

A big year for the NT

2008 has again been an interesting year in the Northern Territory, particularly the last few months. We have seen an NT Election (conducted over three weeks, which I am sure was a lot easier for the politicians than the seemingly endless US Election saga). We've also heard about the possible construction of an Inpex Plant in Darwin, the continuation of key elements of the Intervention, the opening of the Convention Centre and the financial crisis and possible recession, whose effects have perhaps not been fully realised in the NT, but could be in the future. If I was an economist I may be able to make sense of all of this, but instead we have to wait for the NT Government's recently announced 30 year plan (which already has attracted a degree of cynicism and support amongst Territorians).

I have done a separate article on some of the possible impacts of the financial crisis on the Society and the profession.

The Law Society Council and some key members of the Secretariat met on 1 November 2008 to conduct its planning for 2008-2009. The facilitator, Michael Grant QC, led proceedings well. Major issues, including national ones, were discussed, along with means of better addressing our statutory responsibilities and the needs of members.

One of the issues considered was "law and order", which is as always a major focus of Government. The increase in prison numbers and the scarcity of rehabilitation programs was one major concern. Also of concern was the apparent enactment of "rushed" legislation to fix up what are perceived immediate problems, and the seeming suggestion that enactment of legislation was the answer to dealing with social problems, rather than better directing of existing resources and provision of new ones. The Society's new Criminal Justice Committee, chaired by new Councillor Fiona Hussin, will consider these matters.

It is noted, however, that issues raised by the Society relating to the proposed Domestic and Family Violence Amendment Bill dealing with Mandatory Disclosure of Domestic Violence has seen introduction of the Bill being postponed, to enable consideration of issues, and possibly tweaking of the legislation.

Also, the Society and its Committees will continue to work with Government to facilitate the commencement of legislation and ensuring practitioners can comply.

The Society will continue to work with the Law Council on National issues, with a particular emphasis on those affecting NT practitioners and others. Current major



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ones include legal aid funding, anti-money laundering, eConveyancing, recruitment and retention of lawyers, PII and family law developments.

The Member Services Committee will also deal with events, apart from Law Week which will have a separate Committee set up. The Council is keen to ensure that events and functions also better meet members' demands and continue to be successful.

Other committees will continue their work, noting some may need a bit of a "kick along".

Please let me know if you have any queries about any of these matters.

It is clear that a busy 2008-2009 is ahead.

BALANCE APOLOGY

In the last edition of Balance, an article prepared by John Lawrence managed to slip through the editing process, and was included in the published version with some mistakes and a sentence missing. This was essentially a "stuff up" by the Secretariat, and both Barbara Bradshaw, CEO, and Rebecca Mitchell, the Editor of Balance have apologised to John, particularly noting the embarrassment caused to him. The correct article is available on request, and was forwarded in The Practitioner on 5 November.

We have reviewed our editorial procedures and discussed them with Mr Lawrence to ensure such a "publishing malfunction" does not reoccur.