

Opening of the Legal Year 2005

This year the traditional Opening of the Legal Year ceremonies - the procession, followed by the ecumenical service at the courts and finishing with a luncheon for the local profession - were held in Darwin on Monday 31 January and Wednesday 2 February. Both events were very well attended and supported by the legal fraternity.

In Darwin the Opening of the Legal Year was preceded by ceremonial sittings to welcome the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory's newest appointment, Justice Stephen Southwood.

The ecumenical service at the Supreme Court was led by Mal Sercombe from the Baptist Union of the Northern Territory. The singing from the Baptist's choir was really well received by the packed courtroom, and as always the service provided a time for reflection before the start of another busy year.

In Alice Springs, the ecumenical service was hosted by Major Adye Viney and Major Kaye Viney from the Salvation Army. Major Adye Viney provided an interesting and in-depth examination of the parable of the Good Samaritan, that provided food for thought for the legal profession as it enters a new year.

The Law Society would like to thank the Baptist Church and the Salvation Army for hosting this year's service. Both organisations did a fantastic job.

The Hon John Dowd AO QC, former Judge of the New South Wales Supreme Court and current President of the International Commission of Jurists, was the guest speaker at the OLY luncheons in Darwin and Alice Springs.

Mr Dowd provided a challenging and thought-provoking speech about what

it means to be a lawyer and the responsibilities of practising this profession. A transcript of his speech will be published in the next edition of *Balance*.

Chief Justice Brian Martin spoke at the luncheon in Darwin to mark the opening of the new year

In welcoming the profession to the new legal year, the Chief Justice began by reminding the audience that he had stood in this position twelve months ago with a shirt that matched how he felt. It was a bit of a wreck. Unfamiliar with the temperature and length of the proceedings, his Honour had not taken the precaution of bringing a spare shirt to court and his calls for an iron were to no avail. His Honour added that twelve months later a spare shirt always hangs in the wardrobe and as he looked around he saw many friends and familiar faces.

The Chief Justice said that he and his wife Leigh feel very much at home in Darwin. So much so that they are about to add to the Top End economy, and add considerably, with the July wedding of their daughter Jo and her fiancé Matt Ah Matt. His Honour added, however, that he did not receive any sympathy from Justice Mildren whose daughter is also being married during 2005, but she will be taking her nuptials in France!

The Chief Justice reminded everyone that throughout 2004 Justice Bailey strived to continue working and to make the Judges and everyone involved with him feel okay in the face of his struggle. Bailey J did so successfully.

His Honour expressed the hope that the Supreme Court was a happy and cohesive group to which the new member, Southwood J, would undoubtedly make a very significant contribution. His Honour welcomed Southwood J.

The Chief Justice outlined matters of interest for 2005 including improved case management and civil listings procedures. His Honour issued somewhat of a challenge to the profession to make use of the increased availability of civil listings times. The Chief Justice promised to give close attention to arraignment day and pointed out that adjustments would be needed to cope with the recent legislation that directs the court to try sexual assault cases within three months of committal.

The Chief Justice commented that behind the public face of the court the Judges deal with a myriad of topics. Of particular concern for the Chief Justice is community liaison and education, particularly for the assistance of children.



PRACTITIONER

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