

News and updates

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Happy New Year, and welcome to 2018! I hope that everyone had a relaxing break over the festive period. Having now resumed work, I find myself more enthused than usual at this time of the year. I suspect this is as a result of the challenges and exciting opportunities ahead in my role as President.

I'd like to pause for a moment to acknowledge and thank the members of the 2016/17 Council and committees for their contribution to the Society. These volunteers are essential to the running of the Society and their service to the members is to be commended by the profession.

As this is my first President's column for *Balance* I thought I would take this opportunity to tell you a little about myself and outline the Society's goals for 2018.

I became enthusiastic about studying law after quickly realising in high school that science and maths weren't really for me. I was lucky enough to have parents who supported my desire to become a lawyer, but in truth, my parents were simply happy that I decided to go to university. Both my parents migrated from Cyprus to Darwin in the 1940s

and they worked hard to instil in their children the importance of obtaining an education and the opportunities that come from a tertiary education.

I was born in Darwin and I'm proud to say that I completed my primary, secondary and tertiary studies in Darwin. I'm a graduate of the (then) NT University and I'm lucky to have been taught by the likes of Ned Aughterson, Bill Herd, Chief Justice Grant, Judge Blokland, Judge Oliver, Sue Phillips and a number of other well-respected practitioners in the NT.

I was fortunate to obtain my articles with the then Withnall Maley & Co where I had the privilege of serving my Master solicitor, John Withnall, a brilliant practitioner with one of the sharpest, strategic minds and a genuine passion for the law. John taught me the important lessons: quality over quantity, and be bold when fighting for your clients. I continued with Withnall Maley & Co after my articles and had the pleasure of continuing to work with John Withnall, Peter Maley, Sally Pfitzner and Rob Jobson (and several other brilliant lawyers) and developed a practice in criminal law and civil litigation.

After five years, it was time to *spread my wings* so to speak, and I moved to De Silva Hebron where I was able to expand my civil litigation practice to encompass and develop a medical negligence practice. I had the pleasure of working with David De Silva, Susan Porter and Merran Short and many other great practitioners. I also had the privilege of working with brilliant barristers who, one by one, accepted appointments to the Bench. It was during my seven years at De Silva Hebron that I developed the knowledge and confidence to move on and establish my own practice in 2009 with my business partners.

I have worked and continue to work with exceptional practitioners and I'm grateful that my partners have supported my continued involvement with the Society.

Being in private practice, it's easy to forget that being a legal practitioner is more than just running a business. My involvement with the Society over the past six years serves as a reminder that our society cannot function without a legal profession advocating for people's rights and upholding the rule of law.



That's probably enough about me. Let's move forward with the Society's plans for 2018.

December 2017 proved to be a busy month.

Firstly, I attended the Law Council of Australia quarterly directors meeting in Canberra. The meeting coincided with the Law Council's Annual General Meeting where I'm delighted to say that our very own local practitioner, and former Society President, Tass Liveris was elected to the Executive. In the context of there being a contest for the three executive positions, with six nominees, Mr Liveris' achievement should be congratulated.

Secondly, the Council met to reflect on the Strategic Plan which was adopted in 2017. During that meeting we were able to revisit existing goals, review the Society's progress and develop additional objectives to respond to current challenges facing the local legal profession. This year the Society will focus on:

- Access to justice and advocating for funding for our legal aid bodies
- Advocating on issues of law reform in the Territory
- Educating members about the role of emerging technology and the rise of artificial intelligence
- Supporting and mentoring young practitioners
- Promoting, protecting and defending our legal profession
- Continuing the conversation about judicial conduct

Thirdly, the Society's Christmas drinks in Darwin and Alice Springs were well-attended by the profession and was a great way to kick off the festive period.

The Society is also busy organising an exciting calendar of

events, a notable event being Law Week which will take place between 14 and 20 May 2018. A diverse range of events are planned that will not only interest the legal profession but will engage the community. Watch this space!

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the Law Society Northern Territory. In anticipation of reaching this milestone, the Society formed a 50th anniversary working group last year to plan and coordinate Gala Dinners in Darwin and Alice Springs which will be held at the end of August/early September 2018. Keep a look out for your 'save the date' invitations! In addition to the dinners, historians and authors Peter and Sheila Forrest have been engaged to document the fifty-year history of the Society and the Territory profession to mark the occasion and the book, all things going well, will be launched at the Gala dinner in Darwin.

There will unquestionably be many challenges which the legal profession will have to face in 2018. The Society recognises that it is important to unite the profession and, where possible, support the different needs of our diverse members and assist with challenges facing the profession. With that in mind, I welcome any suggestions from the members as to how the Society can better respond to your needs and the needs of the profession generally.

On a final note, may 2018 be a successful and prosperous year for us all.

I can be contacted through the Society or at MSP Legal.