

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

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I was in Alice Springs talking with a member of senior Aboriginal women a couple of weeks ago. They said "We need your help lawyers, we have got a big problem with the police, they are putting all our young men in gaol."

The explanation that the police are only enforcing Government policy doesn't necessarily go down all that well out bush.

This should not be surprising for those of you who have had experience with traditional Aboriginal concepts of accountability.

It would be a tragedy if the response by our Government to the complaints of suburban Darwin is going to diminish the relationship you have built in the bush because you are being held accountable for something outside your control.

Richard Coates is also a council member of the Law Society Northern Territory.

YOUR HONOUR? YOUR WORSHIP?

Views sought on magistrate's address

The Chief Magistrate of the Northern Territory Hugh Bradley has written to the Law Society seeking the Territory legal profession's views on the form of address used in the lower courts.

The issue arose when the Chief Magistrate received an inquiry from an interstate court as to whether there had ever been a proposal in the Territory to change the form of address in the lower courts from "Your worship" to "Your honour". South Australia is one jurisdiction where this practice has already been adopted.

"The subject having been thus raised at our meeting on 31 July 2000, the magistrates expressed their opinions on the subject. With one or two exceptions I think it is fair to say the magistrates are not too concerned what

form of address is used," wrote Mr Bradley.

"It occurred to us that the profession might have a view on the subject: if there is a general desire for change in our practice, I think the magistrates would be content to fall in with it," he said.

The Council of the Law Society discussed the matter at their meeting on 24 August 2000. A strong divergence of opinion on the proposal to change the magistrate's address was noted and Council agreed the profession should be widely canvassed.

Any comments on the matter are encouraged. Please contact any Council member or the Executive Officer of the Law Society with your views.



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