



Lawyers for Animals Newsletter: May

LFA News

Opening on LFA Executive Committee – call for expressions of interest

Lawyers for Animals seeks expressions of interest for a vacant position on our Executive Committee. The Committee is responsible for overseeing projects undertaken by LFA, determining the future direction of the association and managing the Animal Law Clinic in conjunction with Fitzroy Legal Service.

Position

This position, which commences in July 2014, involves attendance at our monthly Committee meetings and undertaking the functions of LFA Treasurer for 12 months. You would also have the option of advising clients directly at the Animal Law Clinic. Each Committee member typically attends one client appointment every five to six weeks.

The role of Treasurer requires a time commitment of no more than one hour per month. Your responsibilities would include banking, preparation of some basic tax forms, and preparation of LFA's annual financial statements. You would be provided with a comprehensive handover and ongoing support in this role.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible to join the Committee, you must be admitted to practice but need not be a practising lawyer. However, to advise at the Clinic you must hold - or be entitled to hold - an unrestricted practising certificate (including an unrestricted volunteer PC).

For more information or to express your interest in this position, please email our current Treasurer, Katherine Cooke: Katherine@lawyersforanimals.org.au.



Executive Committee Profile

This month we commence a regular profile of some of LFA's passionate members.



Astrid Haban-Beer

**Barrister at the
Victorian Bar and LFA
Vice President**

I became a lawyer because... I was always interested in human rights and justice. I loved advocacy from an early age – especially over the dinner table.

I am really proud of... the volunteer and pro bono work I do. I have been a volunteer for many years in different capacities in legal and non-legal roles. I find the pro bono work I do very satisfying.

Animal rights... animal rights issues are fascinating and complex. When you are talking about animal rights, there is often tricky conflict issues with other rights. Animals deserve respect.

I am extremely grateful for... my family and my health.

A key mentor who influenced my career is... I have so many wonderful mentors. Brendan Wilkinson is one of these. I worked for Brendan years ago when I was a student, and throughout my career at all stages he has supported my progression. Now we work together on many matters. I am so grateful.

If I wasn't a lawyer... I would be a journalist or photographer.

Before I started at the Bar... I was a lawyer at the Australian Government Solicitor practising in competition and consumer law, and criminal law.

The best advice I ever received was... stand up for others.

One of the key initiatives I am involved in is... being part of the Law Council's Equalising Opportunities in the Law Committee. The recently released National Attrition and Re-engagement Study (NARS) is a landmark publication that I was involved in from the very start.

Outside of the law... I am a keen yogi. Yoga has changed my life immeasurably and helped me through some challenging times.

Events

A reflection on the Voiceless Animal Law Lecture Series

Nick Moodie, LFA Volunteer, summarises the talk given by Will Potter on “Ag-Gag” laws



On a Thursday night in mid May, a tall, eloquently spoken Texan gave the tenth presentation of his twelve stop Australian tour – the 2014 Voiceless Animal Law Lecture Series.

Will Potter, an award-winning journalist whose work has centred on civil liberties and the green movement since 9/11, talked of troubling recent developments in the decades-long campaign by the US animal industry to counter the effectiveness of animal rights groups. This campaign, which Potter explains began in 1985 with the coining of the phrase ‘eco-terrorist’, has led to the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, a federal law that criminalises non-violent activism through vague and indiscriminate use of the word ‘terrorist’. State legislation has been adopted to supplement the Act, passing in a number of US jurisdictions. It is now reaching out towards Australia.

Undercover investigations by activists have exposed the normality of abuse in industrial farming operations. This has led directly to public outrage resulting in meat recalls, new legal standards, consumer pressure and criminal charges for industry workers. Will Potter reveals that instead of humane reform, the industry’s response has been to label these activists as terrorists. Widely regarded as environmental warriors in the early 1980s, animal welfare and environmental activists have been successfully demonised to the point of being designated one of the most serious domestic terrorism threats by the FBI.

Food and drug corporations, among others, are pushing for the expansion of this “Ag-Gag” legislation inside the US, with the text being copied and pasted into new state laws. As Will explains, similar interest groups in other countries are pushing for the same protections, and the machinations are already well underway in Australia.

We have, according to Will, an opportunity to learn from recent history in the US and to understand and counter this process before it entrenches itself in Australian law. In spite of the spreading legislation and prosecutions, Will identifies a coalescence of support from diverse civil liberties defenders against Ag-Gag, and urges the audience to confront this threat to legitimate protest before the laws are passed, the chilling effect sinks in and concerned citizens become “terrorists”.

Watch Will’s presentation at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QL2IB190IA0>.

Public lecture by Dr Robert McKay – 24 June

The Human Rights and Animal Ethics Research Network is hosting a public lecture by Dr Robert McKay from the University of Sheffield titled “Steer Flees City”: *Animal and Literary Challenges to the Politics of “Humane Slaughter” in Post-war America*.

- **Date:** Tuesday, 24 June 2014
- **Time:**
 - 5.30pm for drinks and canapés (catering by Las Vegan café)
 - 6pm – 7pm for the talk
- **Location:** Linkway, Level 4, John Medley Building, University of Melbourne (Parkville)

Animal Law Moot 2014 – October

The Voiceless Australian-New Zealand Intersvarsity Moot on Animal Law (ANIMAL) will be taking place at Bond University in October this year. It is a knockout style moot competition that will explore and consider the legal issues within the emerging area of animal law. The moot is open to all law students in Australia and New Zealand. For more details, go to the Voiceless website.

Animal Activists Forum – Call for speakers

The Animal Activists Forum is an annual two-day conference that endeavours to provide a space within which activists can network, collaborate and learn. This year the conference will be held in Sydney on 18-19 October. The organisers are seeking expressions of interest from individuals or groups who wish to present at the conference. For more information, visit www.activistsforum.com.

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