

Community Issues Committee



By **Gareth Clark** (top) and **Ronli Sifris**, CIC co-chairs

The Community Issues Committee (CIC) has started 2005 with a bang, and it is unlikely that the pace will slacken as the year progresses.

A special screening of the film *Lilya 4-Ever* was screened at the Lumiere on 21 April. It is a brutally stark and confronting tale of one lonely Russian girl's desire for a better life turning into a living nightmare as she inadvertently becomes a sex-slave. The CIC chose to screen it as part of an ongoing effort to raise awareness of issues relating to human trafficking. The keynote speaker for the evening was Kathleen Maltzahn, director of Project Respect who spoke about her organisation's activities and projects. The CIC is encouraged by the fact that tickets sold out for the film. It is an indication that many young lawyers are concerned about this issue and wish to learn more about it. A follow-up discussion forum will be held later this year, with experts in the area facilitating a discussion with the view to encourage action.

This year's Social Justice Essay Competition focused on "Discrimination", and the authors of the winning entries will be announced at an awards ceremony at Deacons on 16 May.

An animal welfare discussion forum was held during Law Week at the Kitten Club. This forum has been organised in conjunction with the Law Reform Committee, and there are future joint forums planned to discuss varied issues such as changes to media ownership laws, gay rights and youth suicide.

The CIC is also working on putting together an information pack for recently divorced women, which will then be launched and distributed through various community centres. In particular, the CIC wants to explore distributing this information pack to regional Victoria. In that regard, the CIC will be working with the RSYLC to ensure that the relevant information will get to the women who need it.

These activities, combined with ongoing work with indigenous law students, and our coordination of groups of people to participate in the One Umbrella Bake Day Program, will ensure a busy year ahead.

If you would like to get involved in one or more of these activities, or have any other suggestions, please do not hesitate to email Ronli Sifris at ronli.sifris@bakernet.com or Gareth Clark at gareth.clark@bakernet.com. ■

Later Lawyers Network



By **Roderick Tan** and **Carolyn McInnes**, LLN co-chairs

There were more enthusiastic inquiries in the past few months from new law graduates and law students in relation to the Later Lawyers Network (LLN). LLN functions and networking opportunities were cited as the major attractions in joining such a group.

The LLN committee held its first meeting for 2005 on 28 February. Two major matters were discussed: how to find out more about the attitudes of firms towards mature-aged lawyers and how to raise the profile of mature-aged new lawyers and graduates.

The main objective of the first matter is to understand and evaluate the attitudes of the firms' recruitment policies in relation to hiring mature-aged lawyers. Through anecdotal feedback, the committee believes that quite a few of mature-aged lawyers are at a disadvantage when competing for articulated clerk and solicitor positions against their younger counterparts.

However, the committee wants to find out whether the disadvantage applies to a significant amount of mature-aged lawyers, and if so, the reasons for this bias. At the

same time, the committee intends to highlight the virtues and advantages in hiring mature-aged lawyers.

It was decided that the committee members would personally meet with, and interview representatives of large to medium-sized law firms, who essentially exercise the law firms' recruitment policies. After gaining a better understanding of their perception of mature-aged lawyers, the committee will consider the possibility of conducting a wider survey.

The LLN also held its first networking event of the year on 20 April at Zargatt Restaurant at Federation Square where Middletons Lawyers partner Mary Edquist talked about her experience as a later lawyer in the legal profession.

In addition to the networking event, the committee intends to raise the profile of the LLN among mature-aged law students by speaking at events held at law schools and highlighting the potential for people entering into the legal profession later in life or after having a second/third careers, and alternatives available for newly-qualified mature-aged lawyers. ■