

BALANCE

LAW SOCIETY NORTHERN TERRITORY

COSTELLO: NT PROFESSION MUST LEAD THE WAY

Reverend Tim Costello called on the Territory legal profession to think deeply, speak passionately and practice justice tempered by mercy in his luncheon addresses in Alice Springs and Darwin during Law Week 2000.

“It is a very important role to uphold the rule of law, however, it is also a very fallible and frail role,” Reverend Costello told a sell-out Law Week lunch.

“In our own experience, how often we have been assessed and dismissed and judged by people who didn’t know what we have struggled with, what hurdles we have had to jump and how crippling that sort of judgement can be.

“That is why judgement, in my view, has to always be tempered by mercy,” he said.

Reverend Costello spoke of the legal profession as a “calling”, arguing that to speak of the profession as a vocation is a way of retrieving something of the meaning of the role.

“A person who is called to practice law is first and foremost, before they are a businessman or woman, a professional who actually understands that the rule of law, the practice of law, is fundamental to the well being of society.

“I think the great danger for the legal profession is that the vocation, the calling to serve the rule of law, to serve justice, actually gets

unhinged and becomes a commercial issue. We lose its purpose, we lose its context, we lose its meaning. When that occurs lawyers will increasingly be held in low regard. We will bring contempt upon ourselves.”

Reverend Costello spoke of the significant role of the legal profession in the Territory particularly in the current political climate.

“Up here you have a very, very important role. It seems to me

that the great issues facing Australia today you here, in microcosm form, are facing first. Reconciliation — you up here know in all its complexities and nuances, far more about it than us down south. The issue of South East Asia and being part of it — you are on the doorstep. The issue of thinking about how indigenous culture is to survive and respect for traditional law. These are profoundly complex questions that the rest of Australia is not yet really asking. You have such an

important contribution to make.

“Whether it’s mandatory sentencing, whether its reconciliation, whether it’s dealing with traditional law in the context of Australian or European law, it seems to me that your calling is to actually think deeply, speak passionately, practice justice with real commitment tempered by mercy.”



Law Society Vice President Mr Ian Morris with Reverend Tim Costello and Alice Springs Representative Ms Katrina Budrikis at the Law Week lunch in Alice Springs.

- **Gold! Gold! Gold! for Chris Turner.....11**
- **Law Week 2000.....14**
- **Corporate regulation: where to from here?.....20**