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The clock on the silo says 11 degrees

On 18 October 2015, I was proud to complete the Melbourne marathon, a beautiful, scenic and mostly flat springtime run with a particularly grand finish. The MCG, the imposing and colossal stadium that it is, was in sight for several of the hardest final kilometres of the run, although the pain momentarily washed away as I entered the grounds and ran a thrilling lap of the hallowed turf to complete the marathon.

It was very exciting to join professional athletes, the likes of Commonwealth Games medallists and Olympic Games qualifying hopefuls at the starting line. However, at events of this sort it is the everyday people in the field that are absolutely inspirational; people running for causes, people with physical disabilities, barefoot runners, pram pushers, asylum seekers and refugees, runners of all experience levels, all ages, all descriptions.

Although running is generally very individual, there is something wonderful about the collegiality that naturally forms in the thick of the field, behind the elites; the support and encouragement shared by a large group of people with the common objective of completing an endurance event. As people push themselves to and through their limits, they help carry others along with them at the same time, which is especially important when 'keeping on' starts to become really difficult.

In very many ways, much the same is true of the 550 or so of us in legal practice in the Northern Territory and the work of the Society. A year ago, I started out my presidency with the expectation that the volunteer contribution of the membership would be central to success.

As it has turned out, the support of the volunteers and their common objective of improving the legal profession has been one of the more enduring characteristics of my year as president. Without the membership's commitment to collegiality and the efforts of our volunteers, the voice of the Society in supporting and advancing the legal profession in the Northern Territory would not sound as loudly, as far or as effectively or persuasively as it does.

The last 12 months have been extremely challenging and busy for the Secretariat and the Council, but with the unfailing support and assistance of the wider profession, it has also been a very successful time. The notable highlights include:

- The Society moved into new premises at 9 Cavenagh Street, which was officially opened by the Attorney-General on 11 March 2015. As many members have seen, the new space is more functional than the old one and being able to hold CPDs at the Society has facilitated the enhancement of the engagement between the profession and the Society.

The Society has also improved the provision of CPD to the profession and regional engagement, including increasing the number of CPD presentations that are streamed across the Territory.

- The Society was amongst the national leaders in the important area of diversity. Not only did the Council approve the Society's *Celebrating Diversity Strategy* on 30 April 2015, the Society was one of the first organisations to adopt the Law Council of Australia's (LCA) Diversity and Equality Charter.

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- The advancements in diversity and collegiality are apparent in much of the Society's work, advocacy and in events and functions, including very successful Opening of the Legal Year, Law Week and Mental Health Week events.
- On 30 April 2015, the Council approved a policy for applications for exemption from the requirement to be insured under the *Legal Profession Act*, which was applied in the Society's consideration of the 2015/16 applications.
- In June 2015, the quarterly meetings of the Conference of Law Societies and the LCA directors were held in the Northern Territory for the first time and the Society's Annual Dinner was brought forward to coincide with that event.

This was a rare and great privilege for the Northern Territory and all the more special for it to happen during Duncan McConnel's LCA presidential year. The Secretariat exceeded all expectations in organising and coordinating these events at a very busy time of the year and made the June 2015 meetings and functions one of the real local and LCA highlights of 2015.

- The Society was a key contributor to a national legal aid funding campaign, which notably resulted in the Northern Territory Government investing an additional \$1 million into legal aid for the 2015/16 financial year. This meant that the NT Legal Aid Commission did not have to cut out or reduce services, particularly in the regions, which would otherwise have been left without legal aid.

- The Society rebranded, including developing a new logo, a new website and new styles and formats to *Balance and Practitioner*.
- Judge Young was appointed to the Federal Circuit Court in July 2015 to replace Judge Harland, who was transferred to Melbourne in February 2015. Judge Young's appointment provided great stability in the registry after a period of several months without a resident judge of the court in the Territory. The court also moved from the premises at 80 Mitchell Street and into a stylishly refurbished Court 8 at the Supreme Court, with an equally stylish and modern registry on the ground floor.
- The Society was a supporter of the Language and the Law Conference II, which was held in the Supreme Court in Darwin in August 2015. I was very privileged to be able to deliver a presentation to the conference about the *Indigenous Protocols for Lawyers Second Edition*, which was launched in Alice Springs during Law Week.

The Society was proud to have the protocols described by conference presenter Professor Diana Eades as "groundbreaking". In a big conference year, including the annual Family Law Conference and the CLANT Conference in Bali, the Language and the Law Conference II was one of the standout conferences in 2015.



- The Society provided consultation input and advocacy in many areas including:
 - Appearing at the Northern Territory sittings of the Senate Inquiry into domestic violence.
 - Youth detention at the old Berrimah Prison and practitioner issues at the new Darwin Correctional Centre, together with imprisonment rates and issues more generally.
 - Substantial reforms to the courts and tribunals structure in the Territory.
 - Reforms to key legislation, including the workers compensation regime.
 - Consultation on issues such as the academic pre-requisites for admission to the legal profession and the uniform law rules.

All of this is a mere overview. For a small sized and busy profession, I am continually impressed by the level of engagement it has with the Society and the resulting breadth and quality of the Society's interactions with stakeholders at all levels and I can't thank everyone enough for their valuable support and other contributions during the year.

I wish the Society's next Council and the Secretariat well in working together with the profession to maintain high standards and meet all of the forthcoming challenges. I hope to be part of it all for another year, but I want to thank everyone around me and especially those close to me for their unfailing assistance and support.

The last year has been a consistently great privilege and is one of my proudest career achievements. It has been challenging, testing and it has been a period of great learning and development for me. I have also enjoyed every day of it and I hope to be able to build on the work of the past year into the next.

Otherwise, 2015 has been a very relentless and busy year in practice for everyone. I wish everybody a safe, relaxing and enjoyable festive and holiday season with their families and loved ones and a prosperous 2016.