

'It always seems impossible until its done'

– Nelson Mandela



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As you burst back into your office refreshed from a Christmas break you are confronted with all those things you left un-done. Your post-holiday enthusiasm dissipates, like rains in the Todd river bed, mountains of work seem to rise up on either side like the walls of Simpson's Gap. You are just about to drown in your own despair – but wait, the Opening of the Legal Year is just around the corner. Phew! What better way to re-gain your equilibrium, re-point your compass, restore some perspective.

2015 Opening of the Legal Year attended by Julian Burnside AO, QC was a sell-out in both Darwin and Alice Springs. This event continues to serve an important place in the legal calendar and I hope that this and future events continue to inform, inspire and invigorate.

Continuing to be guided by the Strategic Plan 2013-16 the Society's vision is to be the pre-eminent voice supporting and advancing the legal profession in the Northern Territory.

Below: Julian Burnside AO, QC and Tass Liveris at the 2015 Opening of the Legal Year.

New Council: Strategic Goals 2015

The newly elected Council has shaped some important strategic goals for 2015. Whilst the Society will continue advocating on some fundamental issues of law and justice and regulating the profession, the strategic goals put the membership at the forefront:

- improving engagement with the regions,
- enhancing service delivery to the regions and
- developing communication and relations with members and stakeholders.

Improving engagement with the regions

Whilst close to 80% of the membership is in Darwin and environs there is a need to ensure that members in other centres, particularly Alice Springs are engaged in the work of the Society. Already this has seen:

- increasing regional practitioner involvement in the Society Committees;
- increased attendance at Alice Springs events, Christmas Drinks and Opening of the Legal Year and the welcome attendance of the President, Tass Liveris at these events;
- an Information Session in Alice Springs where Manager Regulatory Services Kellie Grainger answered some pointy questions about the complaints process.





Enhancing service delivery to the regions

By committing to this goal the Council acknowledges that delivering services outside of Darwin is resource intensive. One aspect of service delivery is in the Continuing Professional Development. Often those outside of Darwin call for CPDs to be offer remotely by video conferencing. Whilst the Society is continuing to use video-conferencing facilities where they are available to date we have done so with the indulgence of the Courts, Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission NAAJA and CAALAS. With the move to new premises the Society has again

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taken the opportunity to consider an onsite video conferencing facility and I will keep you informed about any progress in this area. Webinar has also been touted as a way to provide CPD remotely and over the past years we have explored various online platforms with a focus on their useability. Our Professional Development Officer is always looking out for new opportunities and the experiences of other CPD providers.

Increase in Member's services has been one of the key objectives behind the move to our new Darwin premises. In addition to a training venue, we are exploring various ideas including phone charging, library services, meeting rooms and the like. If you have experienced a member service that would assist you when visiting town do not hesitate to contact us. We will also be looking at reciprocal arrangement with interstate law societies.



Communications with member and stakeholders

In 2015 the Society President joined the conversation establishing a twitter account @LawSocietyNT. The following for the Society's Twitter account @LawSocietyNT continues to grow and it has been an important conduit for advocacy about law and justice issues. National and local media are always on the look-out for stories and the immediacy of a Twitter message has proved an invaluable addition to the Society's communications tools. Join the conversation.

With the Northern Territory election clearly on the horizon the Council is committed to ensuring that all sides of politics are well informed about law and justice issues. It seems that there are ever increasing incursions on fundamental rights and freedoms such as legal professional privilege, access to the Courts, access to legal representation

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to name but a few. The Society is not alone in concerns about abridged consultation timeframes and hurried drafting to honour election commitments. With that in mind the Society will be seeking election commitments from all sides to evidence based policy initiatives to address:

- domestic violence
- Indigenous incarceration
- legal correctional funding

Diversity

As mentioned in previous columns the Society has adopted a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and will soon adopt '*Celebrating Diversity*' a strategy focused on diversity in the profession. In common across these strategies is a desire to co-ordinate initiatives to address under-representation of women and minority groups within the legal profession. One of the loftier aims of these strategies is to one day see a bench that reflects not just a diverse legal community but the diversity of the community which it serves.

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The Diversity Council of Australia launched its report in August 2012 *Men Get Flexible! Mainstreaming Flexible Work in Australian Business*. The report found that access to flexible work practices was not a women's issue and that Australian men want and need access to flexible working to support their important roles as fathers, carers and engaged volunteers

in their communities. The report looked at how men achieve flexible work arrangements. In line with the Diversity Council recommendations the Society has embraced increasing access to flexible work as a goal of *Celebrating Diversity* identifying it as something that will benefit everyone.

The Society is exploring what tools local firms and agencies can share about the practical aspect of flexible work, how challenges have been overcome and the rewards that have been generated.

Leadership in times of change

Of course the impending Uniform Law to be applied in New South Wales and Victoria from 1 July 2015 will mark a significant feature on the landscape of the Australian Legal Profession. Under the legislation both the Law Council of Australia (LCA) and the Australian Bar Association (ABA) are charged with proposing rules to guide and govern the solicitors and barristers. The Society continues to contribute to the development of these rules through the LCA and the broader consultation process to ensure that there will be no impediments for NT practitioners, and to maximise the opportunity presented by these two jurisdictions falling into line.

IILACE

The International Institute of Law Association Chief Executives (IILACE) conference 2014 was held in Cape Town, South Africa. The conference brings together CEOs of Legal Professional Regulators, Law Societies and Bar Association from around the world. It was attended by 37 delegates. A key benefit of membership of IILACE is the opportunity to explore law and justice advocacy in a global context as well as reflecting on the Society from an international perspective. IILACE 2014 focused on CEO's as leaders with Mandela's story an inspirational back-drop.

The location of the conference in Cape Town afforded the opportunity to consider the role of prisons in society and particularly conditions of detention. Visiting Robben Island where Nelson Mandela penned Long Walk to Freedom

was an opportunity to reflect on oppression. This is timely with the correctional precinct having just opened its doors. Seeing Mandela's cell, speaking with his captors and his fellow inmates not only gave insight into this future President of South Africa, but also explained South Africa as a country living with the shame of its recent past. It brought to mind conditions in Australia's off shore processing for asylum seekers. Speaking with African colleagues the duty of the legal profession to speak out against oppression took a whole new meaning.

IILACE considered many of the more practical aspects of the legal professional landscape. Legal professional education, the regulation of certain legal services to be provided by non-lawyers, the internationalisation of legal practice to name a few. ●



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Language and the Law

Conference hosted by the Northern Territory Supreme Court on 'Court Interpreting' and a Call for Papers and Presentations.

Friday 28th August – Sunday 30th August 2015, Supreme Court of the Northern Territory – Darwin

Following the success of the first "Language and the Law" Conference in 2012, the Chief Justice and Judges of the Supreme Court are pleased to announce the Court will host the second "Language and the Law" Conference.

This Conference will be of benefit to interpreters who work in the courts, judicial officers, legal practitioners, court staff, police officers, corrections officers and other persons who regularly interact with people for whom English is not a first language in the context of court proceedings.

The emphasis will again be on interpreting Aboriginal languages, although not exclusively so. The focus will be primarily (though not exclusively) on issues that arise when interpreting languages spoken in the Northern Territory and similar issues that impact on communication in the courts and associated legal processes.

The Court and the Conference Committee welcome all persons working in this field to attend.

To register your interest in attending, please contact Conference Organiser Ms Malika Okeil on (08) 8999 5295 or email languageandlawconference@nt.gov.au