

ANU Law School Hosts Major International Conference

Heads of law schools from around the world gathered at ANU recently to discuss the role their institutions could play in a changing world.

From 25 to 27 May 2009, the ANU College of Law hosted at University House the General Assembly and Annual Conference of the International Association of Law Schools (IALS).

This was a remarkable gathering of over 100 delegates from 66 different law schools in 31 different countries.

Dean Michael Coper of the ANU College of Law, who is a member of the IALS Governing Board and was Chair of the Planning Committee for the conference, said he was delighted to have won the bid to hold the conference at the ANU, after strong bids to have it in Tunisia, Morocco, or Egypt.

'The conference really showcased the ANU, Canberra, and Australia, and will have significantly lifted the profile of Australian legal education and legal scholarship, especially at the ANU, right around the world', Professor Coper said.

The conference explored the role of law schools and law school leadership in a changing world, so most law schools were represented by their Deans. The conference was opened by ANU Vice Chancellor Professor Ian Chubb; Governor-General Quentin Bryce hosted a reception at Government House; and the delegates were entertained and informed on successive nights by two of Australia's leading judges: recently retired High Court Justice Michael Kirby, now Distinguished Visiting Fellow in the ANU College of Law, and High Court Chief Justice Robert French.

'IALS conferences are always wonderful opportunities to learn from each other, and to question our assumptions about what is best practice in the law and legal education', Professor Coper said. 'But on this occasion, I was determined to push delegates to consider not only our differences but also what we had in common', he added.

'In the result, there was a reasonably robust consensus that our task as law schools around the world was not merely to produce good technical lawyers. It was also to produce community leaders, ethical role models, and citizens of the world who would use their legal knowledge and skills to promote human rights and defend the rule of law.'

'I was particularly inspired', Professor Coper said, 'by the Deans from the Middle East, who saw their law graduates as peacemakers and pivotal to long-term peace in the region. But most of all I was really encouraged that the particular ethos we have developed at the ANU College of Law, not only of excellence but also of working for law reform and social justice, was so validated and reinforced by an almost universal view from around the world of what it means to be a lawyer in the 21st century.'

Contact:

Professor Michael Coper
Dean, ANU College of Law
Australian National University
Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia

michael.coper@anu.edu.au
+61 2 6125 4124 (tel)
+61 2 6125 0097 (fax)



International Association of Law Schools conference delegates gather at ANU College of Law