



Shields Government Lawyer of the Year

By Barbara Bradshaw, Law Society CEO



Above left: Sybille Brautigam & Alastair Shields. Right: Alastair at the MCG with his ACLA award

Alastair Shields was announced as the winner of the Australian Corporate Lawyers Association (ACLA) Australian Government Lawyer of the Year Award at the ACLA Annual Dinner on 1 November.

Alastair is currently Acting Executive Director Policy in the Department of the Chief Minister, but worked in the NT Department of Justice and its predecessors for a significant period.

Alastair is a true Darwin boy (he remembers Tracy) and son of the late Juliet Shields who was a pioneer, and formidable Government lawyer. Alastair decided, I think wisely, not to follow in his father's footsteps and become a geologist.

Starting his career as a prospective lawyer, he became a Finance Officer in Training (FOIT), a very generous government traineeship which involved lots of time off for study (and Friday nights at the infamous DIX with his friends) whilst at the same time a reasonable NTPS salary. He worked as an accountant in the Companies Office, Corporate Affairs and Business Affairs, spending a lot of time chasing corporate

"crooks". At this time he started his collection of colourful shirts, snow shakers and other memorabilia including the infamous ABBA poster. In spite of once perceptively being described as "lazy", he developed a capacity for hard work that enabled him to effectively work full-time and achieve a creditable result in his law course. Many of his fellow students, such as Michael Grant, Sue Porter and Duncan McConnel, are now in senior positions in the NT legal profession.

Business Affairs could not retain him, as once qualified, he moved to what many saw his true vocation - the law. After a time as an articulated clerk and judge's associate, he became a junior lawyer with the Solicitor for the Northern Territory. Before long, and by dint of hard work and ability, he became a senior lawyer and ultimately Director Commercial and Executive Director Legal Services.

His main role has been with major projects, with the biggest ones being the \$1.3bn Australasia Railway Project and \$2.4bn Waterfront Project.

Many, in fact, feel his Herculean efforts were crucial to the achieve-

ment of the Railway Project - many had believed that the North-South Railway would never be fully completed, noting people have been talking about it since 1911.

The press release relating to his award also noted "his ability to provide legal advice in an innovative manner". This was seen in his development of a new form of native title for Northern Territory Parks, which provide the title needed by the Territory without extinguishing native title.

He is also a good mentor to staff. Alastair could not have achieved what he did without the assistance from his Personal Assistant, Meg.

Alastair recently married the lovely Sybille. That has not affected his passion for collection of objects d'art (she is also a collector) and it remains a source of disappointment when he chooses to wear something dull or ordinary.

He also remains connected to the law by his Chairmanship of the Funds Management Committee.

It is appropriate, however, that Alastair's feats are acknowledged at a national level, and he is truly deserving of the national award.