

AGM Report

The National Model Laws project and the possibility of a move towards a mandatory continuing legal education (CLE) system were amongst the matters discussed at the Annual General Meeting.

Law Society NT Chief Executive Officer Barbara Bradshaw reported that the National Model Laws project was close to a final version of the Bill. At a national level, Law Council of Australia (LCA) representatives met with the Standing Committee of Attorney-General in September to discuss comments made by the LCA. These appear to have been well-received.

The National Competition Policy Working Group into the Territory's Legal Practitioner's Act is looking at issues ranging from procedures for Queen's Counsel to whether barristers are offering solicitors services and the question of how the Legal Practitioners Fidelity Fund, Legal Practitioners Trust Committee and the Law Society Public Purposes Trust could be restructured to make better use of the monies. Other issues being considered include structure of the Law Society and the various roles it plays.

Working groups members include Chief Magistrate Hugh Bradley, Peter Barr QC, Merran Short, Barbara Bradshaw and representatives from the Department of Justice.

A draft Bill is expected to be available for comment by the end of this year and the legislation should be passed by mid next year.

The National Model Laws project aims to standardise the regulation of law in certain key areas via state and territory implementation.

Mandatory CLE is being contemplated as a possible condition of obtaining a practising certificate. This could mean that the Territory needs to introduce a mandatory CLE system within the next year.

Law Society CEO Barbara Bradshaw prepared an issues paper on mandatory CLE for discussion at the AGM.*

The Territory hopes to have professional standards legislation in place in late 2004 or 2005. This legislation will allow peak professional bodies to apply for a professional standards scheme, which will provide members with access to liability caps.

The Professional Standard Council has advised that while CLE arrangements must be addressed in any application for a professional standards scheme, mandatory CLE is not a prerequisite for granting an application, however its principles are not inconsistent.

Currently the Northern Territory operates a non-compulsory scheme, which relies on volunteer speakers primarily drawn from the local profession. Many presentations are video-conferenced to Katherine and Alice Springs.

Normally seminars are charged at \$22 (including GST) which is considerably cheaper than other jurisdictions (which range from \$38.50 to around \$99).

Most other jurisdictions have either already implemented a mandatory CLE scheme or are contemplating one.

This has been identified as a priority issue for the Law Society Council in the coming year.①

** Copies of the issues paper were sent to all members along with other AGM materials. Spare copies are available from the Secretariat.*

Planning for 2005

On Saturday 30 October, the new Law Society NT Council held a Strategic Planning Meeting to determine the Society's direction for the coming year.

The following Council sub-committees were established to help address important issues:

- * **Complaints Procedures**
(Chair: Kate Hughes)
- * **Admissions and CDU**
(Chair: Matthew Storey)
- * **Professional Indemnity Insurance**
(Chair: Merran Short)
- * **Information Brochures**
(Chair: Jacqueline Presbury)
- * **Tort Law Reform**
(Chair: Jack Lewis)
- * **Continuing Legal Education**
(Chair: Matthew Storey)
- * **Alternate Income Sources**
(Chair: Jacqueline Presbury)
- * **Investment of Funds**
(Chair: Jacqueline Presbury)
- * **Legal Aid/Pro Bono**
(Chair: Kate Hughes)
- * **Costs**
(Chair: Merran Short)
- * **Criminal Law**
(Chair: Glen Dooley)
- * **Family Law**
(Chair: Kate Hughes)
- * **Commercial Law**
(Chair: Rhona Millar)①

Law Society NT Council 2004-2005

- * **President:** Merran Short (De Silva Hebron)
- * **Vice President:** Allison Robertson (Cridlands)
- * **Treasurer:** Jacqueline Presbury (Hunt and Hunt)
- * **Secretary:** Glen Dooley (NAALAS)
- * **Alice Springs Rep:** Tony Whitelum (Morgan Buckley)
- * **Alice Springs Alternate Rep:** Sam Salmon (Collier & Dean)
- * **NT Bar Assoc Rep:** Jack Lewis (John Toohey Chambers)
- * **NT Young Lawyers rep:** Chris Booth (Ward Keller) *pending the Young Lawyers AGM in November*

Councillors:

- * Kate Hughes (NTLAC)
- * Jodi Mather (ODPP)
- * Rhona Millar (Minter Ellison)
- * Markus Spazzapan (Sole Practitioner)
- * Matthew Storey (Department of Justice)
- * Jo Tomlinson (De Silva Hebron)