

BALANCE

LAW SOCIETY NORTHERN TERRITORY

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Special Feature:
**Technology and legal
practice**

Law & Technology in the 21st Century

When I reflect on my relatively short practising life, some 12.5 years, it is truly amazing to see what changes have occurred in the technology that supports, and sometimes rules, our professional lives. My family acquired its very first computer, an old DOS-based machine with a whopping 64Kb (yes Kb, not Gb) of memory when I was a couple of years into my law degree, and when I first started work, there was still a recently pensioned-off telex machine in our office. The partners of the firm used to look at the photocopier and fax machine aghast, and shake their heads if there was not a more tech-savvy youngster around to operate them.

Many others of you would still remember the days when secretaries (not administration assistants) took dictation by shorthand, a self-correcting typewriter was sophisticated technology, and the thermal-paper fax machine revolutionised the transmission of documents.

A little over a decade later, we have our laptops and Blackberrys, PDAs and memory keys (able to hold more data than that first family computer), multi-function print/scan/copy/fax machines and voice-recognition software. We hardly ever pull the law reports or statute books off the shelves, instead it's all there on-screen, delivered, up-to-date, cross-referenced and formatted, courtesy of the world-wide-web.

While the exponential growth and development of technology has its undeniable benefits in all areas of life, I sometimes pause (between the constant beeping of the computer telling me "you have mail") and wonder whether technology has also made our professional lives harder, more frenetic, perhaps less genteel.

There is no doubt that we now operate in a business environment where our clients and colleagues expect, if not demand, almost instantaneous responses to enquiries, correspondence and instructions. There is less time allowed to be spent in the consideration of a document and the drafting of a reply, and things can often be left until the last minute, in the knowledge that the relevant letter or document can be transmitted in the twinkling of an eye, attached to an email, sent at midnight before the 9am directions



Allison Robertson, President

hearing.

The key is to find ways to enslave the technology in the betterment of our professional lives, rather than allowing the technology to enslave us. This edition of *Balance* is dedicated to "Technology" with that aim in mind.

Dates for your diary

Wednesday 26 April - Conflicts of Interest seminar in Darwin.

Wednesday 3 May - CPD Seminar with Eddie Cubillo on "Bail and Parole: the role of Corrections".

13-21 May - Law Week 2006

Monday 15 May - Law Week launch and Tug-of-War competition in the Smith Street Mall, Darwin, 12-1.30pm.

Tuesday 16 May - Workshop on the referral process for Family Relationship Centres, Darwin.

Wednesday 17 May - Alice Springs Law Week lunch

Wednesday 17 May - Conflicts of Interest seminar in Alice Springs.

Thursday 18 May - Workshop on the referral process for Family Relationship Centres, Alice Springs.

Friday 19 May - Darwin Law Week lunch

Tuesday 23 May - CPD Seminar with Graham Nicholson on "Litigation based on the NT Self-Government Arrangements" 12.30-1.30pm in Darwin.

Wednesday 7 June - CPD Seminar with Cameron Ford on "How to turn your client's story into an effective affidavit".

Tuesday 20 June - CPD Seminar with Chief Justice Martin on "Hearsay and Evidence of Children in Sexual Assault Matters".