

Western Australia

State Conference



John Gordon opened the conference.

Delegates at the Western Australia State Conference enjoyed a change of venue this year, moving from the Vines Resort on the outskirts of Perth to the Pagoda Hotel in Como. We were pleased to have with us from the national office our chief executive officer, Eva Scheerlinck, national vice president, John Gordon, and conference manager, Caroline Venn. Each day began with special interest groups, and the sessions were well attended given the early start.

The head of APLA WA's Workers' Compensation Committee, Guy Stubbs, outlined the discussions he has had with state consumer and employment protection minister, John Kobelke, regarding proposed changes to workers' compensation legislation and APLA's response to them.

The minister himself outlined to conference delegates the proposed legislative changes, which are intended to pass through parliament before the next election. The minister invited APLA WA to work with the government to develop the legislation and we are taking up that opportunity.

Kevin Wong, the solicitor in the *de Sales v Ingrilli* High Court decision regarding widow's discounts, discussed the issues in that case. Ms de Sales, the 'attractive widow' litigant whose damages were reduced 25% by the Supreme Court, also attended the seminar.

Further changes to the *Civil Liability Act 2002 (WA)* are proposed and John Fiocco gave a very interesting breakdown of the way in which those amendments will affect the law of negligence. Mr Fiocco called it a 'minestrone soup' codification, whereby all the factors that can be considered in relation to issues of negligence appear to have been picked from various High Court cases, and litigants will have to satisfy each and every liability issue from a long list.

This is going to make litigation more complex, with less certainty and higher legal costs, an outcome that Daryl Cameron from the Insurance Council of Australia wished to avoid. Despite this, we understand the council continues to support the government's move to codify the law of negligence.

Neil Douglas gave a fascinating and thought provoking talk on the King Edward Memorial Hospital inquiry. He provided very alarming statistics on error rates and identified systemic causes of errors.

We were honoured to have Labor MP Mark McGowan give the dinner address and Greens MP Jim Scott speak at our Saturday lunch on the issue of genetic manipulation of foods.

We farewelled state president, Chris Phillips, and long-standing vice presi-

dent, Matthew Glossop. We are sorry to see them retire from committee duties, but welcome Brian Nugawela as our incoming president.

We were pleased to have in attendance several representatives from defendant law firms and insurance companies, as well as a few medical practitioners.

A special thanks to all our speakers and delegates for their valuable time, particularly as it was a long weekend. We thank you all for your continuing support. ■

Thea Bray, Eva Scheerlinck and Caroline Venn from the National Office.

