

“Thinking Again About Courts in a Liberal Democracy”

Professor Stephen Parker, Secretary and Treasurer of the Judicial Conference of Australia will give the Martin Kriewaldt Memorial Address at the Supreme Court in Darwin on Thursday 13 August 1998

Professor Parker is Professor of Law at Griffith University in Queensland and was Dean of the Faculty from 1994 until 1996. He is admitted to practice as a solicitor in England, a barrister and solicitor in the ACT and a barrister in Queensland.

Professor Parker teaches civil procedure, legal practice and civil law and is currently working on a research project on the nature of judicial independence for the Judicial Conference of Australia - an association of some 280 judges and magistrates. In addition, he is also preparing a related research project for the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration.

As his topic for the address, Professor Parker has chosen *Thinking Again About Courts in a Liberal Democracy*.

The role and operation of courts in Australia have come under considerable scrutiny in recent times. Superior Courts are criticised for ignoring supposed community sentiment in their decision-making. The procedures in all courts are said to be more outdated and add to expense and delay. Furthermore, courts are said to lack a ‘consumer orientation’.

Professor Parker argues in this

address that the debate has become so simplistic that it is incapable of generating sensible proposal for reform. Critics have become strident to the point of sloganeering, and this has invited sweeping rebuttals by defend-

ers of the courts. The situation is that public confidence in the courts, which is vital to their effective operation, is imperilled.

Professor Parker argues that public discussion of the work of our courts must be better informed by an understanding of the complex tasks that they

perform. Courts are multi-faceted civic organisations that operate in political, social and economic contexts. A way must be found to protect fundamental and unchanging values whilst also moving with the times. Professor Parker suggests that this will only come about if courts and the community improve the ways in which they communicate with each other. Drawing on research into the court systems of several countries, he makes recommendations for changes which preserve the independence of judicial officers whilst helping to promote public confidence in courts as civic institutions that can respond to modern needs.

The Martin Kriewaldt Address is delivered biennially and previous speakers have included Lord Oliver of Aylmerton, NSW Chief Justice Gleeson (as he then was) and Justice Roderick Meagher of the NSW Court of Appeal.



Libby Rose

The Law Society Farewells Janet... and Welcomes... Libby Rose

Janet Neville has left the Society for “greener pastures”. Our new Member Services Officer is Libby Rose. Libby joins the Law Society with public relations and desktop publishing experience.

Janet worked as the Member Services Officer for over three years. On behalf of the Law Society and its members, we wish Janet all the very best and welcome Libby to the Society.

Martin Kriewaldt Memorial Address

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