

## Clerk's Message

It was great to catch up with so many Alumni members at the annual reception on 5 March, and again to see board members on 6 September.

2010 was quite a year for the House, with the election of the first hung Parliament since 1940. No doubt Alumni members will have got used to fielding many and varied questions about what it all means! In the department the heightened interest in all sorts of matters that emerged quickly after the election has been maintained - but you will be pleased to know that we think we are coping with it all!

With David and Marion I appreciated

the opportunity to meet with Mike and Rada early in their term as cochairs. We talked over what we saw as the role of the Alumni. I was able to say that to me it represents a lot of what I see as the best qualities of the department: professional people, idealism, principle, willingness to get in and make things happen and, importantly, awareness of each other's welfare and an instinct to look after each other. A pleasure which we are glad to say remains is the knowledge that we are working with people who take their jobs seriously, but don't take themselves seriously all the time! I do see the Alumni as complementing the department very



neatly, and as a great reminder that for so many of us Parliament has been much more than just another place to work.

am pleased to report that government approval has finally been given to extend Comcare cover

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# Alumni on assignment

At the Annual General Meeting of the Alumni on 3 September 2009, Andres Lomp, Director, Liaison and Projects Office of the Department, gave a presentation on possible opportunities for Alumni to participate in international relations programs. Possible organisations included the World Bank, the UNDP, UNESCO, Commonwealth Secretariat and parliamentary bodies including the IPU and CPA. He advised that as all Australian parliaments are now twinned with Pacific nation parliaments, there may also be scope for Alumni members to augment resources. Mark McRae (an unabashed Collingwood supporter) who was an officer of the Department between 1974 and 1989 and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory from 1989 to 2003 was an alumnus who took up such an opportunity. Here is his account of that experience in 2009.

#### FIVE WEEKS ON SOUTH TARAWA, KIRIBATI

— a brief account of a consultancy with the Maneaba ni Maungatabu

On 8 September 2009 the Maneaba ni Maungatabu appointed a select committee of four members to review its rules, the chairman of the Committee being Mr Ieremia Tabai.

Arising out of a 2008 Legislative Needs Assessment report, Parliament of Kiribati (The Maneaba ni Maungatabu) and the UNDP Fiji Multi Country Office had jointly endorsed a Support to Parliament project in August 2009, the broad objective of which was to provide technical advice for the Rules Committee of the Maneaba and for an assignee to assist the Secretariat and to draft amendments to the Rules of Procedure for consideration by the Committee and to prepare a draft report for the Committee's consideration.

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to volunteers who are assisting in the department – see <a href="http://www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/LegislativeInstrument1.nsf/0/B0F1D9D98570ACE0CA25">http://www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/LegislativeInstrument1.nsf/0/B0F1D9D98570ACE0CA25</a>
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It will not surprise you to know that I am aware that this year a number of us made calls about work issues to former colleagues, especially in the weeks leading up to the opening in September. I am grateful to Alumni members who were willing to have a quite word and to help their colleagues — and no doubt there have been plenty of calls that I am not aware of. This sort of help has been given generously, and is greatly appreciated.

Alumni members who are interested in short term or contract work for the department are encouraged to provide details to People Strategies for the temporary employment register <a href="http://www.aph.gov.au/house/dept/employ/index.htm#register">http://www.aph.gov.au/house/dept/employ/index.htm#register</a>: as we

see it we should be willing to pay for anything beyond the personal and informal help that people give so willingly.

By the time you read this Christmas will be over – I hope it was a happy and relaxing time for all Alumni members. On behalf of the department, I extend my best wishes to you all for good health and much happiness in 2011.

We look forward to another happy year of contact with our Alumnists.

Bernard Wright Clerk of the House

Five weeks on South Tarawa, Kiribati – a brief account of a consultancy with the Maneaba ni Maungatabu

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In early October I signed a special service agreement and was on a plane to Nadi (Fiji) immediately, not having been able to obtain a booking from Nadi to Tarawa in the last minute rush over a weekend (I was lucky to get a seat to Fiji). Fortunately, after 2 nights in Fiji I obtained the one remaining seat on the next available Air Pacific flight, arriving at the Tarawa atoll on a sweltering afternoon after a 3 hour flight to be met by charming hotel staff (the ACT legislative Assembly staff had helped considerably here) and the Speaker's driver.

Thus began perhaps the most interesting and engrossing short term assignment I have undertaken in my career.

By way of background, Kiribati ("For Travellers, Not Tourists" says the brochure) consists of 33 islands, 21 of which are inhabited. The islands (the Gilbert group, the Phoenix group and the Line group) extend approximately 3,900 km from east to west and 2,100 km from north to south. The Maneaba (parliament) has 3 "meetings" each year, each of 2 weeks duration, though this is a little deceptive. In fact, Members arrive approximately 2 weeks prior to each meeting and in that time undertake essential committee work and other parliamentary and party business. We think that in Australia we have problems with distance and isolation.

Think again. Compared with Kiribati, our problems are miniscule. The geography in Kiribati means that there are huge logistical problems for members and committees. It is not an exaggeration to say that it can take over 4 weeks for certain members to get to Tarawa for a meeting.

Kiribatiachievedindependencein July 1979. It is a parliamentary democracy with a unicameral legislature (the Maneaba ni Maungatabu) with 41 members (39 elected, one ex-officio (the Attorney-General) and one nominated to represent Banaba). The Speaker is appointed by the Maneaba from outside the legislature and from my observation is a person of considerable experience and sagacity. The members serve a 4 year term (there is an interesting provision for an electorate to recall a member after a petition and referendum activated once!) and the Te Beretitenti (President) undertakes the roles of Head of State and Head of Government.

At the first meeting following a general election, the Maneaba elects the Speaker and it then must next proceed to the election, from amongst its members, of no less than 3 and no more than 4 candidates for the office of Te Beretitenti (President). The Maneaba is then adjourned and the nation proceeds to a further election – that to elect its President. Once

elected, he or she chooses his or her Cabinet from amongst the members (no more than 8) plus the Attorney-General.

One other Constitutional provision of note is that, in the event of (a) a majority of members agreeing to a motion of no confidence in the Beretitenti or the Government or (b) the Beretitenti notifies the Speaker that a vote on a matter raises an issue of confidence, and in a subsequent vote on that matter it is rejected by a majority of all the members, the Maneaba is dissolved! That is - there is a complete spill.

The Rules Committee set a cracking pace – at one stage meeting every 2 days. Support from the Clerk and the Secretariat was strong and I was on a very steep learning curve indeed. In its approach to its task the Committee was professional and painstaking – a wide range of briefs on a number of matters being sought, prepared and digested. A range of proposed changes to the Rules were considered in detail and either adopted, modified or rejected.

In its report, the most significant changes proposed by the Committee affected the rules relating to the meeting times of the Maneaba, questions and answers to questions (aimed at making the question

## Where are they now?

### We find a few of our Alumni colleagues to see what they are up to.

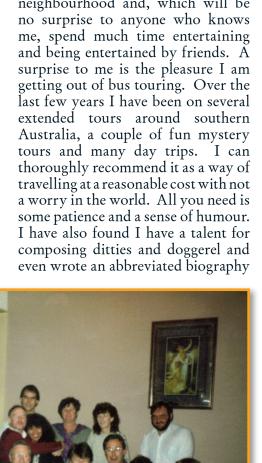
### **EVELYN KEARNS SECRETARY**

After 23 years in various entities in the Defence and Attorney-General related portfolios, I joined the Department in November 1988 as Director, Corporate Services. During the next fourteen years I was involved in the introduction of major financial reforms management including accrual accounting, the automation of the printing and publishing section and the restructure of the printing award, and the expansion of computing. When I started the department had 20 computers on its books and a couple of elementary support programs, 14 years later nearly every facet of operations in Members' and departmental offices was computerised.

Since taking early retirement in 2002, I occupy my time with casual employment as a scribe, which is good fun as I can pick and choose when and where I work and I get acquainted with government entities

and being entertained by friends. A

I never knew existed. An activity close to my heart is fund-raising for Barnardos and together with an ageing band of wonderful women we hold several activities during the year including bridge days and a very popular garden party for Oaks Day in November, at which I run the sweeps. I have much involvement with my four grandchildren, keep an eye on a few 'oldies' around the neighbourhood and, which will be getting out of bus touring. Over the last few years I have been on several





of two elderly friends in verse that was well received. In November 2010 I broke my ankle and that has taken time to heal but I am now back on my feet and it is all systems go!

#### JOHN BELLCHAMBERS

Some might ask "where is he now" well, John Ernest George Bellchambers is still in the same house that Jack and Jill built just over 43 years ago and I should add with the same Jill. You may not wish to know that, but it just goes to show how conservative I am. I just love Burley Griffin's Canberra and it's difficult to tear oneself away after 63 years, no matter how hard our local government tries to spoil it.

What led me to work in the department of the House of Representatives? It had its origin in 1954 when I visited Parliament House with a friend and watched a member make a speech; he was the member for Gellibrand, John Mullens. What intrigued me was, here was this member at his desk in the Chamber surrounded by books, I think Hansards, and as he spoke the placed filled up with members on both sides of the House. Harry Jenkins senior had the same ability to attract listeners. In addition, I listened to my crystal radio set which could only receive radio station 2CN, the station in those days that broadcast Parliament.

I joined the Serjeant-at -Arms office in November 1973. What history followed: the double dissolution of 1974; the Joint Sitting the same year; the sacking of a Prime Minister in 1975;

the Fraser government and then the Hawke government in 1983. In mid 1982 I was appointed to act as Serjeantat-Arms by Speaker Snedden. In mid 1983 I joined the Secretariat of the New Parliament House Committee with which I served until March 1989 when the late Alan Browning signed off on my redundancy. It is difficult to highlight a single period of my 16 years with the department, however, the building which stands on Capital Hill will always remain as a testament to those of us who had the privilege of contributing to its construction.

Where are they now?

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What have I done in the last 22 years? I was appointed General President of Yowani Country Club and served in that capacity from early 1990 until mid 1991, I played golf four days a week, getting the handicap down to 8.4. Bought a unit at Surfers Paradise and served on the Body Corporate Committee. I look after a couple of

family companies. I also do a bit of wood turning from time to time. Life, you could say, is pretty good on the whole, except as you get older some health issues raise their ugly heads above the ocean of time, e.g. macular degeneration. But thanks to modern technology I have sufficient eyesight to drive 20 kms from home during daylight hours.



▲ John is on the left; in the centre is David Smith, Official Secretary to the Governor-General; and Usher of the Black Rod, Peter Murdoch, is on the right.

### ALUMNI BOARD MEMBERS 2010-2011

- Robyn Bushby
- Alan Hume
- Fred Cook
- Keith Johnson
- Garry Cosgrove
- Max Kiermaier
- Dean da Costa
- Evelyn Kearns (Secretary)
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- Norman Lewis
- Desley Dawes
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- John Hession
- Monica Telesny
- Maurie Hopman
- Ian Young

### Further information:

For any further information on alumni events or information please contact

email - Alumni.reps@aph.gov.au

#### blogspot

http://depthouseofrepsalumni.blogspot.com/

#### STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

In the last Newsletter we caught up with Grant Harrison who is currently the Deputy Director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions at the Crawford School of Economics and Government, Australian National University. Grant explains the role of the Centre.

The Centre for Democratic

Institutions (CDI) is a small organization with a big mission: it was established by the Australian Government in 1998 to promote the emergence of stable, democratic political governance in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, with a particular focus on Indonesia, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands,

Vanuatu and Fiji.

We do this with a permanent staff of five (four in Canberra and one in Jakarta) and a small network of expert associates.

We have two main streams to our work: we provide capacity

building assistance to strengthen the operation of parliaments and political parties; and we conduct policy-oriented research on issues related to parliaments, political parties, electoral systems, political leadership and representation.

In our capacity building, we work collaboratively with our in-country partners to identify their development needs and to devise programs of assistance or training in response to these needs. Typically, we provide advice on parliamentary operations and the management of political parties and we deliver training programs for parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and political party officials.

#### Recently, we have:

- run courses for women candidates in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands;
- supported induction programs for newly elected members in

Indonesia and Bougainville;

- developed tailored training on parliamentary financial oversight in Indonesia;
- provided advice to reviews of Standing Orders in Vanuatu and East Timor;
- helped draft a Manual of Practice and Procedure in Papua New Guinea;
- run residential programs for parliamentarians (Parliamentary Leadership); emerging women leaders (Women in Politics), party officials (Political Party Development) and parliamentary committee staff (Effective Committee Inquiries); and
- conducted research and published papers on electoral and parliamentary systems, party regulation and women's representation.

Although we work in political

environments around the region, we provide non-partisan advice and support aimed at strengthening the capacity of parliaments and political parties to operate effectively as democratic institutions.

A large part of our role is to harness Australian experience in governance, institutional development and political practice. We make frequent use of the expertise available at ANU, but we also draw on the professional experience of senior parliamentary officials as course presenters and facilitators.

If you are interested in learning more about CDI visit www.cdi.edu.au and subscribe to CDI.News.

Feel free to contact me (grant. harrison@anu.edu.au) if you have any questions about CDI and its work.

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procedure more effective), the rules of debate and the adjournment debate, the publication and distribution of Bills, the role of the Public Accounts Committee (including a requirement that the Government respond to PAC reports), and the general rules governing committee proceedings. There was also a number of other discrete yet significant proposals for amendments to other rules. In addition, there are a range of changes aimed at clarifying current rules and grammatical changes proposed.

From a personal perspective the contract was most rewarding. I left with a huge respect for the Rules Committee and, in particular, for its Chairman. The encouragement of the Speaker was critical to any success we achieved and the support from the (then) Acting Clerk of the Maneaba and particularly the

Secretary to the Rules Committee and Maneaba Secretariat staff could not be faulted. In addition, the back-up from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT and the Assembly Secretariat staff on a range of matters contributed significantly to the project.

Now, on a different tack – I have never met so many interesting persons in my life in such a short space of time – for locals – from the staff of the Secretariat (and family) to a community of catholic nuns whose memories and experience went back generations, to expats – from the master of a trawler who was the victim of a mutiny (true!) and to a variety of news people, documentary makers, health professionals, educators and engineers who were undertaking projects in the region. All with most interesting tales to tell. (I now have

an appreciation of how Somerset Maugham gathered his material.)

Regrets? Certainly.

I would have loved to have gone out to the Ouba Islet Resort for a weekend (my heart was set on it) or to the Abemama Atoll and the Monivae Guest house (think Robert Louis Stevenson and George Murdoch) but time did not permit. I did get to tour the WW II ruins on Betio (on the western tip of South Tarawa) – the 8" guns used by the Japanese in the Battle of Tarawa are still remarkably well preserved – they were manufactured by Vickers and sold to Japan during the Russo-Japanese war in the very early years of the 20th Century.

And, finally - The report of the Rules Committee was adopted by the plenum in 2010.

A most rewarding attachment indeed.