

BALANCE

LAW SOCIETY NORTHERN TERRITORY

Edition 2/2005 March & April



*** LawAsia Down Under 2005**

Law Council news

Alison Robertson, Barbara Bradshaw and I attended the Conference of Law Societies and Law Council meetings which were held on 19 and 20 March at Broadbeach on the Gold Coast. The meetings were held in conjunction with the LawAsia Down Under 2005 conference.

New Law Council President John North chaired the meetings for the first time, since he took over the Presidency when Steve Southwood resigned upon his elevation to the Bench of the Northern Territory Supreme Court

The meeting dealt with a number of interesting matters, including:

- * The legal profession's responsibilities in meeting its taxation obligations. This has gained national prominence, particularly given the activities of some interstate barristers.

A Working Group has been established to deal with this issue, and particularly with any further adverse data that may come to light. The LSNT is currently developing a strategy. In the meantime I would urge practitioners to note that the ATO is closely monitoring the profession's activities. More details are to come.

- * There was also some discussion on the issue of immunity for advocates, a matter that was then considered by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) the following day. The Law Council was very much of the view that advocates immunity should be retained. It is understood that SCAG will produce an options paper on this issue.

- * The Law Council decided to continue the work of its Tort Law Working Group.

Commonwealth, State and Territory Insurance Ministers met in Darwin on Friday 8 April.

According to Treasurer Syd Stirling: "Up for discussion will be a range of insurance-related issues, including arrangements for the administration of national professional standards laws and

options for a national long-term care scheme for people suffering catastrophic injury following an accident".

Representatives from the insurance and financial services industries were invited to this meeting.

The Law Society Tort Reform Committee is watching developments closely.

- * There was some consideration of social issues including whether there should be a Bill of Rights (this matter was deferred) and the issue of Civil Unions (same-sex marriages).

A meeting of the Law Council's Indigenous Affairs Committee, of which I am chair, was also held. An extensive list of agenda items was put together by the Committee. Watch this space for further details.

We stayed on for the LawAsia Down Under 2005 Conference and a number of interesting sessions were held. This edition of *Balance* includes excerpts from some of the speeches:

- * The state of the profession by Law Council of Australia President John North on page 6;

- * The role of the press in the maintenance of the rule of law by Stephen Kenny on page 10

- * Expert witnesses - the more the merrier? by Dr David Morgan on page 34.

The Conference also involved a number of enjoyable social functions, giving us the opportunity to meet with other delegates and catch up with some familiar faces from the past. Many people would remember Sally Kift, who worked in the NT Attorney-General's Department and then was a lecturer in law at the then Northern Territory University. She was at the



Merran Short, President

conference and it was very good to meet up with her again. She asked to be remembered to her NT friends. Sally is now Associate Professor of Law at Queensland Institute of Technology.

I would finally remind practitioners that Law Week will run from Sunday 22 until Sunday 29 May and is rapidly approaching. I would urge all practitioners to participate. The Marsh Law Week Cricket Challenge will be held on Sunday 29 May and I am looking for willing recruits for my President's XI team. The Tug-of-War competition will be held in Darwin at lunchtime on Monday 23 May, so start getting your teams together.

This year the Law Society has also introduced a speakers' bureau for May to allow community groups, charitable organisations, sporting clubs and schools to book a guest speaker on any legal topic of their choice.

To make this initiative work we need the support of the local legal profession. For more information about volunteering or any of the other Law Week activities, please contact Zoe Malone at the Secretariat on (08) 8981 5104 or via email at publicrelations@lawsocnt.asn.au.

More information about Law Week is also included on page 22 of this edition of *Balance*. ①