

Regional and Suburban Issues



By Tabitha Pettit, Devenish & Co and Alicia Carroll, Coulter Roache

The Regional and Suburban Young Lawyers' Committee (RSYLC) is a new committee of the Young Lawyers' Section, established to represent the needs of young lawyers practising in suburban and country Victoria.

The committee has recently undergone a name-change, from the Regional Young Lawyers' Committee, to more accurately reflect its membership.

The RSYLC held its first face-to-face meeting at the Young Lawyers' Assembly at Werribee Mansion on 6 April 2003. At that meeting, members sat down and planned the activities for 2003 and also established aims for the year.

Issues of access

Victoria is divided up into over ten suburban and country regions, with each region having a representative on the RSYLC. The RSYLC is aware that young lawyers practising in suburban and country Victoria often have different needs and problems than those practising in the Melbourne CBD. One of the major problems faced is that of isolation, because the networks between young lawyers in these regions are often not as developed as those in the Melbourne CBD. Another problem is that, at times, there is reduced access to resources, law courts and continuing legal education programs, many of which are held in the Melbourne CBD. These problems can result in young lawyers leaving practise in these regions, or sometimes leaving the profession altogether. This leads to staffing pressures on the firms involved, as well as inadequate access to legal assistance for local residents. This is particularly problematic in country regions.

Earlier in 2003, programs were held in various country regions of Victoria and the RSYLC will push for this to continue. The RSYLC also wants to improve access to continuing legal education programs held in Melbourne, through continuing and developing methods such as teleconferencing and video link-up.

Reducing isolation and building networks

In 2003, the RSYLC has resolved to overcome the isolation faced by young lawyers outside the Melbourne CBD. Each representative is

working towards building up the networks between young lawyers within and between the regions. It is hoped that this will reduce feelings of isolation, ensure that resources can be shared and increase professional and social networks. It is also hoped that this will not only keep young lawyers in those regions, but that it will attract law graduates and other young lawyers into practice in those regions.

There are plans to establish informal dinners with Judges and Federal Magistrates, so that young lawyers in the regions are able to meet and socialise with members of the judiciary. It is also hoped that networks can be established between young solicitors and barristers and senior practitioners in each region. There are also plans to hold social weekends in various country regions so that young lawyers can meet, socialise and establish professional networks.

Promoting a career in the regions

RSYLC members will speak at all Victorian law schools to promote suburban and country practice to students as a viable and rewarding career option, and research has been undertaken to determine whether scholarships



RSYLC face-to-face meeting at Werribee mansion

and bursaries are provided by Australian law schools to provide rural students with access to undergraduate law courses.

It is accepted that there will be young lawyers who move from practice in suburban and rural Victoria to the Melbourne CBD, but the committee aims to make young lawyers aware of the alternative of building a successful career outside of the Melbourne CBD.

Get involved!

The RSYLC is here for all young lawyers practising in Victoria outside of the Melbourne CBD. If you would like to know how to contact your local RSYLC representative or would like to provide feedback to the RSYLC, please contact Tabitha Pettit at: tabatha@devenishco.com.au or Alicia Carroll at: acarroll@coulterroache.com.au.

The current co-chairs would like to thank Chris Casey for his contribution to the RSYLC. Chris was co-chair until May 2003. ■

Young Lawyers

'Go to Hollywood' Ball

6 September

Saturday 6 September 2003, 8.00pm until late

Venue: 333 Collins St Dome, Melbourne

Theme: Rock the Red Carpet

Dress: Black tie with a touch of Hollywood Glamour

Tickets: \$75.

Bookings: tel: 9607 9370 or email srantino@liv.asn.au

Tinsel town cocktails, full bar and DJ all evening.

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