

The Phillipa Weeks Scholarship in Law

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The late Professor Phillipa Weeks

A year has now passed since ANU Law Professor Phillipa Weeks died at the age of only 53, after a year-long battle with cancer. Readers of *Ethos* will include many former students of Phillipa, who will remember her with profound respect and deep affection.

One of the ways that the ANU College of Law has decided to keep Phillipa's memory alive is

to establish a scholarship in her name, and to raise sufficient funds to ensure that the scholarship will be awarded in perpetuity. This wonderful gesture has a double function: it not only keeps well and truly before us the extraordinary contribution that Phillipa made to the ANU and the Canberra legal community, but also gives a huge boost to generations of deserving students. Indeed, for some it will make the difference between coming to university or not.

Phillipa would well understand the point. She got her start with the assistance of a scholarship, in her case a National Undergraduate Scholarship. She had been a brilliant student at Cootamundra High School, coming first in the State in Modern History, fifth in French, and sixteenth in English. On top of this, she was School Captain. Yet, on the face of it, even this was not quite enough for a National Undergraduate Scholarship; Cootamundra High School had not been able to offer the full range of subjects at the highest level, so Phillipa's overall marks were not competitive with those of the top students from the larger metropolitan schools that could offer the full range. An alert administrator at the ANU suspected that there might be more to the story than Phillipa's overall score, checked with the school, confirmed that she had done as well as it was humanly possible to do given the curriculum limitations of the school, and promptly awarded her a scholarship. Never was a discretion exercised in a more enlightened and prescient way!

I would like to think that we have tailored the Phillipa Weeks Scholarship to resonate with Phillipa's somewhat serendipitous entry to the ANU. It will target young achievers from a rural or regional background, with emphasis both on their academic achievement and on their leadership or citizenship qualities. Awarded on entry to first year, it will be worth \$5000 per annum, and will be held by the successful applicant for the duration of his or her law program at ANU (five years in the case of a combined degree). A new scholarship will be awarded each year, and held for the duration of the program, so that over time, when we have built up to the full complement, there could be up to five Phillipa Weeks Scholarship holders

at any one time. You can find all the details at [http://law.anu.edu.au/Undergraduate/Phillipa Weeks Scholarship.asp](http://law.anu.edu.au/Undergraduate/Phillipa_Weeks_Scholarship.asp).

If you do the maths, you will quickly see that, in order to fund the scholarship from the interest earned on invested capital, we need a corpus that is sufficient to yield a minimum of \$25,000 per annum and accommodate increases in the value of the scholarship. Our goal is to raise a capital sum of \$500,000. The official launch of the scholarship was at ANU on the 31st August 2007. Even before that date, and before the campaign has begun in earnest, we received donations close to the \$100,000 mark. This is a poignant tribute to the esteem in which Phillipa was held by the legal community.

There are many ways of remembering a beloved friend, teacher or colleague. Many of you, especially her former students, will not be able to forget the care and attention she gave to individual students, regularly writing personal notes of encouragement or congratulations. Others will have benefited from her intelligent and compassionate insights into labour law, a challenging area for rational or consensual regulation, replete with class warfare, competing ideologies, and diverse notions of fairness. Yet others will have benefited from the wisdom she dispensed in her forays into community service, whether on the Social Security Appeals Tribunal, the Credit Union of Canberra, or the ACT Sex Industry Consultative Group. As Dean of Law at ANU, I personally benefited particularly from her wise counsel and support when she was my Associate Dean and Head of School for five years from 2000 to 2005. But, like all of us I suspect, I benefited most simply from having Phillipa as a friend. It was in that capacity that one best absorbed the impact of the values that made her such an awesome role model as a human being, values that I endeavoured to catalogue in my eulogy at Phillipa's funeral: her integrity, her kindness, her grace, her unaffectedness, her generosity, her humanity, and her many other almost 'saintly' characteristics.

There are many ways of remembering. And there are many ways of honouring that memory. A tree is planted in the courtyard of the law building, next to which is a plaque with the simple inscription: 'In memory of Phillipa Weeks – Professor of Law – ANU Law School colleague from 1979 to 2006 – Beloved teacher, scholar, mentor, and friend'. We are also looking at naming an appropriate part of the law school building after Phillipa. But the establishment of a scholarship is perhaps one of the best ways of all, with its dual purpose of remembering the past by securing the future. I commend it to you, and warmly welcome your contribution to the Phillipa Weeks Scholarship fund¹. ■

¹ Just go to the website noted above or call Michelle Mabile on (02) 6125 4070.