

Local legal eagle takes top job

The new President of the Law Council of Australia, Stephen Southwood QC, is the first Territorian to hold the position as the head of the legal profession's top national body.

After taking up his appointment, Mr Southwood got straight down to business stating that threats to national security should not be used as an excuse by executive government to make unnecessary incursions on the legal principles, values and institutions that have made Australia a safe, secure and prosperous liberal democracy.

"One of the most important challenges facing the legal profession is maintaining its independence and the rule of law in the face of global terrorism and the consequential expansion of the powers of executive government," he said.

"It is important that the Law Council continues to try and ensure that necessary checks and balances are maintained on executive power.

"We must continue to have confidence in the integrity of our existing legal institutions including our court system and we must ensure that they are properly resourced and supported."

Mr Southwood said another aim of

the Law Council over the coming 12 months of his presidency would be to broaden the Australian legal profession's contact with the legal profession in Asia.

"A very significant event in this regard will be the holding of LAWASIA's biennial conference for the first time in Australia in March 2005. The conference will be held in conjunction with the annual conference of Presidents of Law Associations of Asia, the Law Council's Legal Convention and the Queensland Law Society's Symposium."

He said it was also most important that the Law Council continues to undertake its work in relation to the National Model Laws project, the rationalisation and reduction of the insurance costs for lawyers, the protection of common law rights and access to justice.

Mr Southwood praised the work of former Law Council President Bob Gotterson QC.

"Bob has spoken out on a number of very important issues, including the Guantanamo Bay detainees and the



Stephen Southwood QC

war on terrorism. He has been a strong voice in support of judicial independence," Mr Southwood said.

Steve Southwood is a barrister at Myilly Point Chambers in Darwin. The Law Society NT would like to congratulate Steve and wish him all the best for his presidency.①

The Law Council poses election questions cont...

led against them and retain access to a lawyer of their own choosing; and
* preserving the right to silence.

10. The Bill of Rights

Will you agree to sponsor a process to examine the merits of a Bill of Rights for Australia by referring the issue (along with the appropriate allocation of resources) to the Australian Law Reform Commission for inquiry and report?

For a complete copy of these materials, please contact the Law Society Northern Territory on (08) 8981 5104 or email lawsoc@lawsocnt.asn.au ①



Law Society NT President Merran Short, Law Council President Stephen Southwood QC and NT Bar Association President John Reeves QC.