

Admission reforms

An easier means of obtaining reciprocal admission is being promoted by the Law Council's constituent law societies and Bar associations.

I attended a meeting in early July which was called by the President of the Law Council. At the same time, similar steps were being taken by the Standing Committee of Attorneys General (see story page 2) engendered by the warm winds of micro economic reform.

The Chief Justice has advised me that "paper admissions" will be introduced once the necessary regulations are implemented.

The thorny issue in the debate appears to be admission to the separate bars of Queensland and New South Wales for those

who practise in an amalgam in their home states.

The other major discussion is an attempt to standardise professional indemnity insurance.

In that regard we are worse than the railways -- there are five separate schemes.

With work being done frequently across state boundaries, there is a compelling logic to having one scheme and thereby avoiding contribution claims between funds.

Minets convened a conference, which I attended, where those two issues were ventilated.

John Dowd QC, formerly Attorney-General in New South Wales, spoke of a bill which he had introduced to the NSW Parliament.

The bill will cap liability at about \$3 million.

The US experience is that 25 per cent of partners' income is lost to professional insurance premiums.

Whilst our figures have not reached those levels, the risk seems to be increasing and claims paid have always increased over the previous year's payments.

Congratulations to those involved through the long gestation period of the Community Legal Service.

Much time and effort has been expended and the Attorney-General has vigorously assisted the committee.

Hopefully, a permanent home will be found in the suburbs in due course.

The finals of the school mooting competition will be held on Friday August 30 in Court 1.

The Chief Justice will be presiding.

I wish to thank all those who gave their time in coaching and adjudicating the various participant teams.

NCA looks at money crime

In December last year the federal Attorney-General issued the National Crime Authority with a reference to investigate money laundering in Australia.

The Acting Chairman of the NCA, GJ Cusack QC, has written to the Society seeking assistance from the legal profession.

"The Authority has defined money laundering as the activity of legitimising illegally earned proceeds," Mr Cusack said.

"It is a process rather than an isolated act."

Mr Cusack said the inquiry is not investigating people or organisations for the purposes of laying charges.

Rather, he said, the NCA will be examining ways in which money laundering methods might be combated through legislative amendment and/or administrative change.

"Our research to day has concentrated on obtaining background information and specific case study material from law enforcement agencies in Australia and overseas.

"Assessment of that material has indicated that certain professional groups appear vulnerable to exploitation by those seeking to launder profits obtained from illegal activity. "The legal profession is one of the groups so identified," he said.

Mr Cusack said the NCA is looking for views on the extent to which the legal profession may be utilised by money launderers; details of any suspected instances of money laundering; the problems inherent in identifying such activity; details of any guidelines or procedures the profession has developed to minimise such activity, and; the profession's views on the need for legislative and/or administrative reform in the area. He said the NCA is also seeking views on current legislation, "how it could be improved and what if any imperfections exist which may allow money laundering activities."

Interested practitioners should contact Chief Superintendent Jim Keegan of the NCAs Melbourne office.