

From your editor

Welcome to this edition of the *Australasian Parliamentary Review*.

APR is fortunate to have as its Address for this issue a presentation by Christopher Shanahan SC, former Vice President of the WA Bar Association. Chris has a special interest in constitutional law and his Address considers the adequacy of the WA Constitution when an election, such as the 2008 WA election, returns a hung parliament. This election involved significant changes to the geographic distribution of parliamentary seats and regions in WA following a redistribution in 2007. It was also the first to be held using one-vote-one-value for the lower house, bringing WA into line with the rest of Australia.

Chris's paper was the keynote address at a seminar conducted by the WA Chapter of the ASPG titled 'Hung parliaments: the constitutional and political ramifications (UK, Tasmanian, Australian and WA experiences)'. Harry Phillips has summarised the proceedings of this important seminar and his piece gives the Shanahan Address greater context.

Articles in this issue cover NSW and New Zealand parliamentary and political history — distant and current — and I pay tribute to the four authors involved for the quality of their work.

David Clune documents the events in NSW in the year 1843 and Norman Abjorensen does likewise for the state under the Australian Labor Party 2007–2011. The contrasts and the similarities between the two are striking. Both deal with Parliament's traditional role of holding the executive to account, one in colonial times, the other today, one empowering, one frustrated.

David Wilson and John Martin provide two perspectives on the New Zealand parliament. David, through case study, examines the limited power to punish for contempt arguing that, based on the Australian experience, New Zealand may benefit by placing the power in the general law rather than in Standing Orders. John Martin's piece is a study of parliamentary business in 19th century New Zealand in relation to the British and Australian state parliaments. He argues that a shifting balance between parliament and the executive has led to a dominance in New Zealand of the executive. This is the first of two pieces by John — the second to appear in the Spring 2011 of *APR* and dealing with the 20th Century events.

The good, the bad and the ugly is the title of the 2010 Australasian Study of Parliament Group conference. Organised by the ACT Chapter of ASPG, proceedings examined public perceptions of parliament. Most of the papers presented at the conference appear in this issue. Through a range of subject areas, they explore the tricky question of why public trust in our governmental and parliamentary institutions has diminished. As John Warhurst says, they have a public relations problem which needs to be addressed. I was particularly impressed with the creativity of the younger researchers and writers at the conference, providing as they did contemporary analysis of and solutions to ever broadening community cynicism and disengagement. Dr Rosemary Laing, Clerk of the Senate, has written a thorough and engaging summary of the proceedings. Rosemary's piece is highly recommended not just as a meticulous précis of all that was covered at the conference but for her appraisal of why we should cultivate the good, deal with the bad and learn to live with the ugly.

A new edition to the journal is 'From the Tables'. While designed to inform staff of parliaments in Australia and New Zealand of developments that may have some practical application in their jurisdiction, it will be a valuable resource for anyone with an interest in parliamentary procedural and administrative matters. My thanks go to Robyn Smith for the idea and the authorship. It will be a regular feature of the *APR* and feedback from readers would be appreciated.

In conclusion, the journal would not be produced without the interest and commitment of authors, of members of the Editorial Committee who give their time to providing advice and expertise and the technical skills of our desktop publisher, Stephanie Hancock. Thanks to all.

Jennifer Aldred