

Attorneys agree on reform

The Standing Committee of Attorneys-General announced two major reforms following its meeting in July. The first reform is aimed at facilitating reciprocal admission to practise throughout the states and territories. The Attorneys agreed to work with relevant professional bodies in each jurisdiction to ensure:

the removal of impediments to reciprocal admission that weren't based on non-discriminating character, educational and practical training requirements; the harmonisation of relevant educational and practical training requirements, and; the adoption of a scheme allowing for reciprocal admission to be made without the ne-

cessity of personal attendance in court. The Attorneys said this decision reflected their recognition of the emergence of a "national" legal practice in Australia.

They said it would improve the flexibility in the legal labour market and reduce costs involved in admission to more than one jurisdiction.

The second reform is aimed at the development of uniform legislation to govern the practice of foreign law in Australia.

The Attorneys said this reform would improve opportunities for Australian businesses to obtain, within Australia, expert legal advice on the laws of countries with which they deal.

They said it will also facilitate the efforts of Australian lawyers to export their services overseas by ensuring that they can rely on principles of reciprocity.

Australian legal service exports are currently estimated to be worth \$100 million per annum with indicators suggesting they will reach \$1000 million in the next ten years.

The Attorneys said they would look to guidelines recently adopted by New South Wales and Victoria as a basis for developing uniform national legislation.

They said they expected the uniform scheme to be in place by the middle of next year.

COJI ready to examine the specifics

The first, wide-ranging phase of the Cost of Justice Inquiry by the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs appears to be completed. It is likely that the Committee will now concentrate on specific issues. The Committee has issued its first three discussion papers. The first is a general paper on the issues being considered, the second raising issues about legal costs and scales, and the third on contingency fees.

The Law Council of Australia will be responding to the papers in consultation with its constituent bodies.

The President of the LCA, Alex Chernov QC, recently listed for the Committee some issues on which there might be some concentration.

They included: administration of the courts, caseflow management and pre-trial procedures, court-annexed mediation, alternative dispute resolution, judicial training and the simplification of legislation.

Hewson's call to Australia 2000

The Federal Leader of the Opposition, John Hewson, has called for practitioners' input to a project called Australia 2000.

The project is a Liberal Party initiative which is designed to give professional and other groups a "direct say in shaping Australia's future into the next century."

"The project is about creating a vision for Australia, providing leadership to overcome our nation's current problems, building community understanding of the need for change and encouraging all Australians to be involved in the process of change," Dr Hewson said.

He said the programme was launched in August last year and, since then, thousands of replies from interest groups, industry and business leaders have been received.

Dr Hewson said a report will be published later this year and policy issues conferences will be held in cities and regional centres in the latter part of this year and early next year.

"The information will be examined when writing a complete Liberal Party policy statement," he said.

Practitioners interested in contributing should put their views in writing through the Executive Officer of the Society, GPO Box 2388 Darwin.

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Contributions from practitioners are welcome.