

IS MONEY FUNNY IN A LEGAL WORLD?



ALTHOUGH THE CROWD AWARDED THE AFFIRMATIVE VICTORY AT THE LEGAL COMEDY DEBATE, LIV YLS SOCIAL COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS THOUGHT IT BEST TO LEAVE IT TO READERS TO DECIDE WHO THE REAL WINNER WAS. JAI SHEPHERDSON OF GIBSONS SOLICITORS IS ARGUING FOR THE AFFIRMATIVE, KATE HARRY OF CORNWALL STODART IS TACKLING THE NEGATIVE.

Earlier this year the LIV Young Lawyers' Section (YLS) hosted a legal comedy debate at the Athenaeum Theatre as part of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

The topic was "Greed is good. Are lawyers only in it for the money?".

The event was a sell-out with more than 800 people in the audience.

On the affirmative side barristers Rachel Doyle and Rohan Hoult, supported by former barrister and 3AW breakfast host John Burns, argued fervently in support of the topic.

The negative side was presented by barrister Shivani Pillai, lawyer Catherine Dunlop and ex-lawyer turned comedian Yianni Agisilaou.

The debate was moderated by barrister Tom Hutchings, who provided a humorous overtone.



JAI

As official time-keeper for the debate I was well positioned (physically, if not intellectually) to comment on the outcome, and in my opinion the clear winner was the affirmative. Rachel Doyle opened superbly by chastising the discovery process and confirming that anyone prepared to undertake such a mundane task could only be in it for the money. Rohan Hoult backed up decisively, and stood out as a clear best speaker and a close second to Shivani in the best-dressed stakes. John Burns closed for the affirmative with an analogy between the legal profession and the oldest profession in the world. Clever, but the most compelling reason to hand victory to the affirmative is that unlike the negative, the affirmative did not resort to jokes parodying MasterCard’s “priceless” ads. Game, set, match.

KATE

The negative team did more than argue, they provided a gourmet banquet of reasons to support the assertion that lawyers are not only in it for the money.

Shivani Pillai set pulses racing with her sizzling entrée, revealing how law comes down to wearing a blonde wig and looking hot in a courtroom.

Catherine Dunlop served the main course – a hearty brew (well it certainly tugged the heart strings) of pro bono work, proving that a passion for law is best evidenced by standing up for people who can’t afford justice (thanks to all the money being in the pockets of the affirmative team).

In the end though it was Yianni Agisilaou who provided the sweetest dessert of all by telling the captive audience about his parents’ joy in seeing him become a reputable member of our society.

Yes, there is nothing more pleasing to a parent than being able to say “my son/ daughter is a lawyer” and then awaiting the “ohs” and “ahs” as people around you confirm that you have raised a first-class citizen.

Presumably, that is why Yianni is now a professional comedian. A three-course meal of seduction, passion and honour; a truly winning combination. ■