

Interschool Mock Trial Competition

Students from St Johns College prepare for the preliminary round of the Interschool Mock Trial Competition with teacher Ms Marita Fitzpatrick. Nine schools in the Territory will compete for the 2000 trophy at the grand final in June.



Students from nine high schools around the Territory dressed and performed in character for the preliminary round of what promises to be a challenging interschool mock trial competition for 2000.

The competition, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in the Territory last year, provides students with a better understanding of the law in the community.

Schools in Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin are out to reclaim the mock trial trophy won by Katherine High in 1999.

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Judging by the number of inquiries from interstate in the last few weeks, aspects of legal administration in the Northern Territory has excited considerable national interest. This was no less so at the recent conference held by the Law Institute of Victoria, *The Future of the Legal Profession 2010*. From these inquiries, it is clear that there is considerable disquiet, at the national level, about the integrity of the relationship between the executive and judiciary in the Northern Territory.

But the above mentioned state-based conference also raised issues that must be considered by the profession in the NT. No longer can any of us regard ourselves as practitioners, isolated by the arbitrary nature of state or territory borders. We are increasingly a national profession - and must look for national solutions at the same time as we support each other's more provincially-based problems.

More than 150 legal practitioners from Victoria and interstate attended the *Future of the Profession* conference to identify likely futures for legal practice; consider the effects of major environmental changes such as technology, globalisation, competition policy and deregulation and their effects on legal practice; and to identify the services legal practitioners may

require from their professional organisations.

Put simply the conference centred on two key questions:

- 1 How will lawyers be practising in 2010?
- 2 Will a lawyer's life be worth living?

The purpose of the conference was to identify what is happening to legal practice in 2000 and what the consequences were for the Law Institute of Victoria. The conference further identified ways the professional body could remain relevant to its members.

The most significant trends facing lawyers in the future included:

- a requirement that lawyers deliver a range of services, not just legal services.
- that electronic technology was changing legal practice but not in a uniform fashion across the profession.
- the working week is becoming longer, client expectations of lawyers increasing and lawyers are becoming more dissatisfied with their profession.
- the trend towards large firms with international links is pushing medium sized firms out of the market place.
- large firms perceive state based bodies as irrelevant, leading to



Maria Ceresa, Executive Officer

depletion in resources and failure to provide practitioners with existing services.

- people are less able to afford the justice system with lawyers expected to supply increased pro bono work to ensure justice is delivered.

The merits of self regulation were also examined at a plenary session, focussing on both the level of dissatisfaction with complaints handling procedures in Victoria - where there is majority support for self regulation rather than handing the issue to the Ombudsman - and the extremely unpopular proposals in Queensland to hand these processes entirely to the courts. The Queensland Law Society now regards the NSW Law Society's complaints handling system as a preferred approach. The pros and cons of these systems have obvious resonances with similar discussions in the Northern Territory.

The Law Society Northern Territory would welcome responses by the local profession on the issues raised by our Victorian colleagues.