

# Ferae naturae

By Maria Ceresa, Executive Officer.

LURKING in the depths of the Federal Court is a bloke called Bruce Phillips. He is not an officer of the court, but serves justice in ways that would have been unimaginable a few years ago. He's an affable chap, always on hand, and good to talk to. He's there to assist, and even guide, journalists in the workings of the court. He helps identify background research on topics of justice, keeps people up to date with decisions that are coming down, and offers guidance on the importance of decisions and where they fit in with precedents within and beyond the jurisdiction of the Federal Court. It is a distinctly democratic approach to improving public access to the workings of the justice system.

If the Chief Justice is successful in his endeavours to open up the Supreme Court and the work of the judiciary to a greater understanding by the public, a similar position might soon be functioning in the Territory. Speaking at the Criminal Lawyers Association conference in Bali, Chief Justice Martin made the point that, with the abandonment of the traditional role of defending the judiciary by Attorneys general, it was becoming necessary for the judiciary itself to explain its role and decisions in a more direct fashion to the public.

He recognised that judges, in the main, were unversed in the arcane ways of the media, but needed resources to cope with the need to keep the public informed. The employment of a media officer by the court, if the Attorney makes the resources available, will do much for the reputation of the Court, and indeed boost the standing of the Northern Territory as a progressive jurisdiction.

The unprecedented national media focus on the Criminal Lawyers' Association conference says much about the growing stature of the event in the national legal calendar. With current and former High Court judges on the speakers list, local and interstate leaders in the criminal law game, along with a record attendance, it is difficult to think of another "home grown" event organised by any other Territory profession that has achieved such success in such a short time. For this reason, much of this edition of *Balance*, focuses on the Bali event. Beyond things criminal was the Alice Springs chapter of the National Legal Services Market seminar. Attended by 10 practitioners, the president and the society's public relations officer Sam Kilvert, the successful discussion marks



Maria Ceresa takes a break on a zebra chair at the Gala dinner, Criminal Lawyers Conference, Bali 1999.

the beginning of work for the society's Legal Structure Committee that now has the chore of fashioning the views of the profession into a working document. And finally, congratulations to the Katherine A team for taking out this year's mock trial competition. Thanks to all the participants, coaches and adjudicators. This competition, funded by the Public Purposes Trust and the NT Education Department together with sponsorship from Qantas, does much to demystify and educate the young in our community on the working of our court system.

## Lawyers urged to visit East Timor for August ballot

The Australia East Timor International Project (the Project) is urgently seeking expressions of interest from individuals in Australia wishing to contribute to the conduct of a free and fair registration and ballot process in East Timor in August. The period leading up to the consultation in East Timor on whether the Timorese accept or reject an autonomy package with Indonesia is a crucial time. There are a number of groups going over in this period, and lawyers are encouraged to join with them.

The Project places a high priority on applicants - (a) having either fluent Indonesian or Portuguese (b) self-funding capacity (c) being medically fit (d) being prepared to sign a Code of Conduct and work in East Timor in a neutral and impartial manner, and (e) availability to spend an

absolute minimum of two weeks in East Timor from 21 July.

The Project is open to expressions of interest from any part of Australia. Individuals with relevant skills in teaching, academic, government, legal and election monitoring circles are particularly encouraged to make contact. Please state briefly why you should be considered for this Project, with particular reference to language skills.

On receipt of your expression of interest, you will be forwarded (a) a Project backgrounder (b) terms of reference and conditions (c) the UN Code of Conduct, accreditation procedures and an application form.

The Australia East Timor International Volunteers Project is an independent initiative being conducted under the

auspices of the Victorian Local Government Association.

Expressions of interest should be directed to:

Stancea Vichie, Coordinator  
Australia East Timor International  
Volunteers Project.  
P.O. Box 1326, Collingwood, Vic 3066  
Tel (03) 9417 6711  
Fax (03) 9416 2746

email: aetivp@minihub.org  
Application forms and details are available from the Law Society of the NT.

Further information can also be obtained from:

East Timor International Support Centre  
PO Box 651, Nightcliff, Darwin NT 0814,  
Australia <http://www.easttimor.com>  
[etio@ozemail.com.au](mailto:etio@ozemail.com.au)