



Open Hand

FROM THE ACTING-DIRECTOR



It has been a real pleasure to serve as Acting-Director of the Law Reform and Social Justice Program at the ANU College of Law during the second half of 2012. To step into the shoes of Professor Simon Rice has been to experience, first-hand, how much Simon has done to translate the progressive, ameliorist ethos at the ANU College of Law into the thriving and vibrant law reform and social justice culture (and action) amongst our students it has become. In coming to grips with everything that Simon does, what might of otherwise have been a steep learning curve, was made much easier by LR+SJ Project Officer, Caroline Compton. I am grateful for all the assistance Caroline provided.

I am happy to report that the second half of 2012 has been an exciting and productive time for the LR+SJ program. Perhaps most significantly, we have been able to establish a new LR+SJ environmental law internship. Working with Camilla Taylor, the Principal Solicitor at the Environmental Defender's Office in the ACT (EDO), we have been able to offer two semester long internships with the EDO. The interns will gain "real world" experience, including carrying out advanced legal research into environmental laws, law reform work, writing educational material, and helping with presentations in the community.

In addition, we are concurrently starting a student-led Environmental Law Project to join the host of our other LR+SJ projects, which include student work on community legal education, gay and lesbian rights, global corporate power, human rights, indigenous issues, and prison issues. Congratulations to all the students involved in these worthy activities, which is all the more impressive when you consider that they receive no remuneration or mark for their work. Many thanks also to colleague Dr James Prest, who assisted in getting this internship up and running and will generously serve as the ANU staff supervisor of the internship and the LR+SJ Environmental Law Project.

During the second half of 2012, LR+SJ also held two of well-attended public events. In July, we had a fully subscribed roundtable with Professor Stephen Golub. Professor Golub main focus is the growing field of legal empowerment. He coined the term in a 2001 Asia Foundation/ADB report and recently taught the first U.S. course on this topic, at the University of California at Berkeley Law School. Professor Golub discussed the conceptual underpinnings of legal empowerment with our LR+SJ students and spent time exploring how they might utilise the concept in practice.

In October, LR+SJ co-sponsored a public seminar by Dr Jayampathy Wickramaratne. Dr. Wickramaratne was a member of the Government's Constitution Drafting Team that drafted the Constitution Bill of 2000. He was also a member of the panel of experts appointed by the President to service the All Party Representative Committee



(APRC) and was a signatory to the “majority report” which proposed a strong power-sharing arrangement as a solution to Sri Lanka’s ethnic crisis. He chaired a committee appointed by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights to draft a new constitutional Bill of Rights. Dr. Wickramaratne discussed the opportunities and problems associated with the prospects of a constitutional settlement of ethnic conflict in post-war Sri Lanka.

I now look forward to Simon’s return and hope that the New Year finds everyone favoured by lot.

Donald K. Anton
Acting-Director of Law Reform and Social Justice

STUDENT GRANT SUCCESS!

The LR+SJ program wishes to extend their very hearty congratulations to the Getting Ready for the Referendum project – in particular, team leaders Brooke Greenwood and Alice McBurney - who have successfully secured more than \$10,000 funding for project activities in the new year.

The project was formed in response to the promise by the Gillard government to holding a referendum on constitutional ‘recognition’ of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples before or at the next federal election. The vast majority of referenda in Australia are unsuccessful: only 8 out of 44 referenda have been successful. Lack of accurate and accessible information about the law is likely to play a major role.



Getting Ready for the Referendum team leader Brooke Greenwood leads a group in conversation.

The primary purpose of the Getting Ready for the Referendum (GR4R) program is to disseminate accurate, comprehensible legal information that is as free as possible from political ideology. The program has involved, to date, developing information packs about issues involved in the referendum. Next year, the project will use these resources to undertake community education to a range of groups, including community and school groups.

The funding will be used to publish the project material; develop an interactive website and for various other activities. If you are interested in getting involved in this project, please email lrsj@law.anu.edu.au to register your interest.

CAREERS IN . . .

This semester, in response to students indicating they wanted to know about diverse career options, LR+SJ launched the “Careers in . . .” program. “Careers in . . .” are one hour, lunch time seminars about careers in diverse areas, drawing on a legal education. Sessions are led by one (or more) ANU College of Law academic staff members, and professionals in practice – which have included practising lawyers and NGO staff, as well as public servants. So far, sessions have been held introducing students to possible career paths into development work, and legal means of environmental protection.

LR+SJ would especially like to thank Rebecca Monson, Daniel Fitzpatrick and James Prest for their participation in the “Careers in . . .” program.

NEW PROJECTS

Two new projects have been added to the LR+SJ portfolio this semester. One is the Global Power Project, led by faculty advisor Kath Hall and student team leader Sigríð Robinson. This project seeks to identify the key sites of global corporate power in the main industries and sectors that make up the global economy – including mining, pharmaceutical, media, legal, food, finance, banking and many others. Its goal is to develop a working list of the corporations and organisations that comprise the “global elite” (meaning the top-tier corporations that make up or have access to the key sites of global power) so that engagement, research and impact studies can follow.

In another new project, in conjunction with the ACT Environmental Defenders Office, students are participating in a project that will assist the EDO with the preparation of court documents and case research. In addition – and after a highly contested process – two students were selected to be placed at the EDO as interns. The current internships will continue until the middle of 2013, following which students participating in the EDO project will be invited to apply for internship placements.