

chair's report



RICHARD KERVIN

G'day!

Where has the year gone?

This is often the time of year when people reflect on where the year gone by, and where their lives and careers are going.

For many Articled Clerks, 2000 was a tumultuous time, going from study to employment in a profession as challenging and rewarding as the law. They are still on the steep part of the learning curve, although charging upwards.

First-year solicitors are by now gaining the confidence that comes with being able to witness affidavits and from having some valuable experience under their belts. They are also gaining a sense of the pressure to work longer hours, to the detriment of the other aspects of their lives. I urge you — resist!

Those with second-year status or beyond may have chosen an area or areas of law in which they intend to concentrate their practice. While a long way off eligibility for becoming an LIV Accredited Specialist, they have a pretty good idea what they are doing, in their chosen fields.

Regardless of how much experience you have, you will benefit from membership of one of the Sections of the Law Institute relating to particular areas of practice. If you ticked the box for membership of the Criminal Law Section, the Family Law Section, or the Litigation Lawyers Section, for instance, you have received publications relevant to your area of law. However if you are really to benefit from membership of a Section, consider joining one of the committees.

Some members of these committees are senior practitioners in their fields and the discussions may be pretty

high-powered. However you shouldn't be put off by that — most of the Sections are actively seeking younger members and your contributions will be welcomed.

Take a look at your Section Newsletters, or the Law Institute Journal, to find out what the Sections are up to. There are contact details in those publications, or you can just telephone the Institute and ask to speak to "the Commercial Law Section", for example. Take the step, develop your skills.

retrospection

I reflect on my year-and-a-half term as Chair of the Young Lawyers' Section with pride.

Our Section is vibrant and dynamic. We are really making an impact on our members, on the Law Institute, and on the broader community. You have only to read the reports from the Chairs of our individual committees in this Journal to gain a sense of our activity. Of course, if you have attended any of our functions you will have had some first-hand experience.

This success is a credit to the Executive of the Young Lawyers' Section and the many other members who make up our committees. Well done to all of you!

Our success is also a reflection of the willingness of our membership generally to take part in projects and activities for the good of the profession, the community, or in the name of fun.

The Section, and ultimately the Law Institute, depends on our members. I thank you all for your participation and involvement and encourage you to keep it up. 2001 is going to be a great year for Young Lawyers!

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community issues report

The past 12 months have seen a huge increase in membership in the Community Issues Committee, as well as a renewed enthusiasm and support for its activities from the legal profession as a whole.

shadowing Program

A great example of this was the Third Annual Shadowing Program, which was conducted during Law Week in May of 2000. An initiative of the Committee, the scheme provides students from disadvantaged schools with the opportunity to literally "shadow" a practitioner for one week. Unlike work experience, where often work has to be found to occupy students, the idea behind the Shadowing Program is to let students see exactly what lawyers do, be it reading a case or appearing in court.

Last year 18 students from 12 schools participated in the program, however in 2000 it was expanded to include country and regional schools, and places for over 70 students were found. Ms Jennifer Coate, Chief Magistrate of the Children's Court, launched the program which was a great success. It is hoped the 2001 program will be even bigger - we're counting on the continued support of law firms across the state, so make sure you plug the Shadowing Program to your employers and/or colleagues when the time comes!!

information and jobs skills seminars

Prompted by the concern of Committee members that many law students were unaware of their options at the end of their degrees, the Committee conducted a series of information sessions throughout 2000. Law graduates working non-traditional roles, such as journalism, assured students that a law degree, which did not lead to articles, could still be a

valuable passport into other fields. These sessions were followed in September by a Job Skills Seminar aimed at young solicitors keen to change their jobs or indeed career paths. Speakers at the seminar, which was held at the Leo Cussen Institute, gave practical advice on whether life "really was greener" on the other side of the fence. Special thanks to Derek Neilson and Michelle Florenini for organising the sessions and seminar.

gay and lesbian rights booklet

On on-going project of the Committee, the production of a Gay and Lesbian Rights Booklet is finally underway. The booklet, which is being funded by the Victorian Law foundation, will be a joint production of the Young Lawyers' Section and the Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby. It was due to be released in late 2000/early 2001, although legislative reform in the area of same-sex relationships looks like it will be pushed through Victorian Parliament soon. So for the first time in the history of this Committee, a delay in getting a project up and running has worked in our favour!

juvenile justice project

At the suggestion of the David Baxter of the Seaford Legal Service, the Committee is planning an advice booklet for young people of South-

East Asian background who find themselves in trouble with the law. It is planned that the booklet will be produced in several languages, and thanks to the work of Sasha Manova and Liza Grange-Perry, it looks like this project will be a great success.

essay contest

Inspired by the now not-so-recent Corroboree 2000, the Committee will next year conduct an essay contest for secondary school students on the theme of reconciliation. Committee member Georgie Costello suggested the questions, which will be "Reconciliation – what can I do to help the process?" and "A treaty with Indigenous Australian – the end or the beginning of Reconciliation?" Students and schools will be offered valuable prizes and a chance to have entries published in "Education Age". The prize winners will be invited to attend a special function in their honour during Law Week. The Committee plans to make the Social Justice Essay Contest a regular feature of the Law Week calendar.

other plans for 2001

Anna Skarbek has initiated a new project aimed at distributing leftover food from law firm meetings to welfare agencies and soup kitchens around Melbourne. While we're still looking into the health regulations involved, and it may develop into a donation

rather than a leftovers project, the Committee is hopeful of finding some way of re-directing the dozens of sandwiches and trays of food which get thrown out in law firm kitchens every day.

The Committee has also been approached by the Red Cross International Humanitarian Law Unit to conduct various joint projects in 2001. While details are yet to be finalised, plans include a mock "International Criminal Court" trial and a series of debates on important international law issues.

thanks

No report of this Committee would be complete without a thank you to each an every Committee member (who hasn't already been mentioned!!) – Llewellyn Fleming, Fonda Gazis, Sally Gluyas, Emma Gordon, Karen Grima, Leanne Simons, Margaret Wang, Kristy Calvert, Vanessa Cullen, Irina Shainsky, Kristen Abery, Greg Stander, Kirsten Hagon, and our secretary, Jacqui Boymal. Without everyone's willingness to give up their lunchtimes and spare time (and eat the same LIV-prepared lunch every single week!) we wouldn't have a Committee at all.

young lawyers' law reform committee - annual report

The Young Lawyers Law Reform Committee met for the first time on 13 June 2000.

The Committee is made up of young lawyers from all walks of life. Not all Committee members are practising lawyers and this certainly adds to the variety and the quality of contributions made.

The objectives of the Committee are

- a. to further the objectives of and assist the sections of the Law Institute;
- b. to provide a forum for discussion and continuing education;
- c. to stimulate interest and participation of young lawyers;
- d. to undertake research into the law

and make recommendations for change;

- e. to produce discussion papers and engage in consultation with non-lawyer organisations.

The Committee has written a press release on drug reform. The press release talks about measures which the Committee thinks are likely to be