

**LAW COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA  
INTERNATIONAL LAW SECTION**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**Mary E Hiscock\***

The Colloquium to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the International Court of Justice was held as a joint enterprise with the International Law Association and the Australian and New Zealand International Law Society. It was a day of diverse views and intriguing insights into the operation of a basic institution of our international system. Much of the discussion is reported in the September edition of the Section Newsletter, *International Law News*.

A period of intensive restructuring of the Law Council of Australia has now concluded with the agreement to a new Constitution in September at the Annual General meeting. This ensures that the Specialist Sections will continue their important work on behalf of all members of the Australian legal profession representing a professional view to those who seek it, as well as engaging in proactive discussion with government and others on aspects of law and legal process. At the conclusion of the Law Council's review of the structure and work of the Sections, there were warm words of praise and commendation for the continuing work of the International Law Section, and its fruitful interaction with government and contribution to national policy-making.

All of that is in the past. The Section is now actively seeking to build up membership. We have very cheap rates for law students, young lawyers, and academic lawyers. We have expanded the categories of membership to include as associate members those who are not private practising lawyers with relevant interests such as migration agents, government lawyers, and corporate lawyers. We have a new category of institutional members, such as universities, schools, and law firms who can receive *International Law News* and other Law Council publications.

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\* Professor of Law, Bond University.

As to work, there is plenty. The Section has a busy program for 1996-1997. We have been in constant contact with government, monitoring the structural changes implemented by the new government. It is early days, but there seems to be a reduction in the importance of law and its significance for general policy formation. In addition, the government is withdrawing from active participation in international bodies such as UNCITRAL and UNIDROIT. These are institutions where Australia has made a unique and important contribution to international law-making and broken down much of the Euro-centric and North American dominance. We need to wait for the effect of other post-budget changes.

However, our work in the area of treaties is moving well. Our informal consultative arrangements continue, so that any Section member can raise through the Section concerns on existing or potential treaties with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. We are taking part in the continuing discussions on future machinery for consultations. We are currently preparing submissions to the Senate inquiries on Hong Kong.

We expect to repeat our very successful seminar series on areas of immigration law, before the end of the year.

The International Legal Practice Committee is still engaged in the implementation of our work on the regulation of foreign lawyers in Australia. The views of the Law Council (initially formulated by the International Law Section) have been put forward and supported at recent meetings of the International Bar Association, meetings with the bar associations and law societies in Southeast Asia, and at the Lawasia meeting. The government is funding initiatives to explore and negotiate with regional governments extended recognition of Australian professional and academic legal qualifications.

The International Trade and Business Committee plans a one-day workshop on 16 November at the Meridien Hotel in Melbourne on current developments in international trade, finance and investment. We will review the practical implications of investment guarantees, EDI, changes in maritime liability regimes, and an update on the Vienna Convention on the International Sale of Goods and its emerging jurisprudence. We will also have a Report from Canberra and from Europe.

We are negotiating to see whether we can conduct a law session in conjunction with the National Outlook Conference in December.

We are expanding and developing our home page on the internet, which is presently to be found under Bond University Law School. We are seeking to establish a link with AustLII. We are planning for further dissemination of the work of members of the International Law Section through this medium.

A new Executive has been elected and will take office in November at the Annual General Meeting which will be held in conjunction with the Trade Law Workshop. All our committees, International Trade and Business, International Legal Practice, Nationality and Residence, and International Human Rights, are looking for working members. Our administrator at the Law Council office in Canberra is Gwen Fryers, and she can deal with any inquiries about the Section.

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