

## **Collaborating Down Under**

The first international collaborative law conference, "Collaborating DownUnder", to be held in the southern hemisphere was held in Sydney, Australia at the end of March 2009.

The Australian Attorney-General, The Honourable Robert McClelland spoke at the opening ceremony held on 26 March 2009 at Parliament House, Sydney. The following day, the New South Wales Attorney-General, The Honourable John Hatzistergos opened the Conference.

Both the Federal and the State Attorneys-General spoke encouragingly about their government's vision for and desire to see the use of the collaborative process in dispute resolution other than only in the area of family law. John Hatzistergos made clear the State government's intention to see collaborative law used in the resolution of a range of disputes outside of family law including family provisions claims and commercial dispute resolution.

In keeping with the conference organiser's desire to demonstrate the broad range of areas in which collaborative law is effective, Peter McClelland, Chief Judge at Common Law, Supreme Court of NSW, Justice Terry Sheahan AO, the Land & Environment Court and Justice Murray Kellam AO, Court of Appeal, Supreme Court of Victoria all spoke to the conference on the role that they saw for collaborative practice now and into the future.

Overseas speakers included David Hoffman (author, collaborative lawyer, mediator, lecturer and principal of the Boston Law Collaborative); Sherrie Abney (author, collaborative lawyer, trainer and co-founder of the Global Collaborative Law Council). From Australia, Bradley Chenoweth (international mediator), Professor Tania Sourdin (University of Queensland) and Professor Laurence Boulle (Bond University) and others all spoke on non-family law aspects of collaborative practice.

By any measure, "Collaborating DownUnder" was a resounding success. As the collaborative movement grows and spreads within Australia, significant inroads are being made into such areas of practice as probate and succession, construction and business law.

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