

President's update



By **Catherine Dwyer**, senior associate, Wisewoulds

☛ *Put your heart, mind, intellect and soul even to your smallest acts.*

This is the secret of success. ☛

– *Edith Sitwell*

Welcome to 2005. This year the Young Lawyers' Section has a strong focus on professional development issues. Every young lawyer should be given opportunities to:

- develop skills and experience in their area of practice through interesting and challenging work being given to them;
- receive adequate supervision and support from senior practitioners;
- be mentored by a practitioner within their workplace or the broader legal profession who can offer guidance and support;
- attend continuing professional development seminars (external and internal);
- establish networks with other lawyers and professionals; and
- experience a balanced lifestyle between work commitments and external commitments.

As young lawyers, we are still in the early stages of our careers but opportunities such as those mentioned above will enable us to set the framework for rewarding and fulfilling careers.

At the forefront of these professional development issues is a survey of articled clerks, which was conducted by the Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) at the request of Victorian Attorney-General Rob Hulls, in relation to their experiences during their articles year. The results of the survey have been compiled and the Attorney-General gave a media release on 3 March 2005 in which he said "... the articles system should provide a rich, legally stimulating and nurturing environment for graduates seeking admission to practice law ... the 12-month clerkship should prepare junior lawyers for the years ahead ..."¹

The Young Lawyers' Section looks forward to joining a working party to address some of the issues arising from the results of the survey.

Another project will be the introduction of a Negotiations Skills Competition in September 2005. The importance of negotiation skills in a lawyer's practice cannot be underestimated and we hope that the young lawyers who decide to enter the competition will be given a chance to demonstrate their skills before senior practitioners and will also have lots of fun.

One of the objectives this year is to increase the representation of young lawyers on other LIV committees. Liaison representatives sit on the Executive Committee – these roles are designed to encourage communication, collaboration and interaction between the Young Lawyers' Section and other sections of the LIV. The liaison representatives are responsible for exchanging reports on the activities of the Young Lawyers' Section and the Section to which they have been appointed liaison representative. This will facilitate the exchange of ideas and enhance interaction between senior and junior lawyers.

Another objective is to encourage non-active members to participate in the events and projects organised by the committees. Our membership keeps increasing and we want to ensure that we are addressing the needs of our members so that they are getting the most out of their membership.

We have also met with the presidents of the various law societies in an attempt to raise the profile of the Young Lawyers' Section. Many law students are unaware that they can become members of the Section and those who are members have shown enthusiasm about becoming involved.

Each committee has numerous events and projects planned for the year (these are detailed in the chair reports) and I look forward to meeting you at some of them – perhaps you want to display your advocacy skills, then enter the Mooting Competition, or alternatively, you may prefer the art of negotiation so enter the Negotiations Skills Competition. Register for the professional development seminars, experience our "Hot Topic" forums, demonstrate your flair for writing by contributing to the *YLJ* or come along and share a drink and some nibbles to network with other professionals and young lawyers at the various social functions. The Later Lawyers Network has some new events planned but we are interested in hearing from new members. The Regional & Suburban Young Lawyers Committee organised a fabulous week of events which were held all over Victoria during March.

The Young Lawyers' Section is going to have an exciting, and challenging year ahead but it is "you" who contribute to the shape and direction of the Section. I encourage you to contribute your views and ideas and become involved in some of the committees and their events. Remember, our members are the future of the profession. ■

1. "Legal profession found guilty of workplace bullying", Office of the Attorney-General media release, 3 March 2005.

LAW WEEK 15-21 MAY 2005

Law Week returns again in 2005, and will be held from 15-21 May. The week, which is a national annual event, aims to promote greater understanding within the community of the law, the legal system and the legal profession. Law Week, which is jointly coordinated in Victoria by the LIV and Victoria Law Foundation, not only aims to educate the public about the role of the profession, it also provides a series of events for people within the legal industry to participate in. These include a series of seminars, discussion forums, exhibitions and tours.

The LIV Young Lawyers' Section is proud to be involved in two events during Law Week this year. They are the:

- Animal Rights Law Discussion Forum, Wednesday, 18 May, 6-7.30pm, at the Kitten Club; and
- Social Justice Essay Competition Awards Ceremony, Monday, 16 May, to be held at Deacons.

A copy of this year's program and further information can be obtained at www.victorialaw.org.au/LawWeek.