

Message from the President

Dear IPBA member,

With another successful annual conference now behind us, I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the highlights of the conference and share with you my vision for the year ahead.

Special Offer from Shangri-La Hotels

Firstly, I'd like to alert you to an exciting new offer available exclusively to IPBA members. We have negotiated corporate rates with the Shangri-La Hotels group (www.shangri-la.com) for the following cities: Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai, Manila, and Singapore. The "IPBA Rates", which are typically 30-40% off their hotels' standard rack rate, are good through to 31 December 2006 and will be renewed annually (and for additional cities) if our IPBA bookings reach a specified level. The Shangri-la has setup special online booking access for the IPBA at https://www.shangri-la.com/reservations/booking/en/index.aspx?corp_id=A05812438405. The IPBA's "Corporate ID Rate" code is A05812438405. I'd encourage you all to take advantage of this great offer.

Sydney Conference

Those of you who were able to join us in Sydney will, I hope, have come away with a strong sense of having taken part in an extremely worthwhile event, both from a personal and professional perspective. We were indeed pleased to welcome delegates this year from 43 countries and I'm delighted that the feedback so far on both the conference and social programs has been so overwhelmingly positive.

The conference attracted a range of high-profile speakers from all corners of the globe. From Australia, these included the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the **Hon. Alexander Downer**; the Minister for Education, Science & Training and the Minister assisting the Prime Minister for Women's issues, former IPBA member the **Hon. Julie Bishop MP**, and the Chief Justice of New South Wales, the **Hon. Jim Spigelman AC**. We were also delighted to welcome speakers including **Mr Michael Leir**, the Canadian High Commissioner to Australia; **Mr Yasushi Masaki** from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan; **Mr Andrew Stoler**, former Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organisation; **Mr Salil Singhal**, Chairman and Managing Director of PI Industries Ltd; **Mr Stephen Deady**, Chief Australian negotiator for the Australia/United States Free Trade Agreement, and; **Mr Jaime Irarrazabal**, Chief Legal Counsel to the Chilean Government on a range of free trade negotiations. The calibre of speakers not just at the Plenary session but throughout the conference was extremely high and we hope to be able to publish some of their papers on the web and in coming issues of the IPBA journal.

As well as the various conference sessions, delegates enjoyed a busy social program that offered them a taste of Sydney's top culinary and cultural delights, including the Opera House, Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Art Gallery of NSW and Luna Park. As a Sydney-sider, I was pleased to hear so many of you express to me how impressed you were with Sydney as a city and what it had to offer.

Once again, I'd like to thank the Host Committee for their tireless efforts in organising this year's conference: **John West QC, Robin Lonergan, Roger Saxton, Geoff Sutherland, George Livanes, Lorraine Walker, Chris Dawson, David Laidlaw, David Sigler, Joe Hurley, Campbell Bridge SC, Michael Sonnenberg, Julie Ward** and also **Michael Back, Brad Wylynko, Michael Butler, Anthony Latimer, Andrew Percival** and **Charles Mendel**. I would also like to thank **David O'Donnell** who, although not on the Host Committee, worked very hard on the successful application to AusAid for its sponsorship of the IPBA scholars.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to again thank our conference sponsors for their support: **Ricoh, Clayton Utz, Turner Freeman Lawyers, Allens Arthur Robinson, Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Maddocks, Meritas, Simpson Grierson, Buddle Findlay** and **Austrade**.

A special note of thanks also to the Consulates of Japan and Canada for arranging the participation of Mr Masaki and Mr Leir respectively, and the Consul-General of Japan for hosting a reception for the Japanese delegates at his residence.

This year's conference, I believe, proved yet again the value of the IPBA in contributing to a greater understanding of issues impacting legal practitioners in the region, as well as helping them in their busy professional lives to feel a sense of connection with their colleagues in other parts. I'd like to thank all of you who attended this year's conference and encourage you to spread the word to your friends and colleagues about the value of IPBA membership.

The year ahead

While it's fair to say that the annual conference is the highlight of the IPBA calendar, the association of course has a much broader and important charter: providing a forum for business lawyers with an interest in the Asia Pacific to keep abreast of developments in the region that stand to impact them and their practices. Feedback from members to date is that an association with a regional focus not only provides them with an opportunity to make valuable contacts with those people and organisations that they and their clients are most likely to do business with, but also gives them the opportunity to share ideas and information on regional developments that are of particular relevance to them in their daily practice.

One of my aims this year as IPBA president is to continue the good work started by the Strategic Long-Term Planning Committee. This includes reviewing and amending some operational matters and procedures, some of which haven't changed since the IPBA was founded. Together with the Committee, I will also be looking at the way the IPBA is governed and the committee structure.

Of course, no regional association can expect to survive in today's environment without listening to its members and taking on board constructive feedback on whether the association is meeting their needs. I encourage you to let me or your jurisdictional council member know your suggestions for how the IPBA can better help you as a practitioner in the region. We're also interested in hearing from our members about the value of being an IPBA member. If IPBA membership has somehow made a difference to you and your practice, we'd be delighted to hear from you. And of course, we're always keen to welcome new members so please do spread the word.

I look forward to working with the IPBA Council this year to take the IPBA to a new level.

Jim FitzSimons

President, IPBA

