

Concluding Remarks

Sir David Smith, KCVO, AO

I think I may safely say that this has been yet another incredibly successful conference, and we all are indebted to a number of people for that.

This time last year we learned that John and Nancy Stone wished to hand on their joint responsibilities for managing the affairs of the Society and organising and running its conferences. What followed was a seamless transition into other hands.

One of our Board members, Bob Day, took on the task of Secretary of the Society, with the able assistance of his secretary, Joy Montgomery. Julian Leeser took on the task of Conference Convenor, and was able to enlist the assistance of Ian Callinan, John Stone and Bob Day. Thanks to all of these people, there was a smooth transfer of the Society's records and operation from Sydney to Adelaide, and the holding this weekend of what I have already described as yet another incredibly successful conference.

The themes of the conference were Bills of Rights, federalism, Upper Houses of Parliament, the counting of referendum majorities, and judicial appointments.

The Bills of Rights papers were set against the inquiry currently being conducted by the Brennan committee. The federalism papers were set against Chapter III of the Constitution – The Judicature; State and Territory differences in the regulation of goods and the licensing of occupations; and the High Court's judgment in *Pape v. Commissioner of Taxation*. (Here I must acknowledge the Society's admiration of our member, Bryan Pape, for his courage in mounting this most important case). The papers on the role of Upper Houses of Parliament were set against the current proposal to abolish South Australia's Legislative Council, and the abolition of Queensland's Legislative Council in 1922. In the papers on judicial appointments we heard the arguments for and against reform of the process. We were also given a short paper on the various ways in which majorities might be counted in bringing into operation ss. 57 and 128 of the Australian Constitution.

All of our conference themes were highly relevant to current political debates, and all of our speakers gave us significant contributions to those debates. We are indebted to them all, and on your behalf I thank them most sincerely.

As I reminded members of the Society in my concluding remarks at last year's conference, our inaugural president, the Right Honourable Sir Harry Gibbs, exhorted us to participate in the process of public education and debate on the Constitution. With the publication, in due course, of the proceedings of this conference, and with their inclusion on the Society's web site alongside the proceedings of all of our previous conferences, the Society will continue to live up to the charge which Sir Harry placed upon us in his launching address to our first conference on 24 July 1992.

In closing this twenty-first conference I wish you all safe journeys home.