

CONCLUDING REMARKS

THE HONOURABLE IAN CALLINAN, AC

Ladies and gentleman, it is my function now to close what has been a very successful conference.

We've had, I think, the very good fortune to have had an outstandingly good array of speakers on this occasion. One only has to look at their qualifications and their achievements to have some understanding of how fortunate we are to have heard from them this weekend.

We've heard from a current Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, and I may observe that she is now the third successive Chief Justice to speak at our conferences, a Major General, distinguished academics, a senior cleric, and both current and retired judges of the Federal Court of Australia and state Supreme Courts.

I know we've had very good speakers on other occasions, but it seems to me that on this occasion, we have been especially lucky.

I can't think of any other debating society, if I can call us that without offending anybody responsible for its formation, that has such a variety of speakers, that so encourages free speech, and also brings to the table a breadth and depth of learning and insight of the kind that our speakers do. I might also add that another feature that distinguishes us from other bodies that claim to be good debating societies in this country is that our speakers make a practice of answering the questions they are asked!

It used to be the practice for me or the President to attempt to sum things up, but I think it is unnecessary on this occasion and I fear that it is in the nature of an insult to attempt to capture in a few sentences the massive amount of informed and thoughtful material that we have had the advantage of hearing in these past two days.

Accordingly, I think that all it remains for me to do is to thank those who were responsible for this conference: Eddy Gisonda, who has been a remarkably energetic and effective program arranger, Shannon Lyon, who does a great deal of work in the background, and of course Stuart Wood. This is not to say that others have not made major efforts, but if it weren't for Stuart, we wouldn't have this conference, and I thank him very much.

Finally, I would ask you to encourage others to join what I believe is the best debating society in Australia.