

VICTORIAN STATE CONFERENCE

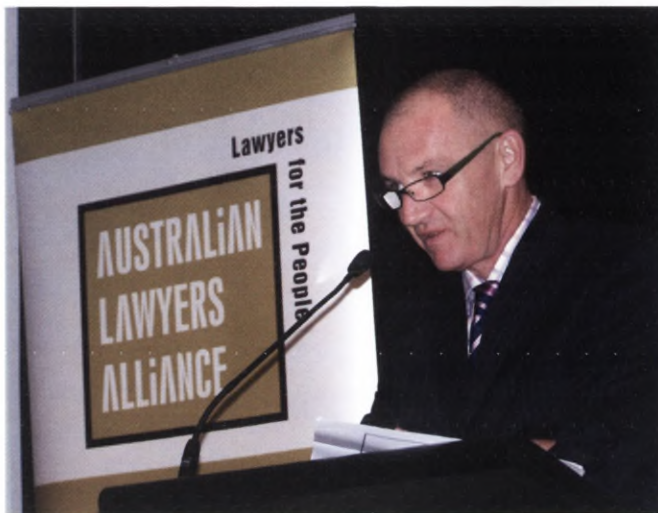
By Clara Davies

They say a change is as good as a holiday. This certainly proved to be the case with the 2007 Victorian Branch Conference. For the first time in four years the conference was moved from the traditional beachside location of Lorne to the beautiful Yarra Valley, and with this change came the most successful branch conference in Victorian branch history!

On 18 and 19 May, more than 150 people attended at the Sebel Heritage Resort and Country Club for what was one of Victoria's premier CLE events of the year. While not blessed with the best weather, spirits were far from damp. As well as the opportunity to network and catch up with colleagues, both old and new, delegates shared in the benefits of an outstanding program.

Simon Morrison, national president, opened the conference with a moving video presentation on the importance of righting the wrongs created by the 'tort reform debacle', reminding everyone of exactly what it means to be a member of the Alliance. Then came one of the highlights of the program, the keynote address from Tom Percy QC. Tom reminded delegates how easy it is in our busy practices to dismiss a claim or cause as being too hard to tackle, and in so doing, allow wrongs to prevail. As members of the Alliance, we should never view any challenge as being too large.

Dr Peter Cashman presented a highly informative and thought-provoking session on civil justice reform in Victoria. The rest of Friday featured a host of practical sessions. The first of these was the always-popular TAC panel session, with a special mention for Michael Lombard's BOS ('best on stage') performance, which combined useful practical insights with highly amusing commentary – at least, that's so 'in my



Tom Percy QC delivers the Keynote Address

humble opinion'. A highly informative debate emerged from the discussion of 'How to Properly Prepare an Economic Loss Claim', presented by barristers Paul O'Dwyer SC and David Martin. Last, but by no means least, Friday finished with the annual case review presented by barristers Tim Tobin SC, David Purcell and Andrew Keogh.

On Saturday, the practical sessions continued with an excellent presentation on the fundamentals of trial preparation from Frank Saccardo SC. Frank focused on the nature and importance of certain investigations and preparations in producing positive outcomes in difficult litigation. David Hirsch, well known to all, sought to demystify cerebral palsy claims and, as always, challenged popularly held perceptions while delivering an excellent review of the practicalities of preparing such claims. Other sessions on Saturday included an overview of case summaries of the latest serious injury judgments relevant to the Victorian statutory schemes, and the WorkCover update and panel discussion. All presentations were high quality; many thanks to all the speakers for their valuable contributions.

Socially, a dinner was held on Thursday to recognise our event sponsors, which was attended by staff from head office, many



Delegates enjoying the conference dinner



John Cramp from Stringer Clark and Gil Cunningham from ipac

national council members and members of the Victorian state committee. On Friday night, the conference dinner – sponsored by Evidex – gave all conference attendees the opportunity to relax and unwind. Thanks also to Julian McMahon, barrister, and Rob Stary, who attended the dinner as representatives of a new arm of the Victorian branch – the Victorian Criminal Defence Lawyers Association. We look forward to the further amalgamation of this Association with the Alliance.

The Alliance extends a very special thanks to all of our sponsors, including our major partners ipac and LawMaster,

event partners Evidex and Impact Capital, and our advertisers Investorwealth, Mark Dohrmann and Clark & Toop. Without our sponsors, many of whom are long-standing supporters of the Alliance, the success of such events could not be guaranteed. Their input not only makes it possible to conduct such events, but also assists each of us in our day-to-day practices to achieve the best results for our clients.

Thanks also to Simon Morrison, national president, Ian Brown, national president-elect, and all the national council members from around the country who attended the conference. We also wish to thank Eva Scheerlinck, CEO, Maja Maunic, conference manager, and all the other Alliance staff who attended and tirelessly worked throughout the course of the conference to ensure its smooth operation. Recognition and thanks also to the planning sub-committee responsible for the development of the program.

Finally, the Alliance would like to thank all the delegates who attended the conference. Alliance members share a passion and dedication that are inspiring and come to the fore at conferences like this. The enthusiastic support and participation of its members are vital to the Alliance's success. ■

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