

## INTRODUCTION

EDDY GISONDA

The Samuel Griffith Society held its thirty-first conference on the weekend of 9 to 11 August 2019, in the city of Melbourne, Victoria.

For the fourth year in a row, it was the best attended conference in the history of the Society, and considerably so.

The conference included papers delivered by an array of speakers not often seen in Australia at the one conference: a former Governor, a Justice of the High Court of Australia, a former Premier, a Justice of the Federal Court of Australia, the nation's pre-eminent historian, a former Justice of a State Supreme Court, a leading constitutional scholar, Solicitors-General, a Senator, a State Parliamentarian, and others.

The Eleventh Sir Harry Gibbs Memorial Oration was delivered by Justice Nettle. Published speeches by his Honour are rare. It was, and is, a marvellous tribute to the Society's inaugural President. The Sir Harry Gibbs Memorial Oration has been transformed into one of Australia's most important lecture series.

The Honourable Alex Chernov, AC, QC is the fourth Governor and fifth Vice-Regal Representative to address the Society. Although the Office is central to our constitutional makeup, there is little modern scholarship on the role of the Governor. His splendid contribution to this volume is learned and sophisticated, and entirely what one would expect from a public servant of such eminence. He also proffers a salient warning to those who would seek to dismantle our current constitutional arrangements. It is essential reading.

Something must be said about the memorable events of Saturday evening, organised as a special tribute to mark the occasion of John and Nancy Stone's ninetieth birthdays. Guests crammed into a normally spacious ballroom, overlooking the bright city lights that speckled the dark skyline of wintery Melbourne. As the rain thundered against the oversized glass-pane windows, and without even a scribbled note at this fingertips, Geoffrey Blainey delivered a masterful after-dinner speech that it is the Society's pleasure to now publish (and see, further, the closing remarks of Ian Callinan, AC, at p. 235).

The Society is of course grateful to each of the other speakers for their contributions to the conference, as well as the chairs of the various sessions over the weekend, including the Honourable Justice Steward and the Honourable Justice Anderson. The Society is further grateful to those who attended the sessions and contributed to lively debate and discussions.

As always, there were many others who contributed to the success of the conference: John Roskam, Kristy Millen, Jeffrey Phillips, SC, Dr Ryan Haddrick, John Pesutto, and Xavier Boffa, among others.

There are now so many young people who attend the conference courtesy of scholarships from generous supporters that it is not possible to list them all. They included Sir Samuel Griffith Scholars, Ian Callinan Scholars, and Mannkal Scholars. Their involvement with the conference contributed to the overwhelming success of the weekend.

Ron Manners again deserves special recognition for his support to the Society and its conferences. So too does the President Ian Callinan AC, the Secretary Stuart Wood, AM, QC, and the other board members as well.

The Sir Samuel Griffith essay competition was won by Catherine Bugler, a law student from Brisbane. The question this year was: ‘Which decision of the High Court of Australia in the field of Federalism do you regard as wrongly decided, and why?’ As it turned out, more entrants wrote about the *Engineers’ Case* than did not, including Ms Bugler. Her essay is published in Appendix 2 to this volume.

This volume concludes (see Appendix 3) with the long overdue publication of Australia Day messages from the Presidents of the Society since 2008. For reference, the messages from 2001 to 2005 are published in Appendix 2 to Volume 17 (2005) and the messages from 2007 and 2008 are published in Appendix 1 to Volume 20 (2008).

The next conference will be held in Sydney.

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