

Riding the career wave



LIFESAVING HAS PROVIDED CONSTRUCTION LAWYER AND MASTERS GRADUATE DAVID ULBRICK WITH A REWARDING EXPERIENCE TO HELP KEEP THE YOUNG LAWYER'S LIFE BALANCED AND GROUNDED.

What is your practice area and where do you think this will take you in 2013?

I practise in the Construction team at Corrs Chambers Westgarth. I act for a range of clients from government to private principals to top and mid-tier contractors. Lately I have been advising clients about projects that are on foot. It is certainly a challenging area of practice. For the immediate future, I am focused on working with my clients to finish their projects.

What advice do you have for young lawyers wanting to make a name for themselves?

I think the most important thing, to an extent, is to let your career guide you. The best piece of advice about career building I was ever given during articles was to focus on building my career "from within". Focus on doing good quality work for the internal clients (partners and senior associates for the most part) and the rest would follow. Throughout my career I've just focused on the task at hand and doing the best job I could and this approach has led to more and more opportunities. Find something you are passionate about and then it becomes easy to improve your professional skills. For lawyers, further study, whether a graduate diploma or full masters, is the best way of improving technical legal skills and knowledge.

You received the Tom Yuncken Young Construction Lawyer Award in 2011. How did your support network contribute to this achievement?

I was honoured to receive the nomination and then amazed and surprised to win the

award. While the award was recognition as an individual, I would never have received it without being involved in high performing teams. I have been very lucky to have been able to work with some amazingly talented and inspirational people throughout my career. However, most of all it is the support I received from the "home team" (my friends and family) that made it possible for me to receive the award.

What attracted you to further study at Melbourne Law School?

The chance to study a specialised degree in construction law, which was a natural fit for me given my undergraduate studies in engineering. The fact that most of the subjects were taught in an intensive format also attracted me to Melbourne Law School. Now that I have completed the masters the challenge is to keep thinking and writing about legal issues.

Describe the volunteering that you undertake with surf lifesaving.

I have been involved in lifesaving for almost two decades and have had various roles in that time. I have sat on committees and sub-committees at my surf club since 1999. I have been responsible for running aspects of the lifesaving services division within the club and components of the club's competition team. In the past few years I have focused my involvement so that it aligns with my professional interests and skills. I am currently involved with the redevelopment of the facilities and lobbying government for funding to help with the

complex task of redevelopment. Lifesaving is a marvellous organisation, run almost entirely by volunteers who give people like me the skills to rescue someone and ultimately save a life.

How is it possible for young lawyers to devote time to volunteering given the demands of the profession?

I think it is difficult to fit in volunteering with the demands that are placed on young lawyers. I don't shy away from that for a moment, but I also think it is absolutely essential for them to get out and be involved in the community in organised ways that are not necessarily linked to their firm. It means that young lawyers will remain grounded in what is happening in their communities and put them in a position to give back to the community that has supported them through their journey to the practice of the law. In my case I have overcome the difficulty by positively and proactively engaging my supervising partners to "buy-in" to my volunteering commitments. ■

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