

## Report of the President

When we look back at 2007, *The Law Society's Centenary Year*, we can be happy. We solicitors generally enjoyed an upswing in work with a buoyant local economy, while taking time to celebrate with our friends in a host of centenary events.

In this report you will see a comprehensive rundown of our events and developments. We invited distinguished speakers to share wisdom and insight, hosted high-profile events and conferences, took members out to sea on a cruise, staged sporting events with our counterparts from the Mainland and Taiwan, issued a stamp release and published "*Celebrating a Centenary*", a commemorative volume of our history. Our members received a complimentary copy and also enjoyed a waiver of membership fees for 2008 to celebrate the centenary. I wish to add my personal thanks to those who came to Hong Kong to honour us, and to those members and secretariat staff who contributed time and effort selflessly to make all of these events successes. I think The Law Society and all Hong Kong solicitors have gained in standing.

*Centenary* events aside, your Council has been most concerned about two matters that touch on the interests of solicitors. First we have continued to strive for a change of law to allow law firms to organise themselves as limited liability partnerships. Secondly, the council has vigorously and consistently pressed the Administration to revise fees paid to solicitors engaged in criminal legal aid work upwards. It is with regret that I must report that our efforts have not yet borne fruit. On both these matters there is a need for a change of legislation, and we have not met with any satisfaction. We will continue to press our cases for change robustly.



The Law Society also welcomed The Chief Justice's decision to enable solicitors to enjoy the right of audience in our higher courts. We have campaigned for this for several years and look forward to seeing solicitor advocates in action soon after the Department of Justice can put in place an amendment of the legislation to implement the accreditation scheme.

The introduction of a *Practice Direction* to curb money laundering and terrorist financing towards the end of the year will soon change the way that members of the public will interface with solicitors. We have considered the role of lawyers envisaged by the influential Financial Action Task Force in its revised recommendations and come up with what we consider best in the interests of the public and the profession. There are uncertainties among some law firms on how this is to be implemented, and we will do our best to explain our approach. On the other hand we will also educate the public of our new duties and what is required of them.

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On the legal education front, we can be happy to see that the interest in taking up law at university is increasing. This means that we continue to attract some of the best youngsters to our profession. This is important because we can only remain competitive in this global economy if we are able to serve with the highest of standards. The Law Society remains committed to promoting such standards.

2007 was a unique year for local legal education in that there were no mainstream LLB graduates from any of the local universities because they had switched from a three to a four year degree program in 2004. Still we saw over a thousand applicants vying for a place on the Postgraduate Certificate in Laws programme. With fewer than 500 places on offer, many were naturally disappointed. On the one hand we will need to continue ensuring the best advance to our profession without being deterred by over-competition, while on the other there will naturally be concerns about an excessive number of solicitors flooding the market.

After 15 years of dedicated service Mr Patrick Moss retired as Secretary General at the end of 2007. I record my thanks to Mr Moss for his contributions to the work of The Law Society and wish him a happy retirement.

We honour members who have made significant contributions to the work of The Law Society. These members have their names entered on to the Roll of Honour. We have always been careful in the selection process, but to enhance this the Council set up an Honours Committee to make nominations of candidates. We look forward to announcing the deserving candidates before the annual general meeting.

There are a number of Council initiatives which are in the pipeline but will not be implemented before the upcoming annual general meeting. These include a review of the composition and size of the Council, the enhancement of members' interests through revisions to the CPD and RME schemes and promoting the dissemination of knowledge through the establishment of an Academy of Law.

**Lester G. Huang**  
*President*