

# President's Column

The Council of the Law Society this year has been involved with the following major matters:

## The Structure of the Legal Profession and the National Legal Services Market

The Council has established a Structure of the Legal Profession Committee, Members of the committee are Donna Drier (convenor), Alan Lindsay, Eileen Terrill, Ian Morris, Duncan McConnell, Susan Porter and Steve Southwood.

The Committee has been set up to:

- a) forward plan the introduction of the changes to the structure of the profession which have been recommended at the National level to ensure the profession is competitive and its structure complies with National Competition Policy.
- b) generally recommend changes to the Legal Practitioners Act
- c) review cost provisions of the Supreme Court Rules
- d) review structure and funding of the Law Society
- e) negotiate assistance from the Law Council of Australia and other jurisdictions

To achieve (a) above the Law Society has retained Sue Oliver to provide a detailed report on each of the structural matters which are being considered by the Law Council of Australia.

To date, Sue Oliver has produced reports in relation to the:

- a) travelling Practising Certificate regime
- b) the National Model Conduct Rules

The Council of the Law Society will be circulating recommendations in relation to (a) and (b) above based on Sue Oliver's report prior to 19 September 1998.

## Practising Certificate

It has been proposed that a national regime should be set up whereby admission to practice in any one state or Territory would enable a legal practitioner to practise in all States or Territories, the system would work in a similar way to which driving licences work.

## Comments on legislative Amendments

The Council of the Law Society and in particular, Ian Morris has made detailed recommendations in relation to the recent amendments to the Work Health Act.

Richard Coates and Jacek Karczewski have made submissions at the national level in relation to:

- Legal Aid
- Dietrich Applications
- Right to Silence
- Procedure in Criminal Trials
- Disclosure of the Crown's Case in Criminal Trials

In addition, the law Society Council has made recommendations in relation to:

- a) the form of the Constitutional Convention.
- b) the Magistrates Act
- c) the Coroners Act (David Farquhar is to be thanked for his assistance in this regard)
- d) the Law Society also had a representative on the Law Reform Working Party which has been set up by the Attorney-General.

## Civil Rights

The Council of the law Society has been opposed to mandatory sentencing and members of the Council have spoken out against it.

## Young Lawyers

Duncan McConnell has been representing the concerns of young lawyers. Concerns have been raised about the conditions of employment of articled clerks and a more detailed report has been sought.

## Northern Territory University

The Law Society has been involved in the reaccreditation of the Law Degree at NTU. Our representative has been Susan Porter. A primary recommendation of the Law Society has been that law Students should not be required to do non-law common units.

## Continuing Legal Education

Duncan McConnell has been the Council member responsible for Continuing Legal Education. Duncan has arranged a number of lectures and seminars in the past 12 months.

## Legal Ethics and Disciplines

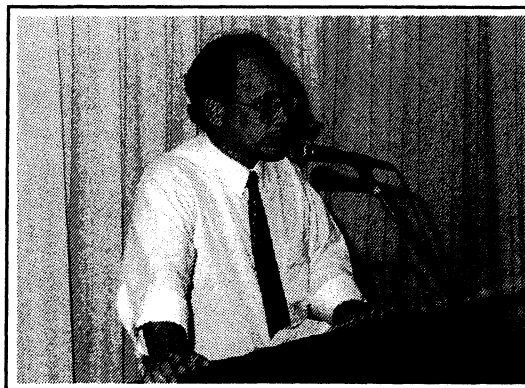
Alan Lindsay has been Chair of the Ethics Committee. A primary concern of the Ethics Committee has been to try and ensure that all complaints are dealt with quickly and that complaints are responded to by legal practitioners.

## Professional Indemnity Insurance

Jim Campbell and our brokers Sedgwick have again done a good job in relation to Insurance premiums and cover. Premiums have again fallen this year.

## Family Law

Eileen Terrill and Stuart Barr have been the Committee members representing family



*Steve Southwood, President*

lawyers. A recent concern has been whether a Family Court Registry was maintained in Darwin. We have been assured by the Commonwealth Attorney General that it will be.

## Secretariat

The Secretariat led by Jim Campbell have again been extremely hard working and have been looking after the needs of practitioners well. Jim, Julie, Libby and Karli are to be thanked for their good work, as should Janet Neville who has left the Law Society to join Law Asia.

## Fee Increases

Following a recommendation by the Structure of the Legal Profession Committee the Council of the Law Society has unanimously determined that it should ask the Attorney-General to approve an increase in the fees payable for Practising Certificates.

I would like to thank all the members of the Law Society Council for their hard work and assistance to me last year. It has been greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank Terry Gardner for the great contribution he has made as President, past president and Law Council representative. I would also like to thank Susan Porter and Stuart Barr who have not renominated as Council members for their hard work.

Finally, I would like to thank all those other members of the Law Society who have also contributed to reports, provided advice in relation to various matters and contributed to *Balance*.