

Darwin Lawyers Assist in Katherine

A group of volunteer Darwin lawyers travelled to Katherine in mid-February to provide assistance to residents in the form of advice on insurance and related matters.

The trip, an initiative of the NT Legal Aid Commission, and supported by the Law Society was generally considered to be a success as over 80 people attended to gather advice on insurance matters after the Katherine floods.

Local lawyers Catherine Spurr of Halfpenny's, David Storey of Ward Keller, Ken Parish of Parish's and sole practitioners Marcus Spazzapan and Richard Crane were joined by the Director of NTLAC, Richard Coates, Sally Rush also of NTLAC and Darwin barrister Pat McIntyre at the Civic Centre in Katherine to provide legal advice at a day-long

session.

The meeting began with a public forum which aimed to address general questions regarding insurance matters and progressed to single face-to-face sessions where Katherine residents were able to get advice about their own particular problems. Katherine lawyers Michael Whelan and Graham Cole, both of whom lost their homes and in Michael's case, much of his business, were in attendance for part of the meeting, as was Katherine Womens' Information and Legal Services practitioner, Susan Gilmour.

The Darwin contingent returned that evening with a clearer picture of what further legal assistance would be required. Generally, it was felt that this could be provided by NTLAC as an adjunct to their daily operation.

Constitutional Convention Towards Statehood

The following letter was received by the President and is reprinted here for the information of members:

Dear Steve

The next step towards Territory Statehood is the establishment of a Constitutional Convention in 1998.

The Convention will consider a name for our State and also a Constitution.

It will be made up of 45 delegates, comprising 27 elected and 18 appointed members.

Industry organisations, which includes professional and business associations will elect 4 members to the Convention.

The manner and process of election will be largely determined by the various organisations in consultation with government.

This process will ensure that the views of industry, business and professional organisations in the Northern Territory are well represented through their elected representatives.

I will be writing to you again in the near future providing you with further information on the Convention, which is to be chaired by Hon Austin Asche AC QC, and the detailed process whereby members of your organisation can nominate for election and participate in this important step towards our constitutional development. Delegates to the Convention will need to be generally available in the months of march and April.

I would be most appreciative if you would pass this information on to your members of your organisation and I stress that **you will be electing your own delegates** to ensure that the diverse views and interests of Territorians are well represented.

Yours faithfully

Shane L Stone.

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