

New ATO processes

A new streamlined process for members of the legal profession in dealing with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) was recently announced.

"From 1 July 2004 barristers and solicitors who represent their clients in matters with the Tax Office will have streamlined authority and proof of identity processes to ensure they receive uniform and timely access to their client's information," Mr Carmody said.

The new forms mean that legal practitioners must explain the meaning and extent of the authority to their clients.

The authority allows a client to give a legal practitioner authority to act. The authority may be limited or unlimited and for a limited or unlimited period. A client may withdraw his or her authority at any time by contacting the Tax Office.

Mr Carmody said the Tax Office takes consumer protection very seriously and is committed to ensuring that clients' privacy and personal taxpayer information is safeguarded.

According to Mr Carmody sensitive client information will only be discussed with individuals who have the proper authority to act on behalf of a client.

A proof of identity notice can be lodged by faxing it to the Tax Office. The Tax Office then records the authority information on its systems and notifies the legal practitioner when the information has been processed.

The standard notice forms for proof of identity authority (for both individual taxpayers and any other entity such as a company, partnership, or trust) and details about lodging them are available on the ATO's website: www.ato.gov.au ①

Congratulations to Lyn

Congratulations to Lyn Bennett who has been made a partner for Hunt and Hunt. The appointment is effective as of 1 July 2004.

Name dropping Meredith

Former AG's Department CEO Meredith Harrison (now residing in the USA) features in as Meredith Smith in (actress) Kate Fitzpatrick's appropriately named book *'Name Dropping'*.

Meredith is credited as a major influence in Kate's life, along with such people as (in no particular order) The Queen, Chief Justice Murray Gleeson, Tom Hughes QC, Patrick White, Sam Neill and Imran Khan.

Meredith has suggested that her portrait may be slightly exaggerated, particularly as Kate describes her now as 'a judge'.

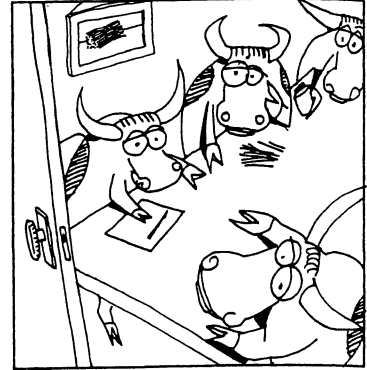
Stella awards under Media Watch

Justice David Ipp is the latest victim of the fictional Stella awards.

Speaking at a recent meeting of Australian and New Zealand anaesthetists, Justice Ipp said: "Each year there appears on the internet a list of the Stella Awards. The Stellas are named after Stella Liebeck who spilled coffee on herself while eating a hamburger. She sued McDonalds and successfully recovered a large sum of damages.

"Last year's winners of the Stellas included 19-year old Karl Truman of Los Angeles who won \$74,000 and medical expenses when his neighbour ran over his hand with a Honda Accord. Mr Truman apparently did not notice that there was someone at the wheel of the car when he was trying to steal the hubcaps."

The Muster Room



According to Justice Ipp: "There are ample cases in Australia that illustrate the same point".

In June 2002, the ABC's *Media Watch* exposed the Stella Awards as: "non-existent awards for non-existent cases as revealed by Overlawyered.com an outfit dedicated to exposing the real excesses of the American legal system. All these incidents... appear completely fictitious and unrelated to any actual persons with these names".

Media Watch initially exposed the Stella Awards in response to a speech Queensland Chief Justice Paul de Jersey made at a medical conference in Italy in 2002.

Since MW's original report a Stella Awards website has been established to report excessive litigation cases and expose phoney cases.

Justice Ipp's examples are both published in the bogus cases section on the website (www.stellaawards.com).

Justice Ipp told *Media Watch*: "I had no idea. It doesn't make any difference. It was an illustration of a point. There have been some strange cases. ①

How to develop business without really trying cont...

- you're in is growing or declining. A sure test is your hourly rate. If it's less than your peers, find a way to finagle yourself into a high-rate area.
- 8. Update your marketing bio quarterly.** Before you can sell yourself to clients, you have to sell yourself to your partners. When a partner puts together a presentation for a prospective client, you want him or her to have the most impressive resume of your experience possible.

- 9. Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Don't just sit in your office grinding out work. Talk to your fellow associates, invite a partner you don't know to lunch and generally create a presence within the firm.

- 10. Actively manage your career.** Your firm may help but it can't and won't do it for you. Understand your strengths and weaknesses. If you don't like the work you're doing, tell

someone. Set goals for yourself in every possible area. If you aren't getting sufficient feedback, go to the partner and ask specific questions.

If you do just these ten things, you'll be employing the best of all three marketing strategies and business development will never be a problem for you.

So that's what I told them. Will it do any good? Ask me in about eight years. ①