

# Solomon Islands Justice Program & The Victorian Bar Intensive Advocacy Skills Workshop

Honiara, Solomon Islands

22 to 26 May 2017

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## ***Background and Introduction***

In November 2016 a group of members of the Victorian Bar together with Judge Chris O’Neill of the County Court and Magistrate Lesley Fleming attended the Legal Training Institute in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, to deliver the 16th Civil and Criminal Advocacy Workshop and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Empowering Women in the Law Workshop.

Both workshops received media coverage and as a result, a request was received from Ms. Angelique Deep, Sectoral Professional Development and Training Adviser,

Law and Justice Sector Program for the Solomon Islands, for a similar program to be delivered to admitted lawyers from the Public Solicitor’s Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

As a result of this request, the Pacific Rim Sub-Committee developed a draft program and revised materials suitable for the teaching of more experienced practitioners.

The Victorian Bar had last delivered training in the Solomon Islands in 2012.

It is important to note the long-standing, albeit interrupted, relationship between the Victorian Bar and the Solomon Islands legal profession. After a period of civil unrest and the collapse of the rule of law in 2003, a number of members of the Victorian Bar provided long-term in-country capacity building and in-line assistance to the Solomon Islands as a part of Australia’s contribution to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). Victorian Bar members included Christopher Ryan QC (now Judge Ryan of the County Court), Patrick Southey (now Magistrate Southey), Robert Barry, Lydia Ruschena, Nicholas Goodenough, and Trevor Wallwork.

A number of Solomon Island legal graduates have completed the Bar Reader’s Course, including Mr Douglas Hou (the current Public Solicitor) and Mr Ronald Talasasa (the current Director of Public Prosecutions). Other Solomon Islander participants in the Bar Readers’ Course have since been appointed to the Bench and taken statutory appointments within the public service. The significance of this training may be considered within the context that both Mr Hou and Mr Talasasa are Constitutional office holders.

### ***Revision of the Teaching Materials***

From February to April 2017 a working group comprising Phillip Corbett QC, Maya Rozner, Sarah Porritt, and Trevor Wallwork developed the teaching materials and program. Ms Wendy Pollock provided considerable administrative support. Of note, the civil and criminal materials were revised so that they were forensically and legally relevant to the Solomon Island context.

The Program was also revised so as to deliver lectures that were more targeted to meeting the particular practice requirements of the Solomon Island practitioners.

A new 'Ethics Workshop' dealing with a number of civil and criminal hypothetical scenarios were developed by Maya Rozner and Trevor Wallwork, and delivered in a 'Workshop Q & A' format.

Maya Rozner and Trevor Wallwork, together with Sarah Porritt developed an 'assisted preparation workshop', where intensive and integrated assistance was provided to the workshop participants to prepare for the civil moots.

An evaluation form was prepared for distribution to the workshop participants at the conclusion of the program.

An assessment form was also used by the trainers to track the comments made to and the progress of the workshop participants. This was a successful initiative developed last year for the LTI graduates in PNG.

### ***The Training Faculty***

Lesley Fleming, Magistrate, very generously and at relatively short notice agreed to participate as an instructor. Her Honour has a long-standing commitment to supporting the development of the Melanesian law and justice sector, which is evidenced by her long involvement with the Legal Training Institute in PNG.

Philip Corbett QC is the Chair of the Pacific Rim Sub-Committee and also of the Health and Wellbeing Committee.

Maya Rozner, Sarah Porritt, and Trevor Wallwork were also selected as instructors. All are accredited advocacy coaches and members of the Pacific Rim Sub-Committee. Trevor Wallwork worked as an advisor at the Public Solicitor's Office in 2008, is admitted in the Solomon Islands, and speaks Pidgin.

Wendy Pollock provided invaluable assistance to the instructors and liaised with the Solomon Islands Law & Justice Program in the development and delivery of it.

## ***Training***

The training group travelled to Honiara on Saturday 20 May 2017 and departed on Sunday 28 May 2017, due to the limited flights to and from Honiara.

Training was conducted to 30 students, from 8.15am until 4.30pm, from Monday 22 May 2017 until Friday 26 May 2017.

## ***Sector Engagement & Relationship Building***

The training faculty met with a number of local stakeholder groups during the course of the week, usually after teaching hours, including:

- A pre-course reception hosted by the Solomon Islands Deputy Public Solicitor at his home.
- A meeting with the Solomon Islands Bar Association, DFAT and members of the Solomon Islands Law & Justice Sector Program staff.
- A meeting with the Head of Program of the Solomon Islands Law & Justice Sector Program.
- A visit to the Central Magistrates' Court, a tour of the new Juvenile Offenders facility and meeting with the Chief Magistrate.
- A visit to and subsequent meeting with members of the Landowners Advocacy and Legal Support Unit of the PSO, and with volunteers to that unit.
- A visit to the offices of the PSO and the DPP.
- A meeting over lunch with the Chief Justice of the Solomon Islands, Sir Albert Palmer; Justice Brown of the High Court, the Chief Magistrate; and representatives of DFAT, the Solomon Islands Law & Justice Sector Program, and the Bar Association.
- A post-course dinner reception by the DFAT First Secretary for the Law and Justice Program, Mr Grant Follett.

## ***Significant Assistance Provided***

All of the members of the teaching faculty noted the significant and ongoing assistance that was provided by DFAT and the Solomon Islands Law & Justice Sector Program to the workshop.

It is noteworthy that the Chief Justice and the Chief Magistrate had agreed to close the Solomon Islands Criminal Courts for the week of the workshop to permit the participants to focus on it. This is a mark of the respect and value of the workshop to Solomon Island lawyers.

Mr Howard Lawry (the Deputy Public Solicitor) and Ms Angelique Deep provided exceptional assistance to the running of the workshop and to the teaching faculty. This included assisting with organising the venue and participants, and to providing transport and support. Their assistance provided a mark of the great regard and mutual respect that was very quickly established between the Solomon Islands Law & Justice Sector and the Victorian Bar.

Ms Deep and Mr and Mrs Lawry also providing assistance in accessing local pharmacies and medical supplies, when all of the teaching faculty succumbed, one by one, to either gastrointestinal or other illnesses, during the course of the week. Mrs Ros Lawry described some form of stomach complaint as “the usual welcome” to the Solomons!

### ***Evaluation of the Training.***

At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants completed an evaluation form.

From the forms, the following themes have emerged:

- A high level of satisfaction with the course structure and program
- A high level of satisfaction with the teaching skills of and experience of the teaching team
- A desire to participate in more regular advocacy training activities and CPD events involving the Victorian Bar
- Acknowledgment that the course was highly effective and much needed

### ***Future Training Opportunities.***

At the conclusion of the workshop, it was apparent that the advocacy skills of the participants had developed significantly over the week. Further, the participants and other stakeholders (DFAT etc) expressed their strong satisfaction with the program and their desire for it to be repeated on either an annual or bi-annual basis. An extract from an email from one of the students to Maya Rozner follows:

*“Hi,*

*Maya it me Cathy the wired one with writing on the hand, haha*

*I am just dropping by to say thank you very much to you and the rest of the Victorian Bar training, I really enjoyed it and I learn a lot from the training, hopefully I will develop further in my carrier with the knowledge and experience gained from the training. It’s great to know you and the others.*

*Hope you all have enjoyed Solomon islands and hope to attend further training in the future.*

*All the best in whatever you do and you have a good day.*

*Kind regards*

*Cathy”*

It is noteworthy that the Solomon Islands is somewhat isolated and that local practitioners have limited access to continuing legal education programs and professional development opportunities. Unlike PNG, there is no Legal Training Institute, and there are no international legal firms (such as in PNG).

From the teaching faculty's meetings with local stakeholders, there is a very strong interest for the Victorian Bar to deliver training in the following areas in the near future:

- Civil and Criminal Advocacy.
- Ethics.
- Environmental Cases (e.g. prosecution of logging beaches).
- An empowering women program, and a related workshop promoting male respect to women.
- Injunctions.
- Negotiation skills and alternative dispute resolution

### ***Conclusion***

The Workshop proved to be a highly effective and well-received advocacy program for the participating lawyers and all involved in the organisation and delivery of it. Whilst the teaching conditions were demanding and very tiring, the teaching faculty is to be commended for their hard work and commitment to the proud tradition of the Victorian Bar in delivering pro bona advocacy training to the legal professions of the South Pacific.

### ***Chairman's Thanks***

My personal thanks and that of the Victorian Bar are extended to Lesley Fleming, Maya Rozner, Trevor Wallwork, Sarah Porritt and Wendy Pollock. I extended formal thanks to the hard work and commitment of Howard Lawry and Angelique Deep during my final address to the participants on the last day of the Workshop but without their contribution and hospitality, the program would not have been such a success.

I also extended thanks on behalf of the teaching team and Victorian Bar to the representatives of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian High Commission and the Legal Justice Sector for the Solomon Islands for their financial and administrative support.

Finally, I once again thank the Chief Justice, the Chief Magistrate, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Public Solicitor for their support for the program and hope that we may continue a long and productive relationship between the Victorian Bar and the legal profession of the Solomon Islands.

Phil Corbett QC  
Trevor Wallwork  
8 June 2017