

President's Report



**TODAY'S
YOUNG
LAWYERS
ARE THE
FUTURE OF
THE LEGAL
PROFESSION**

extra-legal skills such as management, communication and public speaking. The YLS has seven committees: social,

Last year was challenging for everyone, especially young lawyers and graduates struggling to find their place in the profession amid the effects of the financial downturn. Although the worst may be over, the effects of the crisis continue to play out, as many young lawyers seek alternative career paths, return home from overseas, undertake further study or delay lateral moves. But the Victorian legal profession (and its practitioners!) are resilient. Looking back over the LIV's 150 years there have been booms and busts, challenges and changes, and I expect that 2010 will be no different.

The Young Lawyers' Section (YLS), incorporating the Later Lawyers Network (LLN), is a vibrant and supportive environment that has worked hard to ensure that the LIV remains relevant for, and helpful to, new practitioners. With a membership of more than 5000, the YLS is a crossroads for all the various career paths that young legal professionals take. A mandate of the YLS, and a priority for me as president in 2010, is to ensure that as a profession we understand and deal with the unique issues faced by young lawyers.

There are many changes occurring in the legal profession – how we work, who we are, what we want. Some issues, however, are timeless – such as the need to improve access to justice. Building on the outstanding work of my predecessors, I hope to improve the links between the many organisations and individuals from across Victoria that promote justice and provide opportunities for young lawyers to make a contribution. Bearing in mind that today's young lawyers are the future of the legal profession, as president I want the

YLS to focus on diversity and to strengthen partnerships with organisations that have contributed so much to the diversity of the profession, such as Victorian Women Lawyers (VWL) and Tarwirri. It is essential that the legal profession represents and reflects society and that it remains inclusive to properly serve the community.

With this in mind, the YLS, along with the LIV's Indigenous Issues and Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee, is investigating whether the LIV should develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

RAPs are tools that help build positive relationships between Indigenous and other Australians by focusing organisations on actions within their sphere of influence that can contribute to closing the 17-year gap in life expectancy. Actions under a RAP can include acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land, using Indigenous service providers, and employing or mentoring Indigenous Australians.

An LIV commitment to a RAP would follow the LIV's leadership role last year in developing the joint LIV/Victorian Bar Indigenous Equal Opportunity Briefing Policy. (To read more about the policy see the October 2009 *LIV*). Recently, the Law Council of Australia also committed to completing a RAP.

I am very interested to hear the membership's views on an LIV RAP and to hear from anyone who would like to be involved in its development.

In the difficult employment climate last year, the work of the YLS became even more important. Many young lawyers took advantage of the YLS to increase their profile, broaden networks, improve professional development and practise

community issues, law reform, professional development, regional and suburban lawyers, later lawyers and editorial.

In 2009, these committees initiated several projects to engage and develop young lawyers and contribute to the profession, including submitting to the national Human Rights consultation, providing Green Practice training, assisting displaced lawyers, and hosting social and networking events to build friendships and unwind. YLS committee projects and events will continue to grow in 2010, with unique opportunities for training, mentoring, mooting and contributing to this journal (now in three colourful editions).

Entering the profession, one of the first lessons I learnt (beside the fact that law school is nothing like a law firm) is that "who you know" is almost as important as "what you know". Joining the YLS is the best way to ensure you are in the know, and that you are a vital asset for your firm and clients alike. Did I mention it's fun too? Everyone is welcome at the YLS, so no more excuses: get involved and make your mark. ■

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