

ICJ RISES PHEONIX LIKE IN VICTORIA

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The Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists has a busy branch in Victoria. Some of the leading members of the Branch were present at a dinner held at the Menzies Hotel, Melbourne on Saturday 29 September 1990. The President of the Law Institute of Victoria (Mr Peter Gandolfo) and Mrs Gandolfo attended. The President of the Victorian Branch is Mr Haddon Storey QC, former Attorney General of Victoria. Mr Justice R E McGarvie was present as were Professor Francis Trindade (Monash), Mr Paul Bravender-Coyle (Secretary) and Ms Sam Mostyn (Treasurer), all members of the executive of the Victorian Branch of the ICJ. Those attending heard an address by Justice Michael Kirby, President of the NSW Court of Appeal and of the Australian Section of the ICJ.

In his address, Justice Kirby outlined the International mission of the ICJ. Justice Kirby is one of the forty Commissioners elected from amongst distinguished judges and lawyers in all regions of the world. He has also been elected to the Executive Committee of the ICJ and is the first Australian to hold that post. He outlined the work of the ICJ, based in Geneva, on issues affecting the rule of law, human and peoples' rights and the independence of judges and lawyers. He described the steps being taken to replace the long serving Secretary-General of the ICJ, Mr Niall MacDermot QC who had recently retired. The successor to Mr MacDermot will be chosen at a meeting of the Executive Committee in Geneva on 20 October, 1990.

Justice Kirby also addressed the need for greater integration of the activities of the Branches of the Australian Section of the ICJ. He said that he welcomed the revival of the Victorian Branch which was arising "Pheonix-like" after a number of years of relative inactivity. He said that lawyers were usually motivated by a concern about remedying injustice and a desire to uphold basic human rights. The Australian Section of the ICJ permitted Australian lawyers to play an active and constructive part in these activities not only in Australia but in other countries. He said that developments in the Asian/Pacific region caused a great deal of concern to Australian lawyers. He mentioned specifically:

- * The overthrow of the democratic constitution of Fiji;
- * The removal of the highest judge of Malaysia;
- * The detention without trial of human rights lawyers in Singapore;
- * The dangers to the rule of law in Hong Kong following 1997; and
- * The recurring constitutional crises of Palau.

Justice Kirby invited Victorian lawyers with an interest in the objects of the ICJ to join the Australian Section which was founded in 1958 by Sir Owen Dixon. Lawyers interested in knowing more about the Australian Section of the ICJ should contact Paul Bravender-Coyle (telephone 03 608 7444) or Sam Mostyn (telephone 03 640 2640).