

President and Speaker host the Australian Parliamentary Conference, 4-6 November 2009.

In early November, I was fortunate to attend and host with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Australia Parliamentary Conference (APC) which was held in the Legislative Council Chamber. Fifty delegates from all Australian Parliaments attended the Conference.

One of the main strengths of the event was the quality and calibre of the speakers, who included Professor Fiona Stanley, Nobel Laureate Professor Barry Marshall, Professor Fiona Wood, Mr Andrew Forrest, Professor Jorg Imberger, Glenn Mitchell and others.



The Australian Parliamentary Conference aimed to enable Members of Parliament from every constituency within Australia to participate in a bi-partisan knowledge-sharing forum. This conference was a valuable tool to present ideas and issues facing Australians both nationally and internationally and endeavoured to better equip Parliamentarians in their role as law makers, policy advocates and constituency representatives. Having speakers from diverse backgrounds and asking them to share their ideas and philosophies, challenged Members to perhaps think differently on issues or on current public policy ideas. The Conference was based on the successful NCSL Summit which is held in the United States of America on an annual basis.



Picture: The President enjoying the Law Reform Hypothetical, which was hosted by Grant Donaldson, Deputy Chairperson of the WA Legal Practice Board. The topic of the Law Reform Hypothetical centred on the “proposition

of a bill of rights and how that would affect persons in various legal situations". Panel members for this session included the Hon Eric Ripper MLA, Leader of the Opposition Party in WA, the Hon Peter Foss, former Attorney General, and Hon Daryl Williams AM QC.

The Conference's extensive program covered many topics relevant to today's society. I was moderator for *International Perspectives*, *Science Innovation - Investing in Australia's Future*, and *Sporting Stadiums: Inner City Necessity or Expensive Luxury?*, where my role was to introduce the panel members and facilitate debate from the conference delegates.

"Science Innovation: Investing in Australia's Future" featured Professor Barry Marshall, Nobel Prize winner, Professor Fiona Wood, Director of the Burns Service of WA, and Professor Lister Staveley-Smith, Premier's Fellow in Radio Astronomy.

"Water: Will there be enough?" featured Professor Jorg Imberger, Director at the Centre for Water Research, Greg Allen, CEO of Carnegie Corporation, and Dr Tom Hatton, CSIRO.

"Health: Meeting Future Challenges" featured Professor Bruce Robinson, Professor of Medicine at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Professor Fiona Stanley, Founding Director of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, and Dr Penny Flett, CEO of Brightwater Care Group.

"International Perspectives" featured Indrani Bagchi, Diplomatic Editor for *The Times of India* in New Dehli, Alex Thursday, CEO of ANZ Business, and Ric Battellino, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia.

The Heart Foundation breakfast was held on the second day of the Conference at the Speaker's request having attended a similar breakfast at Parliament House earlier in the year. The breakfast aimed to point out to Members the risks associated with heart disease, and to talk about their new campaign aimed at educating people in the community on how to recognise a heart attack and encourage people to call 000 if they feel they may be at some risk or experiencing a heart attack.



Picture: *The President, with the Dr John O'Shea, presenter at the Heart Foundation Breakfast, and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Hon Grant Woodhams.*

Other topics also covered during the breakfast was the “Find Thirty” campaign, aimed at encouraging people to make time for 30mins of daily exercise and the “Draw the line” campaign, aimed at getting people to consider their health and exercise more and eat responsibly. The presentation also highlighted the plight of indigenous Australians who suffer a disproportionate risk of heart attack, heart disease and diabetes.

It was a pleasure and privilege to host the Third Annual APC which is developing into an important forum for networking and professional development for Australian parliamentarians.



Picture: Delegates listen to the one of the panel speakers during the first day of the Conference in the Legislative Council Chamber.



Picture: The Deputy President, the Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm, speaking at the 'Taste of the South West' which was held at the end of the Conference and featured produce from the South West region of Western Australia.