

**A SPEECH BY THE HON. MARILYN WARREN AC,  
CHIEF JUSTICE OF VICTORIA  
ON THE OCCASION OF A RECEPTION TO MARK THE  
RETIREMENT OF THE MEMBERS AND SECRETARY  
OF THE COUNCIL OF LEGAL EDUCATION  
ON 30 JUNE 2008**

DELIVERED IN THE SUPREME COURT LIBRARY  
MONDAY 26 MAY 2008

Today marks the last meeting of the Council of Legal Education in its current form and I think it appropriate to reflect on the contribution of the Council, the issues it has faced, the achievements it has enjoyed and the people who have given their time to ensure its success.

The issues faced by the Council over time are many and varied. But the overarching principle of the Council has been to maintain the high standards of the profession in Victoria.

104 years ago, the first Council meeting was held in the Judges' Conference Room here in the Supreme Court. The first issue considered was the recognition in Victoria of barristers and solicitors from other states and, at the second meeting, the recognition of English barristers. If we reflect back to then, Australia had not long before become a Federation and the High Court had sat for the first time here in the Banco Court. There was a strong sense of nationhood but also a strong sense of statehood. Interstate and overseas admissions is an area which continues to be debated by the Council and other bodies. In an increasingly globalised world, lawyers on any given day advise

international clients on cross-jurisdictional matters. Maintaining high standards of education and ensuring extra-jurisdictional applicants for admission meet Victorian, and Australian, standards will continue to be a focus for the Council.

At the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council, in April 1915, a temporary rule was passed stating that 'where any candidate has left Victoria for services with the naval or military forces of the Crown in the present war and has passed any of the subjects of his course at a special examination of the University of Melbourne he shall receive credit for the subjects so passed as if they had been passed at an annual or supplementary examination.'

The issues faced by the Council then, as now, involve the interface of the profession with the community, locally and internationally.

The strength of the Council's achievements is based on the commitment of the people who have given their time to it. Today was the last meeting of the Council at which the Honorary Secretary would be provided by Allens Arthur Robinson. The position of Secretary has been held by only 5 people in the 104 year history of the Council. First was Sir Arthur Robinson, lawyer and politician. Second was George Forrest Davies and third was John Harper who held the position for an extraordinary 40 years. Fourth was Colin Galbraith who was secretary when I first came to the Council and I have always valued his experience and wisdom. Fifth and final is Anne Ferguson. Anne is an

exceptional person whose contribution to the Council has been significant even during the brief two years she has served as Secretary. In that time, the Council has seen a period of review and change which has resulted in a significant increase in activity for the Council and its subcommittees. Much of the administration and organisation of Council matters has fallen to Anne and I wish to acknowledge her hard work throughout this time.

The contribution made to the Council and legal education in this state by Arthur Robinson & Co, Arthur Robinson and Hedderwicks, and more recently Allens Arthur Robinson has been nothing short of extraordinary in its generosity and devotion to the legal profession. On behalf of the Council, past and present, and on behalf of the Supreme Court of Victoria I convey deep appreciation and gratitude.

There have also been many individuals of the profession who have made significant contributions to the Council. There have been solicitors, barristers, judges, deans and magistrates all devoted to the task – the important task – of the standard of legal education in this State. It is delightful to see some of them here this evening.

The significant contribution of one person in particular, over the past two years, from the Campbell report to the passing of the *Legal Profession Amendment (Education) Bill* – which really brings us here today – should be noted, at that is the contribution of Professor Sandford Clark. His work has

been instrumental to the reforms to the Council, the Board of Examiners and legal education, and I thank him most sincerely.

Judges, current and retired, members of the Bar, the profession, the universities and training providers, I thank each of you for your involvement and contribution to the Council. The great achievements enjoyed to date will be built upon into the next 100 years.

Please join me in this celebration.