

## NT farewell

By now all of you will know that I have chosen not to renew my contract as Executive Officer of the Law Society and will finishing up after the Opening of the Legal Year. I will be leaving the Top End and moving with my family to Brisbane.

When I first joined the Society in 1999 I was welcomed by my national counterparts as a "reptile" - I hope in reference to my former profession as a journalist.

It was therefore with a measure of pride that I extracted a bottle of French champagne from them as a farewell present when I attended my last Canberra meeting on behalf of the Society.

The Council has been quick to act and the Chief Executive Officer position was advertised in the national and local press in December last year. A large number of inquiries ensued, followed by a number of applications.

A four-member council team will be carrying out the interview process this month with a view to finding a replacement to head up the Secretariat and continue the valuable work of the Society.

To say the position over the past four years has been challenging would be an understatement.

The Society has undergone a major change since its first strategic planning meeting in 1999.

It is now a cohesive, active organisation not only fulfilling its statutory obligations but also pro-actively pursuing policies to benefit legal practice in the NT community.

But not only that, as the environment in which the Society used to exist has irrevocably altered.

It is an old curse to live in "interesting times", but the times, as Morrie would quote "have been 'a changing'".

My period of stewardship has seen challenges to the (then) Government's interference in the sentencing process, confrontations between the Executive and the judiciary, challenges to the judiciary itself, the onset of the modernisation of the legal profession and then the beginnings of the end of a previously parochial legal system, the insurance crisis, the alteration of the rights of injured people and the assumption by the Society of more and more duties and obligations under the Legal Practitioners Act.

Internally I have seen *Balance* grow and prosper and the Society gain its first complaints officer. The first external review of the Society has pointed the way to the future.

The challenges continue to surface. Negotiating affordable PII premiums for the profession, establishing a legal education program to meet the national competency standards for admission and assessing the impact on the Territory of any model laws for legal practice, are just a few that spring to mind.

At the same time the environment for legal practice is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive.

One of my last tasks will be to seek a full review of the Supreme Court Scale to more accurately reflect those rises.



*Maria Ceresa, Executive Officer LSNT*

The last assessment of the real costs of legal practice was completed in 1988.

The Society is lucky to have many hardworking members.

This alone ensures that it will always be well placed to face and overcome the challenges before it.

I have been grateful for the opportunity to work with some outstanding people within the Northern Territory legal profession.

These individuals changed my view of the much touted poor reputation of lawyers.

So much in fact I will be joining the Queensland Law Society as its General Manager Corporate Services.

I will watch the progress of the NT Society with great interest and remember with fondness my time with this organisation. ①

## Ciao Barry and thanks

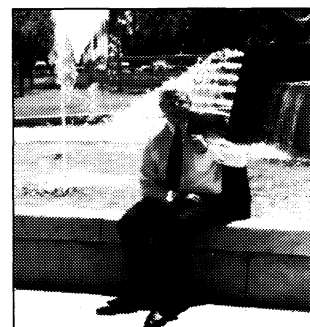
The South Australian Law Society lost a great worker and we lost a staunch ally when Barry Fitzgerald decided to retire as LSSA Executive Director.

Barry has always looked out for the Territory and been a great help to us in areas such as CLE development and organisational change.

He and wife Gayle now plan to convert a property they've bought in Bendigo, Victoria into a Bed and Breakfast.

The Law Society Northern Territory wishes them both the very best in the future.

We now look forward very much to working with the South Australian Law Society's new Chief Executive Officer, Jan Martin.



*Above: SA CEO Barry Fitzgerald...to "retire" in Bendigo. Photo courtesy of the Law Society of South Australia.*