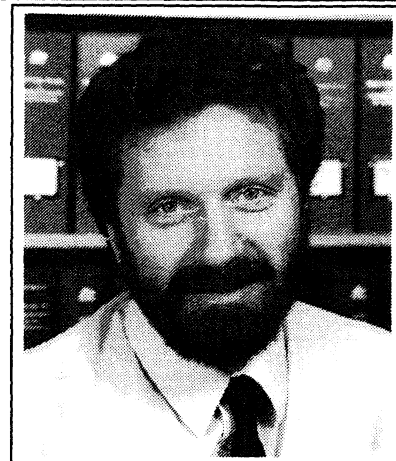


# Structure of the Legal Profession – Views Sought



As foreshadowed by the Chief Minister at the opening of the Society's offices in April, the Attorney-General has now released for comment a discussion paper entitled *Structure of the Legal Profession*.

This is the third and final paper in a series which has provided the centre for the Northern Territory Government's review of the legal profession – the previous two being *Complaints Against Lawyers*, issued in October 1995 and *Legal Costs*, issued in October 1996.

The views expressed in the paper are not necessarily those of the government but are intended to stimulate public discussion and as such require response from the legal fraternity.

The issues covered in this paper are wide-ranging, but affect every member of the profession. They include an introduction of minimum standards of employment and minimum rates of pay; issues affecting the fused profession including a suggestion that all practitioners may accept instructions, sue directly for fees and practise within partnerships; and discussion on the abandonment of appointment of Queen's Counsel in favour of a scheme to recognise seniority among legal practitioners. In addition, the question of permitting multidisciplinary partnerships and sharing of receipts is raised, as well as proposals covering the ability of practitioners to hold themselves out as 'specialists'.

All the issues covered in the dis-

cussion paper impact directly on the movement of the legal profession into the next century and it is most important that members of the profession take some time to clarify their own thoughts on the direction of their chosen profession.

A copy of the paper may be obtained from the Secretariat and I ask that responses to the paper are channelled through the Law Society in order that a cohesive response to the paper is received from the profession.

Also of importance to the profession is the forthcoming 30th Annual Australian Legal Convention, to be held this year at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Melbourne from 18 to 21 September.

All members will have received information about the convention in the May edition of *Australian Lawyer*. As you are aware, the Law Society of the Northern Territory is a constituent member of the Law Council and a supporter of the Legal Convention.

Whilst the convention will be of interest and benefit to all practitioners, members practising in the areas of family law, federal litigation, business law and criminal law will find a range of featured sessions aimed directly at these areas of practice. In addition there will be sessions on topics of legal and political moment, including the republican debate, the native title debate and changes to employment law which will both inform and entertain.

As a continuing legal education exercise, the convention represents ex-

cellent value for money and will provide a quality and variety of papers and presenters not easily come by elsewhere.

The 30th Annual Australian Legal Convention also provides a fine opportunity to network with colleagues (including legal consumers) from interstate and I encourage all practitioners to attend.

The Society's Annual General Meeting is now set for Tuesday 2 September and I urge members to give serious consideration to running for Council. I remind practitioners that an active interest in, and support of, the Council of the Law Society is the best way to ensure that your views are represented in the national context of the legal profession in an era that promises change, modernisation and rationalisation. The Northern Territory's profession has a voice which is heard nationally at the Law Council of Australia and all those with a vested interest in the future of the legal profession should consider ensuring that that interest is well represented.



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