From the Dean

Welcome to the first edition of our LawyerEd Newsletter for 2015. This year we have recruited two new staff members to the Law School – Joe Fardin and Jared Clements. Both will be involved in the Centre for Mining, Energy and Natural Resources Law and the specialist Masters degrees in this area, as well as the JD program.

Sadly we have seen the passing of Adjunct Professor Peter Johnston, a much-loved alumnus with a longstanding connection to the Law School and career at the Bar. January also saw the passing of Grant Robertson, one of our successful alumni who practised in Hong Kong.

It has been a busy start to the teaching year with four new postgraduate teaching areas commencing over the January-February period. This brings our total number of postgraduate offerings to 14 with 3 combined/double degrees. In addition to classes from Law School academics, students have also benefited from international visiting professors including Professors Catharine MacKinnon, Evelyn Ellis, Terry Daintith and Alistair Lucas.

We have hosted a public lecture by Catharine MacKinnon and the George Winterton Memorial Lecture given by Professor HP Lee, as well as the Honourable Michael Kirby. As you will see in the following pages our academics have also had considerable research grant success and our students continue their accomplishments in the areas including the Jessup Moot. Further details of upcoming events and activities (including how you may become involved) can be found on our website and through our LinkedIn page. I do hope you enjoy reading about our latest achievements and developments.

Jessup Moot team Washington bound

The University of Western Australia’s Law School students have continued their outstanding record of success in the Jessup Moot, with the 2015 team on its way to Washington after a great performance in one of the most prestigious competitions for law students.

The team of Leo Simoens, Charlotte Westbrook, Jordan Atiken, Eleni Kannis and Adam Rompotis finished runners-up in the final moot in the national rounds, narrowly missing out to the University of Sydney. Charlotte Westbrook was also recognised as a joint winner of the prize for best oralist in the final moot as well as finishing as 10th best oralist in the Competition.

The final moot was conducted in the High Court in Canberra and presided over by Chief Justice Robert French, Gitanjali Bajaj and Dr Christopher Ward. The students were required to prepare oral and written submissions addressing a variety of legal issues.

Adam Rompotis said “This year involves topical legal issues such as self determination of people, secession and annexation of territory, and treaty law. Themes are drawn from real world international law issues, such as the situation in Ukraine over the past year.” The 23-year-old said taking part in the competition was an excellent learning experience where he not only learnt about international law but developed skills in research, legal writing, oral advocacy and most predominantly teamwork.

The top two teams will now travel to Washington DC in early April to represent Australia against other students from more than 550 law schools in more than 80 countries around the world. UWA law students have competed in the Jessup Moot since the early 1980s, winning the international Jessup Cup in 2003 and named international runner-up in 1995 and 2002. The Law School has continued its exceptional record in the competition, sending a team to Washington DC in five of the past six years.
Research Highlights

The UWA Law School has had a number of recent successes in Category One competitive grants including:

- ANROWS Grant, ‘Evaluation of innovative models of interagency partnerships, collaboration, coordination and/or integrated responses to family and/or sexual violence against women in Australian Indigenous communities’. (Harry Blagg)
- Criminology Research Council Grant ‘Developing diversionary pathways for indigenous youth with foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD): A three community study in Western Australia’. (Harry Blagg & Tamara Tulich)
- OLT Grant, ‘Smart Casual: Promoting Excellence in Sessional Teaching in Law’ (Natalie Skead & Mark Israel in partnership with Flinders University, University of Adelaide, UNSW and James Cook University).

In addition to this, the recent ARC Discovery Project round saw eight applications submitted with the UWA Law School as the lead organisation.

Seven of these applications included research collaborators from other Australian or international universities.

Law School Academic aids tax reform

In October last year, Assistant Professor Ian Murray appeared as an expert witness before the WA Legislative Council Legislation Committee in relation to the Committee’s inquiry into proposed legislation restricting State tax concessions for charities.

The Taxation Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 (WA) was motivated by the 2012 decision that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WA) was a charity and hence entitled to payroll tax concessions. However, the measures are likely to impact on a wider range of charities. For instance, they will affect some charities that focus on helping disadvantaged members of the Western Australian community. An example of this is charities that have a purpose of promoting economic development to address Indigenous or regional disadvantage.

The Committee released a Report endorsing many of Asst/Prof Murray’s findings and adopting several of his recommendations. The Report formed the basis for changes made by the Legislative Council. For instance, there was initially a risk that charities with a mix of purposes for the relief of poverty, advancement of education or advancement of religion, might have been affected. For example, for health promotion charities (with dual education and health purposes) if they also had a purpose of commercialising their research. While other risks remain, this problem has now been addressed in the recently amended legislation and the changes also confirm that charitable trusts for the relief of poverty can continue to access the concessions.
Grant Robertson, a distinguished graduate of UWA Law School, crammed more into his 47 years than many who live to old age.

While his greatest love was his wife Kim and children Sean and Emily, he also loved the law, as well as his extended family, friends, the sea, and travel.

Grant excelled in the study of law and was awarded first class honours and the following prizes while at UWA Law School:

- 1992 H C F Keall Prize in Law
- 1989 Butterworths book Prize in Law - Contract
- 1989 Convocation Prize in Law

as well as a HECS Exemption Scholarship in 1992 (on the basis of academic merit).

Grant practiced as a litigator at Freehills in Perth between 1994 and 2001 after completing his training with them, before moving to White & Case LLP in Hong Kong in 2002 to practise in international arbitration around Asia. After another stint at Freehills Perth, Grant joined Deutsche Bank in Hong Kong as regional litigation counsel in January 2008.

While at Deutsche Bank, Grant excelled at managing and resolving disputes across the region, confidently navigating through different legal and judicial systems, including those in China, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka and Mongolia.

Grant returned with Kim, Emily and Sean to Perth in 2011. Tragically, he was diagnosed with lung cancer shortly after his return. His courage and stoicism in the course of his cruel illness was inspiring. Grant, Kim and their children spent a huge amount of time together.

Grant’s family and many friends remember him as a brilliant, curious, courageous, dedicated, kind and thoughtful man, a fine friend, an adventurous traveller and a wonderful lawyer and colleague of great integrity and with a dry wit.

- Joe Longo, Leif Thassim and Kim Rooney, Photo: Kim Robertson
Global Engagement

The Law School continues to raise its international profile by engaging with regional and global partners, establishing new connections with universities, research centres and peak bodies, and engaging with alumni around the world.

In January we hosted a group of law students from Sophia University in Japan, who participated in English language training, a law lecture series and cultural events over three weeks in February.

Upcoming highlights include the Law Alumni Lecture in London in July. 2015 will also see the Law School co-host the World Society of Victimology conference in July. This will bring experts to Perth from around the globe and will see us offer a specialist postgraduate unit and executive education course on victimology.

Later in the year we will host the Transnational Commercial Law Teachers’ Conference in November. Although focused on education the conference will delve into several of the newer international conventions such as the Capetown Convention, Shipping rules (Rotterdam Convention) and involve government representatives on UNCITRAL and UNIDROIT as well as the US-Iran Dispute settlement panel.

We will hold networking events during both conferences to enable alumni and members of the legal profession to meet with participants.

We continue to expand our exchange partners, facilitating overseas opportunities for staff and students as well as bringing visiting professors and professionals to the UWA Law School.

This year visiting scholars will be drawn from around Australia as well as China, England, Canada, USA, South Africa and Japan.

Teaching & Learning

Semester 1, 2015 has seen the introduction of 7 new postgraduate courses into the Law School’s specialist suite of postgraduate offerings complementing our LLM and resources law programs.

Our postgraduate students now have 14 coursework programs to choose from including the new:

- Graduate Diploma in Chinese Business Law
- Graduate Diploma in International Commercial Law
- Graduate Diploma in International Law
- Graduate Diploma in Law, Policy and Government
- Master of International Commercial Law
- Master of International Law
- Master of Law, Policy and Government

To support their transition into the Law School, two Orientation sessions were held in February for our commencing students; one for our third cohort of Juris Doctor students and the other for our postgraduate by coursework students. The JD Orientation session included a ‘Welcome to your JD and meet your fellow JDers’ session at which the foundation for a robust community of learning among our students was laid by JD students working together in groups in setting goals for their course.

The range of goals set by the students reflects once again the diversity of the cohort and promises an interesting and rewarding learning journey ahead.

Hand-in-hand with a community of learning the Law School continues to work on creating a community of teaching through our Occasional Learning and Teaching Conversations series, sessional staff teaching workshops and the recognition of teaching excellence through our learning and teaching awards. In this regard we extend warm congratulations to Dr Renae Barker and Ms Natasha Terbeeke on receiving learning and teaching awards: Renae for teaching excellence and Natasha for her outstanding contribution to student learning.