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Editorial: Mediation spotlight on Hobart

'No mediator is an island' but in early May 2006 one island will be full of mediators.

From the frontier city of Darwin in the far north, this year's National Mediation Conference travels far south to the cosy hub of Hobart on the island of Tasmania. From 2–5 May the biennial conference promises to be a true festival of ideas with something for everyone.

If one were to create a list of the top 10 Australian themes in mediation, they would include the Howard Government's workplace changes as they relate to private mediation, national standards and mediator accreditation issues, family law reform and online dispute resolution. The conference program acknowledges and reflects the significance of these issues. Speakers are drawn from diverse professional disciplines and geographical locations to address issues of local and global importance.

Prominent themes include family mediation, workplace dispute resolution, and innovations in ADR processes such as conflict coaching and neuro-linguistic programming. A post conference workshop on narrative mediation is also being offered. The growing links between mediation research and practice are highlighted in the diversity of papers delivering empirical research outcomes and the reflective practitioner presentations drawing on experience to develop theories. The latest advances in online mediation will come to the conference from North America – most appropriately through an online link. Mediation will be considered from an Islamic perspective in one session and through mindful and peaceful

lenses in another.

A specific focus of the conference will be on mediator accreditation. There will be a report back on the outcome of the country-wide consultation process on a national standard for mediator accreditation. Insights from accreditation approaches in different jurisdictions will also be presented. At the end of the conference, delegates will have the opportunity to put forward their views on the nature of the proposal and resolve how this issue should be carried forward by the mediation community.

With most of the presentations offered in four parallel streams, the biggest challenge for delegates will be deciding what *not* to attend. In anticipation of the abundance of intellectual curiosity that will descend on the conference, the organising committee has wisely allocated longer than usual lunch breaks to facilitate eating, chatting and buying a subscription to the *ADR Bulletin*.

The National Mediation Conference provides a space for academics to preach to practitioners, for practitioners to tell tall tales from the field, and for diverse cultures and professions to grow richer through shared storytelling and PowerPoint slides. It is envisaged that conference papers will be available online after the event. So if you want to know more, visit the website at <www.mediationconference.com.au>. ●

Nadja Alexander, Editorial Panel.