

Profession Gains and Loses as 1997 Legal Year Opens



The Opening of the Legal Year ceremonies in both Darwin and Alice Springs were again well attended by the profession and I trust that those present enjoyed the opportunity to meet Justice Ganson who was the Society's special guest at both centres. We thank her for taking time out from a very busy schedule to attend these functions and for sharing her views on the future of the profession with members of the NT legal community.

Darwin practitioners also had the opportunity to welcome Justice Steven Bailey back to the Territory, both formally at the special sitting of the Supreme Court and more informally at the luncheon. I was pleased to speak on behalf of the Society at the special sitting of the Supreme Court in his honour.

It was encouraging to note that the Darwin OLY luncheon was again well patronised and although this year's venue offered more seating capacity than that used in previous years, it was still necessary to disappoint some members of the legal community who wished to attend. I offer apologies to those who were unable to secure seats at the luncheon.

The Society hopes to find an even larger capacity venue for forthcoming functions to avoid this disappointment and members' suggestions for suitable venues may be passed to the Secretariat.

I was not able to be present at the OLY functions in Alice Springs, but understand that both the church service and the luncheon attracted a large turn-out from practitioners and other members of the legal community.

Loss to the Profession

The legal profession lost some of its more notable members shortly after the opening of the 1997 legal year with the passing on of former Chief Justice of the Northern Territory, Sir William Forster and more recently, former Alice Springs Magistrate Dennis Barritt.

Sir William was a vital force in the shaping of the legal profession in the Northern Territory and considered friend and mentor to many who practised law during his time here. A memorial service and a special sitting of the Supreme Court in his honour have given members the opportunity to pay their final respects to this very important man in the history of the legal profession of the NT.

I note too with sadness, the untimely death of Central Land Council lawyer Kwentjaye Rodd. Obituaries for Sir William Forster and Mr Rodd may be found in this month's issue of *Balance* and the March issue will carry a tribute to Dennis Barritt.

Official Opening

Preparations are underway for the official opening of the Society's new premises in NT House.

The Chief Minister has agreed to officiate at the function on 18 April and it is expected that the Attorney-General will also be present. All members of the profession will be invited to attend the opening, providing a good opportunity for practitioners to see their Society's new accommodation. Details of the function will be advised shortly. I urge members to take advantage of this opportunity to familiarise themselves with the Society's location and remind you that these offices are often seen by the

public as a "shopfront" for the profession.

I thank those firms who have already pledged donations towards the appropriate outfitting of the new premises and express the Council's hope that other firms will equal their generosity.

Donations of legal memorabilia and other objects d'art will, wherever possible, be acknowledged by a plaque.

Law Council Resolution

Following a resolution passed by the Council of the Law Society of the NT and later by the Law Council of Australia, the following short press statement was released nationwide on 5 February:

"The Law Council of Australia, without expressing any view whatsoever on the question of euthanasia, calls upon the Commonwealth Parliament to reject the Euthanasia Bill 1996 upon the ground only that it is an unwarranted and inappropriate interference with the parliamentary powers of Australia's self-governing Territories."

Austin Asche

I was also pleased to represent the Law Society at a farewell function for the retiring Administrator, Austin Asche.

I am sure members are aware of his distinguished career in the law and his service to the Northern Territory. It is to be hoped that this retirement from public life will not prevent him from continuing his active interest in the profession.