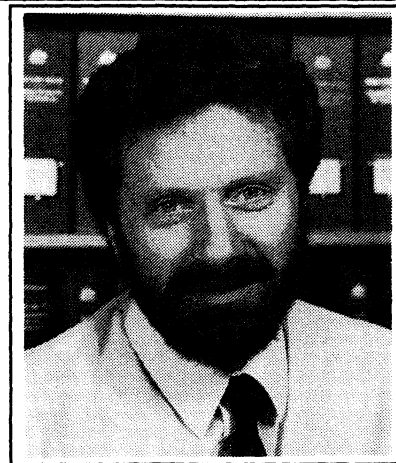


Practitioners' Views Sought



It was pleasing to see such a large gathering of practitioners and other guests at the official opening of the Law Society's new premises. In excess of 150 invitees indicated they would attend and the large crowd and a rough count confirmed that the number of guests who attended was not far from that figure.

In his speech the Chief Minister, the Hon Shane Stone indicated plans for further changes to the profession and urged all practitioners to become members of the Society if they wanted their views to be heard.

I agree with the Chief Minister's sentiment and urge all practitioners to support the Society by not only becoming members but by joining in activities such as membership of committees, the Mock Trials, Law Week and contributions to *Balance*.

The Attorney-General, the Hon Denis Burke, notified the Society of the intention to amend both the *Small Claims Act* and the *Local Court Act*.

Of greatest concern was the proposal to increase the civil jurisdiction of the Local Court from \$40,000 to \$100,000 without any consideration being given to concerns which have been raised in the past in respect of the less than satisfactory arrangements which

exist for throughput of civil matters. This criticism is not of the members of the Bench, of the management or the staff.

In my letter to the Attorney-General I recommended that a number of matters should be addressed prior to any further increase in the jurisdiction of the Local Court. These matters include the priority accorded civil matters, the facilities and structures of the Court, the time frame for matters being dealt with and the current fee scale. This list of matters is not comprehensive and I am endeavouring to arrange a meeting to discuss our further concerns. If practitioners would like other matters raised please send details to the Secretariat.

I thank practitioners for their response to the survey on the issue of the rights of audience of articulated clerks in inferior courts in the Territory. These responses are being collated and the details will be published in the near future.

On the national front I report that the reference of the Australian Law Reform Commission on the Review of the Adversarial System of Litigation has resulted in the Commission publishing an issues paper suggesting that the culture of legal professionals contributes to excessive costs, delays, over-serv-

icing, lack of accountability and an unduly confrontational approach to resolving disputes. The Acting President of the Law Council of Australia has labelled the statements of the Chairman of the Commission as gratuitously offensive and unsubstantiated. The reference is a significant exercise and members who wish to become more involved may get a copy of the paper from the Secretariat.

I also report that the Commonwealth Attorney-General has recently delivered a paper on *Competition Law and the Legal Profession*. I commend the paper to you not because I necessarily support the Attorney's observations (indeed there are some with which I disagree) but because of its contribution to debate on our profession given the significant external pressures currently being brought to bear.



Have you joined the Qantas deal?

Contact the Law Society for further details.