The Australasian Professional Legal Education Council (APLEC) Conference 2018 – “Sunshine or Storm Clouds on the Horizon in Practical Legal Training?”

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A three-day Australasian Professional Legal Education Council (APLEC) conference entitled “Sunshine or Storm Clouds on the Horizon in Practical Legal Training?” was co-organised by APLEC and the School of Law of the City University of Hong Kong (SLW), a member of APLEC, between 6-8 December 2018. More than 60 educators, researchers and scholars in the field of Practical Legal Training (PLT) from various jurisdictions such as Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Canada participated in this event.

The APLEC Conference focused on the Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL) and PLT related issues. In particular, it provided an opportunity for those teaching in the School of Law to present papers on their experiences teaching PLT, or in other related skills areas, to reflect more deeply on their teaching practices, and to network with, and listen to the papers delivered by, experienced educators and leading scholars in the area of PLT.
Prior to the formal conference, an APLEC Heads of Courses Meeting was hosted on 6 December 2018 at the SLW to allow the Heads of Courses of APLEC, who work in different parts of Australasia, to discuss issues related to that organization in the one convenient setting.

Welcome remarks by Mr Justice Tang at the Opening Drinks on 6 December 2018

**Mr Justice Robert Tang** (Non-Permanent Judge of the Court of Final Appeal and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training) opened the conference with a warm greeting to the participants in his welcome remarks at the Opening Drinks on the evening of Thursday, 6 December 2018.

The conference then more formally kicked off on 7 December 2018 with a welcome speech by video by **Professor Geraint Howells** (Dean and Chair Professor of Commercial Law, SLW). Professor Howells first thanked **Mr Jack Burke** (Senior Teaching Fellow, SLW) for organising the conference and all the participants for their presence. He expressed his view on the theme of the conference, by stating that PLT in Hong Kong is largely basking in sunshine and he looked forward to hearing about attendees’ opinions on the topic.

Following the welcoming remarks of Professor Howells, **Professor Lin Feng** (Associate Dean, SLW) gave a speech primarily focused on the PCLL programme at the SLW. Professor Lin described the history and the upward admission trend of the SLW PCLL, pointing out that the intake for places is always high. Even though the School is now offering around 210 PCLL places each year to applicants, he was proud to note that it still provides small group teaching to around 10 students in designated group rooms. This ensures that our PCLL students have a conducive environment to effectively manage the demands of this challenging programme. Professor Lin also indicated that about half of our PCLL students are from overseas countries and they have helped produce a very diverse student culture and keen competition in the PCLL programme.
The opening keynote speaker, **Mr Anthony Rogers** (GBS, QC, JP, Former Vice-President of Court of Appeal and the replacement Chairman of the Consultants which undertook the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training’s broad ranging and landmark Comprehensive Review of Legal Education and Training in Hong Kong) started his illuminating speech by sharing his learning experience of the law and the path he followed to build up his career in law. Mr Rogers pointed out that while the subject of the conference is business as usual for the professors of law, that business will have to be adapted to a world that seems to be changing ever faster. By examining the composition, functions and role of the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training (SCLET) and the current situation of the legal training programmes of the three law schools in Hong Kong, he brought up the issues influencing the future of legal training nowadays and delivered his insightful views towards these issues.

In addition to the panel discussion of experts on the current issues concerning PLT in common law and other developed countries and the plenary sessions given by **Dr Christoph Hafner** (Department of English, City University of Hong Kong), and **Ms Terri Mottershead** (Centre for Legal Innovation, College of Law), the conference also held a number of concurrent workshop sessions which allowed speakers to present on other topics and which triggered enthusiastic discussion among the participants during 7-8 December 2018.

Some of the very important themes emanating from the conference were the need to promote psychological resilience in an ever increasingly stressful profession, the challenge of identifying future technological changes in practice and how best to augment them in the delivery of PLT as well as the value of creating a strong body of scholarship around PLT.
Plenary Sessions given by Dr Christoph Hafner “Learning to Think Like a Lawyer: an Empirical Interdisciplinary Perspective”, (Department of English, CityU) (left), and Ms Terri Mottershead “Practical Legal Education Redefined, Reimagined and Reinvented”, (Centre for Legal Innovation, College of Law) (right)

Some of the Concurrent Workshop Sessions held from 7 - 8 December 2018

The speakers during the concurrent workshop sessions included: **Ms Anuleshni Neelta** (The University of the South Pacific), **Ms Teresa Szunejko** (College of Law, Western Australia), **Ms Yvette Boulos** (College of Law, Sydney), **Ms Debra Cherry** and **Mr Adam May** (Leo Cussen Centre for Law), **Ms Kye Tran-Tsai** and **Ms Sharyn Croke** (College of Law, New South Wales), **Mr David Catanzariti** and **Ms Glenda Bloomfield** (Australian National University), **Ms Michelle Harries** (College of Law, Western Australia), **Ms Beth McKenzie** (Leo Cussen Centre for Law), **Ms Jane Boyd**, **Ms Susan Carr-Gregg** and **Ms Tiffany Thomas** (College of Law, Sydney), **Ms Pia Castelli-Arnold** (College of Law, Western Australia), **Mr Graeme Haas** and **Ms Desi Vlahos** (College of Law, Queensland), **Ms Anthea Fong** (The University of the South Pacific), **Ms Rebecca Murphy** (Institute of Professional Legal Studies, New Zealand), **Dr Kristoffer Greaves** (The University of New
South Wales), Ms Maria Corbisiero (College of Law, Victoria), Ms Julie Pastellas (Queensland University of Technology), Mr Fabian Horton (College of Law, Victoria), Ms Madeleine Dupuche and Ms Deborah Battisson (College of Law, Victoria), Mr Alex Giannopoulos and Mr Fonda Gazis (Leo Cussen Centre for Law), Mr Kay Chan (Barrister, Admiralty Chambers), Ms Alison Jones and Ms Ann Beckingham (Leo Cussen Centre for Law), Professor Hoi Kong (the inaugural holder of The Rt. Hon. Beverley McLachlin, P.C., UBC Professorship in Constitutional Law, Peter A. Allard School of Law, The University of British Columbia), Ms Alice Lee (Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong), Mr Alan Davis (College of Law, Victoria), Ms Anita Hall (College of Law, Queensland), Mr Michael Appelby (College of Law, Sydney), and Mr Jack Burke and Mr Hanif Mughal (City University of Hong Kong).

In her closing remarks, Ms Elizabeth Loftus (Secretary APLEC and Executive Director, Leo Cussen Centre for Law) thanked the SLW, and its staff, for putting on a highly successful conference which was warmly appreciated by all the participants. In particular, she noted that the conference placed scholarship in PLT high on the agenda and that this has served as a springboard for APLEC to examine publishing a Journal of Professional Legal Education in the near future.