

# EDITORIAL

PAVITHRA JAYASEKERA

Welcome to the ninth volume of the *Victoria University Law & Justice Journal* ('*VULJ*'). It is with pleasure my team and I present this collection of articles written by eminent legal academics from around the country.

Working as a *VULJ* Senior Editor has been one of the highlights during my studies at the College of Law & Justice. As a law student, reading academic journals becomes second nature, but preparing an issue of *VULJ* for publication does not! It is a time-consuming and meticulous job, which requires a passion for attention-to-detail and patience. It is hard work, but it is immensely rewarding. I have had the privilege of engaging in candid discussions with judges in their chambers and talks on an array of topics (of which I now have some knowledge) with legal professionals from around Australia. Without *VULJ* this would probably not be possible.

This issue opens with the edited transcript of the 9<sup>th</sup> Kirby Justice Oration delivered by Her Excellency Mrs Vicki Treadell CMG MVO. Her Excellency reflects on how her mother and father, who faced challenges as a mixed-race couple, raised her and her sister to be equipped to confront prejudice. Armed with confidence about who she was and where she was from, she joined British diplomatic service and is now the incumbent High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, resident in Canberra. Her Excellency talks about navigating her current role and dealing with challenges bought on by Brexit and the rise of the digital world.

Next, we present a reflection by Professor Emeritus Harry Glasbeek, which provides an intriguing insight into the life of Australia's 19<sup>th</sup> Governor-General. Sir Zelman Cowen was something of a mentor for Professor Glasbeek, making time to challenge him, to push his boundaries and to advocate for his career development (despite his own tremendous workload). A person of integrity and humour, Sir Zelman was unwavering in his commitment to the practice of law, while respecting the views of people around him. The article documents the changing relationship and the enduring friendship between Professor Glasbeek and a *very good man*.

The first article, by Kate Offer and Dr Renae Barker, tackles whether vegans who follow the diet for ethical reasons should be protected from discrimination based on their philosophical beliefs. In the United States and recently in the United Kingdom, there has been some case law that has found in favour of this claim. Australia does not have a definitive legal definition of religion so Offer and Barker contend that it is

unlikely that veganism would be captured within the definition in its current state. Given the rise of veganism in Australia, this article is topical as it identifies an issue that we are likely to encounter in the near future.

The second article, by Dr Sophie Riley, considers a new approach in implementing sustainable development, one based on Earth jurisprudence. Earth jurisprudence proposes that human laws need to be consistent with, and limited by, the laws of nature. It is the contention that in order for society to live in harmony with nature and protect the Earth for future generations, humans need to reassess their interactions with the Earth and its ecological systems. Specifically, Riley suggests replacing anthropocentric trajectories with philosophies that prevent nature being marginalised and commodified. Moving away from a structure of systems that have historically valued nature when its interests align with human interests is a monumental task. Barker elucidates that it is a task we must collectively face as a global population and that the conclusions, findings and recommendations from the United Nations Dialogues strongly support the implementation of Earth-centred law.

The third and final article, by William Brown, tackles a topic that I believe almost everyone that has studied law has ruminated on. That is, how can complex language in legal documents, such as contracts, be made more accessible and understandable by using plain English? There is no simple answer. Brown points out that there is a need for brevity in drafting contracts, but this need gives way to the perceived greater need for legal clarity, ergo complex language prevails. He concludes that although plain English will not be widespread in the legal landscape, there is an opportunity for reducing ambiguity and maximising intelligibility in several legal contexts.

On an editorial note, we acknowledge that the on-going nature of COVID-19 has affected life in many ways. While the release of this issue was delayed slightly, we remain committed to keeping *VULJ* as up-to-date as possible. As such, some minor updates were made to articles as part of the editorial process.

As I prepare to hand over the editorial baton, I would like to thank my team, our Managing Academic Editor, Nussen Ainsworth, and the extended journal staff that I have worked with over the past two years. It has been an honour. To our readers, I trust you like the new-look *VULJ* and the articles presented in this issue.