

R.I.P Digby

Kluwer Mediation Blog
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[Geoff Sharp \(Brick Court Chambers / Clifton Chambers\)](#)

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About the time Charlie Irvine was penning his recent post about mediator assistants, a mediation colleague here in New Zealand was saying farewell to his own assistant as he cradled him in his arms.

You see, my mate Paul Hutchison, one of New Zealand's foremost mediators, is blind and Digby ("the biggest dog in the world") was integral to his practice for many years - some even said Digby should be the one sitting at the head of the table, instead of under it.

Digby was diagnosed with an aggressive carcinoma a couple of months ago. He worked and stole food right to the end last week.

Digby was famous for getting Paul to out of the way spots by train, bus and aeroplane - nothing phased Digby.

Paul always said that Digby was the perfect icebreaker - I guess when you have a 50 kg dog in the room, it's going to attract some comment, even in the most tense situations.

Paul often identified the most disengaged person in the room and would then ask them to take Digby down in the lift and find some grass so he could do his thing. Invariably, they would arrive back in the room in better shape than when they left.

Paul talks about the time when someone got out of line, stood up and started aggressively moving around the mediation table towards the other party. Without any prompting, Digby quickly rose from under the table and let out a menacing low growl - after a break the perpetrator apologised profusely and shortly afterwards the mediation got to Yes.

So *Digby, mediator assistant and Paul's best mate*, rest in peace in that big grass patch in the sky.