



RADHIKA KANHAI

President's report

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

Seize the Day

Speaking before a High Court judge is both daunting and exhilarating at the same time. Daunting because of the intelligence and inspiration Justice Michael Kirby exudes and exhilarating to pay tribute to a man who has always been courageous and compassionate in the face of discrimination by some sections of our community. In August this year, I had the honour of thanking Justice Kirby for speaking to a gathering of future leaders at The University of Melbourne. His Honour spoke about the operation of law and access to justice in Australia. Drawing on his own life experiences, his Honour appealed to young lawyers to make every effort to maximise our opportunities – "seize the day" was the phrase he used. He also said that there was a moral calling of being a lawyer and that we should be concerned about justice. He said that cleverness was not enough and that being passionate about justice and the role the law plays in our society was also important.

Hearing Justice Kirby make these remarks made me proud of the work the Young Lawyers' Section is doing in harnessing and fostering the enthusiasm that young lawyers have toward law reform, issues of justice in the community and professional development. I encourage you to heed Justice Kirby's message: seize the day, use your position as lawyers to make a difference in the community you live in and get involved.

Mentoring

Having a High Court judge impart such inspirational messages is important to the development of young lawyers. In recognition of this, the Young Lawyers' Section this year has been involved in three mentoring programs, two of which have already commenced (the junior counsellors program and the mentoring by judges program). The other program is the Indigenous Law Students Mentoring Scheme, which was established by the Attorney General's Department and which the Young Lawyers' Section is hoping to provide assistance to. The Section's Community Issues Committee is presently developing ideas for such assistance.

In the last edition of the Young Lawyers' Journal, I wrote about the appointment of five junior counsellors who are available to all Section members for advice on ethical and practical matters. For more information about the five counsellors, please see the article "*Meet your new junior counsellors*" at page 32 of September's edition of the Law Institute Journal.

Recently, the Law Institute of Victoria established a judges mentoring scheme called "Life in the Law", to be run as a pilot program this year. The program gives young lawyers an opportunity to have an informal chat with judges from the Supreme Court of Victoria about their experiences in the legal profession. If successful, the scheme will be run next year with judges from other State and Federal courts. Initial reports have been very positive, so there is a high prospect of the program being run next year with the participation of many more young lawyers and judges.

Federal Involvement

As President of Victoria's Young Lawyers' Section, I have had the opportunity to represent our State at a Federal level on the Australian Young Lawyers' Committee. This Committee is governed by the Law Council of Australia and meets four times a year; twice in person and twice via teleconference with representatives from each State and Territory. The Committee currently has three major projects in progress – a National Young Lawyers' Survey on Conditions of Employment, the National Admissions Policy and a National Golden Gavel competition.

A national survey on employment conditions will enable each association of young lawyers in each State and Territory to obtain useful information on issues such as the nature of work being done by young lawyers, hours worked and work/life balance concerns. The survey will also facilitate cross-referencing of conditions between the States and Territories and will generate meaningful data on an individual State or Territory. The Committee has proposed to distribute the survey shortly and I encourage you to participate in it.

The Committee of Attorneys-General has prepared a paper on a national admissions scheme

which will be available for public comment shortly. Currently, the rules for admission of legal practitioners are not uniform among the States and Territories. The Paper recommends a national model for admissions on which the Law Council of Australia has made some submissions. The Australian Young Lawyers' Committee will also be commenting on the Paper prior to its wider circulation.

The Golden Gavel competition is a comedy debating competition presently run in New South Wales and Western Australia. The Section intends on sending Victorian participants to the National Golden Gavel Competition to be held in Sydney in November this year.

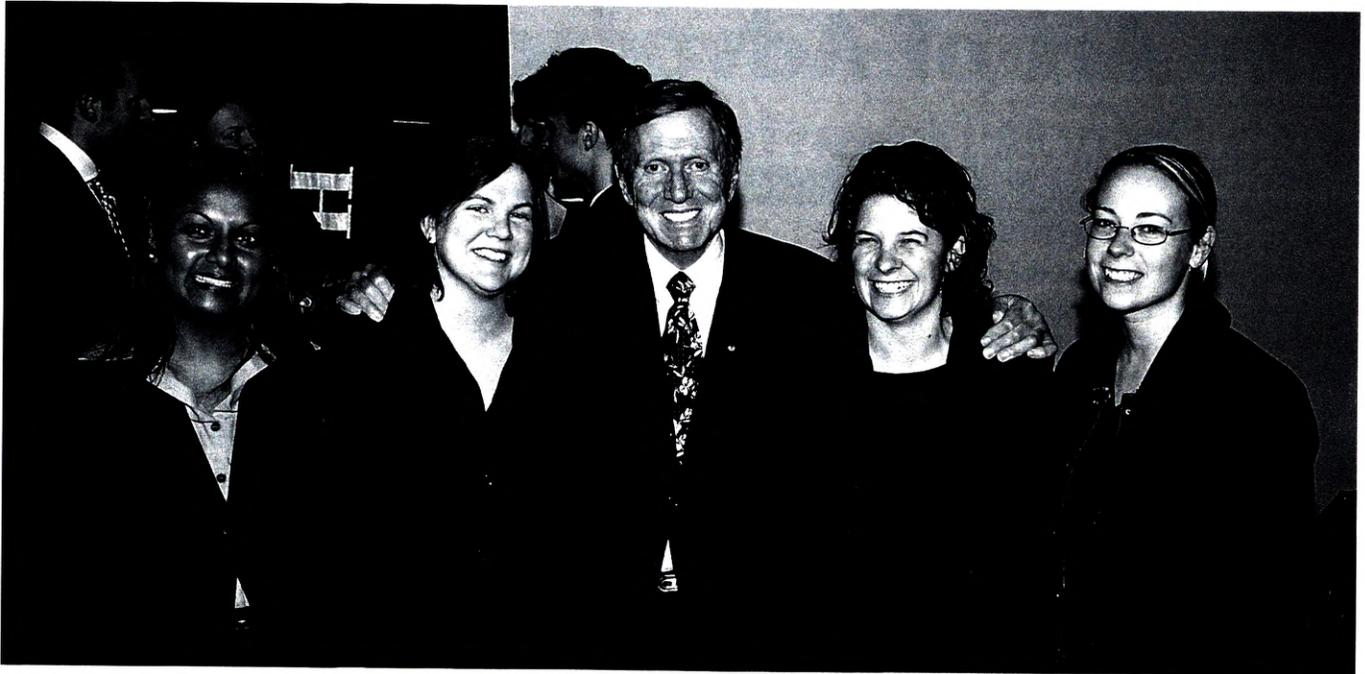
Guidelines for Articled Clerks and Principals

In August this year, the Chief Executive Officer of the Law Institute of Victoria, John Cain, wrote about the number of articled clerks who had contacted the Institute over the past few months reporting extreme problems with their articles ("*Clerk complaints cause concern*" August edition of the Law Institute Journal at page 4). As a response to these concerns, the Young Lawyers' Section has prepared draft guidelines which principals of articled clerks should adopt in their approach to their clerks and to their training year in general. The Board of Examiners has received the draft guidelines favourably and has forwarded them to the Council of Legal Education for consideration. It is envisaged that once endorsed, the guidelines will be sent to principals and clerks upon the commencement of the articles year.

Thank you

As this is the last edition of the Young Lawyers' Journal for 2002, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Law Institute of Victoria for its support of the Young Lawyers' Section. The Institute's Councillors and Executive have always made themselves available to speak to young lawyers and have listened to the concerns and contributions of the Section.

I would also like to thank Jacqui Boymal, the Section's Manager for her enthusiasm, support and tireless dedication in her role.



RADHIKA KANHAI, CLAIRE MAHON, JUSTICE KIRBY, YVETTE NASH AND KARYN PALMER

The work that the Executive and Committee members do sometimes goes unnoticed but the members play a crucial role in the success of the Section. My personal thank you to these incredibly hardworking people, especially to Yvette Nash and Karyn Palmer (Chairs of the Law Reform Committee), Iresha Herath and Philippa Moorfield (Chairs of the Social Committee), Diarmid McGann and Aurora Kostezyk (Chairs of the Regional Young Lawyers Committee), Penny Martin and Kristen Abery (Chairs of the Community Issues Committee), Catherine Dwyer and Katie Coghlan (Chairs of the Profes-

sional Development Committee), Catherine Symons and Selina Sawaya (Chairs of the Editorial Committee), Immediate Past President, Tory Strong and Vice President, Anna Stewart.

Thank you also to the liaison representatives appointed to the Section's Executive: Georgina Costello (Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) Administrative and Human Rights Section), Craig Morgan (LIV Commercial Law Section), Zoe Darnos (LIV Property and Environmental Law Section), Lara Ruddle (LIV Family Law Section), Beverly Burns (Indigenous Young Lawyers), Penny Martin (International Young Lawyers),

Shane Lethlean (Victorian Bar), Anna Brown (Monash Law Students Society), Ivan Rubenstein (Deakin Law Students Society), Darren Boyd (Latrobe Law Students Society) and Ken Nguyen (Melbourne Law Students Society).

Finally, of course, I would like to thank all Young Lawyers' Section Members for your support of the Section. Your ideas on how we can improve our services are always welcome and I thank you for your encouragement and attendance at our functions this year.

See you all in 2003! ●

Focus on Corporate Responsibility

Kristen Abery, Wisewoulds and Penny Martin, Minter Ellison, Co-Chairs Community Issues Committee

In 2001, Paula Gerber of The University of Melbourne spoke to the Young Lawyers' Assembly on the topic of Corporate Responsibility for Lawyers, and Kirsten Hagon wrote papers on corporate responsibility and ethical investment for lawyers. These initiatives led to the Community Issues Committee starting a project on corporate responsibility for law firms. We are pleased that the editors have dedicated this edition of the Young Lawyers' Journal to the same issue.

One of the first questions the Committee discussed was whether principles of "corporate" responsibility should be applied to law firms, being partnerships in a profession with strict

ethical standards. In our view, it is appropriate given that law firms are profit-making businesses generally operating in the corporate sector.

As a committee, we hope to identify and promote the contribution that lawyers make to the community, conduct research on initiatives in the corporate sector, such as the United Nations Global Compact and the Corporate Code of Conduct Bill, and identify strategies that law firms can use to improve their performance as good corporate citizens. Our work on voluntary and legislative codes of conduct suggests that a code could be developed for law firms to give practical ideas to busy lawyers

who seek to make a contribution beyond the bottom line.

The longer term goals for the Project are to encourage lawyers to contribute to the community, for instance in the areas of (1) Pro bono and volunteering, (2) 'Green Office' practices, (3) Workplace and Employment practices, and (4) Ethical Investment, and improve the community's perception of lawyers and the legal profession.

We encourage you to contact us with examples of member lawyers and law firms who excel in their contribution to the community, and to join us at our lunchtime meetings every six weeks to discuss the next stage of the Project. ●