

President's update

GARETH CLARK, PRESIDENT – YOUNG LAWYERS' SECTION

"The results are in: for Sideshow Bob, 100 per cent; and for Joe Quimby, 1 per cent. And, we remind you, there is a one per cent margin of error."

Kent Brockman, *The Simpsons*

The final months of the year are one of the most crucial periods for the YLS: it is the time of the year when nominations and elections for YLS Executive positions are held.

Over past years, many members of the Executive of the YLS have been elected unopposed, myself included. This is not an ideal situation for a representative body of more than 3500 members.

If the YLS is to continue to play an effective and relevant role for young lawyers, unopposed elections must not continue as the norm.

In this regard, the focus of the Executive this year has been twofold:

1. to provide relevant events and services to young lawyers; and
2. to be approachable and inclusive for all members.

There will be an opportunity to provide feedback on the performance of the Executive again this year, in the form of an online survey.

It would be a fitting end to the year to hear your feedback on how the YLS developed vis-à-vis the above two focus points. All feedback can then go towards ensuring that the 2007 Executive delivers best fit, relevant services to you.

In addition to the above, I noted at the start of the year that one of the key messages to come from the 2005 YLS survey, was that members wanted more opportunities to network.

While trying not to sound too much like a salesman, being on the Executive, and a committee member, provides a fantastic opportunity to network. I have met some great people, be it over a drink or a submission, and have worked on some fantastic issues. Yes, at times it is frustrating as hell. However, the good far outweighs the bad, and I certainly recommend getting involved.

While on the topic of elections, in November, another relatively important election is taking place: the Victorian state election.

What is interesting about this coming election is that for the first time in many years, the Victorian Liberal Party seems to be establishing a clear message of what voters can expect under a Liberal government. Ted Baillieu has done this by putting forward some socially progressive ideas that one would usually expect the ALP to embrace.

These include support for gay civil unions, voluntary euthanasia, the decriminalisation of abortion and providing prisoners with access to condoms. It is the first real time since Kennett was removed from office that a contest deserves to eventuate, particularly in light of the conservative nature of the Bracks government.

On the YLS events side of things, the past three months have seen the Section launch two new social initiatives for 2006.

On 13 July, Michael Page Legal sponsored the first YL Trivia Night. The was held at the Exchange Hotel, and sold out with more than 240 people attending the evening, with each team receiving a drink card and some well-earned bar snacks with their entry fee. As for the trivia, well, it is best said that many young lawyers confirmed that without Google, the right answers do not flow as freely as they normally do. Following on from the trivia night, the Southern Suburbs section held an event that is close to many lawyer's hearts – a coffee appreciation night.

With so many of us reliant on an early morning coffee to start the day, this event went a long way to enhancing Melbourne's reputation for informed coffee ordering.

The YLS professional activities arm has also kept itself busy with both the Mooting Competition and the Negotiation Skills Competition falling into the last half of the year.

A particular highlight being the holding of the Grand Final of the Negotiation Skills Competition at the State Library, with Tim McFarlane the final adjudicator.

In October, a year's of planning culminates in the Regional and Suburban Young Lawyers' Week.

This year has seen the YLS present to various universities on the merits of having a legal career in the country or the suburbs. For those seeking more life in the work/life balance equation, it is an option worth looking into.

The YLS contributed to the LIV's development of a policy regarding the death penalty earlier this year. Particularly in light of recent events in Bali, it is well worth taking the time to consider how to put pressure on the Australian government to act forcefully for the lives of all Australians currently on death row.

Law Reform will continue to be a topic until the end of the year, with a discussion forum on gay rights and what model civil union laws Victoria should adopt. This event will take place in November and be run jointly with the ALSO Foundation.

On a final note, I would like to say thanks to all those I have met or worked with throughout the year. In particular, I would like to thank a fantastic Executive who have made regular winter meetings bearable, and who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

I am even more appreciative of this brilliant team given that they are manning the fort for me while I continue my legal career in the US.

In 2007, Donna Adams will take over the role of president. She has been a fantastic VP, and the YLS could not be in better, more enthusiastic or capable hands next year!

Cheers

