

Law Week looming

Law Week will be upon us very shortly and will feature some new initiatives this year.

For the first time, we will be going Territory-wide with the implementation of *Lawline* and, with the welcome assistance of ABC Regional Radio, a series of *Lawtalks* which will be broadcast throughout the Territory.

Free legal advice booths are planned for Darwin, Alice Springs and, for the first time, Katherine.

A comprehensive Law Week kit will be sent to all primary and secondary schools and will include a legal and paralegal careers video which the Society has made in conjunction with the NT Police and the University.

We will release a series of public awareness/information pamphlets (see story p3) on

which we hope to build considerably in future.

Our Law Week guest is Justice Doug Drummond who will visit both Darwin and Alice Springs.

I urge all practitioners to assist where they can and to get behind the Society in its efforts to raise the profile of the profession.

Again the issue of the GST and its effect on legal aid is brewing, this time with an ambiguous statement from the Shadow Treasurer, Peter Reith.

Mr Reith issued a media release which said legal aid commissions would be eligible for a rebate in the form of an input tax credit.

Exactly what this means is unclear. Again, I have written to Senator Tambling seeking clarification on the matter of the commissions, and asking whether this rebate extends to work briefed out by the commissions.

The Darwin Community Legal Service was officially opened by Senator Bob Collins on behalf of the Minister for Justice, Michael Tate, recently.

The service has 55 volunteer solicitors on its books which is a credit to the local profession, particularly given we only number 200-odd for the whole of the Territory.

It is also a credit to Jenny Hardy and her Management Committee who have worked long and hard to get the service up and running. Their dedication and commitment has paid dividends for many people in the Darwin community.

I join with the Attorney-General, Daryl Manzie, in looking forward to the extension of the DCLS to take in Alice Springs.

Congratulations to all those involved.

And, finally, Mr Justice Nader has retired from the bench of the Supreme Court after 10 years.

Nader J brought great expertise in the area of crime to the NT bench.

He will be remembered for his robust parrying with members of the media and his robust view of counsel (depending on the day, either prosecution or defence counsel would be ducking for cover).

Nader J has been a keen supporter of the development of criminal law in the Northern Territory in accordance with acceptable principle and, within proper judicial constraints, has voiced constructive criticism of the NT Criminal Code.

He was chairman of the NT Criminal Code Review Committee and his expertise in that reform process will be missed.

He was also able to turn his hand to write balanced judgments in other diverse areas of the law and had a very good facility for ascertaining facts, sometimes in very difficult cases such as *Howard v Ah Toy*.

A couple of his more memorable judgments were *Prielj v Mannison* and the *Our Lady of Fatima Procession* case.

In *Jabanardi v R* he directed that a proper mental facility be established for a long-term mentally ill Aboriginal person and, whilst the appeal was of limited success, it had the political effect of some form of psychiatric facility being made available for prisoners with mental illness.

I take this opportunity of wishing Mr Justice Nader and his family well for the future.

The profession hopes a replacement judge will be quickly appointed.

BALANCE

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