

# FERAE NATURAE

I am your resident “wild thing” for the next six months. I have been sitting in for Maria Ceresa, your permanent “wild thing” since Monday October 2.

I must confess to feeling a little guilty about it all. The reason for this guilt is that Maria worked diligently away until Friday September 28 and then promptly had her baby on my first day in the “wild thing” pen. As you can imagine I am mortified that I did not come a little sooner so that she at least she could have had a little rest before the full weight of parenthood came crashing down upon her. Seriously, heartiest congratulations to Maria and Chips on the birth of their daughter Chiara. Maria will be back in the pen in April.

It seems only fair that I should tell you a little about myself. Basically I came to Alice Springs in 1986 to recover from a failed romance, meaning to stay for the next year and stayed for the next seven, mainly as the principal legal officer at CAALAS. In 1993 I succumbed to the lure of the sophisticated Tropics and came to Darwin. A brief period at the bar at James Muirhead Chambers followed

and then some time doing family law at the Legal Aid Commission before my appointment as the Registrar of the Family Court in 1998. So in any bar room argument about whether the Top End or the Centre has the better (or worse) climate I can claim some expertise, having spent an equal amount in both. Incidentally I think both places have a superb climate and are wonderful places to live — just in different ways. That’s diplomacy for you.

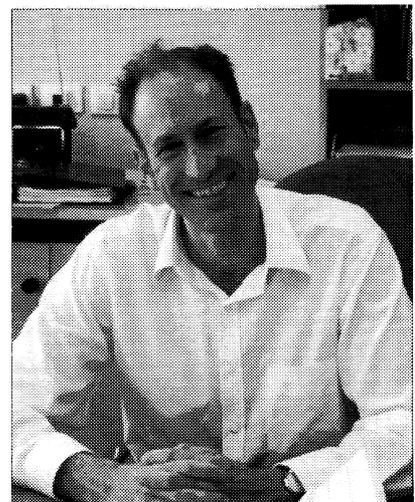
I am looking forward to being your temporary executive officer for the next six months. In particular I am looking forward to meeting all those members of the Society I do not as yet know. It goes without saying that my door is always open to all concerns which members may have.

Between jobs I took the opportunity to catch up on some long over due body maintenance. I went to the dentist. In the waiting room I flicked through one of those magazines which men deny reading but which they cannot resist when available. I mean one of those thick glossy women’s magazines. After my horoscope — was July 1995 really such a bad month for cautious Crabs to change careers — the article which caught my eye was headed *Stress — The Hidden Epidemic — Ten Warning Signs that Could Save Your Life*.

It is easy to bandy about cliches about the stressful times in which we live but stress is a very serious topic.

As you dear readers know, the practice of the law is a particular stressful occupation and getting more so with each technological innovation supposedly designed to ease our lot in life. I speak particularly about the insidious mobile which means that each of us can be tracked down practically any where.

Lawyers have deadlines to meet. Grumpy magistrates to present cases before. Clients who are demanding and unforgiving of human foibles. The burdens of legal practice



Stewart Brown, Executive Officer

can be hard to bear and at times can get on top of even the most organised and competent of legal practitioners. I am sure each of us has felt on occasions like throwing the phone through the window or better still walking out the door of the office and never coming back. There is a high proportion of sole practitioners in the Northern Territory. On them, without the benefit of professional colleagues on whom to unburden, the pressures of professional life can hang heavy.

It is all too easy to take a macho approach to stress and say “if you can’t stand the heat — get out of the kitchen.”

Some stress is good for us. Too much is bad and can adversely effect our work, our clients and our relationships. The Law Society of Victoria has recognised the problems of stress in legal practice and has instituted Law Care, a counselling service designed to help solicitors deal with personal problems particularly the stress that comes from work.

Duncan McConnel is looking at instituting a similar scheme for members of the Northern Territory Law Society through the auspices of the Law Society of South Australia. I am sure that he would welcome any feedback from readers about this important topic.

Members may have ideas on ways to alleviate the stresses of professional life. If so I would gratefully receive them and pass them on to Duncan.

I have no doubt, as Maria asked of you in her last column, that you will treat me kindly.



Darwin’s Roma Bar in Cavenagh Street announced the news of baby Chiara’s birth with this large poster in its window.