

Sometimes it is put in the person's belongings and only found later. Technically, the person has not been charged while in custody but, has the intent of the legislation been complied with in the circumstances?

Under the *Motor Accident Compensation Act*, an officer in the Territory Insurance Office can make a decision about whether or not a person can receive certain payments for expenses for treatment, or to modify a residence, because of a disability. The Act specifically states that the decision-maker is not required to give any reasons for a decision. A right of review is provided for however, without knowing the reasons for the original decision if a request is denied the exercise of that right is handicapped, if not illusory.

I am sure that the Northern Australian Aboriginal Justice Association would be in a position to provide many examples of bureaucratic disregard for civil liberties, as could

a number of other organisations and individuals locally. As Dr. Kristine Klugman, President of Civil Liberties Australia, says:

*"Groups like ours are able to speak up for the individual against bullies and bureaucrats who treat 'little' people with contempt. Often we can get a system or procedure fixed that otherwise would be buried or ignored. One man or woman's complaint doesn't get much response, but when it comes from an organisation like ours, known for standing up for people's rights and liberties, the authorities usually take more notice."*

The people of the Territory need a local voice that speaks out about civil liberties. Indeed, the existence of a civil liberties body is a mark of the maturity of a society and of the robustness of its democracy.

The Northern Territory has aspirations to become a State but, for those aspirations to be realised, Statehood will need the acceptance and electoral support of two thirds of the Australian States and the majority of the Australian people. The Northern Territory will be called on to demonstrate that it has strength of accountability in its governing institutions, a maturity of democratic process and a framework capable of supporting independent decision making that maintains an acceptable level of human and intellectual capital. Most importantly, the Territory will need to raise the profile and the level of its civil and human rights record for it to be considered by the rest of Australia as deserving of Statehood. The establishment of a Civil Liberties Council is, in my view, a fundamental and necessary step towards building maturity into the Territory's progress towards Statehood. ●

## Becoming a partner in a law firm: study probes key factors

**H**igh billings and working all hours - is that all it takes to "make partner" in a law firm?

Practising lawyers are invited to share their promotion experience in a new study by a Queensland University of Technology (QUT) doctorate candidate.

Elisabeth Hetterich is investigating the factors that influence law firms when choosing their future practice partners.

Past research has found law firms promote according to certain "patterns" of behaviour displayed by their junior lawyers.

Some of these behaviours would seem obvious such as high billings and putting in long hours, however, other studies suggest different

factors come into play such as the amount of leave male and female practitioners take.

Ms Hetterich is looking for the effect of certain behaviours on promotion outcomes including the effect of taking extended leave and working flexible hours.

She is interested in the taking of leave for an extended period, say, for a year to look after a parent, do extra study or to go overseas.

Long periods of leave could actually be beneficial to the firm when the person returns enriched and renewed by their experiences, but it is not clear yet whether it can affect promotion to partner.

Ms Hetterich, who practised as a solicitor before spending most of her career in law firm practice

management, is now working full-time on her Doctor of Business Administration at QUT.

She has seen the trend, borne out in the literature, that people are leaving the legal profession early, particularly young lawyers under 30 and wants to find out why that is.

Ms Hetteridge is also looking at the effect of mentoring and how the career of a mentored lawyer progresses.

She is seeking lawyers who hold current practising certificates to complete an anonymous, online survey on circumstances surrounding their last promotion.

To participate in the survey, go to [www.lawsurvey.com.au](http://www.lawsurvey.com.au). ●