

APLA NSW report

Catherine Henry, Craddock Murray & Neumann, Sydney

The NSW Branch is going from strength to strength and this is reflected in the consistent membership growth. During the month of May, we signed up 25 new members and now have double the membership of 12 months ago.

Regional Seminar Programme

Membership growth is no doubt attributable to a large extent to the publicity generated by our series of regional seminars, the first of which was held in Newcastle on 24 May. A first for the Newcastle and Hunter region, the day was well attended by practitioners from the local region as well as academics and students from the Faculty of Law at Newcastle University and also practitioners from as far afield as Coffs Harbour and Glen Innes. The event captured a good deal of media attention and it is now planned to hold the seminar in other regional centres with preparations for a day in the Camden area already under way. The Camden Seminar will be held on Saturday 9 August. The seminar papers are available to members who are interested at a charge of \$40.00.

Other Membership and Recruitment Activities

On Friday 23 May, I met with a number of personal injury lawyers from the Parramatta region. On the strength of that meeting, similar lunch time meetings will now be held in other regions of Sydney to encourage a greater rate of participation in the activities of the Branch. APLA promotional material was circulated at a number of Law Week activities from 26-30 May and at the 1997 Annual Personal Injury Accredited Specialist Conference in Canberra on the weekend of 17 May, Tom Goudkamp represented APLA on a panel of speakers on general personal injury issues.

Proposed Transfer of personal injury actions from the Supreme to the District Court

Despite across the board opposition, it would seem that there is no likelihood that this move can be averted and the scheduled date is still 1 July. As reported earlier, APLA has been actively involved in the lobbying process from the time that the transfer was first mooted with representations and meetings held both with senior bureaucrats and the other affected professional groups. The exercise has demonstrated very clearly that APLA is one of the three most significant professional groups in this state along with the Bar Association and the Law Society. The APLA submission to the Attorney is reproduced elsewhere in *Plaintiff*.

Legal Action for Stolen Children

A press release was issued in the week of the Reconciliation Conference deploring the negative reaction of the Government and indicating that our members were happy to act on a "no win/no pay" basis for any member of the Aboriginal community wishing to claim compensation. The Sydney metropolitan newspaper and national ABC television ran with the issue and as a result of that publicity, some of NSW APLA members with appropriate qualifications and experience are now acting for some of the victims of the stolen children policy.

Local Government Review

Like their colleagues in the medical professional indemnity industry, those who insure local councils are jumping in on the "litigation crisis" bandwagon claiming that they are not able to bear the increased costs of insurance cover for public liability and professional indemnity. There has evidently been an extensive amount of representation material received by the State government

and as a result, an interdepartmental review is now looking at the extent of the liability "problem". Any member who is interested in participating in APLA's submission and who would like to receive further information should contact Rodney Blume of Garden & Montgomerie Solicitors in Cowra who is coordinating APLA's position. Phone (063) 42 622 or Fax (063) 42 3501.

Access to Records

The Branch is active on a number of fronts pressing both for legislative reform both at Federal and State level, the latter appearing to have more potential, and through the mechanism of pre-trial discovery. We are currently arranging for Fiona Tito, Policy Consultant, to address us on her involvement in the drafting of ACT legislation.

Litigation at Sunrise Seminars

Our last seminar (on 12 June) was a very impressive 3D simulation of motor vehicle crashes demonstrated by representatives of the consulting engineering firm, Jamieson Foley who are used as experts in the area of road design and "crashworthiness". John Jamieson will be doing a similar presentation at the 1997 National Conference.

Coming up

Anne Jones of Action on Smoking & Health ('ASH') and Neil Francey, Barrister on Tobacco Litigation

Geoff Johnson, Barrister and Howard Harrison of Carroll & O'Dea on the Commonwealth workers compensation regime and its interaction with common law actions arising from workplace injuries.

As with all early morning seminars, members interested in obtaining copies of papers should contact the APLA Office on 02 9415 4233. Catherine Henry, APLA NSW President, cmn@hutch.com.au