

NT Attorney-General's Discussion Paper No. 2 – *Legal Costs*

The second in a series of discussion papers generated by the government's review of the Legal Practitioners' Act has recently been released by the Attorney-General, Mr Burke.

This paper deals with the issue of legal costs and topics covered include the current situation in the Northern Territory, issues arising, NSW and Victorian models and other proposals for reform are invited to debate the issues raised in the paper.

The Attorney-General has invited the legal profession and the general public to comment on the paper. Comment should be sent to the Director of the Northern Territory Attorney-General's Department and those wishing to comment are invited to do so by December 24 1996.

A copy of the discussion paper may be obtained from the Law Society and further information is available from Lyn Douglas in the Attorney-General's Department on telephone 8999 7354.

Consumer Credit Code

The uniform Consumer Credit Code commenced nationally on November 1 1996. The Office of Consumer Affairs and Trading is the body responsible for administering the Code in the Northern Territory.

Mechanisms have been put into place to ensure uniformity throughout states and territories and in July 1996, the Uniform Consumer Credit Consultancy Management Committee (UCCCMC) was established. This is made up of representatives of all jurisdictions and has the responsibility to monitor and coordinate all actions pertaining to the Code. The NT representative is Donald Hudson, Deputy Commissioner, Policy & Community Affairs (tel: 8999 6142, fax: 8999 6327).

Difficulties in the operation of the Code will be referred to the UCCCMC Chair, Rod Stowe, NSW Dept of Fair Trading (tel: 02 985 0336, fax: 02 635 5247).

In order to ensure maximum input from the Northern Territory credit industry, a local advisory committee is to be established which will allow for information exchange on the operation of the Code.

Migration Agents' Registration Scheme

Representatives of the Law Council of Australia met with the Secretary to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Ms Helen Williams recently to discuss the recent proposal of the Minister, Mr Philip Ruddock, to replace the existing Migration Agents' Registration Scheme with some form of self regulatory scheme.

A departmental task force is currently completing a review of the existing scheme and a paper for public comment is expected to be released shortly.

The President of the LCA, Peter Short, reiterated the current line of the LCA and its constituent bodies that practising lawyers should be excluded from registration the Migration Agents' Registration Scheme on the basis that the legal profession is probably the most tightly regulated profession in Australia and it was considered an unjustified and unnecessary duplication for lawyers to register as migration agents, both in terms of costs involved and regulatory schemes.

LCA representatives also convinced the Secretary that current complaint and disciplinary systems within the legal profession itself were adequate to deal with problems relating to individual lawyer migration agents.

In addition, the Law Council offered to provide details of self regulation in the legal profession to assist the Department in formulating its regulatory system for migration agents.

The meeting ended with a commitment from the Department to continue consultation with the profession in this matter.

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