

A country practice

Ben Franklin

LAWYER, DAWES & VARY, SHEPPARTON

I work predominantly in the commercial litigation area, with my workload supplemented with family law and some general commercial contract work.

The great thing about Dawes & Vary is the culture of the firm. No matter your position or your length of tenure, you are treated as one of the team and your opinions and feedback are listened to with courtesy and respect. There is a real client service mentality that comes with operating in a country or regional atmosphere. There is also encouragement to involve yourself in the community, which is supported by flexible working arrangements and availability of resources.

What makes Shepparton a great place to work and live?

Shepparton is a mid-size regional city with a population of about 80,000. A 15-minute walk from my house or a four minute drive in the morning gets me to work with very little fuss. There's no shortage of activities if you are open minded and keen to try new things.

Your advice for those looking to practise in this area?

Take the opportunity and put yourself out there. I applied for a position at Dawes & Vary at the end of my practical legal training. I offered to do my practicum as a volunteer in the firm. After I put my best foot forward over two weeks I was offered a position with the potential for a solicitor position at a date to be fixed. Needless to say I took the job with open arms, having prepared for an opportunity like this since graduating from Latrobe University at the end of 2012.

How do we find out about employment opportunities in Shepparton?

Keep an eye out and find out what the local papers and classifieds are offering. Most regional newspapers have an online presence these days so get on to their sites as well.

You could also contact the local law association for the region and see if their committee has a job notice board.

Finally, check out what local community legal arrangements are in place and inquire about their programs for graduate/young lawyer recruitment. These can be a great way to get volunteer work and familiarise yourself with the local community.

Jo McCormack

DIRECTOR, DWYER ROBINSON LAWYERS, WARRNAMBOOL

I am currently one of three directors practising mainly in the areas of property, commercial, wills and estates. I have been with the firm for more than 12 years, with the initial six years in support roles and the latter years as a qualified lawyer (director since July 2013). I love the ability to establish a rapport with clients who often return again and again. I also love the flexibility of a smaller, regional workplace. This has been particularly helpful as a single parent.

What makes Warrnambool a great place to work and live?

It takes between five and 10 minutes to travel to work. I'm at work early but it's very rare that I work past 5.30pm. The beach is a short walk away and I love being able to walk or jog down at the beach to unwind at the end of the day. The mentoring opportunities are plentiful, not only within your own firm but from other members of the legal community. Career progression can be a matter of timing. I had the opportunity to become a partner at 30.

Your advice for those looking to practise in this area?

Get as much work experience as possible, particularly while still a student. I was working full time within the firm for most of my studies and this gave me a) an understanding how a law firm operates, b) a chance to work out which areas I'd like to practise in and c) to confirm that I wanted to live and work in the area.

How do we find out about employment opportunities in Warrnambool?

There is no substitute for resume dropping or making contact with the HR people or partners of the firms. Often positions in regional areas are not advertised. If you keep in touch with firms then when positions become available it's likely they will give you an interview before advertising.

Warrnambool

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Penelope Scheffer

SOLICITOR, TYLER TIPPING & WOODS, TRARALGON

I have worked in this general practice firm for more than two years. My main areas of practice are family law and criminal law. I have been given opportunities to work in different areas of the law as well as appearance work.

What makes Traralgon a great place to work and live?

I currently travel approximately 10 minutes by car to work. I have been able to be mentored by the other lawyers in my firm which has helped my transition into the firm and the work. I love that I get to enjoy the country and Gippsland has generally everything I need, and if I do need specific items it is easy to get to Melbourne. The legal community in the area is very friendly and if you are a regular court user the court staff are approachable and will generally remember your name.

Your advice for those looking to practise in this area?

Give your resume to all of the firms in Traralgon and keep an open mind about the work as most firms won't specialise in one area. Finding a contact in the area that can keep you posted on any upcoming opportunities is always a good start.

How do we find out about employment opportunities in Gippsland?

Generally jobs are placed in the local newspaper or you find out by word of mouth. A good way to find jobs is to get a contact in the area who can keep an eye on any opportunities. Give your resume to all the law firms as they don't always advertise when thinking of taking another person on.

Traralgon

Ryan Millard

SOLICITOR, ROBERTSON HYETTS, BENDIGO

I am a solicitor working in property and commercial law. I was admitted to practice in March this year. Robertson Hyetts has 14 solicitors (nearly 40 total staff) across our Bendigo and Castlemaine offices.

What makes Bendigo a great place to work and live?

It takes me about 10 minutes to get to and from my front door and the office. Generally, I don't have to work much more than typical office hours. Consequently, my work-life balance is great and I'm able to maintain the sporting and social commitments that are important to me. The local legal community, but in particular the close group of young lawyers with whom I am generally involved, are highly supportive.

Your advice for those looking to practise in this area?

Retention of quality people is particularly important in country areas. My perception is that local firms really value prospective employees who have grown up in country areas and have local friends and family ties.

If you find yourself with an interview at a local firm it will likely be informal (no set questions, a chat essentially). You should find out whatever you can about the firms you're providing your resume to in the event they want to interview you (most firms in the area have informative websites setting out practice areas and company values).

How do we find out about employment opportunities in Bendigo?

At least for me, there was very little information available about employment opportunities in the area. Local firms don't generally advertise graduate positions (traineeships), and they aren't necessarily large enough to take on trainees each year. It's really for the graduate to get themselves out there and contact the local firms. I sent my resume around with a simple covering letter setting out what I thought I could bring to a prospective employer. If they're interested they will contact you.

Bendigo

For a full version of each interview with more advice and tips visit www.liv.asn.au/yjissue57