

President's report

Radhika Kanhai, Holding Redlich and President, Young Lawyers' Section



RADHIKA KANHAI

***"For those who've come across the seas,
We've boundless plains to share"***

ADVANCE AUSTRALIA FAIR

Welcome to the first edition of the Young Lawyers' Journal for 2002, focusing on human rights. Over the last few months, Australia's human rights obligations have been scrutinised through its harsh treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. The Young Lawyers' Section has strongly expressed its opposition (one that is endorsed by the Council of the Law Institute of Victoria) to the Federal Government's approach to refugees and asylum seekers, calling on the government to end mandatory detention of asylum seekers, process asylum seeker claims in Australia and allow decisions on refugee's claims to be reviewable by the Federal Court (see *Law Institute Journal*, February 2002 edition, page 6).

The Young Lawyers' Section has also assisted in writing a letter to all Australian political parties stating that Australia's policy of mandatory detention of asylum seekers in remote immigration detention centres and in facilities around the Pacific is contrary to international law and human rights standards.

On 8th May 2002, the Section will be hosting a Hypothetical open to all

members of the public. This event will bring together prominent individuals from a range of backgrounds to voice their opinions on various fictional scenarios based on Australia's current approach to refugees, international comparisons and alternatives to mandatory detention. A full report of the Hypothetical will be provided in the next edition of the Young Lawyers' Journal.

I personally encourage all of you to attend and show your support for this issue.

Welcome 2002

Many of you will have already been involved in various Young Lawyer functions such as the ever popular quarterly drinks evening (first one of the year commiserating the end of summer), the running and walking club with ex-Richmond football star, Brendan Gale, and the Macedon Ranges winery tour.

The Section's relevance is of course greater than providing you with networking opportunities such as these organised by the Social Committee. The Law Reform Committee has been working on submissions on the Anti-Terrorism Bill and voting rights for the homeless, and organising a drug law reform conference jointly with Hanover Welfare Services. The Community Issues Committee has been organising an essay competition open to high school students on Australia's attitude to immigration and is developing programs for lawyers to become volunteers in community organisations.

The Section's Professional Development Committee has put together an Articled Clerks' Information Kit which is available at the Institute's bookstore and contains many survival tips. This year, the Committee will develop and implement a Mentoring Program for all Young Lawyers. You will be able to seek the advice of experienced practitioners in career

development, dealing with clients and colleagues and work/lifestyle issues. You may have seen a copy of the "Thriving and Surviving Guidelines" prepared by this Committee last year on the mutual obligations of employers and employees in the legal workplace. This year, the Committee would like your feedback on whether the listed recommendations are being implemented in your workplace.

And of course there is the Editorial Committee. Reading this Journal, you will undoubtedly be impressed with the informative articles written by your Young Lawyer colleagues. The Journal is your journal – we want your views.

The Section is only one of the sections of the Law Institute. The other sections specialise in various areas of the law such as Commercial Law, Litigation, Administrative Law and Human Rights and Family Law. All the specialist sections encourage Young Lawyer participation so think about joining a specialist section that you are interested in whilst still being involved in the Young Lawyers' Section.

Finally, the Young Lawyers' Section is a medium through which you can express your concerns and have something done about them. The Section is well represented at the Law Institute Council which makes decisions on behalf of all member lawyers in Victoria. So by letting your views known to the Young Lawyers' Section, there is a good chance that Council will hear them.

If I have raised your interest level by outlining very briefly only a small part of what the Section has been up to . . . and we are only in May . . . please contact the ever-helpful and approachable Young Lawyers Section Manager, Jacqui Boymal (on 9607 9379) for further information. You can make a difference on how well you are enjoying the practice of law by contributing!