

Government announces restructure of Copyright Review Committee

The Federal Minister for Justice, Duncan Kerr, has announced the new Chair and members of the Copyright Law Review Committee.

Mr Kerr said the primary task of the committee was to advise the government on how Australia's copyright laws could be updated to keep pace with continuing technological advancement well into the 21st Century.

This is of vital importance for the future of Australia's copyright creators and industries.

Chair of the Australian Copyright Council, Peter Banki, has been appointed Chair.

Mr Kerr said the other members of the committee were highly respected professionals with differing expertise in copyright issues.

Committee members have been selected principally to undertake a comprehensive review of the Copyright Act.

They are:

** Dr Andrew Christie, a senior lecturer in law at the University of Melbourne and an expert in computer and information law;

** Malcolm Colless, Director of News Limited, who has considerable experience in the relationship of copyright and the media and who was a member of the Copyright Convergence Group;

** Victoria Rubensohn, who has more than 20 years of experience in the communications field and served as Chair of the Copyright Convergence Group; and

** Rhonda Smith, who has been appointed as the committee's economics and trade expert and is a senior lecturer in the Economics Department of the University of Melbourne.

Mr Kerr also announced the establishment of an expert group, as part of the committee, to provide special input relating to the interests of copyright creators.

Members of the expert group are:
** Libby Baulch, Executive Officer of the Australian Copyright Council;

** Anne Fitzgerald, senior lecturer in law at the University of Tasmania and Co-ordinator of the Tasmanian Arts Law Advice Service; and

** Nicholas Hasluck, a well-known literary author and Deputy Chairman of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

"As a group, the committee has a wealth of copyright and communications knowledge," Mr Kerr said.

"The government expects it to quickly position Australia at the forefront of necessary international reform of copyright legislation."

Mr Kerr thanked those who had expressed interest in serving on the committee, following the announcement in November, 1993 that appointments to the committee would be advertised.

He also thanked the outgoing Chair, Justice Sheppard, and members for their invaluable contributions to copyright policy development in recent years.

UK transfer test for Australian lawyers

Qualified Australian lawyers can qualify as solicitors of the Supreme Court of England and Wales after passing an aptitude test.

The Qualified Lawyers' Transfer Test (QLTT) is a conversion test that enables lawyers qualified in jurisdictions outside England and Wales to qualify as solicitors in that jurisdiction. It is run by The College of Law of England (through the QLTT Board) as agent of The Law Society of England and Wales.

Tests are presently held twice a year (spring and autumn) in London, Hong Kong and Toronto. Lawyers qualified in Australia are required to sit only one of the four sections of the test — Professional Conduct and Accounts. They are generally exempt from Property, Litigation and Principles of Common Law.

A separate department of The College of Law provides instruction for the QLTT in the form of distance learning packages for all sections of the test and a lecture program for Property, Litigation and Professional Conduct and Accounts. Traditionally lectures have been held only in London but this year a four-day revision program will be held in New York in conjunction with the Practising Law Institute of New York. Subject to demand, the college could run a similar program in Australia.

All tutors are full-time staff at the college and are trained as solicitors or barristers. The college is accredited by The Council of Accreditation of Correspondence Courses in the United Kingdom (UK).

Since the QLTT was established in 1991, 676 Australian lawyers have travelled to one of these countries to sit the test.

Federal Court of Australia: registrar retires

Attorney-General Michael Lavarch has announced the retirement of Jim Howard as Registrar of the Federal Court of Australia.

Mr Howard's appointment expired at the end of December, 1994.

He failed to seek re-appointment.

Mr Howard has been the Registrar of the Federal Court since it began operation in 1977.

Prior to becoming Registrar, he spent 11 years working as a solicitor in the then Commonwealth Crown Solicitor's Office in Sydney.

Mr Howard will take up private practice this year.

The Attorney-General praised Mr Howard's contribution to the development of the court.

Mr Lavarch also wished Mr Howard further success in his new career.