

THE TIES THAT BIND Continued from page 3

The lingering expressions within the law that roll so easily off the practised tongues of lawyers and which hark back to the days when we were safely part of mother England's brood don't give the profession much street cred. We are supposed to be a profession of communicators. I was once told by my principal as an articled clerk "Don't write a letter unless you want to tell someone something they need to know". Similarly language used in the court room, even if it is only there to underscore the solemnity of the occasion, should be capable of conveying to the public something they should know. Slavish references to a monarch more associated with family division and conversations over a car phone lend little weight to the authority of the law in a society of such diverse heritage as ours. In the effort to discover ourselves we must be prepared to release the ties that bind. That necessarily involves freeing ourselves from the use of dinky archaic language which ought to make us feel quite stupid when we do use it.

When it comes to change, however, lawyers are like cows. First we chew on it a good while then it has to pass through

four stomachs before we make anything of it.

And another thing... the baying of hounds

In the aftermath of the Childers tragedy, another travesty was taking place: media reporting of "Australia's largest manhunt" for someone wanted by police for assistance in the events that led to the death of 15 back packers in the hostel fire.

Within days virtually every media outlet in the country had named this person, and linked him in a very direct way as "Australia's most wanted man"; the "prime suspect" in an alleged crime and so on.

While it is true that such reporting is arguably legal, short of possible charges having been laid, it is difficult to imagine a fair trial being available for this wretched man if indeed he faces court — let alone the damage done to his reputation if proceedings against him do not eventuate.

It was left to the Mayor of Isis Shire Council which includes Childers, one

Bill Trevor, to demonstrate knowledge of the principles of our justice system the media seemed so eager to ignore.

He was quoted in *The Australian* (itself one of the outlets I have quoted above) as saying:

I think it's good the man police were seeking was apprehended and can assist police further. The next process will start now and hopefully (he) will be able to shed some light on what happened... We don't know what happened and, under the Australian and British (justice) system, everyone is entitled to the presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

All power to Mayor Bill Trevor. In a time of enormous communal passion and grief he has managed to maintain the kind of rationality and support for justice that is at the heart of a system which is designed to protect our liberties. Mr Trevor gets my prize this month for defending those proper processes. He has managed to shame those hysterical elements of the media that have appeared so eager to condemn and pre-judge before the proper processes of the law are carried through.

TWO YEARS AT ST HILARYS

Darwin practitioners and friends gathered to celebrate the second anniversary of St Hilary Chambers in Darwin at a function on 23 June 2000.

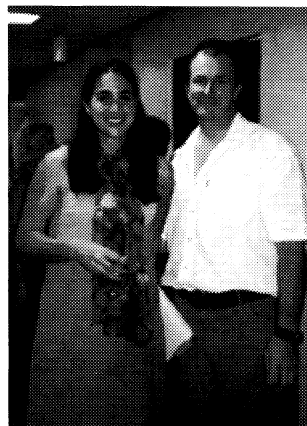
Melanie Little is the principal at St Hilary Chambers. She is joined in her practice by local solicitor Julie Franz and articled clerk Debbie Matheson.



Debbie Matheson, Peggy Cheong, Gloria Richardson and Melanie Little



Catherine Caruana and Tatiana Lozano



Julie Franz and Robbie Hantleman



Margaret Orwin and Tim Prichard