

Year of the Rooster heralds more work on the National Model Laws

Welcome to what is sure to be a busy and interesting year for the legal profession in the Northern Territory.

This year a major priority for the Law Society Council and Secretariat will be working towards the enactment of the new National Model Laws for the legal profession and related Northern Territory provisions. Whilst a degree of uncertainty arises due to the impending NT election, it is understood that Government is working towards introduction of a NT version of the Bill, including appropriate provisions, later this year.

This raises several issues:

- * A Working Group, including officers from the various state and territory governments and the Law Council, is working through amendments to the draft model Bill released in April 2004 and on model regulations. A set of amendments to the April 2004 model was approved by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General meeting in November 2004. A further set of amendments will go to the March 2005 SCAG meeting. It is hoped a further version of the Model Bill incorporating various amendments will be released shortly.
- * NSW and Victoria recently passed legislation based in part on the April 2004 model with some variations. These Bills will be amended to take into account the amendments currently being worked on before commencement on 1 July 2005. The Queensland legislation, which commenced in 2004, will also be amended.
- * It is understood the NSW Bill was the biggest ever passed by

the NSW Parliament. Parliamentary Counsel has started work on the NT version. It is understood that the NT Bill, incorporating both model and "local" provisions will be, when completed, the biggest Bill ever put before the NT Parliament, overtaking such "doorstoppers" as the Cooperatives Act and the Criminal Code.

- * The Law Society NT is working very closely with other jurisdictions on implementation aspects. Merran Short is part of the Law Council's Reference Group and I am on a couple of Officers Working Groups. This assists in NT issues being taken into account and will help us in the overall implementation process.
- * The Society is part of an NT NCP Working Group looking at issues such as structure of the Law Society and set up of Statutory Funds. Some Law Society initiatives such as a further review of our Complaints Handling Procedures and consideration of a MCLE Scheme are in line with this. Government has already enacted revised costs provisions more consistent with the model bill and has allowed for multi-disciplinary partnerships and incorporated legal practices.
- * The Law Society will hold an extensive practitioner education campaign about the new legislation, particularly once some outstanding issues have been resolved and when the first draft of the NT version of the Bill is released later this year.



Barbara Bradshaw, Chief Executive Officer

At this stage we cannot provide you with a firm commencement date - but it is likely to be early to mid 2006.

Please let me know if you have any queries.

Finally a reminder that *Balance* will now be published bimonthly. For regular updates on issues, Law Society activities and upcoming events, please subscribe to our weekly email newsletter, *The Practitioner*.

Since the Society experienced computer problems late last year, The Practitioner mailing list was reduced to those who requested to receive this service. If you have not received an edition for a while or are unsure whether you are still on the list, please contact the Society's Public Relations Officer, Zoe Malone via email at publicrelations@lawsocnt.asn.au ①

Balance contributions

The Law Society NT encourages members and readers to contribute to Balance.

Submissions can be sent to the Editor via email at publicrelations@lawsocnt.asn.au or fax to (08) 8941 1623.