

## **Commonwealth Law Conference - Melbourne**

As a somewhat late reminder of the excellent international events junior barristers can attend with the kind assistance Combar, I write here a report of the bi-annual Commonwealth Law Association Conference, this time held in Melbourne in March 2017. A most civilised and serene backdrop to the conference, with its winding Yarra River lined with smart restaurants, fancy galleries and the Royal Botanical Gardens, Melbourne comes alive at night – buzzing street markets, fabulous rich array of restaurants, music venues, and open (warm) spaces with all sorts going on (the beach is also just down the road).

Oh yes, and there was a conference, too. All sorts in attendance. Moving from one scintillating lecture to the next, this junior member of the bar rubbed shoulders with eminent Silks and Senior Counsel, Chief Justices and judges from all over the world – including our very own Master of the Rolls Sir Terrance Etherton – who gave an excellent speech on the not uncontroversial subject (think awful post-Brexit judgment Daily Mail headline) of the Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Profession. Each of the lectures, in 1.5 hour slots over 4 days, deals with a different topical theme and includes speakers from all over the Commonwealth – an unparalleled opportunity to hear the experiences and diverse perspectives of (to name a few) the Hon. Chief Justice of Victoria, Marilyn Warren, the great Hon. Michael Kirby (retired Justice of the High Court of Australia), judges from Canada, Hong Kong, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Ghana and more; And our own (and much missed) ex-head of chambers, The Hon. Mr Justice Dingemans.

For any aspiring barrister with an eye on international work – or just a keen interest on caring and sharing with our Commonwealth counterparts – I would thoroughly recommend this conference (and membership of the Commonwealth Lawyers Association generally). Previous venues include Cape Town South Africa, India, Hong Kong and Glasgow.

Combar, along with the Bar Council, kindly supported me to attend this important international event. There is an annual International Development Grant available for junior members of the bar to do similar.