

International Law Association (Australian Branch) Annual General Meeting

President's Address 2009

DR CHRISTOPHER WARD*

The past year has been a good one for the Association, which continues to be true to its constitutional objectives by promoting discussion and scholarship in international law. The Australian Branch is, of course, simply part of the wider International Law Association. The Association has, as the focus of its academic work, many committees that conduct important and significant research on current topics of international law. The International Committees operate under the guidance of the Director of Studies, Professor Christine Chinkin. Their work is generally conducted on two-year cycles, with reports to coincide with the biennial conferences of the Association.

The next such conference is to be held in August 2010 in The Hague. I encourage all who have an interest in international law to attend. The biennial conferences are invariably well attended by the world's leading practitioners and scholars. For those who cannot attend, the written conference reports provide a valuable record.

In the past year, I am pleased to say that our membership of the International Committees has been revitalised and refreshed. Our local members play a leading role in many of the Committees, acting as Chair or Rapporteur, and their contributions help to advance the state of knowledge of international law. I am grateful to Professor Andrew Byrnes, our retiring Co-Director of Studies, for his very significant work in this regard. Professor Byrnes is retiring from the role this year as a result of competing commitments, and I acknowledge with thanks his long contribution to the Association and hope that it will continue in some form.

Our National Committee structure has languished somewhat in the past year and it is my hope that the next 12 months will enable the new Directors of Studies to devote some attention to refreshing and renewing that very valuable part of this Association.

Nevertheless, the Association conducted many seminars of interest throughout the year, on topics including international arbitration, the ASEAN Treaty, water resources, and racial discrimination to name a few.

We are in the process of developing a young members' section and have re-established valuable partnerships — with NSW Young Lawyers and the Australian Institute of International Affairs — that will assist us to develop the Association.

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The Branch continues to support the Jessup Moot with the Harold Snelling Award, which is a substantial cash prize to the members of the winning team to assist with travel to Washington. We remain centrally involved, with the Australian Institute of International Affairs and the family of our past President Peter Nygh, in the administration of the Nygh Internship Award, by which one lucky young graduate is funded to attend the Hague Conference on Private International Law. Margaret Brewster devotes a great deal of time to that endeavour, for which we are grateful. We continue with the Nygh and Brennan essay prizes for essays on private and public international law. I am pleased to say that entries for those prizes remain very strong. There is no shortage of younger international lawyers in Australia.

Our Journal, under the editorship of Dr Ben Saul, continues to advance and is now rightly regarded as a flagship refereed journal in international law.

Finally, this is my final year as President. I consider that three consecutive years is the most that should generally be granted to any one President. New ideas and new blood refresh any Association and this one is no different. Therefore, not without some regret I will not be standing for re-election this year. I am very grateful to all members of the Committee who have worked with me over the past three years to resolve many issues, some small and some significant. All of our discussions and meetings are conducted in a harmonious fashion and the Association has benefited greatly from the collected wisdom of the Committee. I would particularly like to thank our retiring Treasurer, Matthew Mallos, who leaves our finances in a very healthy position. Thanks also to our Secretary, Katherine Lake, who without fail manages to sound happy to attend our monthly 8.00 am meetings and provides us with excellent minutes and general administration. I would also like to thank Margaret Brewster and Greg Marks, who have both provided great assistance, despite battling various forms of ill health. I know our thoughts are with each of them. Finally, I would like to thank Andrew Byrnes and the Vice-Presidents, Damian Sturzaker and Rosemary Rayfuse for their wise and valuable counsel over the years. I am pleased to be leaving the management of the Association in such safe hands.