

Pegasus Scholarship to New Zealand, 2007

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Bell Gully sponsored my time in New Zealand and I spent a fantastic few months working at its main offices in Auckland, primarily doing commercial litigation but with some employment law. My broad civil practice at home was therefore matched as closely as possible. Working within a fused profession certainly gave me good insight into the work of and demands placed upon solicitors here. Amongst other things, I was thrown into a long-standing litigation where Bell Gully acts for the Claimant against the former national electricity provider and Rolls Royce NZ Ltd for the negligent construction of a pulp and paper mill. The time for factual replies to the Defendants' briefs of evidence and the Claimant's experts' briefs of evidence had arisen, and alongside another junior solicitor, I was given the task of producing a key expert's brief. I do still have dreams about the inner workings of a co-generation boiler! This task was met with my initial reaction "what don't they write their own reports?"- seemingly not actually the case. It provided a good lesson in some of the differences between out two jurisdictions but also material for my own future cross-examination of experts.

I spent some time at the Supreme Court in Wellington, which is actually housed in the basement of the High Court whilst the new Supreme Court is being constructed. Justice John McGrath was very warm and welcoming to his office temporarily based in Victoria University's Law Faculty (the former Government buildings and the oldest wooden building in the southern hemisphere, made from beautiful honey coloured Kauri wood). I saw a variety of cases both here and within the other appellate courts in Wellington, concerning issues ranging from judicial review, human rights, criminal conviction appeals, and with a good measure of trusts litigation thrown in. It was interesting to watch the Supreme Court debate the legal test for overturning a jury's verdict, and the all round rejection of England's test of 'lurking doubt' demonstrated its role as the final arbiter of New Zealand's law. Whilst there I noticed that Court Number 1 in the High Court a rather familiar and renascent of Old England- its panels were shipped over from England in the 1970s after the Old Bailey had a re-fit.

I was treated to dinner at Justice McGrath's home alongside the Chief Justice Sian Elias, and the new Chair of the Independent Police Conduct Authority, Justice Lowell Goddard, a day after the Supreme Court had allowed an appeal by TVNZ to show a police video of a Defendant admitting murder, which had not been allowed into evidence at his trial where he was acquitted. The case certainly made for interesting discussion and revealed the sophistication of New Zealand's law in these spheres.

The wealth and abundance of outdoor pursuits and adventurous activities is plainly obvious in New Zealand, and I certainly did not let the opportunity to partake in one or two pass me by. Although I feel rather guilty about my personal contribution to the world's excessive carbon emissions, I spent most weekends flying all over the country, and can confidently say that I truly saw as much of the place as possible. I sea kayaked , volcano trekked, river surfed, boated, wine tasted, and bridge climbed my way around the two islands. My most memorable experience however would be doing a tandem sky dive from 12,000 feet above the southern alps near Christchurch. In true kiwi lingo- it was awesome.

I possess very fond memories of my trip and was struck by both the interest in the Pegasus scheme and the desire to maintain the exchange for the positive benefit it has for all involved.