

LINES IN THE SAND

By Alice Springs representative Katrina Budrikis

Domenic and I have been reminded that it is the end of the year, in terms of the administration of lawyers in the Territory. Elections are coming up for the Law Society Council, as is the time for renewal of practicing certificates. We hope that readers (any out there?) have enjoyed having a column in *Balance* devoted to news of Alice Springs. We have endeavoured to provide a cross section of news, views and profiles of people and organisations that contribute to the law and community. Contributions to this column by the Alice Springs profession are always welcome.

We've enjoyed a number of gatherings of lawyers that have occurred under the auspices of the Law Society this year, in particular the Christmas dinner at the Golden Inn and the book launch for Justice Mildren's volume of Northern Territory Supreme Court decisions. Law Week has certainly taken off in Darwin, and the Law Society is still looking for people with enthusiasm and ideas to help with new events for Law Week in Alice Springs. Surely someone out there has the knowledge to develop a "Crime Tour" of Alice?

I had lunch this week with George Georgiou to ruminate over his



George Georgiou: soon to be leaving Alice Springs for Victoria

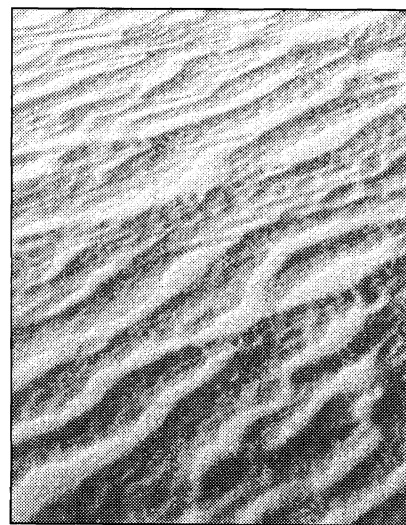
impending departure from Alice Springs to become a public defender with the Victorian Legal Aid Commission. One thing that seems to have stuck in George's mind is that he felt like he was walking into a furnace when he arrived in December 1994. Not surprising for that time of year. But perhaps what did surprise George was that it was more than just a physical furnace. He has found Alice Springs to be a place of extremes: "climactic, political, social and cultural".

The legal system is not adequately addressing the problems faced by Aboriginal defendants

"Alice Springs has given me a different perspective on what Australia is. There is very little in the southern press regarding the plight of Aboriginal people, problems relating to their health, education and legal issues. These problems constantly confront us in Alice. Sadly little has been done to address these pressing issues. I admire the work of organisations like NPY Women's Council, Central Land Council, Congress and the Central Australian Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, who are dedicated to addressing these issues, working against enormous odds and often with insufficient funds.

"I am also impressed with the high standard of representation given to clients by CAALAS and NTLAC. Seldom have I heard the phrase 'I want a real lawyer to represent me' from a client unhappy with legal aid representation. These organisations have done a great job in representing individuals but unfortunately we still have a long way to go in having unjust laws and practices overturned," said George.

"The legal system is not adequately addressing the problems faced by Aboriginal defendants in terms of their lack of understanding of the process, the



dispositions that fail to address the causes for the offending behaviour, and the lack of appropriate rehabilitation facilities.

"I have enjoyed living in Alice Springs enormously. If I have any regrets, they are that we have not been able to persuade the NT Government to abolish the abominable laws with respect to mandatory sentencing and mandatory life imprisonment for murder," he said.

"I'm amazed that the NT government is contemplating allowing mining in the West Macdonell National Park. One of the great things about living in Alice is being able to go to places in the West Macdonnells. It is an area of significant beauty and cultural value. I do not understand why a government would allow the risk of destroying these qualities.

"My favourite spot in Central Australia is definitely the Papunya Tula shop. I don't know how I'm going to survive without being able to stop in and look at the paintings every week or so".

George was also honest enough to admit that going to watch his footie team, Collingwood, was NOT the reason for his departure. I have to say that I will miss George. His advocacy skills and service to clients have been something to learn from — and he has also been a pleasure to have around.

Lines in the Sand is facilitated by Katrina Budrikis and Domenic Conidi, Alice Springs Law Society Council members.

