

# President's update

DONNA ADAMS, PRESIDENT, YOUNG LAWYERS' SECTION

**W**hat is Madonna's secret in continuing to be a successful artist over the generations? The answer lies, I think, in her ability to re-invent herself, and stay relevant to her audience, while drawing in the younger generations by recreating her sounds, and her image.

The LIV Council has now taken a page out of Madonna's book (not the one in which she appeared nude) and are following in the pursuit of remaining relevant to our profession, particularly young lawyers. Why? Because the perception in the past has been that young lawyers are the 'party group', and that we are not necessarily ready to assume a seat at the 'big kids' table until long after our training wheels have come off. However, it seems that as well as enjoying the occasional party, the up and coming Generation X and Y lawyers are looking for promotion early in their careers.

Sadly though, others are leaving the profession in droves before they even get close to the 'big kids' table. So how do we keep young lawyers in the profession? And how do we keep young lawyers interested in the LIV? This is a focus that both the Young Lawyers' Section and the LIV Council are working on for 2007.

Ask yourself this question, can you name from memory, one member who is on the LIV Council? Do you know what the LIV Council does? We actually place our trust in the LIV Council, as our elected body of representatives, to look after our interests when fighting damaging new policies from 'men of straw' politicians, and we place trust in them to keep us abreast of changes in the law when we are too busy to do the research ourselves.

The LIV plays an instrumental role in changing and shaping our profession and the laws of our community. In the past we have perceived the LIV Council to be stodgy senior practitioners to whom we couldn't relate, and as young lawyers we simply assumed our seat on the party bus, stopping only to attend each 'free-drinks' event on offer, effectively continuing to practice as passive passengers in our profession, until eventually being invited to sit with the 'big kids'. What is exciting for us as young lawyers now is that the 'big kids' are interested and energised about what we have to say, and what we want in our careers, and where we think the profession should be headed, and are urging young lawyers to be more involved and to start insisting that they save us a seat at their table.

If you've never thought about participating in an LIV Practice Group, or being elected onto the LIV Council, then perhaps you should. You would be mistaken if you were to assume that you don't need to be involved in the big issues until you're in your fifth year or so of practice. Let me give you a taste for what the LIV Council has currently been putting on the table for discussion, and then you can make up your mind about whether these things affect you.

- The abolishment of the articulated clerkship scheme into structured trainee-ships. *Translation* – the increased likelihood that more people will receive standardised training and their ticket to practice after they finish university.
- The nationalisation of our profession. *Translation* – you'll be able to work in a law firm in Victoria, and then move interstate without going through the rigmarole of arranging new practicing certificates.
- The water debate over licensing and entitlements. *Translation* – where and how your drinking water will be sourced in the future, and whether that last Will and Testament that you're currently drafting for Mr Jones should or should not include any water entitlements of the testator.
- Carbon Emissions Trading. *Translation* – whether or not you can expect to throw out your winter wardrobe as the globe continues to heat up if corporations don't start cutting their carbon emissions.
- The aftermath of the public indemnity insurance crisis. *Translation* – if we manage to wind back the 'insurance crisis' legislation of a few years ago, and the go-kart place around the corner is revived, we could include a 'dash around the track' to the itinerary for John's bucks night.
- Addressing Environmental Issues in the Workplace. *Translation* – whether or not your gravelly throat and other nagging illnesses are the result of an un-healthy Melbourne building that fails to meet a 5 or 6 star energy and efficiency rating.

Granted, my translations fall short of being akin to the explanatory memoranda behind the various bills, but I'll go out on a limb here and assume that at least one of these issues affects you, the reader, right now.

If you could hop into an LIV practice group that is discussing these issues and driving the change, would you do it? I'm tipping you might. It's not only the issues in the community that we are able to talk about from the fresh perspective of a young lawyer, but it is also an opportunity to clarify the generational issues in management styles between those who are 'in touch' enough to manage us well, and those managing partners who indirectly force us to consider leaving the profession. We cannot neglect the fact that Generations X and Y are going to lead our profession in the future. A well-informed body of professionals will surely make changes for the better, as opposed to a misinformed or out-of-touch one.

Our challenge for 2007? Get focused, get involved, and get excited, because the changes we make now and over the next few years will most probably make a difference in whether you continue to practise law into the future, and more importantly, whether you are happy about it.