



MEDIA RELEASE

A NEW WAY TO PROVIDE FREE LEGAL INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY – THE NORTHERN TERRITORY LAW HANDBOOK ONLINE

A joint release issued by the Australasian Legal Information Institute, the Darwin Community Legal Service and the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission - Darwin 16 May 2016

The new Northern Territory Law Handbook Online – an easy-to-read guide to law in the Northern Territory - will be launched on Monday 16 May 2016.

This new and innovative approach to providing the community with information on a comprehensive range of legal topics has been developed by the Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII), the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission and the Darwin Community Legal Service with the support of the Law Society Public Purposes Trust.

The production of the new NT Law Handbook has truly been a collaborative effort and could not have been updated and produced online without the voluntary assistance of its contributors. Over 70 people from the legal community, government and community agencies donated their time, expertise and effort to ensure that the text is up-to-date and accurate.

The Handbook is located on a new website www.ntlawhandbook.org. It has been developed by AustLII utilising a collaborative 'wiki-like' platform. This means that the information in the Handbook can be easily updated and corrected whenever changes are made to laws and regulations. It will be a relatively simple matter to ensure that the information in the Handbook is always up-to-date.

Dr Philip Chung, AustLII's Managing Director explains that another of the advantages of the new collaborative platform is that the text is fully integrated with and hyper-linked to all the primary legal materials held on AustLII, the largest and most widely used free-access provider of online Australian legal materials. He notes that, "AustLII holds all the legislation enacted in every jurisdiction in Australia as well as the decisions and case law of all significant courts, tribunals and regulatory authorities in Australia and a database of nearly 100,000 articles from the major Australian law journals. This means that any law, regulation, court or tribunal decision referred to in the text of the Handbook is automatically hyperlinked to the primary source document and other expert commentary held in the AustLII system."

"The Law Handbook is a vital resource for the community" says Suzan Cox QC, Director of the NT Legal Aid Commission and Chair of National Legal Aid. "Lawyers use it to provide preliminary advice to our most vulnerable members of the community and members of the public have been able to access it through public libraries. The new on line version of the Law Handbook allows people across the Northern Territory to access this excellent resource, for free. In addition, we can now ensure that updates are quickly incorporated in this online resource.

Caitlin Perry, Director of the Darwin Community Legal Service notes "the Law Handbook has been an important community tool for lawyers and the community since 1993, when it was first published. We are very grateful for the many contributors who have made our first, online version, a success".



AustLII has built and will maintain the technical infrastructure and software platform to host the Handbook and to enable the text to be automatically integrated and marked up with the full suite of primary and secondary legal material already existing on AustLII.

Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS) and the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission (NTLAC) provided the text of the 2008 edition of the NT Law Handbook as a base text and have engaged and supported an 'editorial co-ordinator' who has liaised with and co-ordinated the wide range of suitable subject specialists from the Northern Territory and around Australia to develop up-to-date relevant content.

The Northern Territory Law Handbook is accessible at: www.ntlawhandbook.org

It will be officially launched by the Administrator of the Northern Territory the Honourable John Hardy on Monday 16 May 2016.

Enquiries regarding this announcement should be directed to:

- Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission - Suzan Cox, Director (08) 8999 3000
- Darwin Community Legal Service - Caitlin Perry, Director (08) 8982 1111
- AustLII – Richard Hunter, Development Manager – 0409 605 974 or richard@ustlii.edu.au

Notes

The Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII) (www.austlii.edu.au) is a non-profit and free access public service facility, established in 1995 by the Law Faculties of two Australian Universities, UNSW Australia, and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). AustLII is the largest and most widely used free-access provider of online Australian legal materials.

The Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission (NTLAC) is an independent organisation that provides legal advice and legal help for many people unable to afford the services of a lawyer. Its Charter is to ensure that the protection or assertion of the legal rights and interests of people in the Northern Territory are not prejudiced by reason of their inability to obtain access to independent legal advice; afford the financial cost of appropriate legal representation; obtain access to the Federal or Territory legal systems or obtain adequate information about access to the law and legal system. Assistance is provided by in-house lawyers and private lawyers paid by NTLAC to assist in particular cases. In addition, NTLAC provides policy and law reform advice to government to ensure that the interests of disadvantaged people are taken into account in the framing of laws that affect them.

Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS) is the Northern Territory's only generalist community legal centre and provides legal and related services to people in the Top End of the NT with a focus on assisting disadvantaged and vulnerable people get access to justice.