



Garth Thornton

When Garth Thornton arrived in Tanzania in 1958 and assumed responsibility for legislative drafting, he found no adequate training materials—so he created his own. These early perceptions of need ultimately resulted in his *Legislative Drafting* text, now in its fourth edition and regarded for four decades among Commonwealth countries as an essential resource for parliamentary counsel.

Garth's career in legislative drafting took him thereafter to Kenya, where he prepared legislative drafts for the East African Legislative Assembly. Later, as Crown Counsel to the Hong Kong Government, he was seconded to service in Tanzania, where he served as Chief Parliamentary Counsel and Counsel to the Speaker. In 1970 he was appointed Crown Solicitor of Hong Kong and served in 1973-79 as Solicitor General. Garth moved to Perth, Australia in 1979 and served for 10 years as Chief Parliamentary Counsel in Western Australia. Since returning to New Zealand in 1990, Garth has continued his career in legislative drafting as a consultant to The Law Commission of New Zealand and the Government of Western Australia.

Garth first joined us as a speaker at the 1996 International Legislative Drafting Institute, when he spoke on "Technical Aspects of Drafting." In his remarks about drafting "Definitions," Garth related his own experience as a young drafter, laboring mightily over the proper wording of a particularly troublesome definition. Finally, after much thought, many false starts, and numerous revisions, he arrived at a satisfactory work product and proudly placed it into the bill. Much later, after the measure had been enacted, he realized to his profound embarrassment that his carefully crafted definition defined a term that appeared nowhere in the Act! Garth told this tale in support of his advice to "Draft definitions last," but we might also treasure it as a commentary about humility as a virtue in the legislative drafting enterprise.

We're very pleased that Garth and Judith Thornton were able to join us in New Orleans during June 15-26, 2009 for this 15th edition of the International Legislative Drafting Institute, which honors Garth's lifetime of service and his enduring contributions in the realm of legislative drafting. Read about Garth's ["Reflections on a Career in Legislative Drafting"](#) on our website.