



VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC MEDICINE

Today, the Institute is still proud to serve the court system, the police, legal fraternity, scientific community, bereaved families and the general public.

Our role is perhaps best summarised in the words of the Head of Council, retired Supreme Court Judge The Honourable John Coldrey QC,

“It is my belief that the justification for the existence of nation states is to enhance the quality of life of their citizens. And the true wealth of any country is found in its people.

That quality of life, that wealth, can be developed and nurtured in many ways: through the elimination of poverty; through the provision of health services; and through the establishment of a system of education which is available to all.

All nations are confronted with the challenges of implementing these programs. But any attempt to enhance the quality of life of a nation’s citizens will ultimately fail unless it is built upon the rule of law – a rule of law that guarantees justice for all without fear or favour. The cornerstone of the rule of law is the criminal justice system.

In any civilised society it is essential that persons who breach laws enacted for the good of all citizens, are brought before the courts and, if found guilty after a fair trial, conducted by an independent judicial officer, are subjected to the sanctions provided by those laws. Only if these conditions are met will confidence in the rule of law be promoted, and the victims of crime receive justice.

These principles seem self-evident but they are by no means self-fulfilling. We must all work at achieving them. In this task the role of the forensic pathologist is absolutely vital. So, too, is the contribution of the forensic medical practitioner; the forensic anthropologist; the forensic odontologist; and the forensic scientist. Each has the capacity to provide the courts with reliable, independent evidence, based upon expertise and experience – evidence untainted by an allegiance to any particular party in criminal proceedings but based solely upon an allegiance to the truth. To present evidence capable of inculpating the guilty, but, equally importantly, evidence capable of exculpating the innocent. This approach is encapsulated in the motto of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine “Veritas omnia vincit” – truth conquers all.

Each of the various experts in the field of forensic medicine is dedicated to finding and presenting the truth – be it in a court room setting, or in identifying the victims of natural disasters such as tsunamis or bushfires, or the man-made disasters of armed conflict. The importance of identifying disaster victims cannot be overemphasised. It is the key to peace of mind, or justice (or both), for the loved ones left behind to grieve.”

I believe that the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine is successfully fulfilling its role and purpose, not only for the benefit of Victorians, but also nationally and internationally.

The Hon John Coldrey, QC
Chairman
VIFM Council

