

FAREWELL

Having edited and designed twenty eight *Balances* over the past two and a half years it is time to slip away and try my hand at something new. This edition is my last hurrah before I go.

During my time on the magazine there have been some fairly dramatic changes — both in the look of the publication as well as in the content.

A new template and the introduction of splash colour provided *Balance* with a much needed facelift in line with the Society's new corporate logo. An effort has been made to include lots of photos and graphics to make the magazine visibly interesting as well as to record all the social and legal happenings around the Territory. The magazine is looking good, and has potential to become even better.

The most rewarding improvement over time has been the increase in the number of contributors. Two years ago it was a challenge to fill all the pages with copy. As editor I sometimes had to beg, borrow or steal to provide interesting material for readers. Now I have to cull the contributions or edit things down to fit them in.

The increase in contributors reflects the profession's growing sense of ownership over the magazine. The magazine is interesting because the legal community in the Territory is interesting. It has been a privilege to be a part of such a diverse community working on a range of issues, committees and projects. These individuals and groups deserve the profession's support.

Balance provides an opportunity to showcase the Territory profession. The people who contribute should be acknowledged and appreciated. Our regular writers volunteer their time, no matter how hectic their schedules or how bad the writer's block. I would like to thank those people especially. I have nagged them about deadlines for years now and they manage to talk to me! Ed.

FERAE NATURAE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

At a time of winding down for another year and taking part in the Christmas merriment, it seems pretty unexciting to be discussing constitutional change — and the constitution of the Law Society at that.

But next year in September when faced with another AGM all the reasons why it is good idea will come flooding back. Take for example the endless counting of proxies, those forms that have to be filled out a million times and confusion about any last minute entries for the race.

I am exaggerating, but there is no doubt the current system can be streamlined and improved. To do so the constitution will have to be amended. The Council of the Law Society is seeking comments from the profession on the best way to improve the efficiency of our AGMs.

The most important amendment would be setting a closure date and time for nominations. Perhaps the constitution should be amended to require nominations to Council to close one week prior to the AGM to allow names of candidates to be circulated among members.

This would allow all members, not just those who attend the AGM, to know who is running for the Council. Those who pass their proxies to another practitioner would be able to nominate their preferences faced with a full race card.

More importantly our far flung practitioners unable to make it to the AGM due to geography will have the opportunity to make an informed vote.

This brings me to another useful change that may be worth instituting — postal voting. Other Law Societies employ this method successfully. An analysis of the ACT Law Society voting system would be a valuable exercise. Postal voting allows greater participation of members in their Society.



Maria Ceresa, Executive Officer

I would be grateful for feedback from members who have expertise in the running of AGM's.

On another note I would like to thank all of those who gave so generously of their time to the Trial of the Century. The trial was a great success with about 180 people participating in Darwin, Katherine Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

One theme that legal practitioners and members of the judiciary have remarked upon is the willingness of members of the public to debate various sentencing options. Despite the knee jerk reactions of politicians, there was broad agreement among participants that jail is not always the best option for the community.

For those who missed out, a bound volume recording the highlights of the four sessions will be produced and be made available at the Law Society.

This is the type of community education program that the Law Society is proud to be involved with and a worth while project to be supported by the Public Purposes Trust.

As this is the last *Balance* of the year, I take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the Christmas season and the New Year.