

Supreme Court under pressure: judge needed

by the President, John Stirk

Justice Rice's retirement has overloaded the Supreme Court to the extent that practitioners cannot be sure of the availability of a judge to deal with interlocutory matters.

The duty judge system has all but vanished.

The Attorney-General has assured the Law Society that a replacement for Justice Rice is being sought.

However, with a number of substantial criminal matters soon to be listed, it appears that the Court will have to run at least two criminal courts for a substantial part of the next year.

There has been no announcement of an acting judge whilst Justice Nader is on long service leave.

While practitioners will be aware of the time constraints of finding suitable applicants, the inevitable delay will lead to further criticism of the judicial system by the public.

Law Week runs from April 28 to May 4. The Society has organised a programme for Darwin and Alice Springs. Full details are on the back page of this issue.

Harry Blackburn is speaking on The Media and the Law.

Anticipate this subject will lead to discussion in the respective responsibilities of practitioners, the police and the media, and the balancing of a right to a fair trial with the public's right to be informed.

Exhort you to attend the functions organised for Law Week.

The Society is currently seeking the views of practitioners in their needs for Continuing Legal Education.

Urge you to respond to the letter forwarded to you.

We are hopeful of providing sessions on a monthly basis and building a video library on areas of interest.

These matters require the input of all members.

The legal profession has the privilege of self-regulation -- it is our obligation to ensure our standards are maintained through Continuing Legal Education.

The CLE session on Local Court rules was well attended in both Darwin and Alice Springs.

The rules are currently being reviewed and any suggestions for improvement or modification should be made to Neville Henwood.

A Community Legal Centre for Casuarina is awaiting a home.

The Society's Public Purposes Trust has approved grants for the purchase of capital equipment.

The Attorney-General has been enthusiastic in his support for the plan.

Presently, suitable accommodation sites are being considered.

Any practitioners who can assist the Centre once it has found a home should contact Jenny Hardy (897533) or Alistair Wyvill (818322).

The first meeting of the Law Council of Australia in the Northern Territory took place over 22 and 23 March.

A Conference of Law Societies was held on the 24th.

Thanks must go to Kim Graves who has spent a number of years persuading the Law Council of the delights of Alice Springs, to Peter Robinson who encouraged Alice Springs practitioners to welcome the delegates, and to Max Horton for his reminiscences of the sublime practice of law in Alice under the tutelage of Barker, Martin and Everingham.

Finally, as a profession, we are the poorer with the passing of Kevin Murray QC.

Intellectual Property committee resurrected

The Council of the Queensland Law Society has reactivated its Intellectual Property Advisory Committee.

Noelene Straker, the Research Solicitor at the Society, said the Committee recognises the need for industrial and political debate about the commercial, legal and social treatment of intellectual property. She said the Committee also recognises the need for research and education in the area.

The Society is seeking expressions of interest or papers from people interested in this field.

Contact Noelene Straker, Queensland Law Society Inc, GPO Box 1785 Brisbane, 4001. Facsimile (07) 2335999, DX123.

Reforms for Federal Court help battlers

The federal government has moved to amend legislation to give groups with a common legal claim better and cheaper access to the Federal Court.

The Minister for Justice, Michael Tate, said the reforms could benefit shareholders who had suffered loss as a result of a misleading prospectus or stock market manipulation.

"This is a reform on behalf of many individual Australians, without great financial resources, who can be adversely affected by the actions of one company or organisation," he said.

"On the other hand, for the companies and organisations concerned, it could be a more efficient way to deal with legal disputes than the present alternative of facing a succession of individual cases."