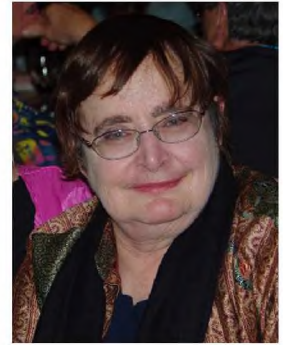


The more things change the more things stay the same . . . or do they?

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We were looking at a 1999 edition of *Balance* for an article and out dropped a flyer for a “National Legal Services Market Seminar” to be held on 11 June 1999.

The invitation came from a dapper Mr. Steve Southwood (pictured), the then President of the Society, who would coordinate a panel considering questions from the floor. It was to be opened by the Chief Minister and Attorney-General, Mr. Denis Burke. Other eminent speakers included Ms. Sue Oliver, “Dean of the Law Faculty of Northern Territory University” and some interstate lawyers. The topics to be considered included the reservation of legal work for the profession and multi-disciplinary partnerships and the limitation of liability.

I presume it was a well-attended and successful seminar but I certainly was not considering the issues then, being more concerned in my then job with the development of a Y2K policy for an Indigenous credit union. It was completely off my radar.

How things have changed!

Legal profession regulatory issues have been on the agenda ever since, and I gained my first real exposure when I joined the Law Society in 2003.

2007 saw the enactment of the *Legal Profession Act 2006* and it has generated a lot of compliance activity both for the Society and the profession.

However things did not have a chance to settle down before COAG announced the National Legal Profession Reform Project (known by its initials “NLPR”).

As a member of the NLPR Consultative Group, I considered a number of discussion papers produced by the NLPR Task Force which is coordinating the project. As Director of the Law Council Duncan McConnel and then Matthew Storey were also heavily involved in consideration of the issues.

The NLPR package, including a 200 page draft Bill, has now been released. Electronic copies were provided but copies are still available from the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s department website.

Comments are due by 13 August 2010.

Many practitioners attended one of the CPDs held on NLPR in Darwin

and Alice Springs or the Roadshow presentation put on by members of the Task Force.

When the package comes in (and I would assume it will, possibly in 2012 or 2013) the profession will be subject to a new system of regulation with a National Legal Profession Board and Ombudsman but with local delegates exercising certain functions. We are keen that the Society remains involved in this, possibly in a revised capacity.

There is support for uniform standard settling and increased uniformity, but elements of the package are already causing concern.

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The package, as released, included a Regulatory Impact Statement and ACIL Tasman Consultants report; the latter not considered very helpful.

We are currently looking at the financial issues both at a local and national level. The costs of the new system, not yet fully quantified, are of concern; NSW and Victorian members of the Task Force are currently looking at funding issues.

We are closely examining the disciplinary and costs provisions in particular.

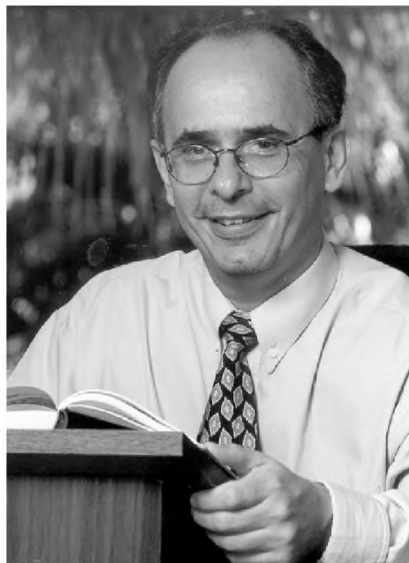
We are working on submissions on particular issues, with our interstate and local colleagues as appropriate.

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The Task Force is already meeting to consider results of the consultation process and a report will be made to the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General before going back to COAG, probably later in the year.

The election timetable may affect this process.

This will be the Society's major issue over the next period but there are a number of other important (and perhaps more important) matters



A dapper Mr. Steve Southwood

to consider.

August 20 will see the retirement sittings for the Chief Justice, Brian R Martin, who announced his retirement recently. He was a fine Chief and made a major impact on the practice of law and justice generally. It is hoped that Territory-based grandchildren will mean he will be available to serve on the Bench when he has some time available.

The 2010 Annual Dinner will be a farewell for Him.

June 29 sees special sittings of the Family Court to welcome the new Federal Magistrate, Leanne Turner.

FM Janet Terry will now complete her "term" in the Territory which began as a Government officer in 1977 and included successful spells

in Government and private practice. We wish her well in Newcastle.

I was personally very sorry to note the retirement through ill-health from practice of senior Cridlands MB lawyer David Farquhar. He has our support as he fights illness but whose contribution to the profession and respect in which he is held can be readily acknowledged.

This edition of *Balance* contains obituaries for Ian Tranthem, formerly the senior practitioner at Darwin Community Legal Centre and a real charter of the profession.

I would like to acknowledge the work put into the successful Law Week by the staff of the Secretariat, Suzie, Sophie and Qarenne in particular. Practising Certificate renewal is well underway and has, I think being going smoothly. Also thanks to Roxy in particular.

What other challenges are ahead?

I would specifically mention the release of the finds of the Child Protection Inquiry, which is putting forward release of its report to September 2010. The Society did a submission, which should shortly be available for public release, and I thank members of the Family Law Committee for their considered input.

Also the latest Intervention developments will have a major impact on the profession and clients.

I wish you all the best as we head to 2010-2011. ●