

OFF BALANCE BY PRESIDENT JOHN STIRK

The big news of late was the Opening of the Supreme Court in Darwin.

It was an historic occasion and we were honoured by the presence of many distinguished jurists. The opening was attended by David Miles, President of the Law Council of Australia, Peter Levy, Secretary-General of the LCA, and John Marsden, President of the New South Wales Law Society.

From our perspective, the culmination of the opening was the Law Ball which attracted some 120 people.

Six hundred dollars was raised for the Alicia Johnson Memorial Trust with prizes graciously donated by Paspaley Pearling, the Sheraton Hotel and Holtze Cottage. I take this opportunity to thank all those organisations for their support.

I would also like to thank Neville Henwood,

Secretary and Social Convenor for the Society, for the organisation and success of the ball, and Jodie Markwell from the Society who helped with the setting up and running the show on the night.

On administrative issues, Council has established a sub-committee to look at the feasibility and mechanics of a Legal Aid Contingency Fund.

The Committee comprises Richard Coates (Chair), Hugh Bradley, Garry Schneider and Alan Lindsay.

The Registrar-General has invited representation from the Society on the Course Advisory Committee for conveyancing agents.

Peter James has accepted the position and has already attended the first meeting.

Many practitioners will know that Council is reviewing the Professional Conduct Rules.

Included in that is a review of advertising guidelines.

When the review has been completed, practitioners will be circulated with the draft rules for comment.

This is the final issue of *Balance* for this year and I think it is appropriate to look back on Law Society activities and achievements this year.

1991 has been a year of change.

Ted Rowe retired after 11 years at the Society.

Jim Campbell was appointed Executive Officer and Robyn Smith his Assistant.

The turnover of work at the Society has increased considerably, our public image and profile has been raised, member services have been put together, complaints are being dealt with quickly and members are kept informed of activities and events affecting them through this publication, bulletins and other circular material. There are, of course, more improvements to be made.

One of our greatest problems appears to be communicating with practitioners in larger firms and organisations.

We introduced a bulletin format which was designed for circulation to all practitioners.

Whilst this system has worked with smaller firms, there are problems with larger firms and government departments — the bulletins seem to be buried in the bowels of the filing system and rarely see the light of day. This results in a number of disgruntled practitioners claiming they were not informed of an event.

It is noteworthy that the majority of complaints come from areas where membership of the Society is extremely low.

It is a curious situation when disgruntled practitioners claim they were not informed of an event by a Society of which they are not a member.

A diary note: the Opening of the Legal Year will take place at the Uniting Church in Darwin on Monday February 3 and the Roman Catholic Church in Alice Springs on Wednesday February 5.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the people who have served on Council (90-91 and 91-92) this year. A Society such as ours is only as good as its Council and it is through Council's hard work that we have achieved results.

I'd also like to wish everyone the best for the festive season and the new year. I look forward to seeing everyone back on deck and refreshed at the Opening of the Legal Year.

LAW BALL PHOTOS

Proof sheets of photos taken at the Law Ball and the opening of the Supreme Court are available for perusal and orders for prints at Karlhuber Photographics, Edmunds Street, City.