

Change is on its way

October is normally a busy month for the Law Society and it has been even busier this year.

Firstly there was the Annual General Meeting on 11 October 2006, which saw the election of a new Council. Details are included in *Balance*. The Council includes a good balance of practitioners working in various areas of law, in government and private practice, and a mixture of experience. It is pleasing to see many of the “old” Council remaining on board. A Strategic Planning Meeting was held on 21 October 2006 to “plot the course” for the next Council year and Committees will shortly start meeting to plan their work.

Holding the Strategic Planning Meeting on 21 October 2006 proved very timely because on 19 October 2006, the Attorney-General introduced the Legal Profession Bill (the Northern Territory version of the Model National Legal Profession Bill) into the Northern Territory Parliament. Debate on the Bill is scheduled for the November 2006 Sittings with commencement of most of the provisions scheduled for either March or April 2007. Trust account provisions will commence on 1 July 2007 and costs provisions on 1 January 2008. A copy of the Bill, second reading speech and explanatory statement is available on the NT government website at www.nt.gov.au/lant.

It is interesting to note that the Bill, with some 762 clauses, is the largest piece of legislation introduced into the Northern Territory Parliament and, in many ways, it is a very complex document. It will impact on all legal practitioners to varying degrees and will require a lot of work by the Law Society and other regulatory bodies. The Bill represents considerable work by the Department of Justice and Parliamentary Counsel both at the national and local level. The Law Society has also been heavily involved in the process, working with the Department of Justice in the development of local provisions in an endeavour to ensure they were as acceptable as possible both for the Society and legal profession and also deal with development of the Model Bill through our representation on the Law Council and National Practice Working Group.

Many of you would have attended information seminars on the consultation draft of the Bill conducted by Department of Justice with assistance from the Law Society. The Bill has been refined in the light of comments made following the information seminars.



Barbara Bradshaw, Chief Executive Officer

The Law Society is currently examining the Bill as introduced. Practitioners should note that the ultimate shape of the Bill is the decision of Government.

Administrative issues that require resolution before commencement of the Bill are also being considered along with the content of proposed regulations and the development of a communications strategy to educate the legal profession about changes required under the new Bill. Further information will be provided over the coming months.

Commencement of the Bill will enable the Mandatory CPD program to commence - points can be accumulated from 1 April 2007 for the period 1 April 2007- 31 March 2008. Practitioners will have to comply with Continuing Professional Development requirements to comply with Practising Certificate renewal requirements for 1 July 2008. More details are to come.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat if you have any queries. We would be happy to meet to discuss any issues of interest. The LSNT will be holding an extensive information program over the coming months.

I would like to thank the Secretariat members for their continued support during this busy period.