

President's Report

1999-2000 - Annual General Meeting - 28 September 2000.

1999-2000 has been another busy year for NTWLA. The focus of our energies has been on providing opportunities for professional development. Our current financial membership is 65 and, as in the past, the level of interest in our activities indicates a much wider support of our objectives.

NTWLA publishes an article each month in *Balance*, the NT Law Society magazine. This allows the Association to put matters of importance and interest into the public domain, and assists us to inform members on contemporary thinking around legal issues. Additionally we have circulated some bulletins throughout the year to members. I would like to thank the NT Law Society for their continuing support in this and many other ways.

Australian Women Lawyers

Kate Halliday is our new Australian Women Lawyers Board member. It is important that we are part of a National organisation as it allows issues of concern to members to be raised at that level. We thank our past Board member, Merran, for her efforts as the inaugural NT Board member. Audrey Mills from Tasmania is the new National President of AWL. We welcome her to the position.

Law Week

Trials Through Time this year consisted of three radio plays being recorded by



Women lawyers at the reception on the Judges Balcony of the Supreme Court on 14 April 2000

the ABC and played during Law Week. This provided a wider audience and allowed 12 NTWLA members to be involved in the numerous parts. The trials were Socrates, Nelson Mandela and O'Shea and Parnell. NTWLA looks forward to being actively involved in Law Week in 2001.

National Jurists Association of Timor Loro-Sae - Seminar

NTWLA has sponsored a seminar on gender and the law to be held by the National Jurists Association of Timor Loro-Sae. We have now been invited to present a paper at the seminar on Gender Issues and Protection of Children's Rights. We plan to send two members from NTWLA to present the paper in person. While the issue itself is important, we also see this as an important opportunity to forge professional links with the world's youngest country.

Reconciliation

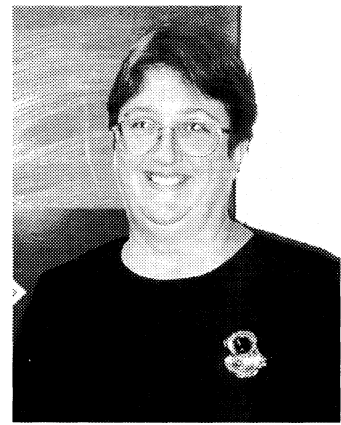
We have been encouraging members to take an interest in reconciliation and a Pledge Book is currently circulating around the profession. Please take the opportunity to consider signing the book. A number of members also met and discussed the content of the Declaration for Reconciliation.

Mandatory Sentencing

In 1998 the Association resolved to oppose mandatory sentencing and we continue to advocate for change. This issue has now been taken up by Australian Women Lawyers, and there is a national profile of the issue generally. Notwithstanding the national profile, there remains much work to be done to have the *Sentencing Act* and *Juvenile Justice Act* amended to allow for the return of the judicial discretion in these cases.

Administrative Law Seminar

NTWLA supported the presentation of a seminar



Melanie Little, President of the NT Women Lawyers Association.

entitled "Rainbow Serpent Dreaming" on 28 September 1999. The seminar was presented by Greg McIntyre and raised a range of interesting administrative law questions. We ensured that the costs of after hours security and airconditioning was met and we are pleased to have funds to assist in seminars such as this.

Women In Prison

Following a report that women prisoners deemed 'at risk' were held in the remand section of the prison at Darwin (a male only section), the committee plans to continue making representations on the issue. We are also concerned about imprisonment rates increasing in the Northern Territory.

Freedom of Information

The lack of Freedom of Information legislation in the Northern Territory has been flagged as an issue to be pursued in the coming year. The Association is planning a debate on the issue which will be held before the end of the year.

Jane Mahony Memorial

One of our main functions this year was the dedication ceremony for the Jane Mahony Memorial section of the Northern Territory Supreme Court Library. Already there are a number of books in the new section of the library and we will continue to place books in each year. Jane was well respected throughout the profession and the Memorial will provide legal resources for all in the profession. The function held on 24 November 1999 was attended by approximately 50 of Jane's friends and colleagues and our thanks to those who spoke and the Library

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Committee of the Supreme Court for supporting the project.

Federal Court Meeting

On 14 July 2000 15 NTWLA members met with two Federal Court Justices, Chief Justice Black and Justice Branson. The forum provided an opportunity for NTWLA to hear about the Federal Court Jurisdiction and was well received by those present. We thank the Federal Court for the opportunity to meet with them.

Judges Reception

Justice Sally Thomas, Patron of NTWLA, hosted drinks on the Judges Balcony of the Supreme Court on 14 April 2000. There were approximately 60 people attending the function. We had a number of speakers including Justice Angel who spoke of the contribution to the law made by Dame Roma Mitchell and Britt Lardelli and Eileen Terrill who spoke on their experiences as practitioners. Once again the evening was an outstanding success for everyone and we plan to hold another reception as an annual event. Our thanks to the Supreme Court for making the venue available to our members. I would like to thank our Patron for her support and encouragement throughout the year.

Lunch Time Speaker

Gail Humble from Cridlands spoke at a lunch hosted by the Association. Her topic Marketing of Lawyers provided much food for thought. There is strong support for more such events and the Committee plans more speaking events in 2000-2001.

Representing NTWLA

I attended a number of functions throughout the year as representative of NTWLA including the Law School Prize Night and the Alicia Johnson Memorial Lecture and Dinner held in Darwin for Jocelyne Scutt. The lectures were well attended and I would encourage members to obtain a copy of Dr Scutt's speech from the Womens Advisory Council. It was a thought provoking and powerful speech. I spoke at the Domestic Violence Legal Help closing ceremony on 30 June 2000. The

ceremony was a fitting tribute to a service which had operated to the benefit of thousands of victims of domestic violence since 1992. On 26 May 2000 I attended an Australian Women Lawyers function to unveil a print donated to AWL by Justice Ian Callinan. The function was held at the Victorian Supreme Court Library in Melbourne and the print of Mlle Jeanne Chauvin showed the first female law student in France at a tutorial. I also attended a meeting with the Law Reform Committee with respect to changes to the Criminal Code relating to self defence and provocation. I published an Obituary for Dame Roma Mitchell after her death in March 2000. She remains an inspiration to many who practice in the law in the NT.

Finances

We did not hold any fund raising events this year, relying on monies raised from the Quiz Night last year and membership fees to keep our finances solid. The Treasurer's Report will show that our financial position is healthy to hand on to the new Committee. Any members with fund raising ideas should contact the new Committee.

Thanks

I would like to thank the Committee who have worked throughout the year to ensure that NTWLA is a vibrant association. They are: Therese Austin, Sharon Burnett, Cassandra Goldie, Kate Halliday, Britt Lardelli, Janelle Martin, and Jacqueline Presbury. Thanks also to Julie Condon who stood in for Britt Lardelli after she left for the South Seas. I would also like to thank other members of NTWLA who assisted in the organisation of events and functions. And again, a special thanks to our Patron Justice Thomas and the NT Law Society for their support of the Association.

I am standing down as President this year after two busy years. The Association is an important part of the legal profession in the Northern Territory. I wish the new President and Committee well.

Melanie Little, President NTWLA Inc, September 2000.

Reaching out for legal help booklet launched by TEWLS

Last year TEWLS ran the NESB Women's Legal Information Project which consisted of a consultation process on the legal needs of non-English speaking background (NESB) women in the Top End and the production of radio skits in 16 languages, on legal topics derived from the consultation process.



The NESB women involved in the above mentioned consultation process identified the need for a Legal Resource Kit targeted specifically to NESB women. TEWLS was successful in securing funds from the NT's Law Society Public Purposes Trust and the NT's Office of Ethnic Affairs, to produce a legal resource kit for NESB women across the NT.

The kit contains details of the legal services available across the Territory, other related services and a practical guide on how to access the legal system.

The Kit contains information such as "Why and when should I see a solicitor", "What can a solicitor tell me about ...", "Tips for seeing a solicitor", "Myths and realities", "What to expect from an advice session", "Problems with lawyers" etc.

The Kit will be distributed across the Territory to women's organisations, ethnic associations, settlement workers, community and welfare workers in various fields, ethnic interpreters and translators, interested ethnic community members and other organisations that work with NESB women.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the Kit please contact the Top End Women's Legal Service on 8941 9989. *There are only limited copies.*

Tatiana Lozano
NESB Legal Project Worker