

# inaugural young lawyers conference a sellout!

The inaugural YLS Conference was held at Hepburn Springs on Saturday 12 May. The conference had a substantive law focus with two seminar streams catering for both corporate and generalist practitioners. Topics covered in the conference included an update on the Trade Practices Act, using the Internet in legal practice, drafting techniques for witness statements and wills, child support and property settlements.

Conference highlights included a presentation on the "Art of the Advocate" by newly appointed County Court Judge Betty King, an excellent summary of the GST by Max Warlow from Senserrick Warlow & Associates Pty Ltd and the keynote address from Ron Beazley and launch of the YLS draft guidelines for employee solicitors.

## employee solicitor guidelines

Anthony Beck-Godoy (Co-Chair, YLS Professional Development Committee) launched the Section's draft Guidelines for Employee Solicitors at the conference. The Guidelines:

- promote a positive work environment that encourages open communication of expectations between employers and employees
- identify the mutual responsibilities of law firms and their employee solicitors and articulated clerks in relation to employment practices, professional development, and promoting a balanced and flexible work environment.
- The Committee is seeking input on the draft Guidelines from YLS members and other members of the profession throughout July.

## up there "bezaley"

Even young lawyers have something to learn from an extinct species, according to self-confessed dinosaur (and until recently, Victorian Government Solicitor) Ron Beazley.

Speaking at the opening of the conference less than two weeks before his retirement, the old campaigner challenged young lawyers to examine their work practices in order to avoid burnout. He implored young lawyers to encourage their firms to address properly the issue of time costing and the value of the non-billable working hour.

"I believe strongly that most firms, particularly the so-called first and second tier firms, set individual budgets which are too high and which adversely affect the lawyers in the setting and obtaining of their individual goals" he said. "Any firm which asks it lawyers, particularly young lawyers, to produce more than five hours 45 minutes per day is acting adversely to the long-term interests of the firm". Mr Beazley also listed a range of essential non-billable activities for all practitioners, namely:

- continuing legal and other education;
- marketing and practice development, focussing on management issues; and
- enhancing interpersonal professional relationships within and outside the firm.

Mr Beazley emphasised that these essential tasks are being compromised by the trend towards uncapped billable hours. This crowd's on your side, Ron.

The "healthy balance" theme of the Conference was also taken up by the Chair of the Young Lawyers' Section, Richard Kervin, who called on young lawyers to challenge the traditional long hours culture within the law, and to strive "for a healthy balance between work and all the other facets of their lives".

For more information about the Young Lawyers' Section, contact Karen Hermann at the Institute on 9607 9379.

# professional development report

## join young lawyers – see the world

*(well, sydney anyway)*

Over the weekend of 27/28 May we attended the NSW Young Lawyers Mid-Year Assembly at Dooralong Lodge in Wyong. NSW Young Lawyers is a dynamic organisation with more members than Victoria due to the fact that membership of the NSW Law Society is compulsory. All CLE for the whole of NSW (which is compulsory up north) is conducted by Young Lawyers. This provides NSW Young Lawyers with a large amount of funding.

The conference setting was amazing. There was no grandiose hotel or conference centre, just log cabins in the middle of nowhere. We had a very busy Saturday hearing all about NSW Young Lawyers and their current and future projects. We heard a report from their President and all the members of the Executive Committee. We got to participate in a discussion about their Code for Employed Solicitors. There was also a thought provoking discussion on mandatory sentencing and introductory discussions about how they could improve their website. After all this we were broken into groups to discuss careers, the website and regional issues. Sunday was another busy day with a seminar on the role of the ICJ in Australia and the conduct of Legal Aid in NSW. After all this, the Assembly still had time to present resolutions to be passed by the meeting.

Over the next few months the Young Lawyers Executive will endeavour to thresh out these issues and you will hear about the outcomes in future editions of the Journal and via Law Bytes.

*By Victoria Strong (Vice-Chair Young Lawyers) and Anthony Beck-Godoy (Co-Chair Professional Development Committee)*