

Charting the course for the coming year

The Society has been busy in the aftermath of the Annual General Meeting. The Strategic Planning Meeting was held on 10 October 2007, with Southwood J adopting the role of facilitator. Needless to say a number of initiatives were kicked off, and a number of Committees have already met and started charting their course for 2008-2009. The Executive, under the leadership of President Duncan McConnel, also held its first meeting, with Council Meeting on 26 October 2007.

The Intervention and the Northern Territory Government response will continue to be of concern, and a major focus of Council's activities.

New Committees are the Small Firms, Legislative Standards, Dispute Resolution and Professional Enhancement Committees. Rather than have a separate Criminal Law Committee, Council will be working closely with a revived Criminal Law Association of the Northern Territory (CLANT).

Some existing Committees will continue to be active, or may change focus (Committee objectives are being updated).

It would appear that the Council and Family Law Committee have been successful in at least achieving a "stay" in the closure of the Alice Springs Family Law Registry, with other issues of concern to be addressed.

The Society is also concerned at the lack of effective consultation on many pieces of new and important legislation before it is introduced.

The *Legal Profession Act* will remain one of the many priorities of 2007-2008, though it will be less dominating than it has been over the last 12 months. One of

the major outstanding issues is the effective operation of the costs provisions on 31 December 2007. A CPD programme started with a Darwin CPD on 23 October 2007. Development of costs agreements and other documentation is a major concern. I am pleased to advise that the ACT has made available their disclosure statement, costs agreements and other documentation, and the Costs Committee is using the material as a precedent. Copies should be available soon.

Individual law practices can also develop their own documentation. It is understood the Bar are considering their disclosure requirements.

One issue the Law Society and other Constituent bodies are considering is developing a Family Law Agreement for use when the existing Family Court Rules expire. The NT Attorney-General recently introduced into Parliament a Justice Legislation Amendment Bill, including some amendments to the provisions dealing with Costs Assessment.

There have been also some major changes in the legal profession. Barbara Tiffin, a bastion of the Policy Division of the Department of Justice has moved to Adelaide, and husband Peter is joining her shortly. Peter has had a varied and lengthy career in the Territory and over the years provided major assistance to the Law Society.

David DeL Winter has returned to the chilly climes of England.

Neville Henwood, a former Society President, has joined Rio Tinto in Brisbane and is running their Procurement area.

John Reeves QC will, on 20 November 2007, become the Territory's first Federal Court Judge.



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Michael Grant QC, former Law Society Councillor, has moved from William Forster Chambers to the Solicitor-General's Chambers.

Tom Pauling QC, one time Law Society Treasurer, is moving from these Chambers to the Administrator's Office and residence.

Congratulations and best wishes to all. They have all, in various ways, provided good support for the Society. Those moving into senior appointments are very deserving of them.

I must finally wish the outgoing Administrator Ted Egan, and partner Nerys Evans, all the best in what sounds like anything but retirement. I would comment that His Honour's speech at the Annual Dinner, reproduced in this month's *Balance*, will cheer up (or further depress?) anyone who feels Darwin has, with its massive recent development, lost its frontier character.

One also wonders what some of the lawyers mentioned in the Administrator's speech would think of the legal profession in the Territory today.