

# **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AT THE CROSSROADS – EDITORIAL NOTE**

This special edition of *The Western Australian Jurist* law journal contains a selection of academic papers from ‘Religious Freedom at the Crossroads’. This historical conference extended from the evening of Friday 14 June to Saturday 15 June 2019 at Sheridan College in Perth, Western Australia. Over 100 people, including partners at some of the best law firms located in Western Australia and other jurisdictions, attended this sold out event.

By all accounts this conference was a resounding success and, in numerous aspects, like no other that has ever been held in Australia. Participating as moderator was the Hon. John Gilmor QC, a renowned barrister and former Australian federal judge. Some of the most distinguished members, both past and present, of the Western Australian Parliament, including former speaker Michael Sutherland, were also moderators for this significant event.

The conference Patron was The Hon John Winston Howard OM AC, who served as the 25th Prime Minister of Australia from 1996 to 2007. In his address to the conference, Mr Howard reminded us that ‘this is the time for all Australians who believe in the fundamental right of religious freedom to speak out in favour of steps being taken ... to ensure the freedoms we have always taken for granted are preserved’.

The keynote speaker was a leading American constitutional lawyer – the Distinguished Professor Emeritus William Wagner of Western Michigan University, Thomas Cooley Law School. His public service includes serving as a Federal judge in the United States Courts, legal counsel in the U.S. Senate, senior United States attorney in the Department of Justice, and as an American diplomat.

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of Cornerstone Legal and Sheridan College, this historical event was live streamed by the West TV (open TV, Channel 44). Conference proceedings will be published in *The Western Australian Jurist* law journal, the yearly blind peer-reviewed academic publication of the Western Australian Legal Theory Association (WALTA).

Apart from Sheridan College, Cornerstone Legal, West TV and the Western Australian Legal Theory Association, sponsoring this event, other sponsors were the Australian Christian Lobby, National Civil Council, The Epoch Times, FamilyVoice Australia, Council for the National Interest, and Barnabas Fund.

Participants in this timely event agreed that religious freedom is a fundamental right of the individual that must be acknowledged and protected by the Australian law. They gathered over a common concern about various forms of attacks on religious freedoms generally, and Christianity in particular. They noted the deteriorating circumstances of Christians both internationally and in Australia.

It is our hope that you may find this selection of peer-reviewed academic papers both enlightening and interesting, and that they encourage thought and debate on the important issue of protecting religious freedom (and other individual rights) both in Australia and beyond.

**Professor Augusto Zimmermann**

Editor-in-Chief, *The Western Australian Jurist*

Perth/WA, 25th November 2019