

Judge Convicted

New Zealand

February *LawTalk* from New Zealand reports on the conviction of former District Court Judge, Robert Heskith, for fraud.

Chief District Court Judge, Ron Young, said that the conviction, whilst a blow to the image of the District Court "is confirmation that [all people], no matter what their circumstances, are equal before the law and can expect to be held accountable for their actions."

"The community has a right to expect that those who sit in judgment upon others are beyond reproach", he said.

Judge Young also said that Mr Heskith, having accepted that he was guilty, had done the proper thing in resigning from the bench.

A Changing Profession

Northern Ireland

Recently elected President of the Law Society of Northern Ireland, Mr Alastair Rankin, expressed his views on the changing face of the legal profession in Northern Ireland which would seem equally relevant in Australia.

"As a profession we are under constant pressure to improve the services we offer and to reduce costs. We rely on our clients and our own individual expertise. Many aspects of our work are under attack, whether it be Will writers and banks muscling in on our traditional probate expertise, accountants muscling in on our corporate work or lawyers from other jurisdictions endeavouring to cream off the icing from the cake. We must all strive to improve the standards we set ourselves. We expect the best from others so we should be prepared to give of our best to others," said Mr Rankin at the Society's Annual Dinner.

He continued, "There is a worry that

accountants are taking more and more of our work and are becoming the first port-of-call for our business clients. Solicitors are no longer considered men and women of affairs who can give general, not necessarily legal, advice on business matters. I have discussed this with many accountants. Their response has been that solicitors were never men of affairs. Maybe I am not old enough to be able to contradict their assertion but I am sure the more senior members present will agree with me that solicitors used to be the first port-of-call for businessmen before a visit to the accountant. It would now appear that the global liberalisation of the legal profession is now a real if not an immediate prospect. We must prepare for it and not do a Canute in front of the tide."

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Queensland Law Foundation and IBM Pioneer E-Business Solution

Queensland lawyers are embracing the latest electronic business technology, thanks to a state-wide networked computer service designed specifically for the legal industry.

THEMIS (The Electronic Members' Information Service) has been developed jointly by IBM and the Queensland Law Foundation.

Market research indicates that about 80 per cent of the state's lawyers are likely to go on-line with the service.

THEMIS offers immediate on-line access, via Lotus Notes, to an extensive range of legal information providing the opportunity to communicate with colleagues on important issues.

"In the increasingly competitive market for legal services, THEMIS provides legal practitioners with fast and affordable access to up-to-date legal research material and

electronic commerce and communication," said THEMIS Project Manager, Joanne Sherman.

IBM's comprehensive services, data-

base hosting and facilities management will underpin the service as it develops. One of the world's largest data networks, the IBM Global Network, will connect subscribers to a reliable, scalable and secure infrastructure to access real time information and share expertise and skills. IBM servers will power the service, providing the ability to scale up with the capacity requirements from PC Servers all the way to RS/6000 SP Servers.

Queensland Law President Hugh Grant said, "Cost-effective and instantaneous access to justice is now assured to all Queensland legal firms, both small and large, regional and metropolitan."



Hugh Grant, QLS President, Joanne Sherman, Queensland Law Foundation Technology Services and David Usher, Queensland State Manager- IBM