

Looking Forward Looking Back

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Many people who come into the Council Room are impressed and sometimes amazed at the pictures of the Darwin Law Courts. They were taken in the early 1960s (based on the picture of the 1960 FB Holden parked outside). The Darwin Court Houses may have been former army huts (known as Sidney Williams Huts) which are a world away from the impressive Supreme Court that is now one of the most notable and attractive buildings in Darwin.

The Alice Springs Court House of the time, a small building, is now a museum. Whilst the current Alice Springs Law Courts building is criticised it is a significant improvement on the previous one.

May 2011 will see the celebration of centenary of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory and this edition of *Balance* features information on some of the highlights. I was thinking of the changes that have occurred when visiting Bathurst and Deniliquin over the Christmas Holiday period. Both are pleasant and historic New South Wales country towns probably now, best known for hosting some of Australia's iconic October events:

In Bathurst's case the Mount Panorama car races and in Deniliquin's case the original and best Ute Muster. Both have and still use, for judicial purposes, palatial Court Houses built in the 1800s possibly when both centres had

visions of being bigger and more important than they subsequently became.

Whilst the story of the Northern Territory Supreme Court is, in some senses, relatively recent it has had some interesting moments and has prevailed over some of Australia's most famous cases.

The issue of Rural, Remote and Regional practitioners is the cover story in this month's edition of *Balance*. It features articles from the Law Council of Australia and myself from the perspective of a "baby boomer" practitioner who has been in the Territory for a number of years and Sophie Anderson, the Society's project officer on the Northern Territory Young Lawyers perspective.

It also features an article on long term practitioner and winner of the 2010 Law Council of Australia President's medal, Colin McDonald QC, who has had an interesting, as well as eminent legal career.

Further comments on RRR issues are welcome.

Late December 2010 saw the release of the proposed Legal Profession National Law and Legal Profession Rules. These will be considered at the February 2011 COAG Meeting. Whilst there are some areas of concern and issues not fully worked though such as funding, there are many improvements on the original version. As I write this article we

are currently putting together some comments on the package to go to the Law Council of Australia and Northern Territory Government.

A copy of the proposed Australian Solicitors Conduct Rules has been circulated.

An exposure draft and explanatory paper relating to the Northern Territory's adoption of the Uniform Evidence Act (UEA) has been released, with comments due by 31 March 2011. This is a significant initiative and its likely adoption will see the Northern Territory catch up with a number of other jurisdictions. The Society is currently examining the material and will make comments by the due date. It is also scheduling CPD's for the information of the profession.

We have also started detailed work on the Professional Indemnity Insurance renewal process. One question I have been asked is the impact of the floods on the renewal. Currently we don't know, but we may have a preliminary idea shortly

I enjoyed seeing so many of you at the Opening of the Legal Year lunch and dinner. Whilst we did not have a religious service or special sittings this year, the lunch and dinner give the profession an opportunity to get together and hear the views of the new Chief Justice on what lies ahead in a very busy 2011. ●