

FERAE NATURAE

In the marketplace of ideas, it often seems that little is done to explain the principles and workings of the criminal justice system. Little wonder, then, that when the average citizen has dealings with the law it can often be confusing or even intimidating. Much of this is to do with the fact that, for most people, dealings with the criminal justice system are rare. Some get broken into and have to report it to the police and insurance company. More rarely still, some get to sit on a jury to decide on the guilt or otherwise of an alleged offender. An even smaller minority end up on the wrong side of the dock and perhaps receive society's punishment.

Yet the media, often fuelled by the ambitions of politicians, more often than not paints a simplistic, if not sensationalist view of the whole deal. Crime, it is said, is rife. The criminals get away with a slap over the wrist. The lawyers make bucket loads out of freeing the guilty, and judges are just a bunch of pansies.

This is at the heart of misconceptions that have led us down the path of mandatory sentencing with the support of both sides of politics as they try to outbid each other at successive elections.

It is with this in mind that the Law Society, with the assistance of the Public Purposes Trust, is joining with a number of organisations to stage the "Trial of the Century" roadshow in coming months.

Based on a successful 1998 pilot carried out by the Legal Aid Commission with Neighbourhood Watch, the Trial of the Century is a community participatory education project. In short, members of the Northern Territory community — in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin — will be invited to participate in a mock trial. Working with practitioners, police, judiciary and court staff, participants are provided with information on the law and a range of sentencing options to consider. Discussion is allowed on the ways sentencing is determined.

The original workshop with Neighbourhood Watch included



assistance from Justice Mildren whose judgment and sentencing was compared — with surprising results — with that of community participants.

The coming workshops will hopefully include as many practitioners as possible, along with members of NT Police, the DPP, the Legal Aid Commission, Rotary, the Council of Churches, NT Court staff and judiciary, the department of education and NTSafe.

I urge all interested practitioners to volunteer their time to be a part of this sentencing education campaign. It's a chance for the Law Society to engage in a positive way with the marketplace of ideas here in the Territory.

LAW SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER

The Law Society
annual dinner will be
held on Saturday 25
August 2001.

Details will be
announced shortly.

Mark your diaries now!

CLE TIMETABLE 2001

10 July 2001
Settlement of Personal
Injuries Litigation
David Sweet, Cridlands
Merran Short, De Silva
Hebron
5pm
9th Floor Conference
Room, NT House, 22
Mitchell Street, Darwin

23 July 2001
Court Etiquette for
Katherine practitioners
Justice Trevor Riley,
Supreme Court of the
Northern Territory
5pm
The Hearing Room,
Katherine Court House

Location

Practitioners will be notified of the location of CLEs via fax bulletins distributed to all firms in the week prior to the session. If you are not receiving these bulletins please let the Law Society staff know.

Payment

Practitioners will now be invoiced for the CLE directly after the CLE session is held. *Please sign in when you arrive at the CLE on the booking sheet provided. Do not send your payment with your booking.*

Attendance rates (including GST) for CLE's is as follows:

\$22 for Law Society members

\$27.50 for non-members

\$5.50 for students

Cheques should be made payable to the Law Society Northern Territory.