

## LAND AND ENVIRONMENT COURT OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

**The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Attorney General. What is the latest information on the Land and Environment Court's operational framework?

**The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS:** The recent Asia-Pacific Courts Conference in Singapore held on 4 to 6 October 2010 confirmed that the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales is the first court in the world to fully implement the International Framework for Court Excellence, and in the manner intended by the framework. The Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court, the Hon. Justice Brian Preston, attended the conference and presented a paper narrating how the court had embraced the framework. Within weeks of the launch of the framework in 2008, it was pounced upon by the Land and Environment Court. The court viewed the framework as providing a useful methodology and, indeed, a vehicle for raising its continuing pursuit of court excellence to the next level. In adopting the framework, the court sought to assist in evaluating the utility of the newly developed framework and to energise the court's own evolution.

The court constituted a self-assessment team comprising 21 members of the court—five judges, the eight full-time commissioners, the six acting or part-time commissioners and two registrars. One of the first priorities for the planning committee was to draft and adopt a vision or mission statement expressing the court's fundamental purpose and values. The adopted vision statement is: The court's purpose is to safeguard and maintain the rule of law; equality of all before the law; access to justice, fairness, impartiality and independence in decision-making; processes that are consistently transparent, timely and certain; accountability in its conduct and its use of public resources; and the highest standards of competency and personal integrity of its judges, commissioners and support staff.

The Land and Environment Court's work in implementing the framework attracted considerable interest and acclaim at the conference and it was cited by a number of speakers as a model of an excellent court. Two awards were bestowed recently upon the court in recognition of its leadership in court excellence. The Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration awarded Justice Preston a commendation for his work in implementing the International Framework for Court Excellence and on 18 September 2010 the Asian Environmental and Compliance Network presented Justice Preston with a plaque of appreciation in recognition of his outstanding leadership and commitment in promoting effective environmental adjudication in Asia. The Asian Environmental and Compliance Network is an international organisation of national and sub-national government agencies from Asian countries that are committed to improving compliance and enforcement of environmental laws through regional cooperation and information exchange.

One of the key activities over recent years has been strengthening the capacity of Asian judiciaries for environmental adjudication. Since 2005, the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales has been sharing best practices and lessons learned with the Thai Courts of Justice to strengthen the courts' institutional arrangements and to build judicial capacity. These awards represent both national and international recognition of the Land and Environment Court's excellent work. I congratulate the Land and Environment Court for being the first court in the world to implement the International Framework for Court Excellence and I commend the Chief Judge, the Hon. Justice Brian Preston, for his leadership and foresight and his team of judges, commissioners, registrars and other staff for their hard work in achieving such an outstanding outcome.