

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Legal Practice in Napier in the Early 21st Century

On Andrew Morrison's retirement from the partnership in 1996, the remaining partners underwent a major restructure and resolved from an early stage to work together more in the style of a senate or Roman forum than a hierarchical senior/junior partner structure.

So far it seems to have worked and ensured relative harmony (that is, harmony relative to some other practices that have fallen on difficult times marked by dissolution, unscheduled exits and rifts).

Along with a fresh structure and regularised sabbatical system an annual strategy meeting requirement was agreed to and all of these things were then entrenched in a formal partnership deed.¹³¹⁶

These strategy meetings have typically been held over five days with at least two of those days (despite cynics suggesting otherwise) involving intense debate and study about the future direction of the firm, including issues such as market coverage and succession planning. It has always been important to include spouses and partners if only to reward them for putting up with their husbands and partners being cranky and difficult for the balance of the year.

The partners initially held their strategy meetings within New Zealand but later extended that and so the full list of destinations reads as follows:

1995	Turangi/Tokaanu
1996	Huka Lodge
1997	Wairaki/Huka Lodge
1998	Melbourne
1999	Queenstown
2000	Sydney
2001	Coolum

2002	Melbourne
2003	Queenstown
2004	Fiji
2005	Port Douglas
2006	Samoa
2007	Sydney
2008	Noumea
2009	Waiheke
2010	Vanuatu
2011	Napier

The author recalls on at least one of the occasions, when deliberations had finished at Turangi and the embarrassing attempt on the nine-hole golf course was finally over,¹³¹⁷ all of the partners wined and dined at a local establishment and then travelled by car to Tokaanu where Magnus' brother Jeremy was staying and in varying states of intoxication we were challenged to a game of three card lou (a betting game in which the rules were illusive and one that few of us had played). Nothing was being taken too seriously by this point (on account of the consumption levels) but nevertheless several of us played (Andrew being the wise and notable exception) and managed to run up an unhealthy deficit on the games board – all carefully written down in the absence of real folding stuff. It was not until the Monday morning of the following week that we all received a memo from Magnus to say that his brother would like us to pay up on our IOUs. Half incredulous, half disbelieving, the matter was questioned with Magnus who assured us that there was no respite and that the money was lost fair and square. Cheques were then issued and later honoured and the author very much regrets not following his Baptist-raised mother's advice about gambling being the "work of the devil".

¹³¹⁶ A formal partnership deed does not appear to have been in place since the early 20th century.

¹³¹⁷ See Chapter 9 under the heading *Stuart John Webster*.



(C14_1): Christmas Party at Gerry and Steph Sullivan's house in Guppy Road sometime in the 1990s – strained karaoke in progress. Left to right: (person unknown), the author, Stephen Greer, Andrew Wares and Gerry Sullivan.