

NEWS

Threat to women's programs

... 24 November ... The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission hears a claim by three men that the national women's health program discriminates against them.

Corporate crackdown

... 28 November ... The Federal Government announces corporate law reforms for 1992 which will toughen standards of conduct for companies, including a ten-fold increase in fines for company directors who breach their legal duties.

Gaoled solicitor freed

... John Little is freed after serving three months sentence for contempt of court related to his campaign against the Victorian Law Institute over professional indemnity insurance and the Institute's handling of funds raised from compulsory practising fees.

Recycling laws in Europe

... 30 November ... It becomes illegal for Germans to throw away packaging for most big electronic packages — shops must take the boxes and return them to the manufacturers. In 1994, this law will extend to the products themselves.

Rape within marriage

... 4 December ... In a unanimous decision, the High Court rules that Australian marriage laws contain no obligation for a wife to consent to sex with her husband.

Police suspensions

... 25 December ... According to police statistics, the number of Victorian Police suspended from duty for criminal behaviour has risen by almost 300% in the past year.

Ruling on rape of prostitute

... 2 January ... The Victorian Supreme Court rules that rape is a less grave offence if the victim is a prostitute, upholding an earlier decision of the County court, but increasing the sentence of Heros Hakopian for rape of a prostitute to a minimum term of two-and-a-half years in gaol.

Tough penalties in WA

... 6 January ... The WA Government announces plans to introduce the toughest penalties in Australia for juvenile criminals. The penalties include gaoling repeat offenders for an indeterminate period, maximum 20-year sentences for car thieves who cause death or injury and courts will have the power to sentence juvenile offenders as adults.

UN Committee referral on rape

... 8 January ... The ruling by the Victorian Supreme Court that rape is a less grave offence if the victim is a prostitute, is to be referred to the UN Committee on Discrimination Against Women, announces Justice Evatt, President of the Australian Law Reform Commission.

Custody for gay father

... 9 January ... In the Family Court in Hobart, a homosexual father is granted custody of his two sons. Both sons expressed their wish to stay with their father and his long-term gay partner.

Law group criticises Bar Council

... 12 January ... The Federation of Community Legal Centres criticises the Victorian Bar Council for the contempt it had shown over proposals by the Victorian Law Reform Commission to make the legal system more accessible. The Commission has proposed that lower costs, less restrictive legal practices and greater scrutiny would be the result of subjecting the Bar to the *Trade Practices Act*.

Ban on election advertising

... 15 January ... The High Court refuses to grant an injunction against the Federal Government's ban on election advertising on television and radio, but invites broadcasters to test the law by defying it.

Solicitor-General's leave cancelled

... 22 January ... The Attorney-General, Michael Duffy, reverses his

controversial decision to grant Dr Gavan Griffith, Solicitor-General (the Government's top lawyer) a year off to pursue work as a private barrister.

ACTU: affirmative action

... 23 January ... The ACTU calls on the Federal government to stop giving contracts and funding to companies that are not complying with the *Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act*.

Lobby group for Judges?

... 29 January ... Judges move to form a lobby group to mobilise public opinion in favour of judicial independence, make pronouncements on law reform and defend judges against public criticism. The proposal is discussed at the annual conference of senior judges.

Campuses clash

... 30 January ... Tensions heightened at the University of New England, as both the Armidale and Lismore campuses (joined in the recent amalgamation of tertiary institutes) seek to launch law degrees.

Ordinations stalled

... 31 January ... The NSW Court of Appeals stops the ordination of 11 women as Australia's first female Anglican priests.

Tough penalties passed in WA

... 6 February ... Despite an outcry from human rights activists, legislation for tough penalties for juvenile criminals passes through the WA Parliament.

Compulsory insurance indemnity

... 6 February ... A Queensland solicitor challenges the Queensland Law Society over its compulsory professional indemnity scheme, by stating that he intends to take out private insurance in the next financial year instead of contributing to the compulsory scheme.

Sources: *Age, Australian and Mercury* newspapers.