

# President's Report

## Kevin Rozzoli

It is again my pleasure to make this, my 6<sup>th</sup> report since becoming National President. In these six years we have witnessed steady progress and a growing acknowledgement of the ASPG's role in encouraging and stimulating research, writing and teaching among all who are interested in parliamentary institutions, in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. It is hoped this will generate not only greater understanding of our institutions but encourage those responsible for the carriage of their functions to perform better in the interests of those they are intended to serve.

This year has been an active one and there is much to be quietly pleased about. Our conference continues the theme of accountability, this time examining the functions of parliaments as they relate to the end consumer of its services, the public who elect them. Accountability has become the latest buzz word, but it is far more than that. All who are elected to represent their community, as well as those who have a role to support them, must be accountable, it is the solid platform of all sound democracies. Conversely it is lack of accountability that materially damages our great institutions.

### *Finance*

On the subject of accountability let me quickly turn to our own circumstances and note with satisfaction a further increase in our total equity, which now stands at \$52,328.18, an increase of almost \$9,000 on last year. While this is the best result in the history of the ASPG, I would remind members that is an essentially modest figure and does little more than secure our immediate financial security. We are once again indebted to the outstanding work of our treasurer, Dr. Anthony Marinac. Unfortunately Anthony cannot be with us this year due to other commitments, however, for the period of his absence the Treasurers functions will be in the capable hands of John Carter, a previous Secretary-Treasurer of the ASPG.

In his financial report Anthony has noted the steady rise in the cost of the Australasian Parliamentary Review over the last three years, from \$6,756.90 per

issue to \$8,485.40. While he has not recommended a rise in this year's membership fees, he notes that if the trend continues it will drive the need for a membership fee increase at some point in the next three to five years. Having said that, I am confident membership of the ASPG remains the best value in town.

### ***The Australasian Parliamentary Reviews***

Once again much of this value for money is due to the tireless efforts of our exceptional editor Dr. Elaine Thompson. Her capacity to produce two high quality, on time, journals each year has done much to raise the status of the journal in the eyes of academics and practitioners alike. If Elaine is to continue this high standard she needs your support in terms of contributing articles. Last year we asked Chapters to provide periodic reports on their activities, and, so that this would not become an arduous task, developed a schedule which involves a report being submitted no more than once in three years. Sadly even on this generous basis some Chapters have not lived up to their commitment. I will not name them, they will know who they are, but it is important that Elaine has these reports as they provide interest and variety in the journal's pages. Please ensure your Chapter meets its obligation in this regard. Thank you Elaine for your continuing outstanding effort, it is greatly appreciated.

### ***The Website***

The website has seen a few ups and downs during the year. We always knew that sooner or later we would have to become independent of the Senate who kindly set up and launched the site on our behalf. After some negotiations we believe we have now set up a new management system and hope, after a few teething problems are resolved, it will be satisfactory. I wish to thank Tim Watling for kindly agreeing to be Webmaster.

### ***Membership***

There has continued to be a modest rise in membership in the past year which now also stands at a record level. We need to continue to push initiatives to further increase our membership base in the interests of maintaining viability and purpose.

### ***Research***

The Accountability Research Project continues to be the flagship in this field. Driven by Associate Professor Ken Coghill, of Monash University, it has greatly helped promote the image of ASPG to a wider audience, as a body actively pursuing higher standards in our parliamentary institutions. Most recently a paper entitled, *Be Honest Minister* was launched at Parliament House, Canberra in the

lead-up to the Federal elections. The researchers come from all sides of politics, and include former members and academics. In April the Queensland Chapter hosted a one-day seminar, based on the research paper, which was held in the Queensland Parliament. It was well supported and received. It had the enthusiastic support of the Speaker, the Hon. Mike Reynolds, and featured supportive presentations from both Government and Opposition. Our thanks must go to Noni Malone and her very active executive for a wonderful day. Both Ken and I attended and participated. This is an excellent example of how we may help an institution promote research and discussion in important areas and even an individual chapter may engage in research in an area of significance. There is certainly no shortage of areas of great practical value that may be pursued. Linking with a local university and former members is a great way of pushing an agenda that is of interest. Research papers will of course always get exposure in the pages of our journal. We are still grappling with the guidelines in terms of research projects that may be accorded ASPG endorsement and this will be further considered by your executive in the coming year.

### ***The Pacific Region***

One of the most exciting developments this year has been the growing involvement of our Pacific neighbours. This has long been an ambition of mine and I am indebted to the Center for Democratic Institutions for its support. CDI responds to the needs of developing countries in the fields of good governance and democratic institutions. Established as an Australian Government initiative it receives its core funding through AusAID and its geographic focus is the Asia-Pacific region. It is an independent body based in the Crawford School of Economics and Government at ANU.

Last year it brought delegates from Fiji and the Solomon Islands to our New Zealand Conference. This year we have delegates from the Solomon Islands, Bougainville and Papua New Guinea, including two parliamentary officers who, in addition to attending the conference will have short attachments to the host Parliament and the Commonwealth Parliament. CDI has graciously funded their travel, accommodation and daily allowance expenses while the parliaments concerned have enthusiastically supported the attachments of the parliamentary officers. This is, I believe, a great step forward. Our aims and objectives include the Pacific region but for many years little has been done in this regard. I am very proud of all who have made this possible and look forward to it continuing in the years to come. It was also my great privilege to work with CDI over recent weeks to deliver an outstanding Induction Program for new members of the Papua New Guinea Parliament. In 2002 the turnover of members was 80%; in 2007, 60%. This throws a great strain on the institution. Conducted over three days the Induction Program aimed at providing the new members, 65 in all, with a wide range of information and support materials. It was an outstanding success. Not only was there an almost 100% attendance of new members, many continuing members also

attended. Over the three days 100 out of 108 members attended some part of the program and a core group of over 60 attended every session. To me this proved that worthwhile programs will attract interest. The wide range of practical areas covered in the program showed great leadership in this field.

The role of ASPG was acknowledged and during the coming year I will be encouraging the Pacific countries to form Chapters and become involved in our activities.

### ***Thank you***

Finally I would like to thank everyone for their support over the last six years. It has been a thrill to see the organization grow in every section of its activities. I believe it is now has a more solid base. Much still remains to be done and hopefully the challenge will be taken up by Chapters and individual members alike. Remember any organization is only as good as its members. ▲