

Perron on QCs

appointment not a matter for Executive

The Chief Minister, Marshall Perron, has called for an end to government endorsement of the appointment of Queen's Counsel.

Mr Perron put the idea to the last Special Premiers Conference.

He said the current system is considered outmoded, archaic and anti-competitive and is thought to artificially increase the cost of legal services.

"Government has no role in endorsing the appointment of eminent doctors, accountants or engineers, yet Executive Council is regarded as a rubber stamp by the legal profession -- expected to confer special status on members of the profession on the nomination of other members of the profession," Mr Perron said.

He said questions of standing and eminence in the professions should be a matter for the professions, not for government.

In an attachment to his media release, Mr Perron cited the 1969 incident in which the South Australian government rejected one of three nominees recommended for appointment by the Chief Justice on the grounds that the nominee, Elliott Johnston, had po-

litical affiliations with the Communist Party.

The Chief Justice then withdrew all three nominations, although the two about whom no objection was raised were subsequently appointed on the recommendation of a majority of Supreme Court judges.

Mr Perron's call has received a mixed response from the law societies around the country.

Following Mr Perron's call, the President of the Law Council of Australia wrote to the state premiers and chief ministers urging informed consideration of the issue and offered the LCA's assistance in providing detailed background material to the premiers.

Mr Miles said QCs are a small group of advocates who specialise in handling complex cases.

He said it would be quite wrong to base a decision on the misconception that most QCs charge high fees, or on the equally misconceived view that ending government endorsement of QCs who appear in one case in a hundred in the superior courts would have an impact on the cost of legal services.

Building Branch changes

From 1 August this year the Building Branch will not provide structural design compliance certification.

All applications for building work after that date must be accompanied by certification from a registered/approved practising private sector structural engineer.

All Building Branch offices will have available a current listing of registered engineers. Engineers who are not registered may register at any time or provide computations in support of the design certificate.

Aboriginal consumer education

The Northern Territory government has appointed a person with specific responsibility for consumer education in NT Aboriginal communities.

The appointment is the result of an agreement between the Northern Territory office of Consumer Affairs and the Commonwealth Trade Practices Commission.

Announcing the agreement, the Minister responsible, Daryl Manzie, said he was pleased because there is a massive workload for consumer education on Aboriginal communities.

Dawson is new OCA executive

Alan Dawson has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Courts Administration.

Mr Dawson will replace Jim Howard who was seconded from the Federal Court to set up the OCA.

Mr Dawson is also from the Federal Court and has spent the last five years in Sydney.

The Attorney-General, Daryl Manzie, said Mr Dawson will bring a sound background in court administration to the Northern Territory.

"He has been trained in dispute resolution techniques at Harvard Law School and has been at the forefront of the Federal Court's mediation programme," Mr Manzie said.

Expiation for .05-.08 offences

Legislation providing for an expiation system for blood alcohol levels of between .05 and .08 was passed during the May sittings of the Legislative Assembly, although a date for its implementation has not been set.

Under the system, drivers with a blood alcohol level of over .05 but under .08 will receive an On-the-spot fine, but will be allowed to proceed directly home under a permit system.

The Minister for Transport and Works, Fred Finch, said the government introduced the law under duress in exchange for \$8.8 million in Commonwealth Government road safety funding.

He said like three other states, the Territory opted to introduce the expiation system for readings of .05-.08 rather than reducing the current .08 limit to .05.

Mr Finch said the .05 provisions could not be implemented until the Police acquire improved breath testing equipment to ensure the accuracy of .05 readings.