

Committees

Chair's Report

To date, the Young Lawyers' Section has had a hectic 1999 and the pace looks set to continue! This year, the Young Lawyers' Section has actively developed programmes which build on our successes of the past, which aim to improve and reform the profession and the law at present, and which will ensure that lawyers remain relevant and effective professional advisers in the future. I believe this approach will benefit our members both today and in years to come.

Building on the Past

In 1999, Young Lawyers is continuing to provide services and events which have been extremely successful in the past. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Phoebe Dunn, Immediate Past Chair of the Section, for her significant contribution to Young Lawyers. Her leadership, hard work and tireless enthusiasm have ensured that the Section has blossomed.

The Professional Development Committee is again conducting its highly regarded annual lecture series. This series provides comprehensive instruction on a broad range of legal areas in which young lawyers practice. The format and content of the lecture series has been improved and updated. The committee will also run the perennially popular and fiercely contested Gordon Lewis Speakers Competition. This year will see a new look competition following the theme of impromptu but erudite.

The Community Issues Committee is continuing its excellent work. The committee is running an expanded Shadow Program, where students from disadvantaged schools will have the opportunity to obtain experience working in the legal profession with an appointed mentor. The committee is also in the process of updating the "Gay and Lesbian Couples and the Law" booklet, thus ensuring that information in this valuable resource is accurate and relevant. I would like to congratulate and thank the committee for its role in establishing the LIV Legal Assistance Scheme, which was launched to coincide with the opening of the legal year by the Governor of Victoria, Sir James Gobbo. The Scheme provides an excellent opportunity for junior practitioners to contribute to the wider community by offering their legal skills and expertise to those in need.

Reforming Law Today

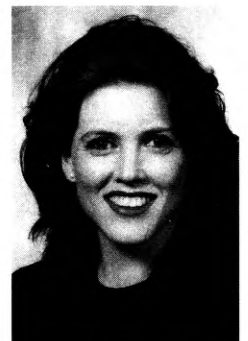
Young Lawyers is committed to being involved in and contributing to debate on legal and social issues which

affect young lawyers, the practice and administration of law, and young people in general. To this end, we have voiced our concern at the Government's proposal to introduce a private sector youth training facility in Victoria. In addition, the Section is supporting the campaign by Community Legal Centres to ensure fair and equitable outcomes from the Commonwealth and State Governments' review of legal centres in Victoria. Young Lawyers has also contributed to public debate surrounding both the working conditions for young lawyers, and the status of women in the law. Finally, the Section is continuing to work with representatives from the various law students societies in relation to the issue of upfront fees.

Looking to the Future

As we approach 2000, themes like change, a new beginning, a better future tend to recur. As junior legal practitioners are the future of the legal profession, it is imperative that we are included and involved in planning for the future. The Section has worked to ensure the views of young lawyers are taken into account, particularly within the Institute. Focus groups have been held to ascertain issues of importance to our members. We are also in the process of establishing a membership committee to ensure that services and assistance offered to our membership are well targeted. The Section is working to forge closer bonds with country practitioners by means of an annual country conference, and will continue to foster close working ties with interstate young lawyers groups. We welcome the new arrival of the Young Criminal Lawyers Sub-Committee of the Criminal Law Section which aims to address issues specific to young criminal lawyers and look forward to working with them.

In a variety of ways, Young Lawyers is embracing change in the law and the legal profession and acting to ensure that the transition to the next millennium is successful. I invite you to become actively involved in Young Lawyers – a dynamic and enthusiastic professional group. Furthermore, I urge you to make use of the services and resources the Section has to offer. I look forward to building on our successes of the past, to reforming the law today and to working together to ensure our future is bright.



*Grania Connors,
Chair
Young Lawyers'
Section*