

Policy Officer's column

Simon McGregor, APLA Policy Officer

This is the first instalment of a regular column I will be writing for *Plaintiff* in my role as APLA's Policy Officer.

A significant part of my work with APLA will be to produce policy statements on each of the major issues concerning our association. These policy statements will enable members of APLA to make speedy responses to any threats to the rights of the injured, and also to take prompt advantage of opportunities to improve their standing. The statements will be prepared in general terms, and can then be adapted as far as necessary to cover particular situations as they arise.

One of APLA's great strengths is the collective expertise of our various members, and a great benefit of belonging to our association is the opportunity to share this knowledge. I welcome expressions of

interest in the preparation of the policy statements from members interested in particular fields.

The areas which the National Executive has assessed as most urgently requiring attention are:

- Response to the Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities Final Report to the Labour Ministers' Council handed down in May 1997. The Council supports comparative scheme performance monitoring and will establish an agency to conduct the same. It seems then that the next steps will occur at the state level as each jurisdiction implements the HWCA recommendations.
- Patient access to medical records in the light of the High Court decision in *Breen v Williams*. The Federal Council

of the AMA has revised its 1993 guidelines following the case, and APLA wishes to respond to these guidelines and lobby for legislative intervention.

- Limitation on Public Liability for Local Councils, with governments currently considering possible legislative changes to reduce the "liability problem" alleged by some local authorities.

All completed policy statements, and as much other research material as possible, will be made available through our website, www.apla.com, or by fax or post for those not so electronically blessed.

I look forward to working with as many of you as possible. ■

Simon McGregor, recently appointed to the APLA team, can be contacted at phone (03) 9629 9448 or

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