

# IT'S JUST NOT CRICKET

As anyone who has met him would know, my son Max is obsessed with cricket. He eats, breathes and ... well I won't go into it suffice to say that it is a grand obsession for a 13 year old.

Other than that, he is a normal kid of whom I am inordinately proud. Sure, he doesn't always do as he's told; has a selective hearing problem which I understand affects all children; and can be irritating beyond belief when he wants to be. But then again, I am hardly an impeccable role model: I often ignore good advice; regularly don't listen to what's good for me; and drive my family and friends crazy. But we get on OK most of the time.

Max's obsession with cricket has seemed pretty good to me: it gets him out of the house with his friends; it's a healthy way to spend his time; and he learns something of the values of sportsmanship. Cricket is a game that emphasises excellence in individual skills in support of your team mates.

I'd like to think it is teaching him fairness and honesty.

So what do I tell him in light of the current furore over Hansie Cronje and the betting scandal that has rocked the cricket world? It's early days, yet and there is to be at least one judicial inquiry on top of what the Indian Police have come up with. Yet, on the face of it, it would seem that one of the world's best players has become involved in the grubby world of manipulating the way cricket games have been played. It appears that, while it may not be match fixing as such, there are strong suggestions that he has involved himself in the spread betting scams that have enriched bookies in India and Dubai - not to mention the US dollars he brought home from the subcontinent.

Is this the kind of thing I even want to talk about to a 13 year old? That his heroes are dishonest? That greed is more important than a game played

fairly? That Cronje tried to lie his way through the whole debacle before he admitted, albeit clumsily, that he had taken the cash?

Even if I wanted to, I can hardly point to Australian players being simon pure. Warne and Waugh hardly covered themselves in glory a few years ago amidst a cover up by the Australian Cricket Board. At the very least, Australian players are also tainted by greed — and the devil can take the hindmost when it comes to the good of the game.

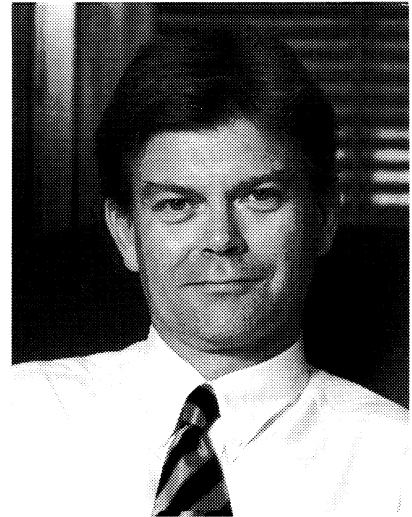
He's a bright kid, and watches the news: God knows what lessons he is learning. I feel that it has been taken out of my hands: the real world has stepped in and parenting is standing on the outer.

I was thinking of this when the subject of pro bono work by our profession came up.

As we all know, the reputation of the legal profession is mixed. Undoubtedly they love us when courts find in our clients' favour; we're far less popular when the reverse is true. We don't do too well in the humour stakes, either. Most "lawyers jokes" emphasise venality and greed — more often than not in the jokes we tell each other.

Yet the legal profession is amongst the most generous in terms of the work it carries out in the community. Every firm in the Territory has formal and informal policies which allow for — indeed encourage — pro bono work.

Individual practitioners, at proportionately greater potential cost, give hundreds of hours a year to providing legal advice to a diverse range of community groups. Salaried lawyers in government and legal aid services pitch in as well. And the figures from DCLS speak volumes for a profession that sees far beyond the narrow confines of running a business to the greater good in a civil society.



*Mr Jon Tippett, President*

And we can't be accused of bragging about it. For some reason or another, we hide our light under a bushel. Very few lawyers talk about it — perhaps surprising for a bunch of people who normally cannot be accused of false modesty. Yet many of us are often aggrieved when the good works we might do are ignored in the hurly burly of public life.

So what's this got to do with cricket?

We live in an age of increased media scrutiny, even in a jurisdiction without Freedom of Information laws. The media has a job to do in upholding principles of honesty and transparency in public life, and the perils of ignoring this are starkly revealed in the Cronje affair. And much as we may dislike the role of the media from time to time when it comes to reporting legal matters, we must recognise the importance of the media's role in holding a mirror to society, and revealing society's shortcomings.

Part of the problem is that lawyers have often not been very good at explaining themselves to the broader community — let alone to the media.

It is often a difficult task, not least because the law has a tendency to be opaque. The jargon, traditions and high principles of the law are difficult to understand for the uninitiated — and even the notion that one has to be initiated into the law is an indication of the distance often perceived between the "profession" and the lay person. The role of the

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law as one of the foundations of a civil society is too often obscured behind what again can often be mistakenly perceived as indifference, arrogance and secretiveness.

It is a potentially dangerous situation, and one that can only be overcome if we allow ourselves to come out into the open: to explain ourselves; to talk about what we do; and talk about the importance of the role of the law in a civil society. So that the public is given the opportunity, in an open and frank way, to engage with us and learn about how law operates — one hopes — as an impartial defender of that society.

To ignore the importance of being more open to the general public will be to the detriment of us all. I can't figure out how bookies could make a quid out of us, but if we maintain an air of secrecy and clubbishness, we should not be surprised if the general public regards us with the kinds of

suspicion that seems to be befalling the cricket world. Dishonesty and secrecy in any game will carry the seeds of self destruction — and the legal profession will not be an exception.

Law Week is one of the few times of the year when we come out for a bit of show-and-tell, and I am pleased that this year's celebrations is focused on reaching out to the general public. From the workshops provided by the Young Lawyers Association to the Case by Case Crime Tour of Darwin to the re-enactment of Tuckiar's Trial, the public is very much the "guest of honour", whether the activities be educational or just plain good fun.

After looking at the Law Week program I've decided I kind of like the fact the profession doesn't brag about its pro bono work. After all, while the law might seem a strange game at times, we are not sports people waiting for our next media fix — let alone a quick sling from the bookies.



*Legal information stalls held in Darwin mall last year will be a feature of Law Week 2000 in both Darwin and Alice Springs.*

We can work for our community and explain what we are about without self aggrandisement or self promotion. It's something we can all be proud of.

I guess what Max has to learn is that what Cronje, Waugh and Warne got themselves involved with is just not cricket. As long as he is open and honest, and treats his fellow players with respect, that's the main thing.

I will continue to be proud of him.

## NT TO JOIN NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES MARKET

**Legislation introducing a national travelling practising certificate regime to the Northern Territory is due to be introduced to Parliament this month.**

A draft of the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill 2000 was forwarded to the Law Society for comment on Christmas Eve last year.

Based on similar legislation in other states, the Bill is designed to allow Northern Territory practitioners to practice in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the ACT without having to apply and pay for a practising certificate in each jurisdiction.

Practitioners from interstate will also be able to practice in the Northern Territory without the need to apply to the Law Society Northern Territory for a certificate. Those wanting to practice in the Northern Territory on

a more permanent basis will be required to register an office in the Territory.

Admission requirements of courts in all jurisdictions remain unchanged.

In order to establish the regime, the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill necessarily makes changes in a number of areas including amendments to facilitate regulations which introduce a national code of conduct, consideration of contributions to the fidelity fund and a requirement on the Law Society to keep a publicly available register of all local, interstate and foreign practitioners.

Access to fidelity funds, levels of minimum insurance and protocols concerning the regulation of the profession are issues subject to final negotiations between each of the participating jurisdictions.

The Law Society requested legislation be introduced that gives the Society power to promulgate conduct rules.

The Law Society has proposed that the Northern Territory legal profession should have similar powers to New South Wales professional bodies which gazette conduct rules.

Under the NSW system the Attorney-General retains the power to disallow any rules that are anti-competitive or not in the public interest within 12 months of gazettal.

The Law Society has also called for a tighter definitions of "legal practitioner" and "interstate legal practitioner."

For further information about the draft Bill or the Law Society submission please contact 8981 5104.