

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY ICJ

The Northern Territory branch of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) held their inaugural dinner in Darwin on Friday 16 February and has held a special meeting to develop policy.

The next function will be a dinner to welcome the Commonwealth Human Rights Commissioner and Disability Commissioner, Mr Sev Ozdowski O.A.M on Thursday 5 April 2001 at 7pm at the Asian Gateway Restaurant, Aralia Street, Nightcliff.

Prior to the meeting Mr Ozdowski will be available in the library at William Forster Chambers from 5.15 to discuss mandatory sentencing and/or any other human rights or disabilities issues with interested practitioners.

Policy platform

The Northern Territory Branch of the ICJ met at William Forster Chambers on Friday 9 April 2001 for a special general meeting to consider a policy paper prepared by Melanie Little and Cassandra Goldie.

After much discussion, the members adopted the following policy principles to constitute its policy platform:—

1. The NT Branch of the ICJ supports the proceedings and findings of the UN Human Rights Treaty system and believes that Australia should fulfil its obligations as determined under international human rights law.
2. Supports the Australian Government ratifying and signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
3. Supports the Australian Government ratifying and signing the Rome statute for the formation of the International Criminal Court.
4. Supports Australia adopting a Bill of Rights enshrined in our domestic law which will enshrine Australia's international human rights obligations.
5. Opposes laws which impose minimum mandatory sentences as being in breach of international human rights standards and inconsistent with the doctrine of separation of powers, and calls on:
 - the Northern Territory Government to repeal its mandatory sentencing laws, and failing that

- the Australian Government to fulfil its international obligations by overriding these laws without further delay.
- 6. (a) Supports the passage through the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly of effective Freedom of Information legislation.
- 6. (b) Calls on the Northern Territory Government to pass effective freedom of information legislation as a matter of urgency.
- 7. Acknowledges and affirms that the independence of the judiciary is integral to the rule of law and opposes any action which infringes such independence of the judiciary.
- 8. (a) Opposes the restriction on judicial review in the Commonwealth Migration Act.
- 8. (b) Calls for the repeal of the provisions in the Commonwealth Migration Act which restrict judicial review.
- 9. Supports the provision of professional assistance to the East Timorese legal profession and the East Timorese judiciary.

Two policy matters were adjourned for further consideration. These were the issues of "stolen" and removed children and deaths in custody. There will be further consultation on these issues.

The members resolved unanimously to thank Melanie Little and Cassandra Goldie for their work.

The Northern Territory Branch of the ICJ now has its own policy principles which can be the base for further representation and action.



Mark Hunter makes a point with Peter McNab. Damien Moriarty (left) and Gordon The



Peter McNab, Rick Andrusco and Sally Gearin