



GAA

Gemmological Association of Australia

Press Release

March 2007

WORLD JEWELLERY CONFEDERATION PRESIDENT VISITING AUSTRALIA

Key players in Australia's jewellery and gem industries are gearing up for some major discussions when the President of CIBJO, the World Jewellery Confederation, Dr Gaetano Cavalieri arrives in Australia on Tuesday March 28.

Dr Cavalieri's visit follows hot on the heels of CIBJO's 2007 Congress in Cape Town, South Africa entitled *Delivering A Responsible and Sustainable Global Jewellery Industry*, which was attended by hundreds of delegates from 35 countries and was opened by South Africa's Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka.

CIBJO's role is to promote industry-wide responsible business practices and economic sustainability in countries where raw materials are produced. CIBJO is the only organisation in the jewellery sector ever to receive official consultative status with the United Nations essentially making it the United Nations of the diamond, gemstone and jewellery industry.

During his Australian visit, co-sponsored by two of Australia's largest jewellery associations, the Gemmological Association of Australia (GAA) and the Jewellers Association of Australia (JAA), Dr Cavalieri will be addressing a number of important industry issues to association members in Sydney and Melbourne. The GAA and JAA are both members of CIBJO.

He will also be giving the keynote address at the National Opal Symposium to be held in Cooper Pedy on April 3 to 5.

Top of the list on Dr Cavalieri's agenda is helping the industry address the looming crisis facing the Australian national stone, the opal. Problems include a massive fall in production, a mix of geo-political and economic developments and rising costs of fuel.

One of Australia's leading opal authorities and retailer, Andrew Cody has been involved in organising a discussion paper at the opal symposium and raising concern about the future of industry.

Over the last decade there has been a major decline in the opal industry with production at the lowest level in almost 40 years.

The Lightning Ridge Miners Association (LRMA) reported that production of black opal is only 30 per cent of what it was in the 1990s. Department of Primary Industries and Energy (NSW) reported that registered claims fell from 2,542 in 1993-1994 to 700 in 2005-2006. This represents a 70 per cent drop in just over a decade. The South Australian Opal Miners Association also reports a worrying decline over the last 20 years similar to the LRMA estimate.

“In fact Cooper Pedy had the dubious honour of being the fastest declining town in Australia for opal production in 2006,” says Andrew. “National Opal Miners Association has been created to provide one voice to which I believe would be the perfect vehicle to manage a renewed scientific research program and help stimulate new discoveries of opal fields.”

Executive Director of the Centre for Customer Strategy and symposium speaker Ross Honeywill believes the future success for the opal industry will be directly linked to the changing consumer landscape. “The image and brand essence of the Australian opal is confused. Consumer perception of the opal product is heavily influenced by tourist momentos and commercial jewellery,” he says.

Dr Cavalieri believes that Australia’s national gemstone can be saved. “It’s a beautiful product with a potentially long production mining life that can take Australia well into the next century.”

Another topic of importance to both consumers and the industry to be discussed in Melbourne and Sydney is the reintroduction of precious metal standards for Australian produced gold, silver and platinum. The standards, which were dropped in the 1970s, are about to be reintroduced following a move by the Australian Jewellery and Gemstone Industry Council in February this year.

Dr Cavalieri will also be discussing sustainable development of the local jewellery industry, the setting of international standards for corporate social responsibility and the correct terminology of gemstones (there are a lot of issues around synthetic diamonds which, when not properly and fully disclosed can create havoc in the diamond jewellery business).

“There’s certainly a lot on the table for discussion and some major issues coming under the microscope,” says GAA Federal President, Grant Hamid. “It is important that Australia starts to tackle some of these issues to ensure the future prosperity of the industry and also to keep pace with international standards and training.”

For more information, or to organise an interview with Dr. Cavalieri, please phone GAA Publicist Lisa Bowman on 0419 386 729.

Websites: www.cibjo.org www.gem.org.au www.opalsymposium.com.au

About the GAA

Gemmology is the scientific study and identification of gemstones. The GAA was established in 1945 as a non-profit organisation to educate the jewellery industry and consumers about gemstones. The GAA offers a wide range of high quality courses, which are recognised worldwide.