

BALANCE

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Forging new ties with Indonesia

A first-ever Australia-Indonesia Legal Seminar was held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on June 28 in conjunction with the "Australia Today Indonesia '94 Trade Expo".

Organised by the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, at the initiative of the embassy and the Australia Indonesia Institute, the seminar formally brought together government officials, academics and practitioners for the first time to discuss "Perspectives on Co-operation, Convergence and Harmonisation".

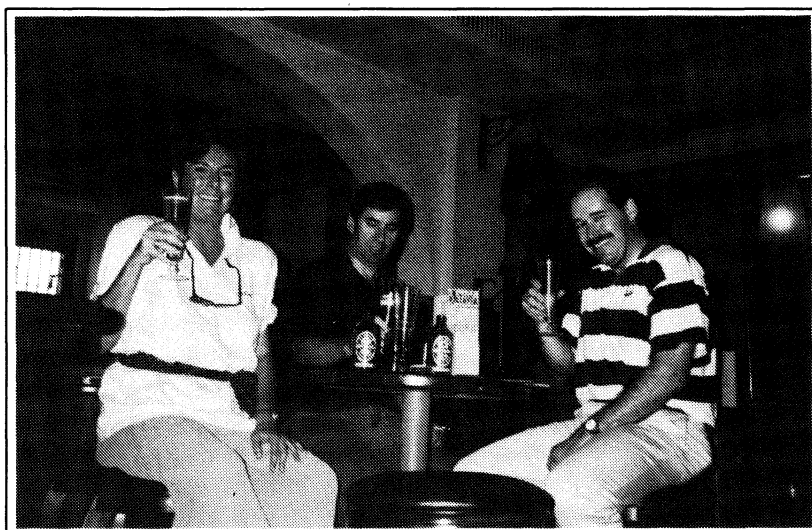
The Northern Territory Government was one of the major sponsors of the seminar.

A delegation — comprising Department of Law Secretary Meredith Harrison, Professor Ned Aughterson, NTU Faculty of Law Dean Colin McDonald, a director of the Australia-Indonesia Institute and The Law Society President Neville Henwood — ensured a strong Northern Territory presence, with Ms Harrison chairing one session and Mr Henwood in the role of discussant in another session.

The seminar opened with a formal dinner at the Aryaduta Hotel for all participants on Monday, June 27.

The keynote address was delivered by Indonesian Minister of Justice H. Oetoyo Oesman. This address set the tone for the seminar, pointing out that while the Australian and Indonesian legal systems are fundamentally different, those differences are becoming less practically important.

This theme developed further during the seminar itself, with several



In Jakarta (from left)... Meredith Harrison, Ned Aughterson and Neville Henwood.

speakers identifying areas where greater "co-operation, convergence and harmonisation" were achievable, including such areas as international trade law, arbitration and bills of exchange.

Australian speakers at the seminar included Sir Laurence Street and the former Attorney-General's Department secretary and present Law Reform Commission Chairman Alan Rose, while the Indonesian speakers included the Director-General, Law and Legislation, Department of Justice Mr Saleh Baharis and Professor Dr Mardjono Reksodiputro — former Faculty of Law Dean, University of Indonesia.

Themes explored during the seminar were "Economic and Commercial Law in the National Context", "Economic Law — Indonesian and Australian Perspectives on Regional

Trends", "Legal Education and Training — Development and Trends" and "Where to from Here: Scope for Closer Links in Law between Indonesia and Australia".

The unquestioned success of the seminar was measured not so much by concrete results as by the participation of significant numbers of senior government officials, academics and practitioners, as well as the goodwill shown by all involved and the enthusiasm for closer links between lawyers at all levels in the two countries. Perhaps the major concrete result of the seminar was the commitment to hold a similar event next year, with a view to taking some of the initial ideas further.

It was an important step in the development of closer ties in the legal field between Australia and Indonesia.