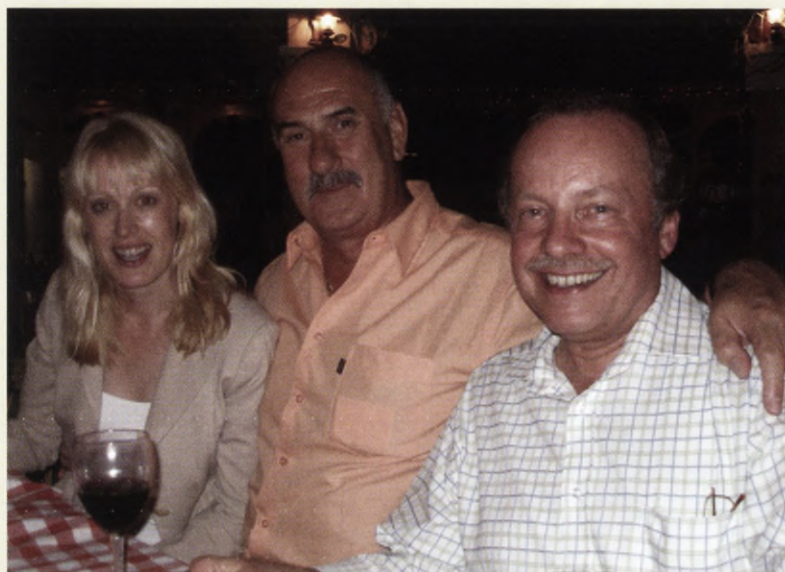
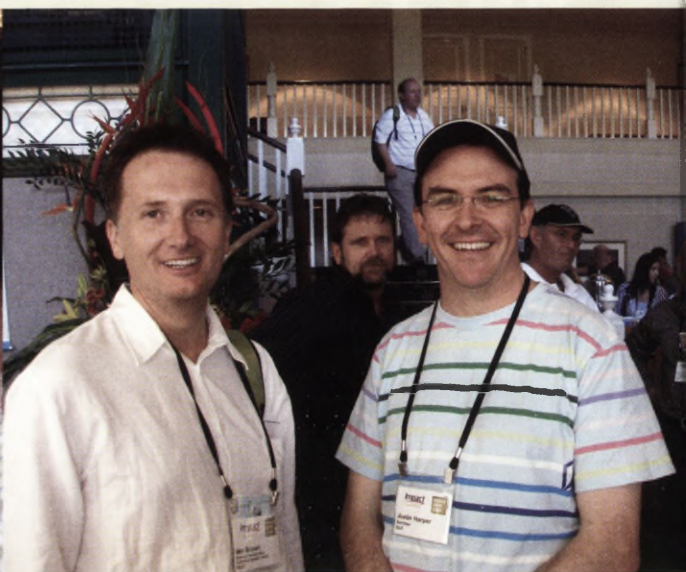


National Conference 2006

By Anthony Scarcella



Kassie James and Gil Cunningham from ipac with Anthony Scarcella, NSW Director, Australian Lawyers Alliance



Ian Brown, QLD President and National President Elect, Australian Lawyers Alliance and Justin Harper, Barrister, Queensland

The 2006 National Conference took place at the picturesque Hyatt Regency Sanctuary Cove Resort in Queensland on 13 and 14 October. Special thanks must go to our major partners, LawMaster and Perpetual and to our other event partners, Ability One, Benchmark, Evidex, Impact and ipac, who made the conference possible. Our thanks also go to our exhibitors DG Thompson, Trust, CCH, Furzer Crestani and HL Burn & Associates, who were extremely helpful in fielding enquiries from delegates throughout the conference.

Immediate past-president, Richard Faulks, opened the conference with a powerful and tone-setting variation to the Billy Joel song, *We Didn't Start the Fire*.

Alliance president Simon Morrison's inaugural address focused on tort reform and its offensive side-effect – namely, insurers profiteering while 'the taxpayer picks up the bill'. Tort reform had been 'sold to the public as a saviour against demon lawyers', but Simon emphasised his commitment to changing that perception during his term.

He then announced the ACT chief minister, Jon Stanhope, as the winner of the Alliance's Civil Justice Award for his opposition to the federal government's anti-terror laws.

Lex Lasry QC delivered the keynote address, demonstrating how the rule of law is regularly compromised in Australia through the detention of refugees, the 'war on terror' and attacks on the independence of the judiciary. He called upon 'the legal profession to put its case to ordinary Australians in a manner which they can understand'.

The federal shadow attorney-general, Nicola Roxon, launched a well-argued attack upon her government counterpart's stance on the right to a fair trial; free speech; free press; sedition; torture; transparent judicial appointments and community legal centres.

The quality of the speakers and the relevance of their presentations maintained its usual high and informative standard. There was something for everyone, ranging from the purely analytical to the practical. Speakers came from all over Australia as well as from the UK and the USA, and included members of the judiciary.

Intellectual and social interaction prevailed during the short breaks and mealtimes among delegates, sponsors and exhibitors alike. The social highlight – the 'Hawaiian night' conference dinner – was a casual, relaxed, alfresco affair, which afforded delegates and their partners the opportunity to dine, dance, chat and network.

Day 2 of the conference saw a humorous and entertaining presentation by US lawyer, Tom Vesper, entitled 'Running A Successful Trial: The Ten Commandments'. Tom opened his session by stripping down from a suit to beach attire! His useful message was delivered in an ironing board-surfing; glass-throwing, computer-bashing, phone-smashing and ghost-busting unusual way!

The conference achieved wide media coverage, with the motion passed calling for a fair trial for David Hicks, in particular, receiving international coverage in the *Washington Post* and *The Jurist*.



Richard Douglas SC, Barrister, Queensland, presents the annual case review with Dr Andrew Morrison SC



Above: Stephen Roche, Shine Lawyers, Rob Davis, Barrister and Simon Morrison, National President, Australian Lawyers Alliance at the conference dinner



Top Left: Tom Vesper, Partner, Westmoreland Vesper & Quattrone, USA, entertains and inspires the audience
Left: Myllinda Sheppard and Brian Hillard from Hillard and Associates Tasmania with Tom Percy QC (centre), Barrister and Western Australian Director, Australian Lawyers Alliance

We, as a profession, are often criticised by the media, politicians and the public. But the Alliance is gaining increasing recognition and credibility as an organisation that promotes justice, freedom and the rights of individuals. We should be proud to be a part of it, and this was surely the upbeat feeling with which delegates walked away by the end of the conference.

By any standard, the conference was an outstanding success! Congratulations and thank you to the conference organisers, one and all! ■

Anthony Scarcella is a sole practitioner specialising in personal injury law and director of the Alliance's NSW branch.
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Fred Lester, Pamela Coward & Associates ACT with Elenore Eriksson, Law Council of Australia

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