

Newly Elected President

Tass Liveris

President, Law Society Northern Territory

Being elected President of the Law Society Northern Territory (Society) on 29 October 2014 was, together with being admitted to the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory in 2002 the proudest moment of my career. Along with great pride, on both occasions I was overwhelmed by feelings of privilege, responsibility and impending challenge. As an incoming President I am extremely conscious of how vitally important it is for the Society to be the pre-eminent voice supporting and advancing the legal profession in the Northern Territory and of the guiding influence that vision must have on the work the Society does.

I acknowledge my predecessor in this role, Peggy Cheong and congratulate her on an extremely successful presidential term. As a member of the Society's Council Peggy was a tireless servant of the Territory legal profession. As one of the Society's longest serving Presidents Peggy was a consistently sound tactician and careful strategist who led with commitment and distinction. Her appointment in late-2014 to the Law Council of Australia's (LCA) International Strategy Committee for 2015/16 is testament to these attributes, as is her ongoing membership of many of the Society's committees. I look forward to continuing to work with Peggy as a friend, mentor and colleague in meeting the future challenges of the Society.

These include the advancement of a national profession and the uniform law which is set to commence in New South Wales and Victoria on 1 July 2015, increasing pressures to enhance access to justice and increasing competition in the continuing professional development market. In the Northern Territory where approximately only 1% of the nation's legal practitioners ply their trade, the vast majority in major centres, these are all extremely important issues which have the potential to significantly impact on the self-funded, self-regulated local profession.

In my view a collaborative approach is called for. To that end on 2 November 2014 the new Council set strategic goals that include improving engagement with the

regions, enhancing service delivery to the regions and developing communication and relations with members and stakeholders. These are challenging goals that I want to make a hallmark of my term as President. I look forward to engaging with the profession at large about all of the issues that are important to you and your practices at both local and general levels.

I was initially drawn to a legal career because I believe in the power of words and literature. I am also continually fascinated by the unique way our legal system permeates right through the community and the defining role it plays in society. I spent my key early practice days as a commonwealth and then state prosecutor in Western Australia; relatively niche practices but

ones which gave me far reaching teachings and I am grateful to be the beneficiary of a prosecutorial apprenticeship.

In 2008 a return to Darwin coincided with a departure from criminal law when the partners of Clayton Utz were prepared to give me an opportunity to launch a late-ish change of direction into civil litigation. I am thankful for that because not only did it introduce me to a wide new spectrum of practice, it brought into sharp focus for me the vast range of issues that revolve around access to civil justice and the enormous ongoing challenges they present for stakeholders in the justice system. The opportunity was also pivotal to my move to the independent bar on 1 February 2010.

Since that time I have always run an extremely wide, but mostly civil practice. I enjoy the diversity of a broad practice, from small claims and minor civil disputes to larger commercial cases and worker's compensation, tribunals, employment and immigration, a little bit of crime and violence restraining orders. I feel that my regular involvement in a lot of practice areas gives me insight into the issues of the day for many legal practitioners and I am hopeful that this places me well to fulfil the role of President and all that it entails.

I also like to run. On 9 November 2014 I joined roughly 13,000 other people from all over the world and travelled to Marathonas in Greece and then ran back to Athens.

It is the bruiser of a course that Olympic marathoners ran in 1896

and 2004 and which traces the approximately 2,500 year-old history of the marathon back to its origins at the point where legend, mythology and history blur. With a finale like no other inside the grand, all marble Panathinaikon Stadium, completing the run was in all respects a great, proud and overwhelming achievement for me.

A lot has been written and said about running as a metaphor for life and when all (most) of the clichés are suspended it is basically true that...

...like life the marathon can be difficult and challenging and a test of resilience and resolve; however with perseverance, focus and determination, step by step and sometimes slowly success can ultimately be achieved.

I think the point is apposite in relation to legal practice, where the pressure on firms, organisations and individuals comes in many forms and is often unrelenting. The Society continues to address issues concerning attrition rates in the profession, mental health and wellbeing, legal education and the supply rates of graduates into the legal services market. As a membership-based body it is essential that the Society is in tune with these and all of the many other issues that are relevant to practitioners and continuing to build on the vast body of work that has been done in these areas is an issue of great importance to me.

In responding to these challenges I am also looking forward to the opportunity to work collaboratively with Duncan McConnel in his role as the 2015 President of the LCA. Duncan is only the second President appointed from the legal profession in the Northern Territory, following Hon Justice Stephen Southwood who was President in 2004/2005. Duncan is a proud Territorian who will serve the LCA and the Northern Territory well in the very important work the LCA does both domestically and internationally. Duncan is a former Society President; we are extremely proud of his achievements and congratulate him on his election.

These days governments develop policy quickly and in large volume, the law changes rapidly and new issues are constantly arising. This means the work of the Society is never complete, a reality that is as exciting as it is daunting, as is the integral part that the legal profession plays in a fair and just society. I look forward to the year ahead and have every confidence that together, step by step, we can continue to strive to achieve our vision. ●

I can be contacted through the Society or at William Forster Chambers. You can also follow me on Twitter.

 @LSNTPresident