

## New Barristers' Committee

By Christopher Wood & Kylie Day

What was formerly the 'Young Barristers' Committee' is now the 'New Barristers' Committee', in recognition of the fact that it represents barristers young in experience at the Bar, rather than necessarily young in age or mind (although, of course, they may have youth of all kinds).

More particularly, the New Barristers' Committee represents the 'under 5s' – barristers of, at most, five years standing at the Bar. It is the only body that is devoted exclusively to their concerns and interests.

Following on from the good work of the Young Barristers Committee, under the chairmanship of Hugh Stowe in 2005, the New Barristers' Committee aims to be responsive to any concerns raised by new barristers, to be proactive in taking initiatives in order to assist new barristers, and also to be proactive in raising issues of policy which arise in the experience of new barristers. Some of the committee's recent activities in these areas are discussed below.

### Assisting in the transition from readership, and early years of practice

The New Barristers' Committee is considering ways that it can assist new barristers in the transition from readership, and in the early years of practice. Difficulties may confront barristers, in their second year of practice in particular, when they lack the support, supervision and goodwill offered by the readership program. Of course, the reader/tutor relationship should continue, with former tutors and colleagues on the floor providing continued assistance on difficult matters. However, the combination of a significant increase in overheads, and the expectation that second year barristers will largely generate their own work, can lead to more difficult times than the year of readership.

Finding suitable accommodation, particularly after readership, can be another challenge. The New Barristers' Committee recently organised an evening seminar, in which Mary Walker SC and Geoff Hull, the Clerk of 8th Floor Wentworth Chambers, addressed frequently asked questions in relation to licensing and purchasing chambers. This was the first in what is hoped will be a series of seminars, specifically targeted to the practical needs of new barristers.

### Costs disclosure and recovery

The regulation, and recovery, of costs is an important matter for every barrister, and perhaps a daunting one for those starting out in practice. The New Barristers' Committee plans to make available on the web site of the Bar Association some sample costs disclosure documents, for the assistance of new barristers in particular. We are also working with the Bar Council on the issue of ways to facilitate more efficient recovery of outstanding fees.

In 2005, the committee commissioned a survey of new barristers covering matters such as income and work satisfaction. Publication of the results of the 2005 survey of new barristers is discussed elsewhere in this edition of the *Bar News*. The results

concerning issues of practice management, such as time for payment of invoices, and the amount of invoices outstanding, should assist new barristers to assess how the business side of their practice compares to that of others at a similar level of experience.

### Development of procedural guides

One of the challenges that constantly confronts new barristers is appearing at short notice in unfamiliar courts or in unfamiliar areas of law. The New Barristers' Committee is compiling a set of practical reference materials on courts, lists and applications in which new barristers commonly appear, to shorten the time for new barristers to get up to speed on the workings of unfamiliar courts and lists.

### Issues of policy

The New Barristers' Committee is keen to work with others within the Bar Council, and independently where appropriate, to provide comment and submissions for reform in substantive areas of the law. At present, the committee is drawing upon the regular exposure that new barristers receive to procedural applications to provide ongoing input to the Civil Procedure Working Party. The committee is also developing a proposal for reconsideration or reform of the law of undue influence in the area of probate.

### Fostering the collegiality of the junior Bar

Earlier this year, Phil Greenwood SC raised for the committee's consideration the issue of how we can better foster the collegiality of the Bar, particularly in light of the closing of the Bar Association's dining room and bar. The New Barristers' Committee is keen to provide some regular and low-key opportunities for barristers to meet with other colleagues at the Bar, in a social context. The committee has decided to organise a series of informal drinks over the course of the year, and in various locations. Informal drinks were held at Bar Europa on 6 April 2006. The committee aims to organise similar and regular informal functions, to which all members of the Bar will be invited, throughout the year.

### International exchanges

At the request of the president of the Bar Association, the New Barristers' Committee is also exploring the possibility of new barristers working at the Bar in other common law countries such as England and Hong Kong, perhaps by way of an exchange programme. Any barristers who may be considering practice overseas, or who have experience in practice as a barrister overseas, should contact Christopher Wood or Travis Drummond, if they are interested in assisting with this proposal.

### What are your ideas?

The New Barristers' Committee is keen to hear from the members it represents, or from anyone with ideas about issues concerning new barristers. If you have any suggestions for the committee to consider, please feel free to pass them on to a member of the committee.