

THE LAW SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
youngLAWYERS

**Careers Guide to Public Law
and Government
2009**

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The Public Law and Government Committee notes that any views expressed in the profiles contained in the Guide are the writer's own and not necessarily those of the organisation for which they work, or of NSW Young Lawyers.

The Committee also notes that the information contained in the Guide relating to various government agencies and other organisations was gathered from public websites and could be subject to change. It should not be relied upon exclusively. If readers are interested in working for a particular agency or organisation, they should conduct their own independent research either by consulting the relevant website or contacting the agency or organisation directly.

The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG*

I commend this guide which explains the range, importance and interest of work in the public sector, or in areas of law that are primarily concerned with the powers, structure and functions of government, as an interesting option which young lawyers should consider as they plan their future careers.

Not so long ago, many young lawyers thought that there was only one real path to fulfilment in the law: a short time as a solicitor; a longer time as a barrister; and then (in the immortal words that John Mortimer attributed to Horace Rumpole) 'trotters in the trough,' following a judicial appointment.

In the past thirty years, increasing numbers of young lawyers have come to know of the variety of career opportunities that is presented in the discipline of law. Careers in the public sector today constitute an important segment of these opportunities. In fact, if the ultimate dream of the traditional path was to arrive in the public sector as a judge, in a position that could influence the shape and content of the law, a wise career choice in early years might escalate the process. It could afford the young lawyer a much earlier and larger opportunity to influence the shape and justice of law in our society.

One of the distinct limitations upon ordinary private practice is that it tends to focus on the micro and to deprive the lawyer of opportunities to consider the macro challenges that arise in the law all the time. The practice of the law in the public sector contains many micro tasks. But more often than not, the public law practitioner sees the law from another dimension. In the nature of things, he or she may have the opportunity and responsibility to consider the general operation of the law and to influence its long-term shape. Particularly if young lawyers work in the challenging areas close to the political branches of government, an enormous opportunity devolves on them to make recommendations, to shape proposals and to influence developments in the content and direction of the law.

My practice at the Bar developed into the field of industrial relations. Many a brief I had before the Full Bench of the then Australian Conciliation & Arbitration Commission. That body, later replaced by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, and now by Fair Work Australia, dealt constantly with micro issues in small cases: employment disputes and unfair dismissals. But it also concerned itself with macro questions: equal pay principles; removal of employment discrimination against Aboriginals; bereavement leave; maternity and paternity leave; accident pay; overtime rates and other issues of general significance.

In other fields of public sector work which I never myself experienced, lawyers were already playing a leading role in advising Ministers; preparing departmental

* Justice of the High Court of Australia (1996-2009).
President of the Institute of Arbitrators & Mediators Australia (2009 -)

manuals of practice; influencing governmental or agency policy; and proposing law reforms. I came to know such lawyers in the years in which I worked as the inaugural Chairman of the Australian Law Reform Commission between 1975 and 1984. Between 1976 and 1984, I also served as a member of the Administrative Review Council of the Commonwealth which helped to shape the new federal administrative law.

In these two posts, I came to appreciate the excitement, dynamism and energy of the distinguished lawyers working in the public sector, both Commonwealth and State. I worked with them closely in the development of law reform ideas. I came to know their strong personalities, sterling qualities and commitment to good government for the people of Australia and reform of governmental practice to enhance accountability and civic responsibility. Those years, and my later judicial life, greatly enhanced my respect and appreciation for lawyers in the public sector of our country.

Anyone who has doubt about the role that even a new and young lawyer in the field of government service can play in the advance of justice, improvement in public administration and reform of the law should read the writings of one such lawyer, Ernst Willheim. He took an important role in the development and application of the new federal administrative law. He has described that role in an essay "Recollections of an Attorney-General's Department Lawyer" (2001) 8 Australian Journal of Administrative Law 151. His description traces his career from his first day in the

federal Attorney-General's Department, through his work as Secretary to the Bland Committee that recommended administrative law reform and in his other interesting and varied work in advisings, in community affairs, in education within the sector and as counsel before the High Court, the Federal Court and other appellate courts in constitutional and administrative law matters.

Today, work in the public sector, can afford a fulfilling and personally satisfying career with opportunities to influence society far beyond those enjoyed by most private practitioners. I therefore commend this publication. It opens up the opportunities that were not so common in earlier decades. Training in the law is a great preparation for life. It provides discipline in analysis, reasoning, justification and fresh thinking. I therefore applaud the public sector and commend to those who are contemplating the future, a new option in public sector employment. To serve a client as a lawyer is a great privilege. To serve the people in the departments and agencies of their government is a special privilege with opportunities for noble service that leaves a true mark on justice in society.

1 October 2009

Introduction

Welcome to the Careers Guide to Public Law and Government. The Guide aims to assist legal students and practitioners to gain a better insight to the range of jobs and careers available in the areas of public law and in government. It profiles a range of positions, from entry level paralegal positions, positions in academia, the bar and the New South Wales and Commonwealth public service, through to the most coveted and prestigious positions in the legal fraternity. It provides information on various law firms who deal with public law matters, various state and Commonwealth agencies and the types of opportunities available, including summer clerkships, graduate programs and associateships.

The Guide is a product of the Public Law and Government Committee, which was formed in January 2008. Its membership ranges from lawyers who work in administrative law, constitutional law or within government, right through to students and practitioners who have a keen interest in these areas. One of its key objectives is to foster a social and educational environment for those who wish to gain awareness of their potential career paths in such areas. The Committee hopes, in particular, that the Guide will promote the rewarding and interesting work available in public law and/or the public service.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank the Hon. Michael Kirby, AC CMG, for his generous support in writing the Foreword. Mr Kirby is an amazing example of the extent to which a lawyer can inspire others to undertake meaningful and valuable work.

Rocelle Ago
Chair, Public Law and Government Committee
NSW Young Lawyers

The following profiles have been generously provided by lawyers working in a wide range of jobs, and at different stages in their careers. As you will see these profiles reflect the diverse opportunities offered by public law and government employment.

Barristers

**The Hon. Mr Justice
David Lloyd**

**Land and Environment Court
of NSW**

I went straight to the private Bar following my admission. I spent my first year as a reader with a very senior junior who had a wide commercial and equity practice. I was fortunate in that, at the end of that year my pupil-master took silk and I inherited some of his junior work.

I practised initially in all jurisdictions. I did everything. As I became busier and more senior I dropped off those areas of practice which did not interest me – family law and crime. At the time of my appointment about a third of my practice was in the Supreme Court, about a third in the Federal Court and about a third in the Land and Environment Court.

I was never briefed by the Crown Solicitor, by the government or by any government body. My appearance work was generally against the government or government bodies. By often appearing against the government I think I became

recognised as having some experience or expertise in public law which may in turn have led to my appointment to this Court. That is, one does not need to work for the government or any of its instrumentalities in order to demonstrate an interest in public law. Bodies such as the Environmental Defender's Office and Public Interest Advocacy Centre are always looking for barristers willing to do such work – albeit on legal aid.

**The Hon. Justice
Rachel Pepper**

**Land and Environment Court
of NSW**

Ever since I attended ANU (a university with a strong background in public law), I have always been a public law enthusiast. This enthusiasm was further fostered during my time as associate to McHugh J at the High Court of Australia and as lecturer at UTS in discrimination law.

However, as is too often the way, I soon became diverted into practising, first as a solicitor at Allen, Allen & Hemsley (as it then was), and then as a barrister, almost exclusively in commercial and equity law. While I enjoyed the rigour and challenge of these fields of law, I found my practice and my legal knowledge beginning to narrow. In order to avoid further legal myopia, I decided to expand my practice in order to include that which I had always been interested in, namely, public law.

This, of course, was easier stated than achieved. However, fortune favours the brave, or in my case, those willing to do pro bono legal work. I had always engaged in volunteer work, both inside and outside the profession (for example, in a community legal centre, as vice president of ACON and as, first a member, then secretary of the NSW Bar Association's Bar Council). I therefore had contacts both inside and outside the bar from whom I could seek advice. I let it be known that I was willing to work voluntarily to gain experience in public law. This led to an invitation from a senior silk on my floor to assist him on a pro bono migration appeal. I gratefully took up the opportunity, notwithstanding I had no knowledge whatsoever about migration law. However, considerable research and reading (and a few sacrificed commercial matters) paid off and this brief led to another and then another, and then to a paying practice in migration law. I soon began to pick up other public law briefs in administrative law, discrimination law, environmental law and constitutional law – the latter of which saw me appear several times in the High Court. By the time I was appointed to the Land and Environment Court of NSW in 2009, approximately half my practice comprised public law.

There are clearly many routes to take to achieve a career in public law. My advice to anyone wishing to practice in this area is simply to pursue your interests in this regard and do not be afraid to take a few risks along the way. With application and diligence, these risks will almost certainly be rewarded.

David Bennett AC QC Barrister, Commonwealth Solicitor General 1998-2008

When I was 8 years old I was told that there was an occupation where one got paid for talking and, more specifically, for arguing. It has never occurred to me since that I would do anything else. Indeed, I would describe any qualified person who for one moment considers any career other than the Bar to be brain-dead.

I did arts/law at University of Sydney from 1958 until 1963. It was then a 6 year course (with basically 2 years Arts and then 4 years Law). One was articulated during the last 3 years – in my case to Robert Somervaille of Dawson Waldron Edwards & Nicholls (now Blake Dawson). That firm had two large advantages for me. It did a lot of litigation and commercial work and it had a reputation for briefing its alumni when they went to the Bar (as many did). I then went to Harvard to do a LL.M. degree. They used to invite about 100 law graduates from all over the world to do this course and I was lucky enough to be one of 3 re-invited to stay another year and do a S.J.D. All this is before the advent of the J.D., so the doctorate was a real one (unlike a J.D. which is either a LL.B. or a LL.M. under a misleading name).

The advantage of the S.J.D. year of residence is that the workload is low so I was able to write most of my thesis while I was there. The topic was a comparative study of the bankruptcy systems of the UK, the USA, Canada

and Australia and an analysis of the private international law problems arising between those systems. I chose the topic because it was an obscure area with little prior work done on it. Since the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, however, it may have become more significant. In fact it took a further 5 years to get the degree because I had continually to rewrite the thesis a number of times in order to get it accepted. The degree was awarded in 1970.

When I returned in 1966 I went back to Dawson Waldron Edwards and Nicholls as an employed solicitor for 11 months, and then I followed my original plan to go to the Bar.

As I have said, there is no better career. The variety of clients and work far exceeds that available in any other occupation; the work hours are heavy but one selects them oneself; one is totally independent and the rewards are high. It is like being paid to eat chocolate.

I was the first barrister to be admitted in every State as well as the ACT and the NT (although Queensland had to wait until I had won *Street v Queensland Bar Association*). I took silk in NSW in 1979 and subsequently (by semi-automatic processes) in the other states and territories. In 1995 I became president of the NSW and Australian Bar Associations. I have appeared in the Privy Council before the abolition of Australian appeals (5 times) and I have been admitted ad hoc (i.e. for a particular case only)

twice in Singapore and once in Malaysia. I have also been admitted in the Republic of Ireland. Incidentally, my applications in Singapore were both opposed by the Attorney-General of Singapore and the Law Society of Singapore (who each appeared by counsel for that purpose) on protectionist grounds but, on each occasion I was successful in achieving ad hoc admission. I have maintained my interest in international admission for Australian lawyers and am a member of the International Legal Services Advisory Committee (ILSAC) which is dedicated to that purpose. In 2004 I led a government delegation of Australian lawyers and legal academics to India for the purpose of raising the profile of the Australian legal profession there and starting the long process (probably several decades) of persuading the Bar Council of India to adopt a liberal admissions policy.

In 1998 I was appointed Solicitor-General of Australia. Despite the misleading title, one is neither a solicitor nor a general. The job is a barrister's job with no proactive or administrative duties whatsoever. One simply advises the Commonwealth Government and appears for it when instructed to do so (like a normal barrister). The cases are fascinating (mainly constitutional in the High Court) but, unlike some of my predecessors, I was happy to appear in lower courts if the case was important or interesting enough. I also led the Australian delegation to the Hague Conference on Private International Law. Unfortunately, the government was not internationally litigious during my two terms of 5 years. I only had one case

before an international tribunal – a dispute with Russia before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in Hamburg.

My second term as solicitor-general expired in 2008 and I am now again practising at the Bar.

I have two pieces of advice for students:

1. Come to the Bar rather than remaining a solicitor or entering academia.
2. Marry each other, lawyers have so much in common.

Bret Walker SC **Barrister**

I am not sure that any retrospect by a barrister who has been fortunate enough to argue constitutional cases will be concrete enough to guide students interested in public law work. But I am sure that arguing such cases is a very good way of practising public law – not least because it goes hand in hand with advising on public law issues.

It should go without saying that anyone so inclined must read administrative and constitutional law – and that means, at a minimum, reading everything the High Court of Australia pronounces on the topics. That is not so demanding – although there is a lot of catch-up reading at first, in order to grasp the concepts and tradition

referred to by citation of precedent. The good news is that the last 25 years or so is the golden age (I think). The bad news is that the great judges in this area (e.g. Brennan J and CJ, Gummow J and Hayne J) are very scholarly, and thus require active work by their readers to read and appreciate their references.

But, if a student is ambitious in this direction, none of these tasks will be too daunting (if you are paid fees for it, the enjoyment is doubled).

How does one get briefed in such cases? I don't really know, and students should distrust the anodyne counsel of someone of my years to the effect of being well read and eager. On the other hand, if you are not eager and well read, forget this area of legal practice at the Bar. Leaders expect, and properly so, that very junior counsel will be red-hot in enthusiasm and hard work, and cool and collected in their scholarship.

If one can somehow convey to colleagues at the Bar that public law is a particular interest, and you are good at it, then I think, and hope, that someone will give you a go. (It is an area where the important cases will virtually always have silks on both sides). Attending, and really participating in professional groups that discuss public law topics (of which there are several) is a good – indeed mandatory – step.

It may be that public law practice as a solicitor before coming to the Bar

is useful to obtain public law work as a barrister – I don't really know, not having ever been a solicitor. The really crucial thing is to identify yourself, to others and also to yourself – as someone who reads, thinks and talks the fascinating concepts in question. There are the heady heights of political science, and the vital (and real) sentiment of The Castle-type citizen against the State conflicts – a very large gamut of appealing factors.

Historically, an earlier generation (of which I am one) moved into public law because we were doing all right in commercial law and equity. I think that has changed, so that it is now realistic for young counsel to say, without insufferable pretension, that they specialise in public law – but I would still counsel some caution in such self-description.

Don't forget that, for some, "public law" includes merits review of very mundane administrative decisions. The gap between those cases and constitutional law is every bit as large as between parking offences and murder, in criminal law. Try not to be a public law snob.

Margaret Allars

Barrister, Professor, University of Sydney

I am practising as a barrister on 11th floor Wentworth/Selborne Chambers in Sydney. I also hold a 0.25 fractional personal chair in the Faculty of Law at the University of Sydney.

Prior to 2001, when I went to the bar, I was a full time academic at Sydney Law School. I started out with a position as an associate, to Sir Nigel Bowen, Chief Justice of the Federal Court. I also spent a year at the Australian Law Reform Commission and a year in practice as a solicitor before going to Oxford for postgraduate study.

I am a Member, Administrative Law Committee of the Federal Litigation Section of the Law Council of Australia.

Tips: I recommend both academic life and practice as a barrister.

Kate Eastman Barrister

I am a Barrister at Sixth Floor St James Hall Chambers in Sydney.

The work I am involved in is advocacy. As a barrister, I provide advice to solicitors and clients. I assist clients prepare their cases in various courts and tribunals. This involves preparing pleadings, evidence, cross-examination and submissions. The area of work is human rights, employment law and public law. My first legal job was as a summer clerk at Allens Arthur Robinson.

I then worked as research assistant for Kevin O'Connor, the then Privacy Commissioner.

My first job after admission as a solicitor was as a graduate solicitor at

Allens in the Litigation Group and then the Corporate Group. While at Allens, I did a number of secondments to the Immigration Centre at Port Hedland and Kingsford Legal Centre.

After 3 years at Allens, I moved to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission as a Senior Legal Officer.

I joined the Bar in February 1998.

I also have been a part-time lecturer at UTS (since 1995) and Monash University (since 2005).

Since law school, I have been involved in a number of organisations: International Law Association, Australian and New Zealand Society for International Law, Amnesty International, Young Lawyers Human Rights Committee, Australian Lawyers for Refugees. I co-founded Australian Lawyers for Human Rights in 1990.

The pros of working as a barrister are the wonderful opportunities to become involved in a wide range of cases and work with terrific solicitors and clients. The cons are the long hours and the challenges of being self-employed.

Tips: Be prepared to work hard and to do pro-bono work for a range of community organisations.

Be prepared to take on new challenges. Never rest on your laurels and always be prepared to learn.

Joshua Knackstredt Barrister

I practice from 12th Floor Selborne/Wentworth Chambers. My practice is varied, but most of my work is in the areas of commercial and equity law, property and administrative law.

As a Barrister practising in the area of administrative law, my role is to advise and appear in Court in order to either defend governmental decisions (if I happen to be acting for the government) or attack them and have them invalidated (if I am acting on behalf of the individual claimant).

Before being called to the Bar, I was employed as a solicitor at Clayton Utz. Prior to that, I was Tipstaff/Legal Researcher to the Hon. Justice R P Austin in the Supreme Court of NSW.

I have been extensively involved in NSW Young Lawyers, starting with an appointment as a Presidential Nominee in 2005 and ending with a year as President in 2007. I am presently the Immediate Past President of NSW Young Lawyers. Since coming to the Bar, I also hold a position on the New Barristers Committee and am the representative of that body on the Law Council's Australian Young Lawyers Committee.

Tips: Apart from "work hard", the best tip I can give is for you to try to find out if it is the job for you. If it is, then (despite what some people say) there is no right or wrong time to set up

practice as a Barrister – it depends on you and whether you feel ready. The employment experience I had before I was called to the Bar was invaluable for me, but it may not be the right track for someone else.

Academia

Anne Twomey

**Associate Professor,
University of Sydney**

Like many law graduates I did not initially have a strong idea of the type of work I wanted to do. I graduated in Melbourne and spent 18 months working as an articled clerk and then a solicitor in a major commercial law firm. I became dissatisfied for two reasons. First, the work was largely procedural in nature and was rarely intellectually challenging. Secondly, I felt that I was not contributing anything useful to society.

Purely by coincidence, I met a High Court Associate who encouraged me to apply for a position at the High Court. One of the judges referred me to a position that I did not know existed – that of Senior Research Officer in the High Court Library. I got the job and worked in the High Court for two years at the height of the Mason Court. I did significant research on cases such as *Mabo*, *Polyukhovich* and *Australian Capital Television*. The work was incredibly intellectually stimulating and I felt that I was contributing something positive to society, in a way that was missing in

working for a commercial law firm. After two years in the High Court I was addicted to constitutional law and work in the public sector. I moved up the hill to work in Parliament House, despite one High Court judge suggesting that I was wasted on the ‘unrepresentative swill on the hill’. I worked as a senior officer in the Law and Government Group of the Parliamentary Research Service. This involved providing research to Members of Parliament (usually Shadow Cabinet members, small parties and back-benchers) and publishing research papers generally. Again, it was intellectually demanding and endlessly fascinating with all the issues of the day landing on my desk. My expertise expanded from purely legal research and analysis to political and policy analysis.

Later, I was appointed as the Secretary of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee. This again expanded my skills to include management of a secretariat, managing a budget, running hearings, drafting reports and negotiating reports through a committee comprised of politicians from different parties. While working at the Parliament, I also completed a Masters of Law in Public Law at ANU. This was made easier by the fact that my work dovetailed with my study, with each aiding and developing the other.

I then moved to Sydney and took up teaching at the University of Sydney. By that time I had a strong research and publication record, which combined with a post-graduate degree, qualified me for a university

teaching position. After a year, by virtue of another coincidence, I was offered the position of Policy Manager of the Legal Branch at The Cabinet Office of NSW. For this position, I needed the skills, knowledge and experience that I had already developed in the areas of management, research, legal analysis, policy development, political sensitivity and parliamentary practice. I continued to publish in academic journals and give papers at conferences.

After I had a child, I moved back to teaching at the University of Sydney. My research and publications record, developed while I was not an academic, again supported this transition. To keep myself sane while at home with a baby, I wrote a book on The Constitution of New South Wales. I continue to enjoy research and writing as well as teaching students. I am constantly intellectually stimulated and feel that I am giving something back to society by imparting knowledge to others.

My message to young lawyers is to be careful not to get trapped in the one job with a single set of skills with only one career path open to you. Each of the different jobs that I have held has expanded my skills and experience so that I can work in a wide range of different jobs, choosing whatever suits me at any particular time. Many of my friends from Law School worked in large commercial law firms for four or five years, became dissatisfied, and then discovered that they were pigeon-holed in a narrow field of law

and could not get a job outside of it. I am eternally grateful that I left my first job when I did (despite being told by a partner that I was ruining my career). Although my career-path was and remains unorthodox, it is the satisfaction that one draws from work that counts, not the money.

Government

Doug Humphreys Principal Registrar, Administrative Appeals Tribunal

As Principal Registrar of the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) I work at the Sydney offices of the Tribunal at 55 Market Street, Sydney. The Tribunal has a registry in every state and territory capital except Darwin, a budget of approximately \$32m pa, about 80 members and 160 staff. The Tribunal is a merits review body that reviews a broad range of Commonwealth administrative decisions under about 400 separate Acts and legislative instruments.

The Principal Registrar is responsible to the President of the Tribunal, Justice Garry Downes for the administration of the Tribunal. The position is that of the Chief Executive Officer of the Tribunal and includes overall responsibility for:

- Information Technology.
- Finance.
- Human Resources.

- Property.
- Registry functioning and procedures.
- Professional development and training.

The Principal Registrar is the agency head under the *Public Service Act 1991* and the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*. The role includes appearing before Senate Estimates hearings held 3 times per year.

Prior to joining the AAT in 2003, I was the Director of the Criminal Law Division of the Legal Aid Commission of NSW for a period of 10 years and was employed in Legal Aid in various criminal law positions for 10 years prior to that. I also worked for 3 years in private legal practice.

I graduated from UNSW in 1980 with a combined Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting, Finance and Systems)/ Bachelor of Laws degrees. After attending the College of Law I was admitted a Solicitor of the NSW Supreme Court in 1981. In 1994, I was accredited as a specialist in criminal law by the Law Society of NSW. In 2008, I graduated from Monash University with a Master of Laws degree majoring in Tribunal Procedures.

I have been a Councillor of the Law Society of NSW since 2008. I am the Chair of the Licensing Committee, Government Solicitor's Committee and a member of the Professional Conduct Committee of the Law Society. I am also the Chair of the Children's Law Specialist Accreditation Advisory Committee.

I am the Executive Officer of the Council of Australasian Tribunals (COAT), a member of the Australian Courts Administrators Group and a member of the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration.

Sian Leathem Registrar, Workers Compensation Commission

The Workers Compensation Commission resolves workers compensation disputes between injured workers and employers. It is an independent statutory tribunal within the justice system in New South Wales.

The role of the Registrar involves the following:

- Management of the Commission, including responsibility for approximately 100 staff.
- Management of the Commission's functions including over 10,000 dispute applications per annum.
- Management of around 200 contracted arbitrators, mediators and medical specialists.
- Management of the Commission's annual budget of \$33 million.

I really enjoy the hybrid nature of the role - part manager, part decision maker. Challenges - avoiding getting too bogged down in the detail of individual matters and issues so that you lose sight of the big picture.

Prior work experience:

- Assistant Registrar – Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal – January 2004 to August 2007.
- Director, Legal Management Service – NSW Attorney General's Department – June 2000 to December 2003.
- Acting Assistant Commissioner – Office of Legal Services Commissioner NSW – May 1999 to April 2000.
- Senior Review Officer – Office of the Legal Services Commissioner NSW – April 1998 to May 1999.
- Senior Legal and Policy Officer – Office of the Status of Women, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet – February 1996 to April 1998.
- Graduate Administrative Assistant – Department of Veterans' Affairs – December 1994 to February 1996.

I am a Committee Member of the Council of Australasian Tribunals, a Past President of the NSW Women Lawyers Association, a former member of the NSW Law Society Government Solicitor's Committee, a former member of the Law Society Equal Employment Opportunity Committee and the Treasurer of the Board of UTS Child Care Incorporated.

Tips: never burn your bridges. The world is a very small place and you never know when you might be able to help a former colleague and they in turn may be able to help you.

Volunteer! Over the years I have held volunteer positions in various organisations including the Women Lawyers Association, COAT, the Law Society etc. Through these positions, you can make great contacts, get terrific experience and hopefully support a worthy cause.

Lifelong Learning. I confess that I have been bitten by the study bug. Since completing my initial undergraduate degree I have completed various other courses, ranging from a Masters, to a Grad Dip to a Cert IV in Workplace Training and Development. I am currently completing an Executive Masters of Public Administration through ANZSOG.

Mentors are everywhere. You don't need to be in a working relationship with someone for them to be a mentor. The main thing is to find someone you respect and who you feel can teach you something. In my experience, most people are flattered to be thought of as a mentor and will happily share their knowledge.

Don't set yourself impossible standards. When you are trying to juggle work/life issues, it is important to be honest about what you can and can't achieve. It may be necessary to accept that the housework needs to

suffer a little, or that you can't get the report finished by the boss' preferred deadline. Balance usually involves re-arranging priorities and negotiating compromises. Don't expect perfection or that you are superhuman.

Make some time for yourself. Go to the gym, take a bubble bath, see a movie. Whatever helps you revitalise. If you are feeling unfulfilled or exhausted, your job and/or your family will almost certainly suffer as well.

Blaise Lyons

Principal Legal Officer, NSW Department of Health

I am a Principal Legal Officer working in the Legal & Legislative Services Branch of the NSW Department of Health. The Legal and Legislative Services Branch provides comprehensive legal services to the NSW Minister for Health and the NSW Department of Health. It is also a specialist legal resource for the NSW Health system and prepares the Legislative Program for the NSW Health portfolio.

My work involves providing legal advice on a diverse range of issues, such as legal issues relating to pandemic preparedness (swine flu), emerging technologies and commercial matters. I am currently drafting an intergovernmental agreement, have a matter before the ACCC, am negotiating outcomes in some commercial

matters and am supervising external legal providers that manage medical negligence litigation and Coronial Inquests. I was recently involved in a case where a hospital sought a declaration from the Supreme Court allowing it to withdraw life sustaining treatment from a patient. In 2008 I worked on the Special Commission into Acute Care Services in NSW Public Hospitals ("the Garling Enquiry") from NSW Department of Health's perspective.

I draft policies and guidelines for the NSW Health system, including the policy on consent to medical treatment, and have contributed to many other policies, including the organ donation and human tissue policy. I occasionally have instructed Parliamentary Counsel and attend Parliamentary debate on specific pieces of legislation. Another significant component of my work is to provide education on legal issues to clinicians working in NSW public hospitals concerning issues such as consent, termination of pregnancy, privacy and advance care directives.

My first law job was as a Law Clerk in the NSW Crown Solicitor's Office. I was admitted in 1999. I specialised in medical-legal work very early in my career. My first job as a solicitor was as a litigator in private practice, defending medical negligence claims on behalf of NSW public hospitals and clinicians. I worked in this position for around 6 years. From there it was a natural progression to move in-house to the NSW Department of Health. I have worked at NSW Health for 6 years, and I have been promoted twice in that time.

I am currently a member of the Law Society Government Solicitors Committee and a lawyer member of the Family Planning Human Research Ethics Committee. In the past I have been a volunteer solicitor at Redfern and Kingsford Legal Centres. I recommend volunteering in a legal centre to anyone wanting to build up their experience with clients and broaden their experiences in different areas of law. For an in-house legal position, having experienced a variety of complex and varied legal situations proves to be extremely helpful. If you want to work in-house for a government agency, having acted for government clients whilst in private practice would also be an advantage.

The best part of my current position at NSW Health is the variety of interesting an unusual work. I am often advising on new or emerging issues where there is no established legal precedent. There is also a great deal of job satisfaction, knowing that I am contributing to improving the NSW public health system for patients, rather than working in a job where profit is the main motivation.

Importantly, NSW Health is a flexible and understanding employer. I have had children whilst working for NSW Health and have been able to negotiate hours and days that provide a great 'work life balance'.

It can be difficult to get appointed to a permanent position as a government lawyer. Applicants need to be prepared to apply for and accept short term or temporary contract positions, as a means of gaining experience and knowledge about the organisation first, with a view to later applying for permanent positions when they become available.

Michael Antrum

General Counsel, NSW Police Force

I work at the NSW Police Force. I have an office in Parramatta and in the Sydney CBD. I am the General Counsel and I oversee the Civil Law capability for the NSW Police Force.

Prior to taking up the position I have been in private practice, an Arbitrator for the Workers Compensation Commission, a Director Principal Solicitor of the National Children's and Youth Law Centre, and the Legal Counsel for the University of Western Sydney.

I have also been involved in a diverse group of committees and voluntary organisations. Currently I am a member of the Government Solicitors Committee, Company Secretary of the Whitlam Institute within the University of Western Sydney, a reserve officer in the Australian Army Legal Core, and a member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Western Sydney.

What I like about my position is the diversity that it presents on a daily basis. The NSW Police Force is a large organisation that must meet high community expectations. I believe the work that NSW Police Officers undertake is important work that gives me a sense of satisfaction.

In my position I have to watch out that I maintain reasonable understanding of policy and legislative shifts affecting this organisation. I must also be aware that decisions in the legacy also have consequences in the personal and social sphere. This relationship has never been as stark as it is now within the NSW Police Force.

Tips on getting a General Counsel position: don't become so specialised that you can't take a helicopter view of a situation. It is important in these positions to be able to have both commercial acumen as well as an instinct for resolving disputes. You will also need to be capable of making decisions on the run, sometimes without always having all of the information before you. Your knowledge of the organisation and its corporate interests is paramount. In my case, a diverse professional background has become an asset.

In terms of providing any other advice I would simply say to young lawyers that it is amazing where tangential jumps sometimes take you. Grab every opportunity you can for learning and sacrifice momentary personal gain

or convenience for the ideal of service and professionalism. One day, people will remember.

Ian Rodgers

**Solicitor, Committals Unit,
Legal Aid NSW**

I represent people accused of offences that are either strictly indictable or where the DPP have elected to proceed against an accused person in the District or Supreme Courts.

I represent my clients through the Committals process and around half of my clients I will continue to represent through to completion in the District Court.

My job involves lots of client contact and court advocacy work. The advocacy is often exciting and challenging. The work is rarely monotonous. Almost every file has a different aspect to it. Having observance status of the world that our clients live within is quite special at times, though also disturbing.

Another good aspect of my work is my colleagues. I work with some of the most intelligent, hard working and humorous people I know.

Unfortunately, one of the major things we have to protect ourselves from is our own clients, not physically, but professionally. It's a strange aspect of our work.

'Burn out' is common amongst criminal defence solicitors, particularly in the

public sector, so work-life balance is important and career balance, moving around is also important.

Prior work history: when I first graduated, but before admission, I worked in two jobs:

- 3 months at a large commercial firm which was valuable as I discovered that this was 100% not for me.
- Then 12 months as a Judge's Associate.

Tips:

- Volunteer work at the Aboriginal Legal Service or in a Community Legal Centre is valuable.
- Persistence in applying for jobs and knocking on doors.
- Obtaining any advocacy experience that you can get your hands on.
- Maybe an interest in social justice is important.

Carolina Riveros Soto

Duty Criminal Law Solicitor, Legal Aid NSW

A duty solicitor is a solicitor who appears in court representing and advocating for legal aid clients in a range of criminal law matters in the Local Court.

I appear in court almost every day representing Legal Aid clients in a wide range of criminal matters. I appear daily in bail applications, bail variations, s.32 applications (for mentally ill clients or clients diagnosed with a mental illness), s.4 applications (reversing a s.25(2) conviction warrant), sentence matters and defended hearings. My clients consist of persons in custody and/or clients from a wide range of socio-economic, cultural, educational and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Prior work history: I worked as the Associate to Judge Williams in the District Court of NSW (Indictable Criminal Jurisdiction), legal intern at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva Switzerland, I was a team leader at LawAccess NSW (Attorney General's Department) and generalist locum solicitor at the Macquarie Legal Centre. As a law student, I worked as a volunteer at the Inner City Legal Centre and completed my practical legal training at the Disability Discrimination Legal Centre.

I am the Vice Chair of the NSWYL Human Rights Committee.

Tips: volunteer, volunteer, volunteer! My aim was to work at Legal Aid for criminal law experience after graduating from Law, but I didn't have any court experience. I rang Legal Aid, sent them my CV, persisted for some months and commenced working as a volunteer within the Children's Legal Service (Legal Aid Commission). I volunteered one day per week for about 6 months and eventually started doing

mentions and pleas in Court, which built up my experience.

Don't be afraid to ask questions and embrace new professional experiences - you can only learn from them!

Emma Maguire

Paralegal, Indictable Appeals Unit, Legal Aid NSW

I am a Support Clerk (Paralegal) in the Indictable Appeals Unit of Legal Aid NSW. I am primarily responsible for the collection and collation of trial and sentence transcripts and exhibits for use in the preparation of severity, conviction, and all grounds appeals to the Court of Criminal Appeal. This material is ordered from the District Court and Reporting Services Branch, and it is my responsibility to keep track of the progress of these requests, and ensure all material received is complete. This involves liaising with Sydney District Court Registry and Reporting Services branch staff. When material is difficult to obtain from these sources, I liaise with the DPP, private firms, and regional court registries to obtain all relevant information. I am also responsible for making first contact with all clients of the Indictable Appeals Unit. I speak to these clients, who are mostly incarcerated, via Audio Visual Link, and explain the process of appeals to them, obtaining information from them that may later become relevant at hearing, and answering any questions they might

have. Other duties I undertake include the preparation of briefs to counsel, instructing in the Court of Criminal Appeal (and once in the High Court), and collecting judgments.

This is primarily a developmental position, designed to introduce young lawyers to court process and procedure. Depending on how proactive you are, it can be a great opportunity to flex your muscles in completing tasks usually completed by solicitors. It is a good role to have as you make contacts within Legal Aid and externally. Most people who have worked in my role prior to me have gone on to become solicitors, either within Legal Aid, or in private practice.

The position can at times be one with a very high workload, with paralegals responsible for up to 80 matters at a time. Managing all of these matters, in addition to conducting client interviews and other tasks, means that anyone in this role has to have superior organisational skills and the ability to multi-task. At times it can become very difficult to get what you require from the courts or other organisations, and you will need good negotiation skills, as well as patience, to succeed in a role such as this.

Prior work history: a very brief stint in the Administrative Decisions Tribunal as a Clerk.

Tips: Legal Aid NSW is a fairly competitive place when it comes to obtaining work. The Paralegal positions

within the organisation are not plentiful. The best way to obtain a position like this one is to make sure you adequately address the selection criteria in the job advertisement, and to put forward all of the skills you have when participating in an interview. Positions such as this are usually obtained by students in the last few years of their law degrees.

Connie Aloisio

Solicitor, Australian Communications and Media Authority

I currently work at the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) as a Lawyer. My work mainly involves the provision of legal advice and assistance to departments within the ACMA, including advice on legal issues and legal risks, undertaking legal research, interpreting legislation and providing detailed advice on questions of law in a policy context, particularly in the areas of administrative law and communications and media law. My role also involves provision of legal advice in relation to ACMA investigations, and any related legal issues or risks, particularly in relation to the enforcement of the *Do Not Call Register Act 2006*, *Spam Act 2003* and *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. Occasionally I work on drafting statutory instruments, conducting or assisting in Commonwealth litigation, and also legal advice on corporate

matters such as Human Resources policies, contracts, and commercial leases. I really enjoy the wide variety of work that I have the opportunity to be involved in at the ACMA, and the broad-ranging experience I am gaining as a result.

Prior work history: at university I completed a combined Bachelor of Commerce/Law degree, and majored in accounting. While studying at university and for a short time after graduation I worked in accounting, firstly in a small Chartered Accounting firm, and then in the Accounts Department of a medium sized law firm. Following this I applied for a position within the Appeals department at the Workers' Compensation Commission (NSW), which fulfilled the practical legal training requirement of the Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice. Shortly after being admitted in December 2005, I had the opportunity to act in the role of Legal Officer within the Appeals team, for 3 months while a team member was on leave. Following this, I obtained a position with the Australian Building and Construction Commission as a Lawyer. I then moved into a Policy Advisor role at the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, to broaden my experience and move into a new area of law. This was a temporary role, and I moved to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal as a Legal and Policy Officer for a short time (also as a temporary employee) prior to starting with the ACMA.

I have been a member of the NSW YL Public Law & Government Committee since April 2008, as the Law Society Representative, responsible for liaison with the parent committee - the Government Solicitors Committee.

Tips: I think the key to obtaining a legal position within government, is to apply for a variety of positions that may be legal, or involve the general application of the law. For example, sometimes a good starting point can be to work in a policy role, or to start in a non-legal position within a team that consists of both legal and non-legal roles, that may afford the opportunity for temporary acting arrangements in those legal roles when employees are on leave.

Don't be afraid to try different roles in various government organisations. You never know what you'll like until you try it, so be open to other areas of work or organisations you may not have considered. Often temporary roles in a government department can provide the opportunity to gain experience that may lead to other career opportunities within that department, or may help you get the role you are after in another government organisation.

Alison Merridew

Solicitor, Crown Solicitors Office Legal Officer, NSW Law Reform Commission

I swore up and down throughout my law degree that I never wanted to be a lawyer, or if I did, I would want to work in a law reform commission so that I could change all the things that are wrong with the legal system. I worked in some random jobs after finishing uni (including a summer working as a stewardess on a passenger ship!) and travelled overseas before deciding to test the legal waters.

On returning to Australia I successfully applied for a position in the NSW Attorney General's Department Graduate Program. My first placement was in ... the NSW Law Reform Commission! The project I worked on at the LRC was very interesting, with a criminal justice focus but touching on many aspects of civil law and human rights. I worked with highly experienced policy officers (some with 20 years' experience) under the supervision of retired judges and an academic. I had many professional development opportunities, including consulting directly with judicial officers and senior personnel from government and non-government agencies; presenting at several conferences and seminars; and giving evidence to a Tasmanian Legislative Council inquiry.

Through the Grad Program I received training in core skills such as writing

in plain english, presentation skills and project management. The Grad Program was sufficiently flexible that I was able to stay at the LRC for several rotations, so refined my skills in writing analytically and for policy development purposes. I also did a 2-week secondment at the NSW Sentencing Council while I was attached to LRC.

I have just rotated across to the NSW Crown Solicitor's Office for my final placement. The CSO acts for the State government but competes with private firms for about half of its work, so runs on a commercial basis. It has an excellent reputation for its legal services and also for training and supporting its staff. The work performed is diverse and interesting - during my third week here, I received instructions to act on a request from a foreign court to take evidence from two witnesses in Australia for proceedings in Portugal!

Both the LRC and the CSO offer what I think are the best things about working in government:

- The work is directly relevant to the community so you have the opportunity to make a real difference;
- Working with people who are driven by their interest in, and passion for what they do (not by money);
- True work-life balance, achieved through flexible working arrangements and very reasonable

hours - the public sector is based around a 35 hour working week (you get time off if you work more hours than required), with flexible start and finish times. Even at Crown Solicitor's Office, solicitors are required to do only 5 billable hours per day, and we are actively discouraged from working later than 6pm! There is also special provision for study leave and a (small) contribution to fees for College of Law or other job-related studies.

Another interesting feature of working in the public sector is the option of union membership, which is not available in most private sector legal workplaces.

If you are keen to work in government, my advice would be to keep an eye out for graduate programs, as well as paralegal, "legal officer" or "policy officer" positions. Opportunities for graduate programs vary from year to year and agency by agency. Also, don't be afraid to write to agencies you are interested in working at - some have the capacity to provide ad hoc work experience placements (paid and unpaid). A foot in the door in a public sector organisation is often all you need.

In typical lawyerly fashion, I'll end with a disclaimer: the views expressed in this profile are my own personal views, and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Justice & Attorney General or the NSW Public Service.

Kate Cornford

Paralegal, Crown Solicitors Office

I am a Paralegal in the Administrative Law Team of the Crown Solicitors Office. The Crown Solicitor is the largest provider of legal services to the New South Wales Government and its agencies. My main duties in this ongoing role include:

- Liaising with government clients, the legal profession, court staff and the public.
- Working in a commercially sensitive manner whilst undertaking administrative and clerical tasks, high-quality legal research, document production and delivery, file management and general support services.
- Utilising a working knowledge of the law, including relevant legislation, court forms and procedures, departmental and public sector guidelines and policies.
- Making representations on behalf of the Crown Solicitor in the Supreme Court of NSW.
- Employing legal computer applications including Open Practice, TRIM, Lotus Notes, ESS and Flex, as well as utilising electronic research databases.

The position gives me hands-on experience within government and

administrative law as a paralegal. I undertake research, draft affidavits and appearances and make appearances in Court. There is a high level of responsibility and involvement allocated to paralegals.

Working at the NSW Crown Solicitor's Office is a great opportunity. Compared to any other law firm, the exposure of paralegals to cases and court processes is unprecedented.

I am currently in my final year of a Bachelors of Law degree. I am a member of various NSW Young Lawyer Committees.

Tips: constantly check <http://jobs.nsw.gov.au/> for NSW Government positions, including those within the NSW Crown Solicitor's Office. The selection criteria for the position was:

- Completion of at least the second year of legal studies;
- A record of superior academic achievement;
- Proven research skills including electronically assisted research;
- Ability to exercise discretion, initiative and work to deadlines in a team environment;
- Excellent written and oral communications skills;
- Excellent client service skills.

This position is a perfect position to get your 'foot in the door' in the public service.

Danielle Gatehouse

Solicitor, Australian Government Solicitor, Sydney

I work in litigation generally, mainly trade practices litigation [competition and consumer - our client being the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)] but also litigation for other regulatory agencies and some advice work.

The Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) offers the opportunity to work with some of the most outstanding legal minds in the country (e.g. Henry Burmester and the Solicitor General), advice work as well as litigation work, flexible work options and in-house experience.

As a young lawyer I also have not been relegated to a dark room to look at documents or spent much time in front of a photocopier. I have also had quite a few advocacy opportunities.

I also do a lot of 'law' in my position - through advice but also particularly in litigation. Perhaps unlike many private commercial clients, our clients are not only concerned to get their outcomes achieved, but they also expect to be informed on exactly how and why those outcomes are achieved according to law. They are legally sophisticated.

What to watch out for: people thinking you work in a government department and therefore have flex time and work less hours than solicitors in private firms. AGS is like private firms - it tenders for its work (except, generally speaking, constitutional work) and has billable hours.

Having to consider the model litigant policy and Legal Services Directions when working at all times. I think it's the biggest distinguishing feature from working in a private firm and features in everything you do as a solicitor for the government.

Work history: Judge's associate, researcher for a number of barristers, a paralegal in private commercial firm doing small claims litigation, researcher for university professors.

I am a former member of the executive and Constitutional Law Co-ordinator of the Public Law and Government Committee.

Tips: be interested in government law (admin law, constitutional law, statutory interpretation) and have a healthy dose of interest in policy. Although if you are policy minded I'd suggest working in a government department instead. AGS does not advise on policy.

AGS also has a large commercial practice too, if you're commercially minded.

If you have a genuine interest in the application of law and legal development from a government perspective then AGS should probably be at the top of your list. I also think it's a great option if you are looking for an alternative to the Bar.

Elsbeth Dyer

Assistant Policy Officer, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet

I work at the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) as an Assistant Policy Officer in the Policy and Strategy Division. DPC is a central government agency that is responsible for supporting the Premier to achieve Government objectives and for providing leadership to the NSW Public Sector to deliver outcomes to the community that are the result of government, business, and community collaboration.

The Policy and Strategy Division of DPC provides independent policy advice to the Premier on all Cabinet and other major policy matters, assists Cabinet to make collective decisions about Government policy, and identifies major policy issues including intergovernmental matters to coordinate the development of government policy and legislative proposals.

In my current role I work mainly on Attorney General's, Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice policy issues. Common tasks that I perform are:

- assessing a proposal to be put to Cabinet by a Minister and facilitating consultation with the Offices of various Ministers affected by proposal;
- providing written advice to the Premier on a proposal to be put to Cabinet by a Minister, outlining identified issues and recommending workable solutions;
- reviewing draft bills reported back to Cabinet and preparing advice on variations from Cabinet's approval;
- preparing briefs and speech notes for the Premier to attend and speak at various community functions;
- preparing briefs on policy issues for the Premier;
- preparing correspondence to stakeholders for the Premier's approval and signature;
- reading newspapers and monitoring radio and television to maintain awareness of current policy and related issues.

From my perspective, there really aren't many disadvantages to my current role. Like many of my colleagues I have a law degree and some might consider having a law degree and not practising law to be a disadvantage. However, as I work with legal policy issues and legislation on a daily basis, I am using my legal knowledge constantly. Indeed, one of the best things about my job is that I can use what I learned at law school in a broader context than I found I could when working in a more traditional legal job.

As to advantages, some of them are as follows:

- there is a good mix of reading, writing, and research on the one hand and interaction with people (colleagues, Ministers' offices, the Premier's Office, State and Commonwealth public servants from other agencies) on the other;
- the work is interesting and varied - I work on a broad range of policy issues in the portfolio areas I have been assigned;
- the working conditions are excellent, for example, good work/life balance, flexible working hours, provision for special leave etc.

Prior work history: when I finished University I worked first as a Legal Information and Referral Officer for a community legal centre. I then worked as a paralegal for the NSW Crown Solicitor's Office, and finally as an insurance litigation solicitor for a private firm, before taking up a position at DPC.

I am also the Deputy Chairperson Macquarie Legal Centre Inc and a member of the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet Employment Equity and Diversity Committee.

Tips: I studied Arts/Law at Macquarie University with a Major in Politics. This is a useful combination for the work that I currently do - I draw on both disciplines constantly in my work.

Also, develop an interest in news and

current affairs. Read newspapers, political journals and biographies and listen to and watch ABC radio and TV. I've been listening to 2BL since I was 13 years old.

It took me nearly 3 years to find out that I wanted to work in the area of public policy and now that I have, my working life is thoroughly enjoyable. My advice would be don't worry if you don't find your ideal job immediately, keep going until you find something that you really like.

Simon Kritsotakis

Legislation and Policy Officer, NSW Department of Corrective Services

I work for the NSW Department of Corrective Services. My current title is Legislation and Policy Officer. I am based in the Corporate Legislation and Parliamentary Support Unit, in the Office of the Commissioner.

The position involves amending legislation by way of Cabinet Minutes, proposing new legislation, preparing House Notes for the Minister's use in Parliament, responding to Bills drafted by other public sector agencies, and generally providing advice to the Minister of Corrective Services, his staff, and the Commissioner of Corrective Services, on anything that is likely to affect the operation of the correctional system in NSW.

The best aspect of my job is that I have a direct role in drafting and commenting on the laws of NSW before they are made.

In the past, I have held roles as a Solicitor in the areas of advocacy and litigation.

To get a job in the NSW public service, I would recommend that you have a wide variety of interests - personality plays a big part - and be involved in the community - for example, do some voluntary work at a Legal Centre or charitable organisation. Also, you need to be patient. The process of securing employment with the Government can sometimes be drawn out. But in my opinion it's ultimately worth it, primarily for reasons of security and stability. In addition, the NSW public service offers opportunities to act in other positions, across agencies, and has benefits such as flex days and good leave entitlements.

Rocelle Ago

Legal and Policy Officer, Administrative Appeals Tribunal

I provide legal and policy advice (and support) in matters relating to the Tribunal's jurisdiction and procedures and the delivery of relevant staff training. Other duties include acting

on behalf of the Tribunal in matters where it has been joined as a party to a proceeding in the Federal Court, or briefing external counsel in more complex matters, dealing with matters which have been remitted back to the Tribunal from the Federal Court, where I assist in determining the reconstitution of the Tribunal and acting as a contact point for liaison with external agencies in copyright matters. The role also sometimes involves undertaking projects and studies that go towards creating standards or improving efficiency, which may involve statistical analysis or conducting file audits.

What I have enjoyed about the role is that it allows you to develop a detailed understanding of the intricacies of administrative/merit review, well past the cursory semester at law school. In addition, you make a direct contribution to the policies of an organisation that aims to provide a review process that is fair, just, economical, informal and quick. Working for a Commonwealth Agency also means that you enjoy fantastic benefits such as flex leave and study assistance. It also means that you don't have to battle with billable hours. There are also opportunities for you to undertake secondments and other professional development opportunities.

In terms of qualifications, I have a Master of Laws in International Law, a Bachelor of Laws (Hons Class I) and

a degree in International Studies. I am also the founding and current Chair of the NSW Young Lawyers Public Law and Government Committee, which was established in January 2008. Prior to the AAT, I worked as a Publishing Editor at LexisNexis. I also worked in different capacities during university, including as a Law Clerk for a mid-sized firm and a Legal Administrative Assistant for the Australian Stock Exchange. I also did some volunteer work for Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, the National Youth and Children's Legal Centre and NSW Amnesty International.

Tips: figure out what you want to do, which areas of law interest you and the type of environment or place you want to work in. Talk to people about their experiences. You shouldn't underestimate the skills you can gain in any position - legal or otherwise. My previous positions allowed me to pick up skills which are transferable to most legal or government positions, including attention to detail, project management and managing deadlines, and working with a variety of people within and outside an organisation. Broaden your experience by doing volunteer work (which is rewarding on a totally different level!) - why not become an active member of the NSW Young Lawyers Public Law and Government Committee?

Veronica Chan

Assistant Policy Officer, NSW Department of Justice and Attorney General

I am employed as an assistant policy officer, in the Legislation and Policy Division of the NSW Department of Justice and Attorney General (DJAG; formerly, the Attorney General's Department). The Legislation and Policy Division's role is to:

- identify the need for, and formulate changes to, the law and legal system;
- ensure quality legal policy advice is provided to the Attorney General and Government;
- implement the Attorney General's legislative program; and
- inform the community about changes to, and the operation of, legislation within the Attorney General's portfolio.

The workload can be highly demanding, as there are many deadlines to work to, and you need to be flexible, because work priorities can change very quickly. However, it is very satisfying to be working in a job, knowing the day-to-day tasks (even the less exciting ones!) contribute to DJAG's aim of promoting social harmony through programs that protect human rights and community standards, and reduce crime.

I studied combined Arts (History)/Law at the University of New South Wales. I was never sure where I would end up at the end of my degree, but I'd always had an interest in working in the public / community sector. During my studies, I worked (as part of an elective) at Kingsford Legal Centre and also Eastern Area Tenants Service. Both gave me a taste of advocacy in the community legal sector.

Following university, I worked for a sole practitioner, while I completed my practical legal training (PLT). The cases were fairly typical for a suburban practice – family law, criminal law, conveyancing... It was a great experience, but I came to the realisation in this time that I did not have a passion for advocacy. So whilst I completed my PLT and was admitted to the Supreme Court as a legal practitioner, I was content to leave that avenue to investigate what the public sector had to offer law graduates.

At the time, there were several graduate programs that encouraged graduates with law degrees to apply. I was accepted into the DJAG graduate program (2007). During my second rotation, I applied for and was accepted into the policy stream of the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Fast Track Graduate Program. The former provided an insight into the different functions of DJAG, while the latter was an opportunity to rotate across three different departments and participate in different stages of the policy-making cycle.

Private Practice

Greg Ross

Special Counsel, Shaw Reynolds Bowen & Gerathy Lawyers

I work at Shaw Reynolds Bowen & Gerathy, which is a niche market firm practising in Property Development, State and Local Government, Environment, Corporate and Commercial Law and extensively in Planning Law.

I operate as Special Counsel. I specialise in public sector related work, including contracts (as a major interface of the public and private sectors) as well as Government finance legislation and operations.

Much of what I do involves being contacted by an internal Government agency legal team which briefs me a bit like the way a barrister might be briefed to advise or appear in a court case. Public sector legal practice for me primarily involves various forms of contracting including a juggling of law, policy, politics and probity but necessarily includes administrative law, empowerment issues and proper purpose.

Matters range from advising, negotiating and documenting major transactions, such as the proposed new Cancer Centre at RPA Hospital – Lifehouse at RPA, to major

procurement contracts such as cleaning and maintenance contracts for NSW Department of Education and Training and some law reform issues.

I am involved in a range of interesting societally beneficial work. By way of example, for a couple of years, I was on ICAC's Operations Review Committee, an internal committee which reviewed draft ICAC inquiry reports and made recommendations in respect of their further progress.

Things to watch out for: the wide range of political issues which can impact on a "Public Sector" transaction which, at first, looks straight forward, but can be affected by many tangential or other issues such as political issues, e.g a change of Minister (let alone a change of Government) who has a different view can lead to significant variations of projects on which you have spent a lot of time.

Prior work history: when I left school I worked for a while in Births Deaths and Marriages, part of the then Registrar General's Department and one of my supervisors encouraged me to study Law. Whilst at University I worked in a quasi legal role with the Corporate Affairs Commission as it then was (a precursor of ASIC).

On graduating, I worked in the private sector for 13 or so years where I did banking finance and property development work and some NSW Government work, as I had always had a bit of an interest in Administrative law.

I moved from being a partner at Phillips Fox to Assistant Crown Solicitor, Property Commercial NSW for 9 years. Then I tried to retire but some NSW agencies pursued me and I returned to practice advising on specialist Government issues and have done so since 1999, though practising from the 'private' part of the profession.

I am a member of the following:

- NSW Law Society Government Solicitors Committee.
- NSW Law Society Licensing Committee.
- Legal Qualifications Committee (and its Practical Legal Experience subcommittee) which advises NSW Legal Profession Admission Board.
- Commonwealth Public Sector Lawyers Association (presently acting chair of it).
- NSW College of Law's Practical Experience Appeals Committee.
- NSW College of Law's Professional Development - Board Advisory Committee.

Tips:

- Continue to want to learn a lot and serve society.
- Learn the basic building blocks as everything else involves them, though usually combined in complicated (sometimes unnecessarily complicated) ways.

Practising 'public sector law' is something of a speciality in its own right, due to needing to be able to juggle law, policy, politics and probity. Public Sector law can be very interesting and demanding but thoroughly enjoyable. Public Sector practice can and does involve a fair amount of lateral thinking.

Greg Johnson

Solicitor, DLA Phillips Fox

I work at DLA Phillips Fox, in the Government and Administrative Law Litigation group. I am a solicitor whose primary responsibility is with respect to our migration practice. My role involves day-to-day conduct of files acting for the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. The kinds of matters I run are refugee judicial review proceedings in the Federal Magistrate Court (on review from the Refugee Review Tribunal), including appeals to the Federal Court, and occasionally High Court. I also run judicial review proceedings involving refusal/cancellation of student visas. I run merits review proceedings in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, primarily involving applications for review of decisions of the Department to refuse/cancel business visas and other permanent visas. This includes cancellation for character reasons.

The good features of this position include the high level of autonomy with

files, high volume litigation, the opportunity to do your own advocacy in the Federal Magistrates Court, Federal Court and Administrative Appeals Tribunal, plus the opportunity to work with Counsel on more difficult matters, the opportunity as well to run matters before the Full Court of the Federal Court and in the High Court.

With autonomy, however, comes risk, so it is essential to be up to speed with developments in the case law, and changes to the legislation (which occur quite regularly). Working for a government department also requires an understanding of, and appreciation of, government policy and how policy mixes with the law.

Work history: I used to work in the Employment Law team at DLA Phillips Fox as a solicitor.

I am the vice-chair of the Public Law and Government Committee.

Tips: speak to people and find out about opportunities from the 'inside'.

Public administrative law allows practitioners to really engage in solid legal work, involving close scrutiny of legislation, consideration of ever-changing case law, in particular at the level of Full Federal Court and High Court.

Non-Government Organisations

Ben Fogarty

Principal Solicitor, Intellectual Disability Rights Service

My path in law once meandered somewhat aimlessly. Today, however, after ten years next week as a solicitor, I have found my place in the law and I truly relish the challenges, triumphs and adventures my work brings me every day of the week. At present I work as the principal solicitor of the Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) and I teach one class of criminal law at the University of NSW. I have been a community legal service solicitor for about five years and I have taught criminal law part-time for about six years. Prior to this work and straight out of my university studies, I worked for about five years in a large national private law firm.

I learned a great deal in the private law firm and the resources there were phenomenal, but my heart was never in it and it was a time where I was searching for my place in the law; for where I could truly make a difference with my studies and skills. An illness of a close family member triggered me to make the jump and to see what else was out there – to leave the cosy nest of the big law firm and fend for myself. It was the best decision I ever made.

I had a night job and a part-time teaching job lined up for later in the year. So I started volunteering. I volunteered at Redfern Legal Centre and had a locum job for a month at Inner City Legal Centre. I was helping people to fight evictions, another to get a withdrawal and apology for a newspaper article defamatorily implicating someone as a terrorist, writing submissions on ‘anti-terrorism’ laws – the work was amazing. I had found my place in the law.

Luckily, after a bit of time volunteering and getting my face recognized around the traps, I was employed as the principal solicitor for the NSW Disability Discrimination Legal Centre (NSW DDLC). My passion for disability rights was born and the pinnacle of my work at NSW DDLC was NGO lobbying work I did at the United Nations in New York on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006. After three years at NSW DDLC, I worked a six month stint as an outreach solicitor at the Darwin Community Legal Service. It coincided with the initial stages of ‘the Northern Territory intervention’ and was an eye-opening experience that has helped me understand better the law, my country and the people within it.

For the last two years I have worked as the principal solicitor at IDRS. I have never worked harder; but also I have never learned more about law, nor felt so enthralled by the hectic pace, the clients, the ups-and-downs, the

adventures. I do such a broad range of work – criminal law, guardianship law, tenancy law, consumer law, employment law, discrimination law, administrative law – you name it.

“Regrets? I have a few, but then again, too few to mention” (as the song goes). I do regret not having applied to do an associateship with a Judge or Magistrate, and, deep down, I would like to do some more substantive work overseas. Of course that can still happen, later down the track.

What I say to my students and to anyone studying law or in law is:

- find a job you actually enjoy doing or at least work towards one – money and high salaries are not always conducive to an enjoyable career;
- volunteer and give back to the community – you possess powerful skills and knowledge that can help those less fortunate, educated and resourced than you; and
- be brave – don’t die wondering about a career change.

As someone once said, “find a job you enjoy and you’ll never work a day in your life”. I understand what this means now and I have the privilege of experiencing this in my work in the community legal sector. The place I have found myself in the law is a remarkably rewarding one.

Indrani Bandyopadhyay

Solicitor, Intellectual Disability Rights Service and Benjamin & Leonardo Criminal Defence Lawyers

Public law, that is, Criminal Law, Administrative Law and Constitutional Law, as defined by Justice Michael Kirby, is the mark of a civilised and democratic nation. To me, public law is entirely about the control of government action, and thus fundamental to the maintenance of the principle that harks back to the very origins of our British Common Law system, keeping the ‘King’s peace’. Without public law, there is no place or recognition given to The People without whom, there is no democracy, and in fact, no modern Australia.

I have always seen myself first and foremost, as a lawyer for The People – not just for the Little Guy, but the whole demos; a lawyer whose main aim is to help maintain balance in a democratic society. As I see it, without a properly functioning system of public law, Australia – the idea and the place – as it is today, could not exist. I hate to think of what the alternatives might be, but there are plenty of examples around the world, and throughout history, to choose from if we want an insight into what life might be like without a properly functioning public law. There is little doubt in my mind that society would degenerate into the Hobbesian hell where human life is

'nasty, brutal, and short'. Public Law then, stands as the Leviathan – and while it is initiated and often manipulated by governments, it remains beyond government. Public law is not for the benefit of the government, but for the benefit of society, of which the government is one (but essential) part.

My journey into law was driven by my belief in the essential dignity of life and a passion for democratic principles. My criminal law experience was gained from the eighteen months I spent as a volunteer for the Aboriginal Legal Service, and during that time, what I noticed was the inextricable links between the criminal law, administrative law and constitutional law; and I discovered that I could not be an effective criminal lawyer unless I was a true public lawyer.

To gain experience in administrative law and other law, I have spent the last six months (in a paid and unpaid capacity) with the Intellectual Disability Rights Service, serving a clientele whose lives are determined – down to the smallest detail – by the government. In order to protect people who have an intellectual disability, we have legislation that dictates the circumstances under which sex with an intellectually disabled person is acceptable, yet our clients can't seem to acquire a general waiver which forgives their inability to understand the concept of having to have a valid bus or train ticket when travelling on public transport. On a daily basis the lawyers at IDRS negotiate on behalf of our

clients with staff from various government departments who are often very sympathetic, yet have their hands tied by policy, procedure and legislation. This is such a small thing: fines for not having a valid transport ticket, yet the consequences of such transgressions rule the lives of our clients, and often days (and resources) of the lawyers at IDRS.

These are the things that drive me to public law and keep me there. This passion also makes it difficult to find the right job – I do some contracting work, and it pays a few bills, but not many. I'm a single parent with a star-student daughter, so I'm geographically bound to Sydney. But being a single parent also means that I get some financial help from the government, and I also still work six hours a week at a bookshop (started there when I began my degree) to cover the increase in my rent. On the days I'm not working (or on weekends or late at night), I research firms that have the right practice areas, and later contact them and have a chat. For a while, in sheer frustration, I even thought of setting up my own firm with a Principal Solicitor to supervise me through my certificate restrictions. I actually put the structures in place to do that, but I hesitated; I'm a new lawyer – I was only admitted in April – and I want to spend the next few years learning my craft and providing good service, not worrying about BAS statements. And so the search continues.

It is a struggle sometimes, I have high expectations of myself and sometimes

I struggle to keep the faith. But I am propped up by good friends and the knowledge that when the right job comes, it will be sheer magic. I came to the law late in life – I come from a background of business and publishing. I did not read law to impress my parents, or because I had nothing better to do, or because I got the marks. I came into law with a purpose in mind – The Law is the machine that regulates society. Being a ‘whole of society’ sort of person, I don’t sneer at money or the entrepreneurial spirit – in fact, I enjoy the cut and thrust of the commercial arena. But I came to the law because I wanted to be part of things, and to engage on a more fundamental level. Gandhi said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world”. I interpret that piece of wisdom in the following way: put simply, if you want to change the machine, be the machine.

Gayatri Nair

Legal Officer, ACT Human Rights Commission, Domestic Violence Lawyer, Legal Aid ACT

At Human Rights Commission (HRC) I research human rights issues relevant to the *Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT)* (HRA), draft submissions and advice to HRA government and others on the operation of the, respond to human rights enquiries, attend meetings/forums on the HRA, help with

community education on human rights.

I love that I am able to work directly with human rights legislation and in a human rights framework. I enjoy the opportunities and challenges that arise, including making submissions to government on how to improve laws so they are consistent with human rights. I also look forward to potentially providing research as sometimes the Human Rights Commission intervenes in cases that deal with the HRA. It’s an area I am really passionate about and it’s exciting to be able to contribute more broadly to legal policy issues.

At Legal Aid ACT I represent clients on a duty basis to apply for interim domestic violence, and personal protection orders. This includes interviews, and regular appearances in the Magistrates Court. It also includes representing clients at return conference and final hearing.

I really enjoy the client interaction. It’s very diverse, emotionally challenging, and tiring work, but consistently rewarding. I have enjoyed the advocacy side more than I expected, and going to court is a real thrill. I like that I can assist someone in an immediate way and especially really vulnerable people who are in need of help.

Previous work history: I did part of my PLT at the NSW DPP and was given the opportunity to instruct in two trials. I also completed an internship at UNHCR as legal/protection intern

before working as a voluntary research assistant to Mr Julian Burnside AO QC. I then worked as a Community Legal Education Officer at Legal Aid ACT, and also as a criminal duty lawyer on Saturday mornings (which I still do). I am the ACT Co-Convenor for the NGO, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights group.

Tips: volunteer, if you have the means! I did voluntary work at the NSW DPP, an internship at United Nations Commissioner for Refugees as a legal/protection intern, and also later as a research assistant with Mr Julian Burnside AO QC before I got the jobs I am in currently. These arose from not only persistence, but simply asking and getting involved. I think you also have to be flexible, for example, I took a job in an organisation I really liked, even if it wasn't the ideal job. Follow your dreams and passions, as that's what will stimulate you and keep you excited and dedicated to the work you do. I also think having support and networking with others with similar interests help, for example being part of the Australian lawyers for human rights, is motivating and allows me to interact with others interested in similar issues.

Post-Graduate Students

Rebecca Welsh

Postgraduate student and researcher, UNSW

I work as a researcher at the University of New South Wales Gilbert + Tobin Centre for public law, where I am also undertaking a PhD studying the constitutional separation of powers and anti-terror law.

Since University I have had a passion for constitutional law, particularly implied rights and separation of powers, and also for the process of judicial reasoning. Late in University I also became interested in Australia's controversial responses to the acts of terrorism in the US and UK, and of course in the questions of the rule of law and justice that these often touchy issues raised. After I completed University in Wollongong (where I also studied psychology) I obtained a position as a graduate in the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department where I completed rotations in Security Litigation Policy and Native Title Branches.

Applying for graduate positions was at times gruelling and disheartening, but ultimately rewarding as the public service exposed me to the reality of the mechanisms of government and the world of politics in an incalculably valuable way that I never could have learnt in books. My advice if you want a job in the public service is to apply

for as many departments as possible, relax, and never undersell yourself – different departments are after different kinds of people, it is unlikely marks alone will get you all the way. I would also suggest spending a bit of time in Canberra if you can. Unfortunately I was unable to find a fit for my love of the law, rather than politics, and have a chance to sink my teeth into legal issues or advice as I had hoped – but this desire was more than satisfied when I moved to Sydney to take up a position with a top firm practicing Insurance litigation.

The move from public to private was reasonably easy. They are separate worlds for sure, but I believe experiencing both has given me a fuller understanding of this strange universe of the law. After a while I accepted that my interest lay in constitutional law rather than the *Insurance Contracts Act 1984* (Cth), and in being an independent advocate of the issues I was passionate about rather than a ‘hired gun’. With confidence in my decision I approach the Gilbert + Tobin Centre with my interest in undertaking a PhD and becoming an academic in the area I had such an enduring interest in.

Public law, like all law, is constantly changing. Those of us with an interest in public law are privileged by frequent public conferences on emerging and controversial issues. There is definite value in undertaking curricular and extracurricular activities in the area of law you are interested in, though my advice is the most value can be obtained by getting along to conferences and speaking with the diverse range of individuals you find

there. Ask questions and speak up, and you will quickly tap into the deep base of knowledge and passion that exists for Public law in Australia. Fresh perspectives are welcome in every public law dialogue I’ve been involved in, and worthwhile discussions always need to be had. Often I found that my undergraduate view was valued as a new and intriguing perspective by even some highly esteemed and established people at these forums.

Whilst I was a litigation Solicitor I maintained my attendance at constitutional and human rights conferences when possible, and also took up a place on the NSW Young Lawyers Public Law and Government Committee. This Committee, as well as many other associations and mailing lists (both government and independent) can be indispensable in keeping you up-to-date on issues and opportunities.

Public law is not everybody’s cup of tea, and you will find that people in the field are generally happy to be approached by you if you have a genuine interest or question around their expertise or experience. I guess my advice in short is: get and stay involved, keep an eye out for opportunities and don’t be afraid of them, and if you are particularly interested in an issue or area then follow it with eagerness and an acceptance that you will always be learning (even when you may be the established expert and a new undergrad stumps you with a question!).

Alison Davidian

Postgraduate student, Harvard, UNV Judiciary Specialist, Somalia

My areas of work experience have mainly been in human rights and international development. I graduated from Arts/Law at Sydney University in 2003. In September 2009, I started my LLM at Harvard University but my most recent position before starting the Masters was as a UNV Judiciary Specialist with UNDP Somalia.

The position was quite varied and involved a lot of different aspects including supporting projects to increase access to justice, particularly for vulnerable groups; assisting to establish and support legal aid centres in prioritised regions of the country and supporting projects to harmonise Customary, Shari'a and Secular Law.

Before getting this position, I had some overseas experience. I'd worked as a legal intern in Trial Chamber II at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Tanzania (2005); as a law clerk to Justice Langa on the Constitutional Court of South Africa (2004); and as an intern in the Transition and Reconciliation Unit of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg (2003/2004). Before leaving Australia for Somalia, I was working as a solicitor at the Refugee Advice and Casework Service in Sydney.

Tips:

- How do you actually get a job working overseas?

I know a lot of people would love to get jobs working overseas, and before I got the job with UNDP I was asking the same question. How do people get these jobs?? What do I have to do?? I've done 3 internships, have exhausted my life savings, gone into extreme debt that I'm still paying off, and still nothing.

Well, the answer I think isn't very satisfactory but I honestly believe you need a heap of enthusiasm and more than anything – a fair amount of luck. First of all, get yourself onto all the international rosters that look for professionals. The way I got my job in Somalia was through the United Nations Volunteer roster (even though it's volunteer, they actually pay you a substantial wage). There are some refugee rosters as well like the SURGE roster. Have a look at the jobs advertised through the Australian Youth Ambassadors Program run from AusAID and Australian Volunteers International. Depending on what area of law interests you, start researching organisations and rosters who do the work you're interested in and then start sending emails and applying.

The other thing is you have more chance of being lucky if you're actually in the country where you want to work. For example, you want a job in international criminal law, and there's a job going at the ICTR. Thousands of people would love a job at the ICTR.

And thousands of tremendously qualified people send in their CVs including one of the interns currently at the ICTR, working for one of the prosecutors. This prosecutor knows the person who is doing the hiring. He says to the person hiring, this kid is a winner. I've worked with him/her, they're dedicated, smart, enthusiastic and (here's the kicker) they're already here and can start straight away! That's where luck and strategy kick in. So be strategic. If you've graduated and want to do an internship, pick the organisation carefully. I know a lot of people who managed to get jobs by doing great work and being around for long enough that they started to get noticed. Sometimes these things require you to take risks. Make sure the risks you take are calculated ones. Also remember it's often the risks we take that don't make sense to a lot of people that can lead to the most incredible opportunities and life experiences.

- Nothing you do is a waste.

Whether you're working in private firm, working at an NGO, studying, doing a course, studying a language – whatever you're doing, you're building skills. Even if you don't realize it, trust me, you are. Let me give you an example: a kind person would say Alison is "technologically challenged". A blunt person would say, "Alison shouldn't be let near computers, but the necessities of the modern office sadly dictate otherwise". In Somalia – and this is no joke – I was the computer "whiz". That's right – the "whiz". This was because many people in the

office weren't used to computers, had never really used them before, so I was teaching people excel and how to print double sided etc. So the point of the story is, you all have skills. Even if you might be going through a really difficult time where you're not working or studying, maybe looking for work or caring for a sick family member, you're developing crucial coping mechanisms – ones you will draw on at some stage when working overseas.

Associateships

Sebastian Hartford Davis

Associate to the Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia

The work varies greatly according to the Court's sitting schedule. In a non-sitting week, my time is divided between proofing judgments, preparing for upcoming matters and special leave applications, and assisting his Honour with any research-related work that may have arisen in the previous sitting week.

During a sitting week, my time is divided between all of the above, as well as sitting in Court as Tipstaff, clerking, and attending to any miscellaneous judgment production matters that may arise.

I have also worked as a paralegal at Clayton Utz and completed a summer clerkship at Blake Dawson in 2007/2008. Prior to my appointment to the Court I was working as a law clerk

at Piper Alderman Lawyers, where I have accepted (but deferred) an offer of graduate employment.

I was the founding Vice-Chair of the Public Law and Government Committee of Young Lawyers 2008, President of the Macquarie University Law Society 2007.

Personal attributes are often as important to the Judges as grades, since there is such a close working relationship in Chambers. This means that the appointments are as much a matter of luck (i.e. that the Judge in question will want to work with you) as they are a matter of preparation. Try to keep this in mind in an interview.

The good aspects of this job are the close contact with the Chief Justice, exposure to the Justices of the High Court, exposure to the work of the High Court, living in Canberra, working with the other associates. You need to watch out for the algae-infested waters of Lake Burley Griffin! Be careful with work-life balance.

Claire Doherty

Associate to the President of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal

I am currently working as a Judge's Associate to the President of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Much of my work is case related - liaising with parties, reading through submissions, managing the files, being

in the hearings themselves, and editing decisions. The President of the AAT is also a Judge of the Federal Court and Supreme Court of Norfolk Island thus I have been fortunate enough to be involved in some Full Federal Court matters as well.

Other work that I do includes legal research for speeches or decisions and assisting in the organisation of meetings and conferences. The diverse roles that the President plays mean that my work is constantly varied. The job involves a fair amount of travel which has been a bonus and given me a chance to explore new cities in Australia. Working in such a close environment with a Judge is very different to most law graduate jobs and is a great opportunity to observe and learn.

After growing up abroad in Rome and then Vienna, I completed my LLB in the UK with a year spent abroad in Helsinki specialising in EU and public international law. I then did an internship at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna working on treaty law where I was involved in the drafting of a Handbook on Model Nuclear Laws, as well as general administrative law of the organisation. Following this I carried out an internship at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, also in Vienna. Prior to starting my job at the AAT I undertook an LLM in Sydney, specialising in public international law, an area of law I ultimately wish to work in.

I would recommend the job of Associate to a Judge as a fantastic

way to experience the workings of a court from a broader perspective, as well as an opportunity to observe a wide range of advocacy styles. Being based largely at the AAT has in fact given me a much more varied role and has made me aware of the importance of administrative review and the role played by the Tribunal. Whatever your ultimate career goals in law are, working as an Associate is a great stepping stone in any direction and is always looked upon favourably by employers. My advice would be to research different Judges and courts, address applications to individual Judges and to get applications in early.

Jun Lee

Associate to a Presidential Member, Fair Work Australia

The work I do can vary on a day-to-day basis and can include:

- Conducting legal research in the field of industrial relations.
- Providing assistance in relation to Award Modernisation.
- Acting as “Clerk of Court” during hearings, including full bench hearings.
- Preparing, drafting and checking documents, including orders and decisions.
- Various administrative duties to ensure the smooth running of chambers.

Prior work history: Legal Officer at the Workplace Authority, Administrative Assistant (Legal) at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

Tips: my main tip would be- Put the time and effort into your application!

Associate positions can be extremely competitive, so a well-detailed and well-worded application will help you stand out from the crowd. If there is a selection criteria for the position, ensure you have covered every criteria thoroughly.

Also be aware that the various courts and tribunals have different procedures in recruiting associates. For example, the Fair Work Australia and the AAT advertise associate vacancies on the APS Employment Gazette (www.apsjobs.gov.au), whereas Federal Court associate positions are generally not advertised, with the selection of associates being conducted directly by the judges.

I get to be involved in a dynamic and fascinating area of law, as well as gaining an invaluable insight into the inner-workings of chambers. By being at the coal face of industrial relations, the associate position provides unique opportunities to interact with unions, employer groups and law firms – and the stunning view from the terrace outside our chambers doesn’t hurt.

Associates should think about their post-associate career options well before their contract runs out as the 12 months will fly by.

Career Opportunities in the Public Sector

The public sector offers many dynamic, interesting and challenging jobs for those with legal qualifications. The old stereotypes of cardigan-wearing clerks are certainly no longer apt (if they ever were). These days you might find yourself working in a role that allows you to have direct input into the policy-making process, or if you gain employment as a solicitor, you might get to work on interesting and sensitive matters across many areas of law. One of the main attractions of working in the public sector is that you truly will be working in the “public service,” and therefore you might find that your employment provides you with an opportunity to make a contribution to the broader community in which we live.

Applying for a job

Although the recent financial downturn has had an impact on all sectors, interesting government jobs come up all the time. If you are looking for a government job, it is important to monitor websites like www.apsjobs.gov.au (Commonwealth agencies) and jobs.nsw.gov.au (NSW agencies) so you are aware of positions that are advertised. Commonwealth vacancies are also advertised in the Gazette, which is published every Thursday and can be accessed at www.apsjobs.gov.au. Many agencies offer graduate programs, but if you are unsuccessful in gaining a place on one

of these, you should not be disheartened. There are many other entry level jobs that you can apply for. You just need to watch for vacancies and when they come up, look at the grade, the rate of pay, and mostly importantly, the selection criteria, to establish whether they are appropriate for you to apply for.

The merit selection process is one of the key differences between applying for a private sector job and applying for a job with a government agency. Regardless of how well qualified you may be for a particular position, if you don't answer the selection criteria properly, you will not be called for an interview. Answering selection criteria can be something of an art form. We recommend that you seek out information that will assist you to do so. For example, the website www.publicservicejobs.com.au contains information regarding the application process for government jobs.

If you find that your application was unsuccessful, don't be discouraged. Contact the appropriate recruitment officer or member of the selection advisory committee and ask for feedback. Review your application. Ask someone you know who might be able to assist you with it. Above all, keep trying!

Public sector agencies

The following pages contain information regarding various agencies that employ lawyers, either in a legal or a policy capacity. The information contained here is intended as a guide only and is far from comprehensive. There are many different agencies (we have only listed a few) and many different opportunities. We hope that what is here provides you with the inspiration to begin searching and see what you can find yourself. As we have gathered most of this information from public websites, we strongly advise that you conduct your own research into these agencies before applying for any positions you see advertised.

We have not included information about local government here, but you could also consider employment in this sector as it may involve exposure to interesting public law matters.

Commonwealth Agencies

Administrative Appeals Tribunal

The Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) provides independent review of a wide range of administrative decisions made by the Commonwealth Government and some non-government bodies. The AAT aims to provide fair, impartial, high quality and prompt review with as little formality and technicality as possible. Both individuals and government agencies use the services of the AAT.

The range of positions which require legal qualifications include:

- District/Deputy District Registrars;
- Conference Registrars;
- Legal and Policy Officers;
- Associates to Tribunal the President, Deputy Presidents, Senior Members and Members; and
- Hearing Attendants.

The positions are advertised on the AAT website as vacancies arise. The AAT does not have a formal graduate program or summer clerkship program but accepts voluntary placements. The AAT has offices in all capital cities.

Website: www.aat.gov.au

Commonwealth Attorney General's Department

The Commonwealth Attorney General's Department provides support and advice to the Commonwealth Government on justice related issues. Located predominantly in Canberra, the Department offers a range of employment opportunities across a broad spectrum of legal and policy areas, which include, but are not limited to administrative law, civil procedure, intercountry adoption, national security, human rights, native title, copyright and international law. The Office of Legislative Drafting and Publishing, which is responsible for the drafting of legislation and other instruments, is also a part of the Department. The Department has summer clerkship and graduate

programs. The graduate program includes work rotations and training and development activities. Those who are interested in working for the Department should consult its website for further information.

Website: www.ag.gov.au

Australian Competition & Consumer Commission

The Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) is an independent authority that was set up to administer and enforce the *Trade Practices Act 1974*. It provides policy advice and guidance to consumers and business, and it ensures that businesses and individuals comply with the Commonwealth's competition, fair trading and consumer legislation. The ACCC is not only motivated to perform this work by its statutory requirements, but also by an overarching belief that "competition is crucial to the economic well being of Australia and quality of life for all its citizens".

The ACCC's main offices are located in Melbourne and Canberra, but it has offices in every capital city, including Sydney, and one in Townsville. The ACCC is comprised of about twelve branches and provides a range of employment opportunities, including both policy and legal roles.

The ACCC has a graduate program that provides participants with the opportunity to complete three fourteen week rotations, which can be in any

branch of the organisation. Graduates can opt to complete an interstate rotation.

Website: www.accc.gov.au

Australian Communications and Media Authority

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is a statutory authority within the federal government portfolio of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. The ACMA is responsible for the regulation of broadcasting, the internet, radiocommunications, and telecommunications.

The organisation has principal offices in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney and employs approximately 540 people. The Legal Services Division of the ACMA also has employees in these three principal offices.

The ACMA was established on 1 July 2005 by the merger of the Australian Broadcasting Authority and the Australian Communications Authority. The ACMA works closely with relevant industries to achieve active self-regulation, while ensuring industry compliance with licence conditions, codes and standards. The ACMA monitors the effect of regulations to ensure they are responsive to the community's needs.

To find out about working at the ACMA, including the opportunities and benefits available to its employees, visit the careers page on the ACMA website.

Website: www.acma.gov.au

Australian Government Solicitor

The Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) provides legal advice to the Commonwealth Government. It functions as a commercial law firm and employs over 400 lawyers. It has multiple areas of practice, including administrative, constitutional, native title, trade practices, intellectual property, corporate and criminal law (for a full list refer to the website below).

The AGS has offices in every capital city. AGS Canberra participates in the Summer Clerkship Scheme (in 2009/10 it offered 3 positions). AGS Canberra also has a graduate program that provides an opportunity to rotate through four different practice groups or settle in one particular group. The AGS runs a Lawyer Development Program to assist lawyers in the early stage of their careers to develop the skills required of an AGS lawyer. AGS Canberra keeps an employment register and it is possible to send your resume to its HR section at any time.

Website: www.ags.gov.au

Australian Law Reform Commission

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) is an independent statutory corporation that conducts inquiries into areas of law following a request from the Commonwealth Attorney General. Such requests are called 'references', and the ALRC is usually working on between two and three references at any one time. Current ALRC inquiries include one into

family violence, one into secrecy and one into royal commissions. In the past inquiries have covered areas of law as diverse as uniform evidence, the sentencing of federal offenders, freedom of information and family law.

When conducting an inquiry, the ALRC aims to examine ways to simplify and modernise law, improve access to justice and harmonise Commonwealth, state and territory laws. The ALRC will usually produce a preliminary Consultation or Discussion Paper prior to its final report. The final report will include recommendations to the Government as to how the law can be reformed to address any issues that the ALRC has recognised during its inquiry.

The ALRC has a President, two Full-time Commissioners and two Part-time Commissioners and it employs a number of Legal Officers to conduct research and writing work on its references.

The ALRC runs a legal internship program for law students. Interns work in a voluntary capacity, and assist with research work. If you are interested in becoming an intern, you should consult the internship policy, which is available on the ALRC website.

The office of the ALRC is located in Sydney.

Website: www.alrc.gov.au

Australian Prudential Regulation Authority

The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) is the prudential regulator of the Australian financial services industry. It oversees banks, credit unions, building societies, general insurance and reinsurance companies, life insurance, friendly societies, and most members of the superannuation industry. APRA is funded largely by the industries that it supervises. It was established on 1 July 1998. APRA currently supervises institutions holding approximately \$3.4 trillion in assets for 21 million Australian depositors, policyholders and superannuation fund members.

APRA's vision is to be a world class integrated prudential supervisor recognised for its leadership, professionalism and innovation. APRA's mission is to establish and enforce prudential standards and practices designed to ensure that, under all reasonable circumstances, financial promises made by institutions we supervise are met within a stable, efficient and competitive financial system. APRA also acts as the national statistical agency for the Australian financial sector and play a role in preserving the integrity of Australia's retirement incomes policy.

With a staff of around 580, APRA employs teams of highly skilled economists, accountants, lawyers, statisticians, actuaries and other professionals. With its headquarters in Sydney's CBD, APRA also has offices around the nation in Melbourne,

Canberra, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. There is an APRA Graduate Program which offers graduates diverse opportunities and experience across the entire financial services industry. For further information visit the careers section of the APRA website.

Website: www.apra.gov.au

Australian Securities and Investment Commission

The Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) is Australia's corporate, markets and financial services regulator. It contributes to Australia's economic reputation and wellbeing by ensuring that Australia's financial markets are fair and transparent, supported by confident and informed investors and consumers. ASIC is an independent Commonwealth Government body, it is set up under and administers the *Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001* (ASIC Act), and carries out most of its work under the *Corporations Act 2001*.

ASIC regulates Australia's 1.6 million corporations, 4,769 financial services businesses and 17 financial markets. They employ approximately 1,650 people nationally and have offices in each capital city plus an information processing centre in Traralgon, Victoria.

ASIC offers career opportunities for Lawyers that are classified as 'Financial and Real Economy' roles. ASIC also offers a Graduate Program and seeks graduates from the Law discipline (amongst others). For further information, visit the careers section of the ASIC website.

Website: www.asic.gov.au

Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation

The Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) gathers information in order to produce intelligence that will be able to warn the Commonwealth Government regarding any threats that may arise to Australia's national security.

ASIO offers opportunities to work as Intelligence Officers and Intelligence Analysts. It also employs legal advisors. For more information on working for ASIO and the kinds of opportunities it offers, you should visit its website. If you are interested in the work carried out by this agency, you should also consider the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), which gathers overseas intelligence, and the Office of National Assessment (ONA), which provides assessments to the Commonwealth Government regarding international strategic, political and economic developments.

Websites: www.asio.gov.au
www.asis.gov.au
www.ona.gov.au

Australian Taxation Office

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is the Government's principal revenue collection agency. It manages and shapes tax, excise and superannuation systems that fund services for Australians. It also supports the delivery of community benefits with roles in private health insurance, family assistance and cross-agency support. The main role of the ATO is to manage and shape the revenue systems that sustain social and

economic policy, and fund services for Australians. The ATO administers legislation for taxes, superannuation and excise (but not customs duty), as well as addressing broader issues affecting Australia's revenue systems, such as aggressive tax planning, persistent tax debtors, globalisation and the cash economy.

The ATO is headed by the Commissioner of Taxation, a statutory official appointed under the provisions of the *Taxation Administration Act 1953*. The ATO is one of the largest public service employers in Australia with over 22,000 people located in more than 20 sites.

The ATO offers Graduate Development Programs which are designed to build the ATO's future leaders and technical experts by developing Graduates' skills, knowledge and networks to help them throughout their career in the ATO. As a national organisation the ATO recruits graduates for positions in most capital cities and some regional centres. The ATO offers a number of different specialities or streams in their Graduate Program, depending on your qualifications. One of the graduate program streams offered is the Graduate Taxation Program for graduates who have completed, or are in their final year of study of, one of the following degrees: Law, Banking & Finance, Accounting, Taxation, Economics, Business/Commerce, or Criminology. You should consult the 'careers centre' on the ATO website for further information.

Website: www.ato.gov.au

Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions

The Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) is responsible for prosecuting alleged offences against Commonwealth law, and depriving offenders of the proceeds and benefits of criminal activity, providing an effective national criminal prosecution service to the Australian community. There are ten offices of the CDPP throughout Australia, including one in Sydney.

The CDPP usually conduct recruitment for entry-level solicitors once a year. They also employ paralegals, giving experience to those who might later act in solicitor roles for the CDPP.

Website: www.cdpp.gov.au

Commonwealth Ombudsman

The Commonwealth Ombudsman considers and investigates complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by an Australian Government department or agency.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman has a legal team but does not have a formal graduate program or summer clerkship program. Positions are advertised on its website as vacancies arise.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman has a national office in Canberra, and offices in all state and territory capital cities.

Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's role is to develop and implement policies and programs that ensure Australia's agricultural, fisheries, food and forestry industries remain competitive, profitable and sustainable.

Its policies and programs:

- encourage and support sustainable natural resource use and management;
- protect the health and safety of plant and animal industries;
- enable industries to adapt to compete in a fast-changing international and economic environment;
- help improve market access and market performance for the agricultural and food sector;
- encourage and assist industries to adopt new technology and practices; and
- assist primary producers and the food industry to develop business and marketing skills, and to be financially self-reliant.

The Department employs about 4,200 staff in Australia and overseas, including policy officers, program administrators, scientists, economists, meat inspectors, veterinary officers and quarantine inspectors.

Opportunities within the Department include:

Graduate Development Program:

The Department's Graduate program includes three work rotations to provide graduate with the opportunity to contribute to policy development, program management and corporate management within the Department.

National Indigenous Cadetship

Program: The Indigenous Cadetship Support (previously National Indigenous Cadetship Project) is an Australian Government initiative that improves the professional employment prospects of Indigenous Australians. It links Indigenous tertiary students with employers in a Cadetship arrangement involving full-time study and work placements.

This program is open to Indigenous Australians who are currently enrolled or plan to enrol in an undergraduate, advanced diploma or diploma level course at an Australian tertiary institution.

Indigenous Entry Level Recruitment

Program: The program is designed for applicants with limited experience in government and no formal qualifications. Successful candidates undertake a combination of on the job and formal training that is designed to develop the key skills and knowledge needed to operate in the public sector environment.

General Employment: the Department also offers a range of exciting

employment opportunities in a range of fields and locations. Vacant positions are advertised on the Jobs section of the Department's website and in national newspapers.

Temporary Employment Register: the Department also engages non-ongoing employees to fill short-term vacancies. The majority of non-ongoing vacancies for less than 12 months duration are filled from this register.

Positions are advertised on the Department's website as vacancies arise. All information relating to recruitment can also be accessed from the Department's website. The Department's office is in Canberra.

Website: www.daff.gov.au

Department of Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy

The Department of Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy (DBCDE) provides policy advice and program support to the Australian Government on information technology and communications portfolio issues.

The Department runs a Graduate program which includes three work rotations to provide graduate with the opportunity to contribute to policy development, program management and administration.

The Department also has a legal branch. Positions are advertised on the Department's website as

vacancies arise. All information relating to recruitment can also be accessed from the Department's website. The Department's office is in Canberra.

Website: www.dbcde.gov.au

Department of Climate Change

The Department of Climate Change is responsible for leading the development and co-ordination of Australia's climate change policies. It provides policy advice, policy implementation and program delivery in three areas:

- Reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.
- Adapting to the impacts of climate change we cannot avoid.
- Helping to shape a global solution.

The Department is located in Canberra. It has a graduate program which is open to graduates of all disciplines. As part of the program, graduates complete three rotations within the Department and participate in a comprehensive learning and development program. For more information regarding the Department and the employment opportunities it offers, you should consult its website.

Website: www.climatechange.gov.au

Department of Defence

The Department of Defence defends Australia and its national interests. General opportunities include careers in the Air Force, Army or Navy or careers as civilian employees as

Australian Public Service employees. The Department has a legal division which is responsible for the provision of legal advice and other legal services to the Australian Defence Force (ADF), the Minister of Defence and the Department of Defence. Its mission is to provide legal advice, services and support to the command and management of Defence on all aspects of law and the management of legal affairs (apart from matters for which the Judge Advocate General is responsible or are referred to the Defence Legal Panel) and legal advice to members of the ADF.

The Defence Legal Division head office is located in Canberra. Officer representatives are posted to most major commands, formations and organisations around Australia. Defence Legal is consisted of Permanent and Reserve Navy, Army and Air Force legal officers (with the exception of legal officers posted to the Inspector General of the ADF and Office of the Judge Advocate General). Defence Legal also includes all Defence civilian legal officers, paralegal officers.

As a part of the Defence Support Group, it provides legal and other support to all Services and Groups in Defence. There are over 80 staff members. Around 60 legal officers and 30 paralegals are based with Service Commands in Australia, on postings in East Timor and Malaysia as well as exchange postings overseas. Members of the Reserve throughout Australia supplement the work of permanent ADF Legal Officers.

In addition to legal work, Defence Legal services include advice and quality control. A primary focus of Defence Legal work, in both Canberra and the Regions, is on operations law including humanitarian law. Other important fields of focus, particularly in peacetime, are administrative law and discipline laws, together with international agreements and arrangements and legal advice on a range of matters.

The wealth of information on military and civilian careers with the Department can be accessed through their Careers webpage: www.defence.gov.au/header/careers.htm. The Department's office is in Canberra.

Website: www.defence.gov.au

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has a broad portfolio that is focused on building a socially inclusive Australia and touching the lives of all Australians, from early childhood, schooling, universities, training and skills to employment participation, workplace relations, youth and Indigenous program. DEEWR's vision is to create a productive and inclusive Australia.

Opportunities within the Department include:

Graduate program: the Department runs a Graduate Program which for

applicants from all academic backgrounds. It has a specialist legal stream during which graduate lawyers can rotate through different legal areas of the Department.

Legal positions: the Department employs over 120 in-house lawyers in a range of specialist areas in the areas of administrative, social security and family assistance and public sector law.

Temporary Employment Register: the Department engages non-ongoing employees to fill short-term vacancies. The Department manages a temporary employment register. The majority of non-ongoing vacancies for less than 12 months duration are filled from this register.

All information relating to recruitment can also be accessed from the Department's website. Positions are advertised on the Department's website as vacancies arise. The Department's main office is in Canberra, but it also has state offices.

Website: www.deewr.gov.au

Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts develops and implements national policy, programs and legislation to protect and conserve Australia's environment and heritage and to promote Australian arts and culture. Opportunities within the department include:

Graduate Development Program:

The Department's Graduate program includes three work rotations. The Department anticipates that it will recruit approximately 60 graduates for its yearly program to work on areas including environment protection and conservation of biodiversity, wildlife protection, community and household climate action, cultural affairs, Indigenous arts, natural, built and movable cultural heritage, film and the arts, water resources, greenhouse gas abatement, renewable and energy efficiency, and air and fuel quality.

Ongoing vacancies: All ongoing vacancies are advertised on the Department's website as they arise. The Department has a Legal Branch which recruits when opportunities become available.

Temporary Employment Register: the Department also engages non-ongoing employees to fill short-term vacancies which might be anywhere from a few weeks up to twelve months.

All information relating to recruitment can also be accessed from the Department's website. The Department's office is in Canberra.

Website: www.environment.gov.au

Fair Work Australia

Fair Work Australia is the national workplace relations Tribunal. It is an independent body with power to carry out a range of functions relating to: the safety net of minimum wages and employment conditions; enterprise bargaining; industrial action; dispute resolution; termination of employment; and other workplace matters. Fair Work Australia commenced operations on 1 July 2009. The Tribunal assumed many of the functions of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Opportunities include associateships for Tribunal members (see profiles for further details). Positions are advertised on the Tribunal website as vacancies arise. The Tribunal has registries in all major cities.

Website: www.fairwork.gov.au

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

The Department of Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) aims to improve the lives of Australians by creating opportunities for economic and social participation by individuals, families and communities.

The Department has a Graduate Program which consists of two work placements. It has four specialist streams:

- generalist (for graduates who are interested in social policy, policy analysis and program delivery);
- finance;

- information technology; and
- legal (generalist/law).

Positions are advertised on the Department's website as vacancies arise. All information relating to recruitment can also be accessed from the Department's website. The Department's National Office is in Canberra, but it also has state and territory offices in all capital cities.

Website: www.facsia.gov.au

Department of Finance and Deregulation

As a central agency of the Australian Government, the Department of Finance and Deregulation plays an important role in assisting government across a wide range of policy areas to ensure its outcomes are met, particularly with regard to expenditure and financial management, deregulation reform and the operations of government.

Essential services delivered by the Department include supporting the delivery of the Australian Government Budget, the ongoing management of the Australian Government's non-defence domestic property portfolio and key asset sales. The Department is also responsible for implementation of the Australian Government's deregulation agenda and the financial framework for Australian Government Agencies. Additionally, the Department provides entitlements advice and support to

parliamentarians and their employees, maintains shareholder oversight for Government Business Enterprises (GBEs), provides general insurance services to government agencies and promotes improved risk management. The Department also provides strategic advice, guidance and service provision for the productive application of new and existing information and communication technologies to government operations.

The Department seeks talented individuals, such as economists, accountants, financial analysts as well as a host of other occupations including public policy, administration and social sciences.

The Department also provides a Graduate Program which offers a diverse and comprehensive introduction into the Australian Public Service (APS) with 11 months of training and development activities. The program is developed to provide new graduates with the skills and knowledge to become Finance employees and to underpin their future careers within Finance and the APS. As a Finance graduate you have the opportunity to work on a variety of projects in diverse areas including: project management, policy development, procurement, asset sales and management, budget analysis and advice, corporate services, stakeholder management, legal services and legislative advice, ministerial and parliamentary services, whole-of-

Government Information Technology (IT), and financial reporting. For further information on careers within the Department, see the recruitment section of their website.

Website: www.finance.gov.au

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) aims to advance the interests of Australia and Australians internationally. It provides foreign and trade policy advice to the government and work with other government agencies to coordinate Australia's pursuit of its global, regional and bilateral interests.

Opportunities within the Department include:

Internships: the Australian National Internships Program is run by the Australian National University (ANU), in conjunction with all Australian universities. Applications and inquiries should be made to the ANU.

Graduate program: the Department has a Graduate Trainee Program (Generalist Policy Officer) for applicants from all academic backgrounds. Graduate Trainees work to advance Australia's interests across a broad range of areas - from security to trade - and represent Australia in a formal capacity while serving overseas.

Specialist positions: the Department also recruits people for particular positions which require more

specialised skills and experience, including Legal Specialists and Economic/Trade specialists. Successful candidates in specialist selection processes must work in a position for three years before being eligible to apply for an internal transfer, such as to a State Office or another Division, or for an overseas posting.

Annual Bulk rounds: the Department also runs annual bulk rounds at each level (APS 2- Executive Level 2). An order of merit may be drawn on to fill any further vacancies which arise within 12 months of the original gazette notice. The bulk rounds for APS Levels 2 and 4 are generally to fill vacancies in corporate positions only, whereas APS Level 6, Executive Level 1, and Executive Level 2 selection processes are held to fill both foreign and trade policy, and corporate positions in the department.

Temporary Employment Register:

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade engages non-ongoing employees to fill short-term vacancies. The department manages a temporary employment register. The majority of non-ongoing vacancies for less than 12 months duration are filled from this register.

All information relating to recruitment can also be accessed from the Department's website. Positions are advertised on the Department's website as vacancies arise. The office of DFAT is in Canberra.

Website: www.dfat.gov.au

Department of Health & Ageing

The Department of Health and Ageing

has a diverse set of responsibilities, but throughout there is a common purpose: better health and active ageing for all Australians. It aims to achieve its vision through strengthening evidence-based policy advising, improving program management, research, regulation and partnerships with other government agencies, consumers and stakeholders.

The Department has a Legal Services Branch which forms part of the Department's Business Group. The Legal Services Branch of the Department of Health and Ageing provides legal advice to the Ministers, the Executive and Program Managers on a wide range of issues affecting the portfolio. The branch also manages the department's large legislation program and its litigation. Applicants must be able to demonstrate sound legal analysis, be self-motivated and innovative in their approach to solving complex legal problems. Admission as a legal practitioner of the High Court of Australia or a Supreme Court of a State or Territory, while not mandatory, is highly desirable.

The Department also has a formal graduate program. Graduates undertake three workplace rotations of four months each and gain experience in policy development; program management; and corporate management.

The Department also has a National Indigenous Cadet Program which

provides assistance and work placement opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Students need to be studying an undergraduate full time degree at an Australian tertiary institution. On successful completion of their degree, the Cadet is automatically advanced to an APS3 position in their sponsoring division (home division).

All information relating to recruitment can be accessed from the Department's website. The Department's National Office is in Canberra, but it also has state and territory offices in all capital cities.

Website: www.health.gov.au

Department of Immigration & Citizenship

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship's (DIAC) key objectives are to manage the lawful and orderly entry and stay of people in Australia and to promote a society which values Australian citizenship, appreciates cultural diversity and enables migrants to participate equitably.

The Department has a Legal Division that provides advice to departmental officers. It has a generalist graduate program which involves participation in three supervised work rotations across the Department.

The Department is also able to accommodate a limited number of

work experience placements at National Office in Canberra. Due to the nature of the Department's portfolio and its legislative responsibility to ensure privacy and security of information, state and territory offices are unable to accommodate work experience placements.

All information relating to recruitment can also be accessed from the Department's website. Positions are advertised on the Department's website as vacancies arise.

The Department has its central offices in Canberra.

Website: www.diac.gov.au

Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet

The Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet (PM & C) is a central Commonwealth agency. Its role is to provide advice to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet about the main issues regarding public and government administration in Australia. This includes domestic and international issues, as well as matters relating to Commonwealth-State relations.

The Department engages in consultation with other Commonwealth agencies in order to inform its briefs for the Prime Minister, Cabinet Secretary and others. The Department also plays a role in ensuring that policy proposals put to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet are developed in a co-ordinated and informed manner.

The Department is comprised of five divisions and offers opportunities for those interested in policy work. The Department has a ten-month graduate program that combines a learning and development program with on the job training. The Department is located in Canberra.

Website: www.pmc.gov.au

Department of the Treasury

The Commonwealth Treasury began operations in Melbourne in January 1901, the smallest of the seven Commonwealth departments established with Federation. The original five members of the department were bookkeepers. Over time, the Department was required to establish policy in areas such as public service pay and conditions, bank notes, the taxation system including land and income tax, pensions and other welfare payments, postage stamps and the collection of statistics. Today, the Department focuses primarily on economic policy.

The Department is divided into four groups, Fiscal, Macroeconomic, Revenue and Markets with support coming from the Corporate Services Group. These groups were established to meet four policy outcomes: sound macroeconomic environment, effective government spending and taxation arrangements, effective taxation and retirement income arrangements, and well functioning markets.

The Treasury provides advice to the Commonwealth Treasurer and other Treasury ministers, and is the Government's principal economic policy adviser. Treasury staff are offered a stimulating, varied and challenging environment, are given the opportunity to contribute substantially to Australian Government policy and to interact with business and other Government representatives.

Each year the Treasury seeks university graduates interested in public policy, economic policy or taxation policy and excellent academic standing in one or more of: economics and econometrics, law, mathematics, public policy, finance, taxation and related disciplines. Additional information about graduate careers with Treasury is available at <http://graduates.treasury.gov.au>.

For further information about general career opportunities, visit the Treasury website.

Website: www.treasury.gov.au

NSW Agencies

Note: In June 2009, the NSW Government announced that it was creating 13 super departments comprised of 160 agencies that existed at the time. For instance, a new Department of Human Services is being created. It will encompass Housing NSW, the Department of Community Services and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Aged Care, among others. However, given that this amalgamation is currently underway, we have largely included information from the current department websites, and where possible or relevant noted the name of the super agency of which the department in question will become a part.

A list of the allocation of existing agencies to super agencies can be located at: www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/publications/news/stories/allocation_of_bodies_to_super_departments. It is also possible that existing websites listed below may change in the near future, so this is something you need to be aware of when conducting your own research.

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Now part of the Human Services super agency.

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) provides

support and services to older people, people with disabilities and their carers in NSW. In order to provide this support, DADHC works in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including local and Commonwealth government, other NSW agencies, non-government organisations and peak bodies.

The central office of DADHC, which is located in Sydney, is responsible for providing corporate support to the rest of the Department and the development of statewide policies and programs.

Website: www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au

Department of Commerce

Now part of the Services, Technology and Administration super agency.

This agency incorporates a number of agencies, including the Office of Fair Trading as well as Industrial Relations.

The Office of Fair Trading is responsible for administering consumer legislation in NSW and ensuring that the rights of consumers are protected in NSW. The Office of Fair Trading also plays a role in educating NSW businesses regarding fair trade practices.

The Office of Industrial Relations is responsible for administering workplace legislation in NSW. It also provides information regarding workplace laws to both employers and employees.

At the time of writing, a website for the new Department of Services, Technology and Administration was not yet available. You should consult the website below for more information regarding this Department and the agencies it incorporates.

Website: www.commerce.nsw.gov.au

Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) manages the state's natural resources (including national parks and botanic gardens) and is responsible for working towards a healthy environment for NSW. The work of DECCW is diverse and includes biodiversity and threatened species management, greenhouse and climate change issues, air quality and noise pollution, the regulation of chemicals and radiation and programs to reduce littering and illegal dumping of waste.

This year, DECCW recruited for a graduate program that will run in 2010. The program is two years in duration, and included graduate positions in various sections of the Department, including the policy sections. Applicants for these positions were required to have qualifications in public policy, political science, economics, communications or journalism. DECCW also employs lawyers in its legal branch, and in 2010 this branch had a graduate position available for an Aboriginal Graduate.

For more information on employment with DECCW, you should consult the Department's website.

Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au

Department of Education and Training

The Department of Education and Training (DET) is the largest single organisation in Australia. It is responsible for the delivery of public education through public schools and TAFE NSW. While it primarily employs teachers and support staff, DET has a role in developing policy and conducting research, and like other agencies has a head office, located in Sydney, that provides corporate support. Those interested in this agency should consult its website for further information.

Website: www.det.nsw.edu.au

Department of Justice and Attorney General

The Department of Justice and Attorney General (DJAG) incorporates a large number of agencies including Corrective Services, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, the Administrative Decisions Tribunal, the Sentencing Council, all NSW Courts, NSW Trustee and Guardian, Privacy NSW, the NSW Law Reform Commission, the Legislation and Policy Division and the Crime Prevention Division among others (for a full list refer to the Department's website). As a consequence, the Department offers a diverse range of policy and legal employment opportunities.

In 2009-10, the Legislation and Policy Division of the Department will participate in the Summer Clerkship Scheme. The role of this Division is to provide advice to the Attorney General as well as to the Department and other NSW Government departments regarding legislative reform and legal policy.

Those interested in working for the Department should consult its website for further information on the work carried out by each division. The head office of DJAG is at Parramatta, but some divisions of the Department are located in the Sydney CBD.

Website: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/Lawlink/Corporate/II_corporate.nsf/pages/attorney_generals_department_index

Administrative Decisions Tribunal

Like the AAT, the Australian Decisions Tribunal (ADT) reviews administrative decisions, but its jurisdiction encompasses decisions made by the NSW Government. The ADT provides independent, external review of administrative decisions, and deals with other types of cases, such as discrimination complaints and professional misconduct inquiries. There are six Divisions of the ADT and an Appeal Panel. The ADT plays a key role in promoting high quality decision-making in the provision of government services and programs. The ADT sits in Sydney CBD.

The ADT employs Registry staff who assist in the initial stages of matters that come before the Tribunal.

Website: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adt

Communities NSW

Communities NSW is comprised of a range of agencies including NSW Sport and Recreation, the Office of the Community Relations Commission, the Office of Volunteering, the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, Arts NSW, the Australian Museum, Sydney Opera House, the Art Gallery of NSW and the State Library of NSW. Among other things, it is responsible for “promoting the interests of specific population groups including children and young people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds” and “increasing opportunities for participation in the arts, culture, recreation and sport at all levels.”

For more information about this agency, consult its website, which provides links to the websites of all associated agencies as well as information about employment.

Website: www.communities.nsw.gov.au

Crown Solicitor's Office

The Crown Solicitor's Office (CSO) provides legal services to the NSW Government. NSW Government agencies must seek advice from the CSO regarding core legal matters, which are matters that involve constitutional questions, fall within the responsibility of the Attorney General,

concern the portfolios of more than one Minister or raise issues which are fundamental to the responsibilities of government. The CSO must compete with private law firms for non-core government work. The CSO employs more than 300 legal and support staff. It is divided into twelve practice groups, which include Administrative Law, Constitutional and Native Title Law, Criminal Law, Commercial Law, Government Law, Torts and Inquiries (solicitors from this group represent the Crown Solicitor at Inquests and all forms of inquiries).

The CSO is located in Sydney. It employs solicitors of varying levels of experience as well as paralegals. It offers a rotation program through its practice groups as well as learning and development opportunities.

Website: www.cso.nsw.gov.au

Department of Community Services

Now part of the Human Services super agency.

The Department of Community Services (DoCS) is the lead NSW agency for community services. The Department is responsible for child protection, out of home care, early intervention to prevent child abuse, and the provision of welfare services to the community in the event of a natural or other disaster.

As well as offering opportunities to work in policy, DoCS also employs lawyers in its Legal Services Branch. The Legal Services Branch provides advice,

undertakes legislative review and also litigation on behalf of the Minister for Community Services and the DoCS Director General. Litigation at DoCS can include care litigation in the Children's and District Courts, as well as general litigation involving claims against the Department. The Legal Branch also has a section that is responsible for the provision of advice on all aspects of child law, as well as running matters in the Family and Supreme Courts (including adoptions). A further section of the Legal Branch acts for the State Central Authority in international kidnapping actions under the Hague Convention.

Lawyers employed by DoCS either work at its head office in Sydney, or in one of its regional offices. Anyone interested in working for DoCS should consult the Department's website for further information.

Website: www.community.nsw.gov.au

Housing NSW

Now part of the Human Services super agency.

Housing NSW provides housing and housing assistance to people in NSW. It has approximately 150,000 properties in its portfolio. Housing NSW also works with other government agencies, peak bodies and non-government agencies to meet the needs of its clients, and it also plays a role in addressing homelessness in NSW. Housing NSW has a policy and strategy division that is responsible for

developing policies and strategies in order to meet housing needs, setting outcomes and targets for the organisation and leading planning and evaluation. Housing NSW also has a legal branch, which provides legal support and advice to the Department. The head office of Housing NSW is located in Sydney.

Website: www.housing.nsw.gov.au

The Independent Commission Against Corruption

Now part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) is an independent body that is responsible for investigating any allegations of corruption made regarding NSW public officials and authorities, including local councils and NSW judges and magistrates. The ICAC does not have a general jurisdiction to investigate allegations of corruption made against the NSW Police, and can only do so where the allegation involves other public officials who are not police. The Police Integrity Commission investigates allegations of police corruption.

The ICAC is able to employ a range of investigative techniques in order to investigate claims. The ICAC does not have the authority to prosecute matters, but it can make reports to Parliament and refer matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who will decide whether or not it should be prosecuted.

The ICAC also plays an educative role. It assists NSW public sector agencies and individuals to prevent corruption by providing advice and building an agency's resistance to corruption through training and resources.

The ICAC offers a range of employment opportunities, including policy and research positions. Job vacancies are listed on its website.

Website: www.icac.nsw.gov.au

Information Commissioner

In June 2009, it was announced that a new independent body would be set up in NSW to oversee Freedom of Information (FOI) Laws in NSW. The establishment of the office of the Information Commissioner is a part of the reforms that were made to NSW FOI legislation in the first half of this year [see the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* and the *Government Information (Information Commissioner) Act 2009*]. The Information Commissioner will play a dual role of ensuring that agencies both understand and copy their obligations under the legislation. The NSW Privacy Commissioner, Judge Ken Taylor AM RFD, is currently the Acting Information Commissioner, but the NSW Government advertised the position in September this year. A website has not yet been set up, but those interested in FOI law should keep this new body in mind as it may provide employment opportunities.

In March this year, the Commonwealth Government also announced that it would set up an Information Commissioner. It released exposure draft bills (available at www.dpmmc.gov.au/consultation/foi_reform/index.cfm) and a consultation process followed. The Government planned to introduce the new legislation to Parliament in 2009.

NSW Law Reform Commission

The NSW Law Reform Commission (NSWLRC) performs a similar function to the ALRC, only it, of course, has a focus on NSW law. Like the ALRC, the NSWLRC receives references from the NSW Attorney General to conduct inquiries into specified areas of law. The NSWLRC is currently conducting inquiries into family violence, privacy, access to personal information, workplace deaths, complicity, penalty notice offences, jury directions, succession law and people with cognitive and mental health impairments in the criminal justice system. Its past inquiries cover a number of diverse areas of law.

The work of the NSWLRC is overseen by a Chairman, a full-time Commissioner and several part-time Commissioners. A number of legal officers carry out legal research and writing work. The NSWLRC also employs law students as volunteer interns. If you are interested in working as a student intern, you should consult the NSWLRC's website for further information.

Website: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/lrc/ll_lrc.nsf/pages/LRC_index

Legal Aid NSW

Legal Aid NSW is an independent statutory body that provides legal services to socially and economically disadvantaged people, assisting them to understand and protect their rights. Legal Aid NSW provides free legal advice and minor assistance at twenty-two locations throughout the State. Legal representation can also be provided in criminal, family, and civil law matters when clients meet means and merit tests. Legal Aid NSW aims to ensure that people who are economically and socially disadvantaged can understand, protect and enforce their legal rights and interests.

Legal Aid offers a Career Development Program each year, with four graduates accepted, one of the placements being Aboriginal Identified. There are also recruitments of entry-level solicitors each year, but prior experience is recommended. Legal Aid also offers developmental opportunities such as Paralegal or Legal Support Officer roles, from which it is possible to move into solicitor positions.

Website: www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au

NSW Health

NSW Health is responsible for monitoring the public health system and supporting the Health Minister to perform their administrative and

statutory functions. The Department works to protect, promote, maintain and improve the health of people in NSW. In addition to offering careers for health professionals, the Department employs people in a policy capacity. It also has a legal branch that provides legal advice to the Minister and the Department, and undertakes legislative review.

Website: www.health.nsw.gov.au

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

The NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) acts on behalf of the Crown and is the body responsible for instituting and conducting prosecutions for indictable offences in the Supreme and District Courts, and acting in appeals regarding such prosecutions, as either appellant or respondent. The ODPP acts in trials and committal hearings, some summary hearings in the Local Court, and appeals, but is mainly responsible for the prosecution of more serious offences. The ODPP has four Sydney locations and seven regional offices.

The ODPP usually offers Practical Legal Training placements every twelve months. It also keep a register of people who have expressed interest in working at the ODPP, sometimes offering temporary administrative, or entry-level solicitor positions.

Website: www.odpp.nsw.gov.au
Department of Premier & Cabinet

In 2007, the NSW Premier's Department and the NSW Cabinet Office were amalgamated to form the Department of Premier and Cabinet

(DPC). DPC is a central agency with a multi-faceted, leadership role within the NSW public sector. It provides support and advice to the Premier and the Cabinet on major policy issues. It also supports Ministers and agencies to integrate and coordinate policy across the NSW public sector. In addition, DPC is responsible for coordinating the State Plan as well as developing workforce planning for and improving the workforce capability of the NSW public service.

The Department, which is located in Sydney, is currently comprised of several divisions, and offers a wide range of employment opportunities, including entry level policy officer positions.

Website: www.dpc.nsw.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is an independent, impartial oversight body. It is responsible for making sure that certain NSW Government agencies perform their functions properly. The Ombudsman provides assistance to agencies so they can improve their service delivery. The Ombudsman also investigates complaints about agencies within its jurisdiction and makes recommendations to agencies, and the relevant Minister, in circumstances where the complaints are justified. If these recommendations are not acted upon, the Ombudsman can make a report to Parliament in circumstances where they believe it is in the public interest to do so. The NSW Ombudsman offers a range of employment opportunities. It does not have a graduate program, but it does

encourage graduates to apply for advertised positions. For more information about the organisational structure of the Ombudsman and the type of work each branch does, you should consult its website.

Website: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

Public Defender's Office

The Public Defenders are salaried barristers who appear in serious criminal matters for legally aided clients, independent of the government. Once legal aid has been granted, a Public Defender may be briefed to advise or appear in a matter through Legal Aid NSW, the Aboriginal Legal Service, a private solicitor, or any community based legal group. The Public Defenders are located in Carl Shannon Chambers in Sydney CBD, but the barristers travel to regional locations when necessary.

The Public Defenders offer unpaid work experience for select student volunteers in certain circumstances. The ability to take on student volunteers is limited by availability of office space and the needs of Public Defenders for assistance. Consideration is given to exceptional students wishing to complete their practical legal training with the Public Defenders. Paid work experience is limited to successful candidates for the Aboriginal Law Graduates Program.

Website: www.publicdefenders.nsw.gov.au

Roads & Traffic Authority

Now part of the Transport and Infrastructure super agency.

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) is responsible for planning and

delivering road transport infrastructure, driver licensing, vehicle registration and the promotion of road safety in NSW. In addition to employing engineers and planners, the RTA employs people in wide range of policy areas.

The RTA has a graduate program that runs for two to three years. Graduates can complete four to six rotations while they are participating in the program. The RTA provides training and opportunities for further study. For more information regarding the graduate program or other employment opportunities offered by the RTA, consult its website.

Website: www.rta.nsw.gov.au

NSW Treasury

The NSW Treasury is, like the Department of Premier and Cabinet, a central agency. It is comprised of two arms, the Office of State Revenue and the Office of Financial Management. The Office of State revenue is responsible for the administration and collection of taxes, the implementation of legislation relating to State Revenue and the collection of outstanding debts to the State. The Office of Financial Management advises the Treasurer and the NSW Government on state financial management policy and reporting, and on economic conditions and issues. The Office of Financial Management must work with other NSW agencies in order to achieve cross government outcomes.

The Office of Financial Management has a twelve month graduate program that includes three rotations through different branches. Those who are interested should consult the website for further information. The Office of

State Revenue also employs graduates. For further information, see the OSR website.

Website: www.treasury.nsw.gov.au
www.osr.nsw.gov.au

Non-Government Organisations

Some of the best and most interesting opportunities in public law arise from work that is done by not for profit, non-government organisations that provide legal services (usually on a pro bono basis) to plaintiffs and applicants in their actions against government agencies and administrative decisions.

Although finding a paid position (particularly an entry level one) can prove difficult, many of these organisations provide volunteer opportunities. Volunteer work for an NGO or not for profit organisation is extremely valuable experience, and it is something you should consider, if it is at all possible for you.

There are many NGOs. Below is a brief list of some you might be interested in, but we strongly advise you to conduct your own research into the kinds of organisations that provide these opportunities.

Aboriginal Legal Service

Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) is a criminal law practice serving the Aboriginal communities of NSW. The ALS has offices throughout regional NSW as well as Redfern, Parramatta and Campbelltown.

Due to its structure and origins, the ALS is heavily reliant on volunteers for paralegal and (more often than may be expected), court work. As such it offers incredible learning opportunities to those who are serious about the law. Volunteers have the opportunity to hone their skills in local court advocacy, case strategy, and are given a firsthand insight into how the criminal justice system works as a whole. You'll even be asked to prepare from scratch Supreme Court bail applications (an opportunity most lawyers never get). Volunteers also have the opportunity to interview clients in gaol, either over the phone, via audio visual link and in person. If you are prepared to work hard, you will

gain a first-class education in law, even if you choose not to practice in the criminal field.

The staff are friendly, the lawyers are committed, and the pressure can sometimes be very high. The ALS is a high-volume work environment so you can expect to be working on numerous matters at the one time. This is a place for self-starters: you will be working under limited supervision so you will need to be resourceful and prepared to learn fast. And you must remember, that criminal practise is no game; these are people's real lives you will be dealing with, so approach your volunteering with the sort of mind-set and seriousness that criminal practise deserves. Neither is the ALS a place for 'stars' – everyone there is a star in their own right, and the only way such a place can provide top quality client service is if the whole team pulls together.

In terms of paid work as a lawyer – opportunities for work arise constantly – it's a hard gig and not for everyone – and be prepared to go bush where you can expect to be 'blooded' and introduced to the harsh realities of what life is like to be an Aboriginal person in an often hostile and unrelenting criminal justice system.

Website: www.alsnswact.org.au

Intellectual Disability Rights Service

Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) is a community legal practice established specifically to assist people with an intellectual disability to exercise and advance their rights (both under the law, and in law related areas). IDRS engages in legal, non-legal, and systemic advocacy on behalf of their clientele who are among some of the most marginalised in society. IDRS' main areas of practice fall squarely into the 'public law' box – criminal law, administrative law, and discrimination law (among others). Aside from having its own

in-house lawyers, IDRS welcomes volunteers (space is limited so get in quick), and is a participant firm in secondment programmes such as the one run by Blake Dawson.

IDRS also houses the Criminal Justice Support Network project (CJSN) which offers court and police station support to people with an intellectual disability through its network of volunteers and paid staff. IDRS/CJSN has recently set up a volunteer solicitors' programme through which they offer a 24-hour custody line service to make sure that people with an intellectual disability are properly cared for when taken into custody. If you have a criminal law background and would like to help out – please give IDRS a call (training will be provided)!

Another area in which IDRS excels is through its law reform/systemic advocacy arm. CJSN is currently completing a resource kit which aims to change current police practices dealing with sexual assault victims with an intellectual disability at police station level. Recent changes to the *Evidence Act 1995* and *Crimes Act 1990*, coupled with a shift in judicial attitudes to intellectual disability means that sexual assault victims with an intellectual disability have a far better chance at achieving justice than they have previously had. Changes to police procedure will mean that intellectually disabled victims of sexual assault can put their energies towards getting a fair go rather than fighting to be heard by often well-meaning but skeptical (or simply unwitting) police officers. IDRS has been instrumental in educating the community on issues of intellectual disability and has produced a remarkable report *Enabling Justice* (available on the IDRS website). Educators from CJSN travel across NSW to teach various groups of people (including lawyers) about intellectual disability and how to deal with clients with

an intellectual disability [especially section 32 of the *Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act 1990* (NSW)]. If you work for a firm, or know of a firm who may be interested in learning about intellectual disability (highly recommended!), contact IDRS to organise a time for an educator to come out and give a talk. Your understanding of the criminal justice system will never be the same again!

IDRS, like other community legal services, is not for everyone – superior communication skills, patience, a willingness to learn (fast), a real belief in justice and equality under the law, and of course, a good sense of humour, are essentials. But if you're the sort of person who came to the law to make a difference, IDRS could just be the sort of place for you!

Other Community Legal Centres

There are a number of legal centres throughout Sydney and regional NSW that provide legal services to the community and offer volunteer and employment opportunities that you may like to investigate.

Such centres include those that provide general legal services to the community and those that provide specialist ones, like the Environmental Defenders Office and the Refugee Advocacy and Casework Service. Some, like the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, also undertake policy work as well as advice work.

You should consult the website of the peak body, the Combined Community Legal Centres Group (NSW), which contains a list of legal centres and advocacy services, and includes their contact details and websites:

Website: www.nswclc.org.au

Career Opportunities in a Private Law Firm

When one usually thinks of a private law firm, ideas are conjured of mergers and acquisitions, expensive high profile litigation, and, of course, late nights! However, nestled amongst the larger financial and litigation groups of many of Sydney's top and mid-tier private firms can often be found small burrows where one may discover that rare, but exotic creature: the public lawyer!

So what does a lawyer practising public law actually do in a private firm? A number of top and mid-tier firms are appointed to panels to advise, and act in litigation on behalf of, Commonwealth and State Departments and agencies. The area of law one can practise in as a private firm public lawyer is principally administrative law, but some firms also deal with constitutional law issues as part of their advisory role within Government. The Australian Government Solicitor is a good example of a business enterprise that acts for Government (mainly Commonwealth, but State as well) on a number of levels, in a number of different capacities. More information can be obtained at www.ags.gov.au (there is more information about the AGS in the public sector section of this guide).

As with working in the public sector itself, working for a private firm for a Government agency or Department presents opportunities to be involved with legal and policy work relevant to the functions of that agency or Department.

Applying for a job

As with most sectors of the economy, the opportunities to apply to work at private firms have been subject to the global financial downturn. Nevertheless, many private firms offering opportunities in public law and Government areas continue to receive applications as part of yearly summer clerk and graduate

programs. You should consult the websites of the firms you are interested in and check to see whether that firm is offering placement in a program. Otherwise, there is never any harm in making contact with the relevant Human Resources coordinator and enquiring into placement opportunities. If you are aware that the firm you are calling has a practice in administrative or Government law, inform the Human Resources coordinator that you are particularly interested in working in this field.

Law Firms you might be interested in:

Below is a list of some of the larger law firms that do government work. We strongly advise that you do your own research into the firms, the type of work they do, and whether they are involved in the summer clerkship scheme or have graduate programs. There may also be other firms, including smaller ones, that are not listed here, so you should not regard this list as exhaustive in any way.

- Blake Dawson:
www.blakedawson.com
- Clayton Utz:
www.claytonutz.com
- Corrs Chambers Westgarth:
www.corrs.com.au
- Deacons:
www.deacons.com.au
- DLA Phillips Fox:
www.dlaphillipsfox.com
- DibbsBarker:
www.dibbsbarker.com
- Gilbert + Tobin:
www.gtlaw.com.au
- Henry Davis York:
www.hdy.com.au
- Mallesons Stephen Jaques:
www.mallesons.com
- Minter Ellison:
www.minterellison.com
- Sparke Helmore:
www.sparke.com.au

Other Career Options

This guide has covered options for employment in government agencies, private practice and non-government organisations. As the profile section shows, however, there are further options you may wish to consider, including:

Associateships

As the profiles testify, becoming an associate or tipstaff is a great start to a legal career, particularly if you are interested in later becoming a barrister. Obtaining a position can be extremely competitive, so if you are interested in pursuing this option you need to investigate it thoroughly and if possible seek advice from those who have been successful applicants in the past. Judicial officers sometimes advertise the position of their associate or tipstaff formally, but often the process is more informal, for example, you must write to the judicial officer for whom you would like to work expressing your interest. There is some information regarding becoming a tipstaff at the NSW Supreme Court and an associate at the Federal Court of Australia on the respective websites of each court:

Websites: www.fedcourt.gov.au
[www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/
lawlink/Supreme_Court/
ll_sc.nsf/pages/SCO_
employment](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/Supreme_Court/ll_sc.nsf/pages/SCO_employment)

Barrister

Once again, the profiles testify that the bar can offer a challenging and fulfilling

legal career, provided you are self-motivated and hard working. You should investigate this option carefully and seek advice from any one who is able to give it. The bar has a reputation for being collegial, so try to get in touch with barristers who practice in areas you are interested in – you might find someone who is willing to provide you with some helpful advice.

In order to become a barrister, you are required to complete three bar exams (which each have a pass-mark of 75), as well as the Reading Programme. The Reading Programme involves reading with an experienced barrister, known as a ‘tutor’ and incorporates the Bar Practice Course. For more information, consult the website of the NSW Bar Association.

Website: www.nswbar.asn.au

Academia

An academic career can also be extremely rewarding. If you are interested in pursuing this option you should talk to people already working in the field and consider postgraduate study. There are a number of paths leading to an academic career.

