

# President's update



By Catherine Dwyer, Senior Associate, Wisewoulds

**W**hat an incredibly busy year it's been so far for the Young Lawyers' Section (**the YLS**)!! I hope this Edition of the Young Lawyers' Journal finds you refreshed – half the year is already over and no doubt you have all been engaged in some interesting and challenging legal work to date. No matter how busy you are in your professional lives, make sure you take some time out to have a personal life...there are no more long weekends until November!!

Earlier in the year, John Cain and I met with the incoming President of the Real Estate Institute of Victoria (**REIV**) who was interested in establishing a "young agents" group as a branch of the REIV. The purpose of the meeting was to explain how the YLS was set up, what subcommittees comprise the YLS and how its events and projects are organised throughout the year. It was a great opportunity to demonstrate how the YLS works for the benefit of its members but it was also an avenue for assisting another professional organisation to establish a similar group for its young members. Given the success of the YLS over its 25 year history, it is great to be able to pass on our ideas and contributions for the structure of a "young agents" group within the REIV.

In April, a very productive Planning Assembly was conducted by the YLS at the beautiful Werribee Mansion and it focused on "Professional Development Issues" – participants spent the morning session listening to three inspirational guest speakers who offered a wealth of experience and provided insight; into mentoring, networking and achieving a healthy balanced lifestyle:

- Catherine Healy from Catherine Healy Legal Consulting distinguished the difference between formal and informal mentoring programs and the importance of having a mentor for young lawyers starting out in the profession;
- Kriss Will from Kriss Will Consulting offered some tips on networking and building a client base. She told participants that essentially the basics of networking are "...you need to engage with people; there needs to be a longer term value proposition in the relationship; you have appropriate on-going contact and you need to like the people...and the benefits – you enjoy work more; you create awareness of your skills and style; you create opportunities for people to use your legal skills and you start to build a practice"; and
- Carolina Gonzalez from The Nature of Balance in South Yarra provided some simple methods for relieving stress.

The afternoon session was utilised as a forum for brainstorming some ideas and creative suggestions for certain aspects of some of the projects which are being organised by the various committees throughout the year.

April was also the month when the Later Lawyers' Network conducted an extremely successful function with guests hearing from Mary Edquist, a partner at Middletons, about how she entered the legal profession after being a teacher for many years. The Later Lawyers' Network (**LLN**) is designed to provide continuing legal education opportunities, networking events and projects focusing on topical issues for those law graduates and lawyers who have had a previous career (or a few) prior to commencing their legal career. The LLN is a subcommittee of the Young Lawyers' Section and through its events, all lawyers who have come to the legal profession at a "later" stage can participate in those events (as well as

other Young Lawyers' Section events). If you are a "later" lawyer, I would encourage you to come along to some of the LLN events – you will be able to meet other lawyers who have joined the legal profession "later" in life. Furthermore, I would encourage you to join the LLN (an award winning committee being the recipient of an Australian Young Lawyers' Award in 2004). We are always interested in hearing from new members and we welcome your contribution to the projects of the LLN.

In May, the Social Committee conducted its first Young Professionals' Networking Event in conjunction with accountants, engineers, architects, the Australian Institute of Management and the Melbourne Junior Chamber of Commerce. The aim of the Young Professionals Network is putting to rest the idea that "networking" is a dirty word. As young professionals we are all expected to get out there and engage in networking activities. Events such as these are aimed at giving us an opportunity to network with professionals from a wide range of industries and broadening both our business and our personal contacts. Networking is about building relationships and this is why everyone wore a name tag – to encourage everyone to speak to at least a couple of people who were not part of their respective organisations. A lot of time and effort goes into the organisation of these combined events so if you were not able to make it to the first event, make sure you come along to the next one! Several more are planned for this year.

Over the past few months, the Law Reform Committee has been focusing on, along with numerous other groups within the Victorian community, a consultation as to how human rights should be protected in Victoria. The Government established a Human Rights Consultation Committee (**the Consultation Committee**) comprised of Professor George Williams, Haddon Storey QC, Andrew Gaze and Rhonda Galbally. A discussion paper was produced by the Consultation Committee which was available on the website ([www.justice.vic.gov.au/humanrights](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/humanrights)) and a number of key questions were devised for the purpose of the consultation such as:

- Is change needed in Victoria to protect human rights? If so, how should the law be changed?
- What rights should be protected in a Charter of Human Rights?
- What should happen if a person's human rights are breached?
- What legal instruments should be used to implement such change?
- What role could the community play in protecting and promoting human rights?

The Consultation Committee accepted submissions up until 1 August 2005 and it is obliged to report back to the Government by 30 November 2005 on the findings of its community consultation. As part of its contribution to this important project, the YLS produced an information kit stating, inter alia, why Victoria is consulting on this issue, the process for the consultation, how human rights are currently protected in Victoria and details for putting in a submission. Following the distribution of its information kit, the YLS prepared a submission for the Consultation Committee to consider.

It is fantastic to see the YLS involved in so many projects designed for the benefit of its members – we look forward to seeing you at some of our upcoming events!! ■