes to administrative law.

The Institute was pleased that Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig, Cabinet Secretary and Special Minister of State, was able to give the keynote speech at Forum. Given his responsibility for the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth), Senator Ludwig was able to outline key aspects of the Government's reform of the FOI Act. Senator Ludwig's address also included a discussion of a number of key aspects of the reforms proposed, including the proposed role of the Information Commissioner, a revamp of the obligation on Commonwealth agencies to publish information about their operations and the introduction of a new single form of public interest test, described by the Senator as one that would be weighted towards disclosure. Senator Ludwig's address set the stage for the Forum's first plenary session on "FOI Reform or Political Window Dressing?"

Other plenary sessions held during the Forum included:

- "Whistleblower protection: A comprehensive scheme for the Commonwealth public sector";
- "Recent evolutions in Australian Ombudsmen";
- "Controlling immigration litigation";
- "Evidence (and other perspectives on fact finding) in Administrative Law"; and
- "Future directions".

Consistent with its status as the major national annual administrative law conference, other key speakers at the Forum included Simon Cohen (Public Transport Ombudsman for Victoria), Karen Curtis (Federal Privacy Commissioner), Mark Dreyfus, QC MP (Chair, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs), Chris Field (Western Australian Ombudsman), Philip Hack SC (Deputy President, Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal), Professor John McMillan (Commonwealth Ombudsman), Denis O'Brien (Principal Member, Migration Review Tribunal and Refugee Review Tribunal),

Jillian Segal (President, Commonwealth Administrative Review Council) and Dr David Solomon (Queensland Integrity Commissioner).

The Forum dinner was held on the evening of the first day of the Forum. As has been the practice for more than 10 years, the dinner featured the famous (or infamous) Administrative Law Trivia Quiz. As always, the Quiz was hard-fought. Unusually (for Canberra Forums), the Dennis Pearce Super Team did not win.

The Institute intends that selected papers from the 2009 Forum will be published in the *AIAL Forum*. It is intended that the first of those papers will appear in the next issue.

As to the 2010 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 Sydney, on 22 and 23 July 2010. The Forum will be hosted by the NSW chapter of the Institute and will be held at the University of Sydney. The theme for the Forum will be "Delivering Administrative Justice". Preparations are already under way and a Call for Papers has recently been sent out.

I look forward to seeing as many members as possible at the 2010 Forum.

Stephen Argument
Secretary, AIAL