

Mr Speaker, the Law Society of the Northern Territory has also requested that the name of the society be changed from 'The Law Society of the Northern Territory' to 'Law Society Northern Territory'. The government sees no problem in agreeing to this change of name. However, the government also expects that the reason for a government role in this kind of matter of internal management of a non-government body will be raised and considered in the national competition policy review of the Legal Practitioners Act.

Finally, the bill addresses some other provisions in the current Legal Practitioners Act that are outdated. These are as follows:

- simplification of the definition of 'legal practitioner'. The current definition is rather complex because it attempts to provide for the fact that the Parts of the act have a differential application to various classes of legal practitioners. That definition will be removed and replaced by a general definition. Where required, the Parts of the act will contain definitions appropriate for the application of the provisions of the Part;
- the inclusion of appropriate references to legal practitioners with deemed registration because of the operation of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997;
- statutory confirmation that legal practitioners are officers of the court;
- amendment to the levies currently payable to the Fidelity Fund so that they may vary between the classes of legal practitioner; and
- the amendment of the monetary amounts possibly payable as levies. These have not been amended since 1982. They are to be amended so that the maximum amounts of supplement payable to the Fidelity Fund, in respect of any one year, rises from \$100 to \$500 and, in respect of a career, is set as a maximum of \$1500. It must be noted that the Committee which determines the size of these levies is comprised of three persons - namely the Master of the Supreme Court and two persons nominated by the Law Society of the Northern Territory. Thus the legal profession, rather than the government, controls the size of any such levies.

The bill has been developed in consultation with both the Law Society of the Northern Territory and the judiciary. However, I

anticipate that there will be some issues for which further consultation will be required. Thus in the period between introduction of the bill and its passage I look forward to discussion with the legal profession and the judiciary concerning the bill.

Mr Speaker, the bill is a positive step towards the eventual National Legal Services Market in Australia and enhances the competitiveness and quality standards of the legal profession. Additionally, in terms of occupational and professional regulation the legal profession is leading the way for other professions and occupations. It is doing this by effectively accepting and sharing licensing and disciplinary powers concerning legal practitioners who practise on a national basis.

I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS Take bills together

Mr PALMER (Leader of Government Business): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent bills entitled Financial Relations Agreement (Consequential Provisions) Bill (Serial 228); First Home Owner Grant Bill (Serial 229); Pay-roll Tax Amendment Bill (Serial 235); Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 240); Taxation (Administration) Amendment Bill (Serial 241): (a) being presented and read a first time together, and one motion be put in regard to the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third readings of the bill together and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to.

FINANCIAL RELATIONS AGREEMENT (CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL (Serial 228) FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT BILL (Serial 229) PAY-ROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 235) STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 240) TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 241)

Bills presented and read a first time.