

TEWLS

— New legal advice
service for women —

Volunteers needed

A new community legal centre specialising in services for women has recently been established in Darwin.

The Top End Women's Legal Service is part of a network of women's legal services established around Australia as part of the previous Commonwealth government's Justice State-ment initiative.

The Top End Women's Legal Service has employed one solicitor/coordinator and will employ other workers in the near future.

The service is currently planning its services for the community which will include:

- free legal advice and referral clinics. One clinic each week will operate as an outreach service outside the Darwin area.
- some limited casework; where women do not have access to any other form of legal assistance.
- community legal education
- lobbying and campaigning on legal issues affecting women.

The service aims to fill the gaps where other existing legal services are not meeting the needs of women.

TEWLS will concentrate on providing community legal education on issues relevant to women, particularly in rural and remote areas. The goal is to increase the awareness of Aboriginal women's of legal options available to them and how to obtain legal assistance.

Workers from TEWLS will visit communities in the Top End to provide community education and to increase the access that women have to the other services provided by TEWLS.

The legal advice and referral clinic will operate as a free drop-in service staffed by TEWLS workers and volunteers. The assistance and commitment of volunteers will be vital for its success.

TEWLS is currently looking for volunteers for the legal advice clinics. Any

women interested in obtaining more information about being a volunteer or who would like to become a member of TEWLS should contact the coordinator Kate Halliday on tel: 89413394 or 89419989 (after 26 June).

The outreach advice service will operate on a weekday morning and will give women an opportunity to attend a legal advice session closer to home and gain access to other resources such as DSS, the Housing Commission and medical services at the same time.

TEWLS will also be involved in law reform activity in areas which impact adversely on women or discriminate against women. This not only includes substantive laws but also the way laws are enforced and legal process.

The recent investigation and findings by the NT Ombudsman into police handling of a victim of sexual assault highlights one area where the legal system is not meeting the needs of women. In this case a woman who complained to police about a serious sexual assault was detained by in police custody for about 14 hours for minor offences before being released by the court.

The Ombudsman's investigation found that most of the woman's complaints about the police treatment of her were substantiated. It appears from the nature of some of the findings of the Ombudsman that police did not comply with some of their own rules in relation to the investigation of complaints of sexual assault. Police did not treat the situation as a human crisis as required by the rules, according to the Ombudsman.

TEWLS is concerned about the findings of the Ombudsman in this case and would like improvements in the way that police approach such cases in the future. Women who make complaints of sexual assault to police should be given information by police about services available to them such as counselling and legal services. Moreover police should facilitate the woman's contact with services during the investigation of the sexual assault.

Such reforms would go some way to ensuring that in future women who make such complaints of sexual assault to police receive consistent treatment from police in accordance with their own rules.

Kate Halliday

ATO —

Compensation & Personal Injury PCD

The Law Society holds for comment by 2 August, a Pre-Ruling Consultative Document (PCD 10) entitled *Income Tax: how are compensation or damages payments for personal wrong and injury treated under sub-section 25 (1) and paragraphs 26 (e) and 26 (j) of the income tax Assessment Act 1963.*

Interested parties should contact the Law Society or the ATO to see a copy of this.

Fiji Law

Society Convention

The Fiji Law Society advises that its convention will take place on 20 - 22 September 1996. Topics to be discussed will include human rights, fair trading, bankruptcy and liquidation and children's law.

The Fiji Law Society invites members of Australian law societies to participate and is looking for suitable speakers/presenters from Australia and New Zealand.

The Society is working on a very limited budget and is unable to offer travelling expenses to speakers, but is suggested that Australian lawyers may wish to combine the Convention with a holiday in Fiji.

For further details, contact the Law Society of the NT or the the Convention Committee Secretary M K Narsey (tel: (679) 302 004 or fax: (679) 302 904.

Crossword Answers

Teresias No 1 "The Smell of Fear"

Answers:

Across

1. barrister
6. realc
7. ER
8. aerial
10. Ali
12. OEL
13. chlamydia
14. ebol
15. lung
18. symposium

Down

1. breaches
2. aer
3. RLA
4. ice
5. tried
9. royals
11. bloom
16. UI
17. NU