

From the Profession

British Statistics

Great Britain

The following statistics were reported in *The Mail* of May 25.

England and Wales boast 12 Law Lords, 36 Justices of Appeals, 96 High Court Judges, 557 Circuit Judges, 332 District Judges, 913 Recorders and 348 Assistant Recorders.

There are 87,081 solicitors and 8935 self-employed barristers in England and Wales.

£1.5 billion was the net expenditure on legal aid in 1996.

A Law Lord earns a salary of £127,680, a Circuit Judge £79,669 and a Recorder is paid £380 per day.

England and Wales have 89 full-time Stipendiary Magistrates, 98 Acting Stipendiary Magistrates and 30,374 unpaid lay magistrates.

8576 law students graduated 1995 and 8,000 more completed a one-year Legal Practice Course, designed to convert other degrees into law degrees.

Source: Infoline, June 1997

Dedication to the Profession

Canada

Benchers of the Law Society of Alberta (the equivalent to Council members of the Law Society of the NT) can expect to commit 400 - 500 hours per year to Law Society business, according to "baby bencher", Pat Rowbotham, QC.

Ms Rowbotham says that "first term" Benchers serve on five Law Society committees and attend five 2 - 3 day convocations and a number of hearings throughout their term.

Fellow Bencher, Philip Lister, QC, espouses the view that "as lawyers we have been given much by our society (a fine education, a respected position in the community) and maybe we owe not just the community but the profession something in return. Helping govern the Law Society is one way to do this."

Source: Law Society of Alberta Benchers' Advisory, August 1997

Conveyancing Debate in NZ

New Zealand

The New Zealand profession is currently involved in debate about the future of conveyancing as it considers the possibility of moving that area of practice out of the exclusive domain of lawyers.

Law Talk 482 (4 August 1997) carries the text of a speech by the President of the NZ Law Society, Ian Haynes in which he addresses many issues in this matter as they affect the legal profession. Among these is the notion that lawyers' fees are responsible for the high cost associated with buying and selling real estate.

Mr Haynes, in defence of the profession, produces some interesting statistics which indicate clearly that legal fees are wrongly perceived as the main expense.

The average sale price of a house in Auckland is \$235,000 and the real estate agent's commission on this sale would be about \$9,800. Since 1985, real estate agent's commissions have risen from 2.9% of the sale price to 4.2% in 1997. In contrast, lawyers' fees have decreased from 0.34% of sale price to 0.21%. The current portion of costs received by the lawyer in a conveyancing transaction is 9%, as opposed to 91% paid in real estate agents' commission.

Mr Haynes points out that the NZ government's desire to decrease the cost of buying and selling a house would not necessarily be achieved by opening up the conveyancing area but more realistically by looking at the statutory regulation of the real estate industry.

He points to the example of Scotland where solicitors are the traditional agents of choice and to England where deregulation of the real estate industry has seen a successful movement of solicitors into the real estate business where they are able to offer clients professional service throughout the transaction.

He further suggests that using a solicitor for real estate transactions automatically provides the public with the protective mechanisms already in place within the legal profession.

He advances his argument by suggesting that a lawyer, offering a one-stop shop for real estate purchase is a cheaper alternative to a real estate agent as his work in this regard is charged by way of fees rather than commission.

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Balance is published 11 times per year by the Law Society of the Northern Territory. All contributions, letters and enquiries to the Editor, *Balance*, Law Society of the Northern Territory, GPO Box 2388, DARWIN NT 0801.

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