

# Rule of Law Conference, Brisbane

LUCY TERRACALL, MIDDLETONS

I was honoured to be invited to represent the Young Lawyers' Section at a conference titled "Rule of Law: Challenges of a changing world" at the Banco Court in Brisbane on 31 August and 1 September.

The conference was an initiative of the Law Council of Australia (LCA), Queensland Law Society, Bar Association of Queensland and LAWASIA.

LCA president Tim Bugg hosted the conference that focused on defending and preserving the rule of law in a climate of global and regional uncertainty.

The calibre of speakers was outstanding. Among the presenters was Sir Gerard Brennan QC, American Bar Association immediate past president Karen Mathis, NSW Supreme Court Justice James Spigelman and former Queensland Premier Wayne Goss.

The topics covered over the two days included, among others, separation of powers, crime and punishment, judicial independence, international perspective on the rule of law, and rights of Indigenous Australians.

In his perceptive keynote address, Sir Gerard discussed the adaptive nature of the rule of law and noted that "legal systems

necessarily vary from place to place, from people to people, for each system must respond to local culture and conditions. But whatever be the character of a legal system, the rule of law is the underpinning of peace, order and freedom".

The conference shed light on the importance of the rule of law around the world by examining the situation in countries other than Australia. The articulate Malik Imtiaz Sarwar, a leading Malaysian human rights lawyer and activist and the Malaysian National Human Rights Society (HAKAM) president, addressed the conference on semi-democratic Malaysia. He spoke of the drastically declining standard of the judiciary and the worrying trends of Islamisation and race politics in the Malaysian government and wider society.

The conference was an extremely valuable experience and I met some truly astounding individuals.

Ms Mathis left the audience with a powerful final message: "The rule of law is the world's most precious resource. Unlike other commodities, the more we share it, the more we have".

Transcripts of the speakers' presentations at the rule of law conference can be found at [www.lawcouncil.asn.au/rol\\_2007.html](http://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/rol_2007.html). ■



## YOUR LEGAL DIRECTORY and Diaries *The essential reference guide for young lawyers*

**Search** for quick references  
**Plan** your year ahead  
**Connect** with the legal profession



Order your 2008 Legal Directory and Diaries  
at [www.liv.asn.au/diary](http://www.liv.asn.au/diary)