

Recognising the profession's achievements

The "theme" of *Balance* this month is the achievements of some current and former Territory legal practitioners. Newly appointed Federal Court Justice Reeves, Administrator (and former Solicitor-General) Tom Pauling, Solicitor-General Michael Grant QC, ACLA Government lawyer of the year Alastair Shields, Company Director and former Territorian Nerolie Withnall and Josephine Stone AM, have all contributed to the Territory, and to the Law Society.

Some of these lawyers are "home grown", born and bred in the Territory, and some came to the Territory and made the most of its opportunities. Some, either as young lawyers or children, weathered Cyclone Tracy. I particularly remember watching the special 7.30 report in 1999 in which Nerolie Withnall described going through the cyclone with her then husband, the late John Withnall, and two small children. Both Alastair Shields and Michael Grant qualified in law locally and began their legal careers in the then Department of Law.

All these stories show that ability, hard slog and working in the Territory, dealing with the interesting social and complexities involved, can lead to career advancement and achievement, either in or outside the Territory. The Territory, by its nature, still throws up some significant legal challenges. This was highlighted by Colin McDonald QC during his speech at the induction of Reeves J.

The lawyers mentioned above are not the only persons who have done well, and made a major contribution in the NT legal environment.

Young lawyers prepared to be

flexible and work hard would be aware that the Territory remains a place of opportunity, and that lawyers are not somehow "second best" or "going to a backwater" by electing to work here, even if only for part of their career.

Timing Issues

As practitioners cope with the Christmas rush and coordinate last minute deadlines, Christmas functions and January holiday plans they should be aware of some timing issues.

The Costs provisions of Part 3.3 of the *Legal Profession Act* become operational on 31 December 2007. CPDs have been held, and will extend into January 2008. The Costs Committee is currently finalising costs disclosure material, and other procedures are being finalised.

The initial CPD year finishes on 31 March 2007. Practitioners will be required to lodge a CPD record statement in their PC application. These will be subject to random audit. Please contact Christine Heatherington-Tait, Professional Development Officer, if you have any queries.

Initial trust account external examinations will need to be completed between 31 March 2008 and the time of PC renewal in June 2008.



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I would be happy to deal with any queries.

I thank practitioners for their help in 2007, particularly in doing their best to come to grips with the *Legal Profession Act* and Regulations. We will continue with the saga in 2008, but I am hoping it will be significantly bedded down at that stage.

I would particularly like to thank Josephine Stone AM, retiring Solicitor Complaints and Ethics, for her work over the past few years. She has significantly updated procedures and practices, and has made a major contribution to the profession in the Territory.



One of our local profession's high achievers - Alastair Shields, Australian Government Lawyer of the Year - pictured with other award winners at the ACLA Annual Dinner at the MCG in November.