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Editor's Note - Animal Law Education

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EDITOR'S NOTE

LEGAL EDUCATION REVIEW SPECIAL TOPIC

ANIMAL LAW EDUCATION

The theme of this Special Topic Edition is animal law education at the tertiary level. Animal law as a discipline refers to the laws governing the human/non-human animal relationship. The study of animal law encompasses a broad range of laws, and raises a unique variety of legal, philosophical, scientific and political issues. Through studying animal law, students gain an understanding of how and why the law facilitates differential treatment of animals according to context, and encourages them to consider the ethical consistency of our approach to animal protection. It involves questioning the adequacy of the laws, policies, and regulatory structures addressing animal welfare, leading to discussions about law reform. These discussions extend to consideration of arguments to reform the very legal status of animals as human property.

At present, fifteen law schools across Australia offer animal law units, and an increasing number of students are pursuing animal law in Higher Degree Research.

Animal law units are proving to be highly popular elective choices for law students, with a growing number of law students engaging in the animal law movement as a result. There are now a range of animal law organisations and societies in Australia, including the Animal Law Institute, the Barristers Animal Welfare Panel, the Animal Defenders Office, Lawyers for Animals, the NSW Young Lawyers Animal Law Committee and various others.

This collection of papers resulted from the annual Animal Law Education Workshop series, now in its fourth year. The Workshop brings together animal law academics from across Australia and New Zealand, to discuss the theory and practice of animal law teaching. This special edition features articles exploring the many and varied challenges and opportunities raised by teaching animal law at the tertiary level.

Kyriakakis considers how animal law can be embedded within law school curricula, and addresses the issue of institutional resistance to the introduction of animal law units. Sankoff explains the benefits of experiential learning in animal law courses, outlining the methods utilised in his own course. Rodriguez Ferrere shares his perspective on animal law syllabus design, drawing on his experiences with creating an animal law unit at the University of Otago. James and James question what we are trying to achieve by teaching animal law to law students by considering the objectives of animal law units. Finally, Walkden-

Brown explores how animal law facilitates high-quality legal education.

Reflecting on the collection, it is clear that although teaching animal law involves unique curriculum design and pedagogical issues, it offers significant lessons for legal education more broadly.

The edition has benefitted from the extremely helpful editorial assistance of Co-Editors Professor Christine Parker of the University of Melbourne and Dr Joanna Kyriakakis of Monash University. Thank you also to Assistant Editor Rebekah Lam and Referencing Assistants Alex Purcell and Erin Germantis. I thank the editorial team sincerely for their time, expertise and dedication, and extend my gratitude to the Animal Law Institute, who assisted with the co-ordination and legal review of this edition.

We hope you enjoy learning more about this growing and dynamic area of the law, which is increasingly being recognised as a core component of the legal social justice landscape in Australia.

Dr Meg Good
Chief Editor