

# President's update

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**"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."**

Winston Churchill

In December last year, an online survey was distributed to all members of the Young Lawyers' Section (YLS). Of the 4500 members the survey was sent to (who ranged from law students, to articulated clerks, to 5th year lawyers), only 4% of members responded. This alarmingly low number (197 people) provides a clear indication of what the aim of the 2006 Executive Committee (Executive) must be: to provide members with a relevant program that encourages and facilitates greater interaction and involvement.



The underlying objective of this program is that, if nothing else, involvement in the YLS must be fun. It never ceases to amaze me, but other lawyers are actually amusing to hang out with. Let's be honest, what other professionals share our ability to combine insightful sarcastic wit with grounded cynicism?

Events such as the Legal Comedy Debate,

Michael Page Networking drinks, the Negotiation Competition and the Fun Run will all return in 2006, and the Annual Lecture Series will continue to provide a forum for legal education (and CPD units). This year also marks the return of the Legal Hypothetical (last seen in 2004 as the Hypothetical on the Law on Terror).

In addition to these core events, several new events will be launched throughout the year. We will keep you informed of these, and all events will be advertised in the Section's Calendar, located at <https://www.liv.asn.au/members/sections/younglawyers/about/younglawyers-Latest.html> and in *Law Bytes*.

Law reform is a key focus in 2006. Interestingly, responses to the survey state that the Executive is either "too far left" or "too far right". In 2006 we are looking for a more unified approach on legal policy and I encourage those on all sides of the political fence to get involved.

In November, Victorians will elect a state government for the next four years. The YLS is well positioned to influence political policy by pro-actively lobbying the government and opposition parties on relevant legal issues, both high profile and low profile, in the lead up to the election. The YLS is also able to assist the community in understanding election issues, by way of discussion forums, debates and hypotheticals.

At a federal level, of concern to the Executive is the decline in the review role of the Senate. Whether you agree or disagree with the IR reforms and the terrorism

legislation passed last year, at the end of the day the Senate had insufficient time to review such important pieces of legislation. Community consultation and the need for Parliament to have appropriate time to consider submissions are integral elements of the law making process. Pressure must be kept on parliamentarians to ensure legislation is appropriately scrutinised and reviewed. The YLS certainly has a role in applying this pressure.

**"Irony, isn't it Smithers? This anonymous clan of slack-jawed troglodytes has cost me the election, and yet if I were to have them killed, I would be the one to go to jail. That's democracy for you."**

Mr. Burns (*The Simpsons*)

The YLS will continue to work on projects in the following areas:

**Human trafficking:** On the global front, human trafficking is a problem that needs to be tackled. We are currently working to establish a support network and resource base for victims of trafficking and will continue to raise awareness of a problem that does exist in Australia.

**Indigenous issues:** On a domestic front, indigenous issues continue to warrant focus. This includes not only access to justice and community legal education, but the provision of appropriate support for indigenous law students and lawyers alike.

**Gay rights:** In 2004, changes to the *Marriage Act* and *Family Law Act* pro-actively prevented the recognition of same-sex partnerships (including for those couples who are married overseas). The YLS will be working on a position paper for both the state and federal governments on issues such as adoption, marriage and equality under the law.

These are just some of the themes that will be discussed this year. If there is an issue that you are passionate about, get involved and work with the Section to create change. The only way we can take something on board is if we know about it.

A lot of hard work goes into making the YLS relevant and enjoyable for all law students, young lawyers and later lawyers. Whether it is a committee meeting, a social event, preparing a submission or a networking event, we hope to see as many of you involved as possible this year. Please feel free to drop me, or any Executive member, a line if you have any suggestions, questions or comments.