

# Improving accessibility to Australia's laws

Proposals to improve the quality and accessibility of law have been agreed by the Federal Government as part of broader reforms affecting business regulation.

Federal Attorney-General Michael Lavarch made the announcement earlier this month.

The White Paper on Employment, Industry and Regional Development implements recommendations from the Administrative Review Council Report No 35 - "Rule Making by Commonwealth Agencies" tabled on 6 May 1992.

"As part of the package, an electronic register of existing and future delegated legislation will be established," Mr Lavarch said.

"For the first time, there will be ready access to all delegated legislative requirements.

"The register will help reveal outdated or unnecessary regulation, duplication and overlapping requirements to ensure that all regulations remain appropriate and up-to-date.

"Law revision units will be established in the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and the Office of Legislative Drafting to rewrite the necessary legislation and regulation in simpler language.

"A consultation process will be introduced for changes to all delegated legislation affecting business.

"Government agencies will provide affected parties with a Legislative Instrument Proposal, which will analyse the need for the regulation, costs and benefits, and alternative ways of achieving the objectives."

In other news from the Attorney-General's Department, the Corporations Law Simplification Program will be expanded as part of broader reforms affecting business regulations. The program will receive an extra \$1.2 million for three years starting in

1994/95, as part of measures announced in the White Paper on Employment, Industry and Regional Development.

"The program targets overly complex and intrusive legal regimes which are costly to business and the community," Mr Lavarch said.

"Part of the additional funding will be used to increase private sector involvement in the program, including through enhanced consultation.

"Proposals to simplify share buy-backs, corporate structure for small business and register keeping requirements have already been released for public comment.

"These proposals will be dealt with in the first Bill to simplify the Law.

"Share capital rules, annual reporting provisions, company names and company meetings are also priority areas for reform."

## PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA Senate Standing Committee of Privileges **Parliamentary Privileges Amendment (Enforcement of Lawful Orders) Bill 1994**

On 12 May 1994 the Senate referred to the Standing Committee of Privileges, the Parliamentary Privileges Amendment (Enforcement of Lawful Orders) Bill 1994 for inquiry and report.

The Bill provides for:

- (i) the enforcement by the Federal Court of the lawful orders of the Senate and its committees, particularly orders for the production of information and documents,
- (ii) avoidance of any imposition of a penalty on a public servant for acting under the directions of a minister, and
- (iii) the adjudication and determination by the Court of any claim of executive privilege or public interest immunity, through the examination of the disputed evidence or documents by the Court.

The Committee is specifically required by the Senate to give particular attention to the effectiveness of the Bill in providing a solution to problems arising from claims of executive privilege or public interest immunity before the Senate and its committees. The Committee invites any interested persons or organisations wishing to express views on matters relating to this inquiry to lodge a submission with:

The Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee of Privileges  
The Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

by Wednesday 22 June 1994. The Committee would be grateful if computer disc copy (MS DOS or Macintosh format) could be provided with submissions where possible. Invitations to appear before the Committee may be issued on the basis of written submissions received. The Committee usually makes public the written statements made to it. Persons making submissions must not make them public without the approval of the Committee. Further information, including the full terms of reference, the bill and associated documents, can be obtained by contacting the Committee Secretary (tel (06) 277 3360, fax (06) 277 3199).