

The year in review

As Christmas and New Year approach we can look back on a very busy, challenging and productive year for the Law Society.

Given that the insurance market is still problematical, with fewer players and close examination of claims records, I believe the PII outcome for Northern Territory practitioners was very satisfactory. Given continued uncertainties in the insurance market it is imperative that continued emphasis is given to claims minimisation and enhanced practice management. This could also assist in reducing dissatisfied clients and in many cases, complaints. Whatever the outcome, complaints can cost firms significantly in terms of time and reduced goodwill.

For these reasons I join Merran in urging firms to seriously consider obtaining the Quality Practice Reviews being conducted by LeMessurier Harrington. I would also urge members to attend seminars being run by Opening of the Legal Year guest speaker Kriss Will. As noted in the President's column, Kriss has extensive experience in the "legal profession" and will have plenty to say. She is also a bit of a character.

It is likely that the Law Society will get a new costs complaints jurisdiction from around March next year. New rules relating to advertising will also come into effect with the commencement of the remaining provisions of the *Legal Practitioners (Costs and Advertising) Act*.

The *Legal Practitioners (ILP and MDP) Act* will present further challenges.

As practitioners would be aware Rules for admission education requirements are scheduled to come into effect from 1 January 2004. These rules will require persons seeking admission to be able to establish core competencies over a number of areas.

These competencies have been set by the Legal Admissions Consultative Committee in its Vocational Standards for Entry Level Lawyers. The Committee, chaired by Mr Justice Priestley was concerned that existing

articles programmes which could, for instance, cover few of the areas concerned, would not meet these parameters.

With the pending onset of national model laws for the legal profession, professional standards legislation and other developments, the NT legal profession has to increasingly move towards complying with these national requirements.

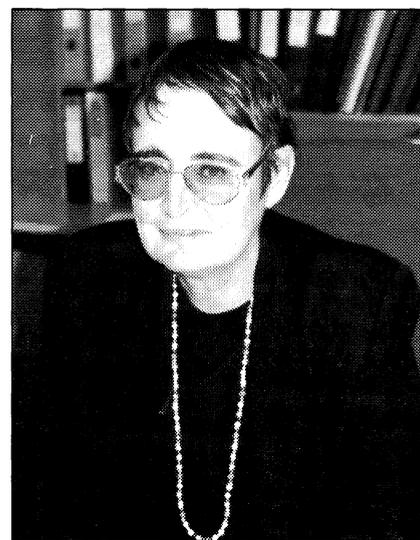
The Law Society was asked to come up with a programme that could meet requirements in the best manner possible. It was noted that persons could already get admitted by completing certain post-graduate courses such as ANU's Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice and College of Law courses, although these were interstate courses with no NT component.

Because Northern Territory input was necessary in any course established, it was felt that the Charles Darwin University Law School could provide this.

The ANU GDLP course will now be offered online in the Territory with a Territory component. Details are in the accompanying summary from Meredith Day of CDU. Inquiries should be directed to her. (*Please see page 20.*)

One issue raised is "Will articles be effectively dead?". The course has been set up in a way so that a person can work in a firm in conjunction with undertaking the course. In fact the course is offered in an "in practice" mode with practical experience substituting for other course units. We believe the combination of articles or a similar clerkship will provide the best possible grounding for the difficult task of practice, providing both the experience of working in a firm with the wide "academic" component.

The course next year will be something of a "trial" so any



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comments on the effectiveness of the process would be appreciated.

The Rules as drafted are designed to give the Legal Practitioners Admission Board some discretion to deal with particular situations, and transitional provisions deal with situations such as those of Judges Associates who have already started their Associateship.

In summary, and on a personal note, I would have to say 2003 has been one of the most interesting of my life. I thank Council and fellow Secretariat members for the support offered over the year and wish all members a merry Christmas and an interesting and productive 2004. ①

