

# LSNT Committees chart course for '08

Law Society Committees are now in full swing for 2008. Following is an update of recent Committee activities. Thank you to all those who participate on LSNT Committees.

## Member Services/ Professional Enhancement

The newly formed member services committee, chaired by Kate Kensell of Northern Territory Legal Aid, has identified the provision of counselling services to members as a priority area for the first half of 2008. The Committee is in the late stages of negotiations with a service provider for this purpose, and expect to make an announcement to members in the coming months. The Committee is developing a membership survey, with the aim of gaining an understanding of what Society members appreciate most about their membership, and to determine how we can increase the value of membership. The Committee urges members to support the survey when it is distributed.

### 2008 Objectives

1. Development and implementation of a LawCare scheme in the Northern Territory.
2. Monitor and review Law Society NT publications i.e. *The Practitioner* and *Balance*.
3. Monitor and review Law Society NT member satisfaction with Law Society services in general.

## Indigenous Issues

The Indigenous Issues Committee last met before Christmas, at the conclusion of an extremely busy 2007, thanks to the Commonwealth Government Intervention. Committee Chair, Matthew Storey, travelled to Alice Springs for

Opening of the Legal Year in February, primarily to discuss Central Australian Intervention issues with practitioners, and obtain their views. The Committee intends to keep in touch with the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, who have commenced ongoing visits to remote communities regarding the Intervention.

At the January Council meeting, the Law Society Council requested that this Committee look into the current operation of the 2km alcohol free zone law, and anti-social behaviour.

### 2008 Objectives

1. Assist in the development of LSNT policy with regard to the Australian Government Intervention package, and foster a dialogue with relevant stakeholders regarding this matter.
2. Liaise with the Law Council of Australia's Indigenous Issues Committee.
3. Monitor and Comment on issues relevant to Indigenous access to Justice.
4. Consider and comment upon other significant legal issues affecting Indigenous people in the NT.

## Small Firms

The Small Firms Committee was initiated at the 2007 Strategic Planning meeting, and first met last November.

The Committee determined that it would only be useful for firms consisting of no more than two practitioners, and that the greatest benefit would be in facilitating CPDs relevant to small practices.

The first small firms CPD was held on 21 February, and the Committee intends to organise another two in 2008.

### 2008 Objectives

1. CPDs to be held specifically relating to sole or small firms (Costs, Advocacy, Drafting, Ethics, Special Risk Issues and LPA 2006 issues requiring assistance).
2. Small firms and sole practitioners conduct CPDs themselves with smaller groups (ie. other small firms) than normal CPDs held at the Society. CPDs will be structured between a small discussion and a lecture. The Committee will call these meetings "forums".
3. The Small Firms Committee will be the organising group of these forums.
4. Around six issues will be discussed at a time at the forums.
5. There will be four forums held each year.
6. A bulletin will be published regarding the forums and sent to small firms.

## Family Law Committee

In late 2007 and early this year, The Family Law Committee, Chaired by Michelle Giacomo, commented on the Care and Protection of Children Bill and the Domestic and Family Violence Bill. The issue of mandatory sentencing in relation to the Domestic and Family Violence was considered at the January meeting. The Committee remains concerned at the lack of CPD seminars regarding family law in the Northern Territory, and have recently considered practitioners who may be suitable to conduct CPDs in the future. The Committee had a win in late 2008, when plans to close the Alice Springs Family Court Registry were shelved until at least December 2008, after which time the issue will be reconsidered. Dedicated work on behalf of the Committee, Alice Springs members and the Law Society contributed to this reversal.



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## 2008 Objectives

1. Consider and comment on new legislation impacting on this area of law.
2. Inform the profession via CPD seminars.
3. Monitor professional standards in the Family Court.
4. Continue to work on issues relating to the new legislation and the introduction of the FRC.
5. Monitor Alice Springs Family Court Registry.

## Commercial Law

Recent submissions by the Commercial Law Committee have included comment on the Vendor Disclosure Bill, the Unit Titles Amendment Bill and property law.

## 2008 Objectives

1. To keep under review and promote improvements in commercial law, practice and procedure.
2. To formulate submissions and/or recommendations in relation to proposed legislation or such other matters as the Committee thinks fit.
3. Seek representation on and liaison with such government or non-government committees or associations concerned with commercial matters as the Committee thinks fit.
4. To foster closer working relationships between commercial lawyers.
5. To bring matters of interest or concern relating to commercial law to the attention of members.

## Access to Justice

This active committee, chaired by Jo Pattinson of De Silva Hebron,

has commenced with plans to implement a formalised Pro Bono Clearing House in the Northern Territory, and has approved a paper entitled "NT Pro Bono Clearing House - Purpose and Structure" to inform members of the Profession. The Committee will soon approach firms and practitioners regarding the confidential pro bono register. The Committee will soon apply for funding for a Pro bono/Legal Aid Conference proposed for 11 and 12 September.

## 2008 Objectives

1. Examine funding and other issues relating to NT Legal Aid bodies.
2. Establish a pro bono clearinghouse in the NT.
3. Organise the NT Pro Bono and Legal Services Conference - September 2008.
4. Consider pro bono issues in the NT.
5. Discuss the results from the Pro Bono Survey, plan future action and examine potential solutions to issues raised.

## Tort Law

Issues in tort law are relatively quiet at present, it was determined at a January Committee meeting. Issues discussed at this meeting included the Law Council of Australia Position Papers and Occupational Health and Safety Workers Compensation.

## 2008 Objectives

1. Discuss Tort Law Reform survey results and comments.
2. Work with the LCA Working Party, and consider interstate campaigns.
3. Work with ALA on Tort Law issues.
4. Provide comments on the development of the VOCA

Regulations and monitor the introduction of the new legislation.

5. Monitor the development of rules.
6. Monitor the proposed introduction of the remaining LPP reforms.
7. Monitor the impact of the current LPP reforms in the NT.

## Legislative Standards

This Committee has met once since its establishment in late 2007, and Committee members also met with the Statehood Committee in November.

## 2008 Objectives

1. Development of a set of legislative standards for the NT.
2. Establishment of links and dialogue with parliament through the Speaker, the Clerk of Parliament and Parliamentary Counsel.
3. Development of a standard or preferred mode of consultation with the LSNT on Bills.
4. Development of a "soft" Bill of Rights for the NT.
5. Consideration of a proposed constitutional model for NT statehood.
6. Drafting a constitution for NT as a State.
7. Consideration, development, adaptation and monitoring of judicial standards.

## CPD/CDU

The CPD Committee, under the Chairmanship of Matthew Storey, intends to revise the current CPD guidelines in the near future. The Committee has recommended that a CPD be held about how to present CPDs. The Committee has invited the NT Bar Association to present a CPD on their topic of choice in Alice Springs.