

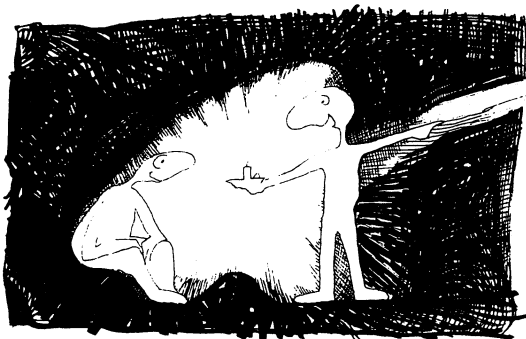
# BALANCE

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## DCLS officially opened

### FREE COMMUNITY LEGAL ADVICE



Darwin Community Legal Service Inc, PO Box 4305 Darwin NT 0801

The Darwin Community Legal Service was officially opened by Senator Bob Collins last month.

It was the culmination of an enormous effort by a group of Darwin solicitors and that work was acknowledged by the Attorney-General, Daryl Manzie, Senator Collins and Jenny Hardy, the convenor of the DCLS Management Committee. Senator Collins said the fact that 55 Darwin solicitors had volunteered to work with the DCLS was recognition of how desperately needed the service was and of the profession's commitment to access to justice for middle Australia.

He pledged to continue to seek federal government assistance so the DCLS could expand its operations.

The Attorney-General, Daryl Manzie, also pledged his support and said he looked forward to the day when a similar service would be available to the residents of Alice Springs.

The Co-ordinator of the Service, Gordon Renouf, said that several projects, including an NT law handbook, were already underway, and that the Service hoped to be able to provide a 008 number for people outside the Darwin area as soon as it was possible to do so.

Mr Renouf also said the Service would produce a variety of information packages to assist with public education on legal issues. He said the Service has expanded from one free legal advice session per week to three since September last year.

## Family law & AAT fees rolled

The federal government's proposed fees for family law and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal were blocked by the Coalition and the Democrats in the Senate during the last parliamentary sittings.

A total of six fees were recommended by the Estimates Review Committee and were scheduled to be effective from 1 October last year but were deferred following strong opposition from a variety of quarters, including Family Court judges.

The President of the Law Society,

John Stirk, welcomed the blocking of the fees.

Mr Stirk said the proposed fees seriously called into question the federal government's commitment to cost of justice issues.

The Coalition did not support the Democrats blocking of proposed High Court and Federal Court fees.

Those fees will be implemented.

The President of the Law Council of Australia, David Miles, said the LCA believed the fees should not be imposed in any courts and expressed

disappointment that the Coalition did not support that view.

Nevertheless, he said the Council welcomed the blocking of the Family Court and Administrative Appeals Tribunal fees, two areas in which the fees would have had a particularly severe impact.

"The Law Council maintains its view that it is hypocritical of the government to increase the cost of justice in this way at the same time it is expressing concern about it," Mr Miles said.