

BALANCE

MAY 1993

The Official Publication of the Law Society of the Northern Territory

Happy 25th birthday!

It is pure coincidence that during Law Week 1993, the Law Society of the Northern Territory will turn 25.

On 7 May our Society will have made the long haul from infancy to what is, hopefully, level-headed adulthood.

Richard Keller, a partner in the then firm of Ward Keller and Rorrison, founded the Law Society when he called a meeting in the Supreme Court library on 7 May 1968.

Twenty-five practitioners holding proxies for five others attended and resolved to form the Law Society of the Northern Territory.

Ian Barker QC is responsible for our constitution guaranteeing representation for Alice Springs lawyers.

He was holding proxies for his colleagues, Paul Everingham and Brian Martin.

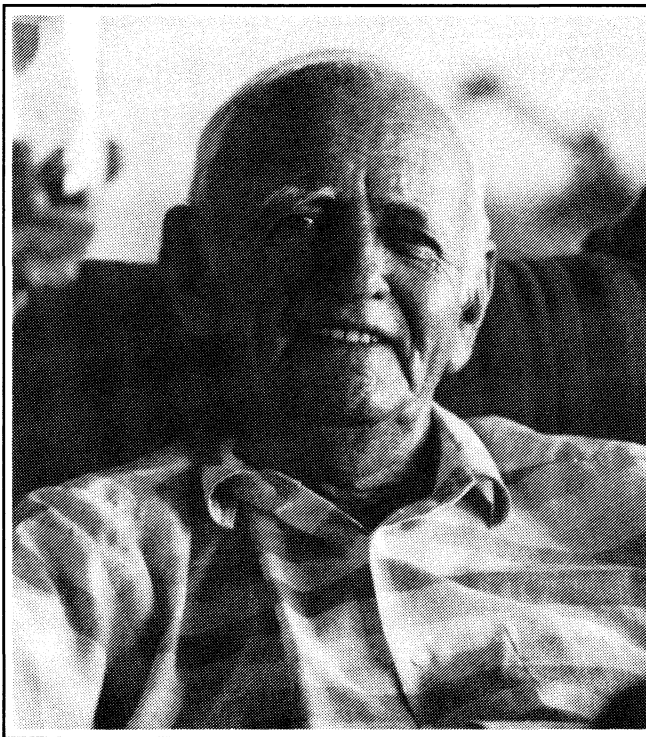
Everingham went on to become the Northern Territory's first Chief Minister following self-government in 1978, and Brian Martin was welcomed as the Territory's new Chief Justice in March this year.

Elected to office at that meeting were: Ron Withnall (dec) (President), Alec Rorrison (Vice-President), Geoff James then of Waters James

O'Neill, now of Mildrens (Secretary), Penelope Holmes, Ward Keller & Rorrison (Treasurer).

It is hardly surprising that Ian Barker became the Alice Springs representative.

The remaining Councillors were:



Foundation President, Ron Withnall

George Cridland of Cridland & Bauer, Peter Massie, the Crown Law Office's Prosecutor, Richard Keller and Jim Williams, the Crown Law Officer.

The fledgling Society first had to deal with a practitioner who had been charged with, and was eventually

gaoled for, fraud.

There was not a great deal the Society could do because it had no official recognition, and there was no such animal as the *Legal Practitioners Act*.

What did exist was the *Legal Practitioners Ordinance 1965* (repealed in 1974), but that legislation did not recognise the Law Society or any disciplinary functions.

Fortunately, the practitioner made an application of his own volition to the Court to be struck from the roll and declared bankrupt prior to his conviction in 1967.

He is understood to be living on the central coast of NSW and making his living from real estate.

Early issues of concern were the availability and provision (or lack thereof) of legal aid, the availability and provision of legislation, judgments, transcripts and law reports, and law reform (the Society's law reform committee caused a furore when in 1972 it publicly and

controversially supported abolition of the death penalty).

The Society also had a series of ongoing spats with the then Attorney-General, Ivor Greenwood, over the way the Territory was administered *continued on page 3*.

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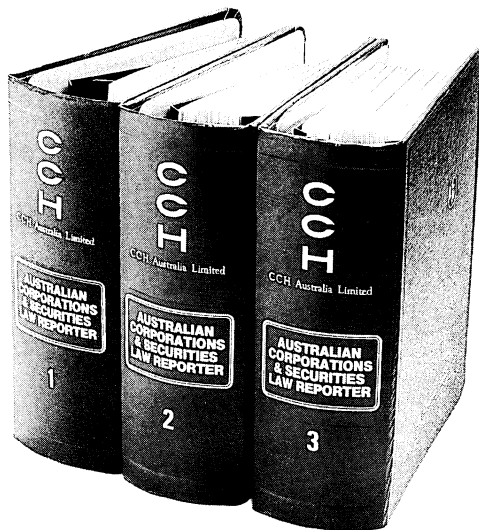
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Happy birthday to our Society

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and neglected by Canberra.

Indeed, our learned Solicitor-General, Tom Pauling QC, who was then a private practitioner, spoke at what was supposed to be a friendly dinner for Senator Greenwood.

He succinctly said: "I quote from a sign now at the 16-mile and which says: *This is not a rubbish dump. Bugger off.*"

Fortunately, the Northern Territory now has a comprehensive legal aid system, a structured law reform process and its own authorised reports.

It is also fortunate that the Society has not had to deal with an issue as emotional as capital punishment in its recent history.

For a Councillor's recollection of how it was, see our interview with Geoff James on pages 6-8 of this issue.

Rogue's Gallery

The Society's *Rogue's Gallery* (roll of Presidents) looks like this:

Ron Withnall (1968-69)

Alec Rorrison (1969-70)

Ian Barker (1970-73)

Dean Mildren (1973-75)

Paul Everingham (1975-77)

Nerolie Withnall (1977-79)

Dean Mildren (1979-81)

Terry Coulehan (1981-83)

Hugh Bradley (1983-85)

Richard Giles (1985-87)

Graham Hiley (1987-88)

Kim Graves (1988-89)

Ian Briggs (1989-90)

John Stirk (1990-92) and

Neville Henwood (1992-present).