

Get ready for Law Week - 13 to 18 May

This year's Law Week program is shaping up well with an enthusiastic profession ready to Take it to the Streets (the loose theme for this year).

Attorney General Peter Toyne will launch the week on Monday 13 May.

As well, we've got a regular radio spot being "hosted" by the Women Lawyers Association during the week, a Careers in the Law expo to be held at (and in conjunction with) the Northern Territory University and some exciting and interesting crime tours.

Our grand finale of the week is an Open Day at the Supreme Court in Darwin on Saturday 18 May.

Other events include a Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission stall at Casuarina Shopping Square and

lunches in both Alice Springs and Darwin with guest speaker, *The Australian's* cartoonist Peter Nicholson.

renowned

One of the nation's most renowned political commentators through his biting cartoons, Nicholson will perform "drawks" at both the Alice Springs and Darwin lunches. That is, a talk while drawing.

Another highlight will be the crime tours hosted by Tom Pauling QC in Darwin and John Stirk in Alice Springs.



Above: cartoonist Peter Nicholson, photo courtesy of *The Australian*.

And the Open Day at the Supreme Court will include a mock trial by the Bar Association and a Small Claims workshop by the NT Young Lawyers. ①

Public Liability update

The Law Society of the NT has made further submissions to the Northern Territory Government on public liability pointing out that moves in March by Commonwealth, state and territory ministers on the issue may be not considering all the factors.

Law Society president Ian Morris said matters determined by the ministerial meeting in Canberra will have no reasonable affect on premiums.

"What was proposed by the New South Wales treasurer is essentially a copy of the New South Wales Health Care Liability Act," Mr Morris said.

"That suggests action like setting a benchmark to get over before you get a pain and suffering claim.

"In fact, the United Medical Fund, one of the largest medical funds, has concluded that if all points of that Act come into being then it might only lower premiums by 12 percent."

Mr Morris has submitted that study to Attorney-General Peter Toyne.

The joint communique of the ministerial meeting said an expert report identified the major factors behind rising premiums and the reduced availability of public liability

insurance. It said they were: changing community attitudes to litigation; change in the courts' of what constitutes negligence; increased compensation payments for bodily injury claims; past under-pricing and poor profitability of the insurance industry; the collapse of HIH; and a decision by insurance companies to be more selective about the risks that they cover.

Mr Morris said the imbroglio with the insurance companies was a beat-up.

"(The ACCC's) Alan Fels has said the only reason why premiums have gone up is that insurance companies have made administrative and marketing errors which they're trying to make-up for and I agree," he said.

"Insurance companies are not making losses, they're just making less profits. If they were making the losses that they say they are, they wouldn't be in business." ①

National Open Disclosure project

Health care stakeholders from lawyers to clinicians and insurers to consumers are being asked for their input into a national project.

Established by the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care, the national Open Disclosure Project aims to:

- ♦ develop a set of national standards to support open disclosure by health care providers to patients and their carers following an adverse event; and
- ♦ develop an education and organisational support package to assist in the implementation of the standards.

For more details about the project go to www.nsh.nsw.gov.au or ring Louise Kershaw on (02) 9926 5991.