

reform

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Law Reformer as Governor General

"Great men may be compared to torches shining at
long intervals to guide the advance ... they
light up their time ..."

Claude Bernard, 1865

Emeritus Professor Sir Zelman Cowen has been chosen to succeed as Governor-General of Australia in December 1977. He brings to the office a lifetime of scholarship. No recluse, he has developed the art of communicating his own thoughts and those of other great intellects to the Australian public over nearly three decades. Since the early 1950s he has been a frequent commentator on radio and later television : never retreating from the obligation of the modern scholar to use the new techniques of communication to share wisdom and knowledge.

Sir Zelman was appointed a Commissioner of the A.L.R.C. on 1 July 1976 for a period of three years. He was one of seven part-time Commissioners, carrying this responsibility with other heavy burdens. These included those of Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, Chairman of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and Director of the Australian Opera. He is a man of many parts with an endless stream of anecdotes and good humour, some based on the famous legal and other luminaries he has known.

Whilst a member of the A.L.R.C. he took an active part during the whole course of the reference on *Human Tissue Transplants* (see p59). He also took an active part in the Commission's work on its important *Privacy* Reference. In 1969 he delivered the A.B.C. Boyer Lectures on the theme "The Private Man" alerting Australian society to the importance of preserving privacy in the modern age :

"A man's privacy is his safety valve, he has in it his permissible area of deviation, his opportunity to give vent to what he would not express or do publicly; within these private limits he may share confidences and intimacies with those he trusts and he may set boundaries to those confidences".

Sir Zelman was also associated with the Commission's early work on its reference concerning standing to sue in federal courts and class actions. His catholic knowledge of and experience in the law will be sorely missed. As one Commissioner put it during his last meeting of the A.L.R.C. on 29 August :

"He has, during an all too brief period on the Commission made a powerful contribution to its work and to the depth of thought which it gives collectively to its references. He enhanced the stature of the Commission by his coming as he does by his going in the happy circumstances of his appointment".

Changeover in Australia's Attorney General

"Politics is almost as exciting as war, and quite as dangerous. In war you can only be killed once.

Sir Winston Churchill, 1920