



## **Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory (CLANT)**

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### **2018 Annual General Meeting President's Report; 23 November 2018**

It has been an extremely busy and productive year for the committee in which we have had members involved in a number of capacities on external committees, reform groups or conferences including:

- Criminal Justice Forum
- Making Justice Work
- JusTas and Deakin University Reintegration Puzzle Conference
- International Criminal Law Congress
- Law Society Northern Territory Council
- LSNT Social Justice sub committee
- LSNT CPD/ CDU sub committee
- LSNT Law Week Committee
- NT Law Reform Committee
- Territory Families Legislative Amendment Advisory Committee
- Crime and Justice round table with Luke Gosling
- Youth justice forum Katherine Council and Sandra Nelson
- Katherine Local Court Users Group
- Darwin Local Court Users Group
- Alice Springs Local Court Users Group

This year we have been involved in policy reform or have sent submissions in relation to:

- *Monitoring Places of Detention (OPCAT) Bill*
- Recognition of “dead time”
- *Evidence (National Uniform Law) Act* review
- Amendments to coincidence and tendency provisions in *Evidence (National Uniform Law) Act*
- Judicial conduct
- Reduction in addictive behaviours
- Decriminalisation of certain drug offences
- Abolition of all forms of mandatory sentencing
- Implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory
- *Criminal Code Amendment Bill*
- Draft Charter of Victim's Rights

We have hosted a number of events this year including the Biennial Tony Fitzgerald memorial lecture, a mock trial during Law Week at the Supreme Court in Alice Springs and the 'Centralian catch up' for members in Alice Springs and the Barkly region in March this year.

We have made financial contributions to the NT Human Rights Awards and the upcoming Language and the Law III Conference to be held in Alice Springs next year.

As president I have met with the Attorney-General on a number of occasions to discuss a range of issues including our ongoing campaign to end mandatory sentencing and to look at other significant justice reforms. I have also met with senior staff from Territory Families to discuss the ongoing issues with youth justice and to promote strategies to better utilise bail supported accommodation. I met with the deputy leader of the opposition in August to update her on our key messages. I recently attended a presentation by David McGuire, CEO of Diagrama, who was able to provide fresh perspective on approaches to dealing with youth offenders that are results based and put our system of prison-like detention centres to shame.

We have published our four annual 'Balance' articles which have identified our key messages for reform in the criminal justice system. I have been engaged by the media to speak on a number of wide ranging topics.

On 17 November I gave evidence at the select committee hearings into strategies for harm reduction of addictive behaviours at which we highlighted the need for therapeutic courts, abolition of mandatory sentencing and reforms to the Alcohol Harm Reduction Act; as well as raising the issue of wholesale reform surrounding drug offences and the de-criminalisation of certain offences.

It has been a very tough year, we have reflected upon the ongoing failings of our youth justice system, which now a year on from the release of the Royal Commission's recommendations, appears in a more dire state of affairs than ever before.

Members of our committee have been recognised for their contributions to the law and criminal justice; our former president Russell Goldflam was recognised with a Human Rights Award in December last year, and recently David Morters was appointed silk – we congratulate them both. Committee member Clement Ng recently reported on his Churchill Fellowship to the US, Canada and New Zealand to investigate mental health programs in the juvenile justice system.

Finally our major event, the 2019 Bali Conference, is shaping up as our biggest and best conference yet. Our Keynote Speaker, George Georgiou SC, has recently finished the Eastman trial, with the jury returning a verdict of not guilty after 30 hours of deliberation. The conference will run from 22 June to 29 June in Sanur – we hope to formally announce a return to our spiritual home, the Bali Hyatt, and release registration details shortly.

Whilst challenging and very time consuming, I have really enjoyed this year as president and thank the committee and our general membership for their ongoing support.