

SA Conference 2009

By Anthony Kerin

The sixth annual SA state conference was held at the Holiday Inn, Hindley Street, Adelaide on 29 May 2009. The conference was well attended and full of relevant and topical matters.

Topics ranged from human rights considerations, including a session on the death penalty, through to medical practitioners' views on the AMA guides and psychiatric injury after trauma. Delegates heard a Supreme Court judge's views on concurrent evidence and the annual case law update by barrister, Jo Deuter, of Sir Anthony Mason Chambers (for the third time in four years).

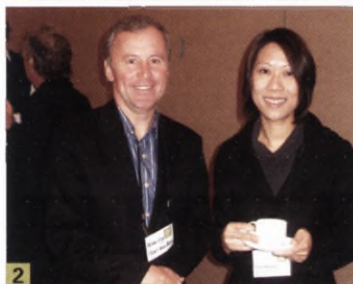
The conference attracted over 50 people. The branch committee is very grateful for the sponsorship support received from Furzer Crestani Services, our major partner, as well as our partners, Perpetual, Ask Funding and LawMaster.

The day began with an introduction by state president, Tony Kerin, reflecting on the activities of the committee and the state branch over the past 12 months.

The SA members were grateful to the national president, Clara Davies, for taking the time to attend the conference. In her address, Clara reminded us all of the tort reform 'storms' of the early 2000s and how the current environment is not dissimilar.

This was followed by our keynote speaker, Julian McMahon, a criminal barrister from Melbourne. In a moving presentation, he spoke on the issue of the death penalty, the treatment of refugees and of the need 'to do more than just work on the file on your desk'. Too few voices are prepared to publicly say what needs to be said, when hardfought individual rights and liberties are being threatened. He also commented upon the terrorist trial recently concluded in Melbourne, and the manner in which that trial was conducted.

Dr David Cullum provided us with an insight into the AMA guides, which is the new way of life for SA practitioners. The absurdity of the guides, their inconsistency, their complexity and their increased level of costs and very real decreases in benefit, in most cases, were discussed. One of the most accredited practitioners in SA with a better understanding of the guides than most, Dr



L to R: 1 The Hon Justice Richard White QC, Supreme Court of South Australia and Tony Kerin, SA State President, Australian Lawyers Alliance. **2** Michael King, Tindall Gask Bentley and Toya Nguyen, Johnston Withers & Associates. **3** Helene Christensen, Ask Funding, Joseph Wearing, Bourne Lawyers and Tony Kerin, SA Branch President, Australian Lawyers Alliance.

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Cullum commented that there would often appear to be very little logic to some of the conclusions achieved using the guides.

Professor Cherrie Galletly, psychiatrist, talked about Somataform pain disorders, depression and PTSD, and other conditions that follow trauma.

Gavin Coldwell, barrister from Owen Dixon Chambers in Victoria, discussed his experiences with the Workcover Panels, providing a comparison between Victorian and SA legislation. The organising committee was extremely grateful to Gavin for giving up his time and providing us with insight and experience with Medical Panels in Victoria over the last 17 years.

Barrister, Peter Day, of Jeffcott Chambers, commented on the new motor vehicle changes and the proposed legislation, which appears to attempt to narrow ambit of liability.

This was followed by an engaging and engrossing session with the Honourable Justice Richard White QC of the Supreme Court of South Australia on the issue of concurrent evidence, which was at the forefront of a medical negligence matter in SA recently. We were fortunate also to have some of the counsel involved in that trial present in the audience.

This was followed by Jo Deuter's update on 30-odd cases over the last 12 months, which will have a bearing on many members' areas of practice and is alone worth the value of attending.

The Holiday Inn catered fulfillingly, and networking drinks afterwards provided an opportunity to catch up with other members of the association, and sponsors, and to consider the day.

A special thank you to the organising committee of Trish Jarvis and Jo Deuter. The branch committee looks forward to organising a bigger and better conference in 2010.

The organising committee would also like to thank Eva Scheerlinck and Maja Maunic from the national office for their skills and logistical ability in organising the event and putting it all together. ■

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