

Committees on Show



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One issue that frequently comes up and which was addressed at the recent Strategic Planning Meeting of the new Council of the Law Society is how the Society deals with the issues that matter to Territory practitioners.

It is a priority of the Council, Secretariat and Committees to deal with these issues.

The Society also works closely with the Law Council of Australia, of which we are Constituent body.

Society Committees, which supplement the work of the Council, cover a number of areas, and report to Council.

Committees are currently settling their objectives which will go to the next Council Meeting. They will be reported on in a further edition of *Balance*. Committees will prepare articles for publication in *Balance* outlining their activities.

Some of the issues being dealt with are carry overs from the last Council year or ongoing matters. Many of the priorities are determined by Government policy and quite

frequently Committees have to put "normal" work to one side to concentrate on specific matters that come up.

There are a number of national as well as Territory initiatives afoot which will sooner or later have a significant impact on your practice whether you are a barrister doing criminal work, legal aid lawyer doing family law, government lawyer working in the litigation area or commercial lawyer dealing with major Territory projects (to name just a few categories). Some have the potential to considerably affect the Society and its ability to perform its functions and provide services to members.

Federal and Territory policy issues affecting us include National Legal Profession Reform and Access to Justice initiatives which extend into such areas as court procedures and costs. Territory legislation, including in the criminal area, is a particular focus.

As I write this article the Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) Committee is shortly to meet with Marsh Pty Ltd to plan the renewal strategy

for 2009-2010. Members will also be working with QBE. A key strategy will be to keep PII premiums as low as possible. As we continually remind practitioners, a key determinant of premiums is claims history, and practitioners should do everything possible to minimise claims. The process will take several months to finalise, with renewal packages coming out in April 2010 for those practitioners in the NT scheme. The impacts of the national Legal Profession Reform project will need to be closely considered. Details on PII proposals will be coming shortly

The Commercial Law Committee's current major focus is the Sale of Land (Rights and Duties of Parties) Bill. There are a number of outstanding issues that are being worked through with government.

We are also closely reviewing the E-Conveyancing proposals, Personal Properties securities reform and the Credit laws.

The Dispute Resolution Committee is looking at the Supreme Court Trial Civil procedures which commence operation in January 2010. The cost

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and complexity of court proceedings is being considered at the national level with the new Federal Court procedural simplifications and recommendation of the Access to Justice report, such as for enhancedADR.

The Indigenous Issues Committee is considering the proposed reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act and some other NTER related matters.

The Family Law Committee is considering a wide number of issues including proposed amendments to shared parenting law, a new costs agreement and mandatory disclosure issues. It is noted the Care and Protection of Children Act will be reviewed in 2010 and Committee members, including

some of the Territory’s senior legal practitioners in the area, will have a major input.

Members of the Criminal Justice Committee recently visited the Berrimah and Don Dale facilities and issues relating to the goal, and the future proposals relating to corrections, will be a major focus.

The CPD/CDU Committee will monitor issues relating to CDU and establish a programme for next year. One key issue will be making e-CPDs available and expanding the number of available CPDs, including in remote areas.

The Member Services Committee will focus on enhancing services for members of the Society, including access to membership discount

schemes and other services. The findings of the Rural, Remote and Regional report and how to keep lawyers in the Territory will be considered.

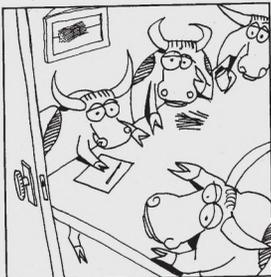
The Personal Injuries Committee will concentrate on the new plans for harmonisation of work health legislation, which is a major area of Territory practice.

The Ethics Committee, consisting of senior Territory practitioners, will continue to consider complains matters. Our new Professional Standards Solicitor, Allison Smart, (who many know under her previous name and designation as President 2005-2007 Allison Robertson) is working on complaints procedures.

The Access to Justice Committee oversees the Pro Bono Clearing House and is considering the resources provided to legal aid and related issues.

The Society will do its best to help practitioners meet the challenges ahead. ↓

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