

Unhappy start to the new year

We have been saddened recently by the loss of two practitioners who had a long association with the Northern Territory.

Toni Thursfield lost his battle with cancer at the Peter MacCallum Institute in Melbourne last month.

Thursfield will be remembered as a softly spoken, entirely understated British wit who was dedicated to his work and his workmates.

He arrived in the Northern Territory from Hong Kong in 1972 and worked in a number of local firms.

Following self-government, Thursfield joined the newly-formed Executive and Policy division of the Department of Law.

In 1985 Thursfield and his wife, Toni Kelly, went to Hong Kong

where he was Senior Crown Counsel with the Attorney-General's department.

They returned to the Darwin in 1988 and Thursfield spent another two years in E&P.

Thursfield was due to take up a position, once again, with the Attorney-General's department in Hong Kong when he was diagnosed with cancer and went to Melbourne for treatment. The Society takes this opportunity to extend condolences to Toni.

I understand there will be a memorial service for Thursfield in a few weeks time.

The Society will keep members informed.

Another loss which will sadden many is that of Murray Huntington of Sly and Weigall in Sydney.

Murray had been making forays into the Northern Territory since 1983. He was an insolvency specialist and appeared for Price Waterhouse in the long-running Day and Dent saga.

Murray died on 19 January.

Again, the Society extends its condolences to his wife, Margaret, and family.

This news has meant an extremely unhappy entry to the new year. We can only hope the year improves as time goes on.

The Society has received an excellent short video produced by the Queensland Law Society about their Law Claims Scheme.

Geoff Mann, the Chairman of the Professional Indemnity Insurance Monitoring Committee said: "Where care is missing, claims will result."

That Society's recurrent claims tend to be failure to institute a common law claim following a successful Worker's Compensation claim, and actions

arising out of a solicitor representing both sides in a vendor/purchaser or borrower/lender transaction.

The Society's Claims department imposes a higher insurance levy on solicitors who have had more than one claim for failure to observe the time limit in personal injury cases and claims arising out of acting for both parties in a conveyance in three years. In only one year, claims paid out by insurers and the Law Society rose from \$400,000 to \$8 million.

The statistics on which firms tend to be claim-free and which firms tend to be claim-ridden are interesting.

The video is presented by former ABC TV news presenter, Bruce Paige, and is about 10 minutes long.

I urge all practitioners to watch it.

Anyone interested should contact the Society.

The video will be made available to member firms and individuals at no cost.

The NT Law Reform Committee is addressing the issue of alternate dispute resolution and has invited submissions from practitioners.

The Committee has divided the project into four areas:

- (1) civil disputes, including commercial disputes and disputes relating to human rights;
- (2) disputes involving possible infringements of the criminal law;
- (3) family and other domestic disputes, and;
- (4) disputes between Aborigines occurring in Aboriginal communities.

The Committee is also looking for practitioners to join subcommittees in the respective areas.

Copies of discussion papers are available. Inquiries should be directed to Meg Bollen, Executive Officer, NTLRC, GPO Box 1535 Darwin, phone 897932.