

LAWASIA News

Children & the Law Conference A united approach

Late May saw LAWASIA's second *Children and the Law Conference* proceed with great success in Singapore. Hosted by the Law Society of Singapore and its very energetic Family Law Committee, the conference built considerably on the achievements of the first *Children and the Law Conference*, held in Brisbane, Australia in 2003.

Notable among those achievements was the combining of legal and non-legal participation in recognition of the intermeshed interest of varied stakeholders. Delegates to the Singapore conference were especially impressed by the success of this formula in delivering information and promoting informed and productive discussion.



The program was a current and interesting one that included sessions on child custody, child abduction, post family break-up support, restorative justice and planning for children with special needs. The conference's Guest-of-Honour, the Hon Justice Lai Siu Chiu of the Supreme Court of Singapore, referred to it in her keynote speech, as not just impressive but also ambitious in the range of material it sought to cover.

That claim challenged the interest of the 120-odd participants who attended not only from the local jurisdiction, but also from Australia, Bhutan, India, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, South Korea and Sri Lanka. Equally, in their ranks were representatives of the judiciary, the legal profession, relevant government ministries and various interest groups. Each session



LAWASIA President-Elect Mr Jung Hoon Lee
with Law Society of Singapore President
Mr Philip Jeyaratnam, SC

boasted full attendance and delegates were keen to share views and queries with the expert speakers during question and answer times, promoting lively information exchange.

Of special interest were two featured talks given by international contributors. Ms Maureen Southwick QC, a highly experienced Auckland-based child advocate, shared considerable expertise and information about *Counsel for the Child and the New Zealand Experience*. New Zealand has led the region in establishing excellent practice in this area and Ms Southwick's talk focused on the practical thinking and intelligent analysis of experience that had seen this reputation developed.

Mr Scott Falvey of McInnes Wilson Lawyers in Queensland did not claim expert status in his featured talk, *Posthumous Sperm Donation, from the Grave to the Cradle*, rather noting that the area was sufficiently new and open to allow any to develop that status. He won the audience's immediate attention by requesting



LAWASIA ExCo Member Ms Malathi Das with
Mr Scott Falvey, Deputy Chair of the
LAWASIA Young Lawyers Section

that delegates not refer to him as "the Sperm Guy", and continued his talk by raising some controversial legal perspectives, based on often heart-rending experiences.

The occasion also enabled Law Society president, Philip Jeyaratnam SC to officiate at the launch of the Law Society's Family Law Committee publication *The Art of Lawyering*, a best-practice guide for family practitioners, edited by Associate Professor Debbie Ong, from the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Law and a particularly highly-regarded speaker at the conference.

LAWASIA's special acknowledgements for the success of this stimulating event are due to Law Society Singapore treasurer, and LAWASIA ExCo member, Ms Malathi Das, the Law Society's Family Law Committee, under the leadership of Ms Ellen Lee, Law Society Councillor, Mr TL Yap, and Ms June Tan, Director of CPD at the Law Society, as well as the Law Society committee members and staff who assisted her in staging this worthy event.



Mr Andrew Davies, Chair of LAWASIA
Family Law & Family Rights Section