

Review: Dragon Dictate

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I am a survivor.

I have entered the lair of the dragon and lived to tell the tale. Noting the fierce response that can erupt when a 'labour saving device' doesn't work to plan (don't mention VoIP phones) my recent engagement with Dragon Naturally Speaking Professional 13.0 legal edition was relatively bloodless.

I'd like to say it was because I knew what I was getting into and thus set aside copious amounts of time, but it is just as likely that I was sufficiently well medicated due to recent hand surgery that the '10 minute set up' didn't faze me at all—I had all day because I couldn't type and couldn't file-note my phone calls but for a highlighter clutched in my left claw (hopefully never to be annexed to an affidavit). So the set up took a few hours but I'm not complaining, just managing expectations. The joys of hands free typing are worth the time to install and train.

I guess my motivation was high (see hand surgery above). I recommend you approach this task in the morning. Not the morning that you are due to file a 25 page affidavit or your client's case will be dismissed, another morning. I also don't recommend Saturday as 'the morning' as you need to have on hand your administrator privileges (if you have to ask what these are then maybe you should not be installing software on your computer). You will also need to know where to save the application when prompted.

I was first introduced to Dragon Dictate as a junior lawyer some years ago. Whilst at the time I could see the advantages for the senior members of the firm with their Dictaphones almost rusted to their hands but it was difficult to see how it was going to compete with the computer generation. The competition was fierce. I completed primary school with the basics of touch typing. From this foundation I lurched through two university degrees, an attempt at writing for the theatre, editing and writing lengthy reports; and now, my word processing skills would be described as advanced.

In 2014 I installed an earlier, non-professional version of Dragon Dictate (I got someone to do it for me). It had changed significantly with lots of cool new tricks such as using your voice to click between email and word. Unfortunately my work was so interrupted that I didn't get the chance to give it a proper run. If it had been a race however my speed and accuracy would give typing the podium finish.

For Professional version 13 the outcome is clear cut, it types way faster than I can and with little training its accuracy was up there (expecting to get better with more use). All the cool tricks are there but with an even more user friendly interface. There's also the comforting suggestion that although you can use your voice to instruct the program to make you a cup of coffee, you don't have to (I'm not sure it can make a cup of coffee, but also I am reassured that I'm not a failure for not testing this and many other cool features). The speed is definitely there and the headset is definitely a better experience too. You will find it enjoyable and easy to use and well worth the time to train.

Fortunately my hand is recovered. My Dragon is curled up on my desk (not in a drawer however), ready to launch any time I like and will protect me from future unemployment should I lose my hands in a gardening accident. Results will definitely vary according to the amount of typing you do but it is a worthy investment even if only used intermittently. Be prepared for user-profile upgrades to take some time but in full flight its nothing short of magic.

A grant, an art auction and a Supreme Court win

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David Morris

Principle Lawyer / Executive
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The Environmental Defenders Office Northern Territory (EDONT) secures sufficient funds to stay open for the next twelve months.

A functioning justice system must be accessible to all in society. And justice should not differ, either in substance or availability, because of the size of one's bank balance. As Canadian Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin once stated

“[Access to justice] is a fundamental right, not an accessory.”

There is no legitimate justification for distinguishing between environmental matters and others when it comes to the denial of access to justice. But that is exactly the effect of the Commonwealth Government's cuts to Environmental Defenders Offices' funding. The cuts have reduced the ability for community members to understand and access the rights and remedies available to them under mainstream laws applying to environmental matters.

The cuts eradicated education programs designed to explain the often-complex array of environmental laws applicable in this country and they eliminated the opportunity for many to use the law to oppose projects, which they believed, had an unacceptable impact on the environment.

The cuts saw this office come within about a month of closing its doors. Fortunately, a combination of a grant, an art auction and a Supreme Court win has seen us manage to keep the wolves from the door; at least the end of this financial year.

The grant The Law Society Public Purposes Trust approved a one-off operational grant for \$45 455. This funding, importantly, is un-tied funding which allows the office to function properly as a community legal centre. That is, the funding enables us to respond to community requests for advice and representation, rather than having to deliver any kind of particular project.

This grant is but another demonstration of the Law Society NT's wonderful long-term support of the EDONT. Previously, the Law Society NT Public Purposes Trust has provided grants allowing the EDO to develop extensive online resources, fact sheets and tool kits covering most areas of NT environmental law. Most recently the Law Society NT Public Purposes Trust provided a grant, which funded our extensive outreach program that took place during the 2014/15 financial year.

The EDONT thanks the NT legal profession for demonstrating in a very tangible way its absolute conviction with regard to the provision of access to justice for the Territory community.

The art auction The EDONT experienced an amazing wave of client and community support in the face of our impending closure. For those of you unaware, the EDONT recently ran its (hopefully inaugural) Aboriginal Art Auction. The event was launched as an official NT Law Society Law Week Event at Outstation Gallery in Parap, thanks to the incredible generosity of Matt Ward. The event then ran online for a month until the event finale in Sydney on 3 June (Mabo Day) hosted by Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers.

It was a unique event made possible due to the generosity of our clients and the art centres in the communities where we have undertaken work (and even some where we have not). Forty-seven pieces of stunning art were provided as part of the auction, the idea for which was conceived by some of our clients from the Borroloola region who were concerned that our office would shut.

The event generated a significant buzz in parts of the legal and environmental scenes in Darwin and Sydney. This buzz included national media coverage, an example of which is the little write up below in the Financial Review's 'Hearsay' gossip section.

Notables bid for collectibles North of Whyalla, it is not singing but painting that has been deployed to help the Environment Defenders Office in the Northern Territory. Its federal funding was cut at the end of 2013. An online auction for more than 40 donated artworks from Aboriginal artists is ongoing. Gilbert + Tobin will host the finale in Sydney on Wednesday night. The auction has already raised \$20,000-plus for the environmental non-profit. Among current top bidders elbowing for one of the impressive works is Federal Court judge Melissa Perry, Australian Bar Association president Fiona McLeod SC and former NSW Bar Association president Phillip Boulton SC. Apologies if Hearsay has created a little more competition. All in the name of a good cause.

The Art Auction generated just over \$60 000 and after associated costs were covered the event raised over \$40 000 for the EDONT; a result that far exceeded our expectations.

A grant, an art auction and a Supreme Court win

The EDONT is extremely grateful to Nancy McDinny, Stuart Hoosan, Jacky Green, Myra Rora, Matt Ward, Injalak Arts, Buku-Larrngay Mulka Arts Centre Yirrkala, Maningrida Arts and Culture, Ikuntjii Artists, Ngukurr Arts Aboriginal Corporation, Munupi Art, Waralungku Arts, Warlukurlangu Artists of Yuendumu, Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd, Larrakia Nation, Bula' Bula Arts Aboriginal Corporation and Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers.

A Supreme Court win In May of this year, Justice Hiley handed down his decision in *The Environment Centre Northern Territory (NT) Incorporated v The Minister for Land Resource Management* [2015] NTSC 30, which related to water extraction licence decisions. Our client was successful in that proceeding and we were able to recoup the legal costs we incurred representing the Environment Centre NT. The EDONT would like to acknowledge and express our enormous gratitude to our Counsel in that matter, Alistair Wyvill SC and Nick Kelly.

The combination of these three events gave the EDONT the twelve-month funding certainty that we set as a pre-requisite to continuing past 30 June 2015.

The EDONT would also like to recognise some other significant contributions that enabled us to continue operating during the 14/15 financial year in the absence of Commonwealth Government funding. During the 14/15 financial year, The EDONT received (and continues to receive) wonderful support from the Charles Darwin University Law Faculty. We have also received fantastic support from the Jumbunna, Indigenous House of Learning, who helped produce the video used in our December 2014 crowd funding appeal.

Additionally, the EDONT has been fortunate to receive many donations, some sizable, during the 14/15 financial year and we would like to thank all of our donors.

The EDO and the Northern Territory – a unique context

The presence of an EDO is important in all states and territories, but the NT's unique context makes it even more critical here. The NT comprises slightly less than twenty per cent of Australia's landmass. The population

is just shy of 250 000 people, with over twenty-five per cent of them being Indigenous Australians with English as a second or more language. The NT also has a fragmented and poor legislative framework for various aspects relevant to environmental law and a wealth of natural and exploitable resources.

Both in spite of and due to its unique features, the NT faces significant environmental challenges in the form of mining, petroleum, agriculture, aquaculture, urban and other developments. In 2012, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People, James Anaya stated:

“Natural resource extraction and other major development projects in or near Indigenous territories are one of the most significant sources of the abuse of the rights of Indigenous peoples worldwide.”

I must say that this was not something I had considered a lot before I began working at the EDONT. In fact, before I began working at the EDONT it was difficult for me to imagine the day-to-day impact environmental legislation has on the lives of some Australians. Growing up in inner city Melbourne, I was impacted little, if at all, by laws that regulate mining, groundwater and pollution. I was certainly not impacted at all by legislation concerning sacred sites, land rights and native title. I was interested in those things of course, in a kind of academic way, and I have always been passionate about the protection of wild places. That is why I took the EDO job in the Northern Territory; to help people use the law to protect what remains a largely pristine part of our country.

