

Work to continue

I hope that my term as President will see the conclusion of some major issues presently facing the Law Society and the profession.

Many of them are already well advanced.

The issues include, for example, a review and/or overhaul of both the *Legal Practitioners Act* and the Professional Conduct Rules, the fruition of the Legal Aid Contingency Fund, mutual recognition and national uniformity of and between the states and territories, and the TPC inquiry into the legal profession.

As members will be aware, a significant amount of work has been done in respect of amendments to the Act and the Conduct Rules.

A trust deed to allow a \$200,000 seedling grant from the Public Purposes Trust for the Legal Aid Contingency Fund has been approved by the

Attorney-General and has been executed by Council.

What remains now is for the Attorney-General to table the Deed during the next parliamentary sittings.

Hopefully, the fund, will be operative by October or November (see story page 1).

The issues of mutual recognition and national uniformity continue to be discussed at a variety of levels which include the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG), the Law Council of Australia and conferences of law societies.

Mutual recognition is nearer reality than national uniformity. The latter is far more complex and requires a great deal more work.

The TPC inquiry into the legal profession, whilst stretching resources, requires a submission from each law society and the Law Council simply because practices within the profession vary from state to state (which reinforces the desirability of national uniformity).

An issue which is less prominent is limited liability in the professions.

Some work has already been done in the NT in respect of this, and I propose to explore its pros and cons and, if necessary, lobby the appropriate organisations for required legislative changes.

I would like to continue the practice of putting a public face on the Society.

The Society's image has improved enormously over the last couple of years, and this is primarily because of work put in with both the media and the public.

That work obviously includes co-ordinated projects such as Law Week and the Ansett Inter-School Mock Trial Competition. But public awareness is increased by the production and distribution of brochures and the efficiency with which inquiries and complaints are handled by the Society.

CLE is an area constantly requiring

attention, although the programme established by Leanne Robertson this year is excellent. We hope to be able to continue it.

The hoary old argument of compulsory CLE continues.

It is difficult to justify compulsory CLE in the NT on economic grounds since we have so few practitioners scattered over so great a distance.

However, with the public and governments expecting even better service from lawyers, compulsory CLE may become inevitable.

I understand the Northern Territory Law Reports will shortly be hot off the presses, and on behalf of the Society offer my congratulations to Mildren J and his Council of Law Reporting for getting a set of authorised NT reports underway in such a short time.

The amendments to the *Land and Business Agents Act* allowing conveyancing agents remain a matter of concern (see story, page 3).

The Society will be writing to the Attorney-General urging a series of urgent amendments to the Act.

Finally, I would like to thank John Stirk for the work he has done in the past two years.

Changes to the Society under John's presidency have been dynamic, and there is no doubt that the profession is better informed and serviced as a result.

John will remain on Council as Immediate Past President, and is the Society's delegate on the Law Council of Australia, so his input will continue to be considerable.

BALANCE

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