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Victorian Society for Computers & the Law—President's Report 1997–98

www.vscl.org.au

Delivered at Annual General Meeting Tuesday 15 September 1998

I thank you members of our Society for entrusting the presidency of the Society to me following the excellent work of my immediate predecessors Phillip Catania and before him, Gordon Hughes. I believe that we have together, with the hard work of a number of members I will mention later in this report, continued the development and enhanced the status of our Society.

On a subjective level I gain the impression that we are poised on the edge of providing clear leadership to the members of the legal profession in Victoria in this area of the law. When you review the activities of the Society I feel sure you will form the same judgement. On an objective note I report that we have close to 100 members but no significant increase on 1997.

Activities for 1997–98:

The main benefit for members is our series of monthly meetings. This year we have increased the number of meetings and well and truly maintained the quality of the presenters and the intellectual depth of our topics. By way of example our

topics ranged from new developments in copyright law (two seminars), Internet related topics such as taxation, encryption and security, and email (to-day). In addition Peter Searle with his lucid analysis of the use of Internet sites gave us access to a wide range of inexpensive sources of law. The challenging issue of liability of telecommunication providers was dealt with by another committee member, Kent Davey, and our last seminar concerned the issues of trademarks and the Internet.

All these meetings were fully attended and we often had the pleasant embarrassment of a shortage of chairs, numbers reaching some 80 odd on at least one occasion.

VSCL and University of Melbourne prize in computerised legal research.

The Committee co-operated with University of Melbourne Law School to award a prize in computerised legal research. Ron Huttner, lecturer in this subject, was pleased to announce the winner is Lin Kalanon who secured an outstanding 99% in the subject.

Other developments this year included revising our logo to a style which does not apologise for lawyers being involved in information technology matters and which your

committee believes represents a modern image while retaining the obvious visual association of law with computers.

Strategy meeting

Jon Kenfield our former treasurer and a consultant mediator, led the committee in a major session of analysis of the Society's goals and what should be done to achieve them. As one outcome we jointly arranged a recent successfully attended seminar with the Law Institute of Victoria on "E-commerce and the law".

Your committee considers we should work with other organisations to arrange seminars and generally build our profile. (We do need a person dedicated to the publicity of our activities among other similar bodies and the wider law and computer groups.).

VSCL future developments and tasks

Internet activities:

Obviously the Internet will be a major influence on the development of the practice of law and also on the development of your Society. We have been very fortunate through the assistance of Netjustice and Tony Beal our webmaster to significantly

enhance the presentation of our embryonic web site (www.vscl.org.au) and to add many excellent links to it. If you are not a frequent visitor to the site, I commend it to you. I also encourage you to email webmaster@vscl.org.au with suggested links and your own suggestions for the further development of the site. The site will no doubt grow in importance and become, along with email, our major means of communication with members and others.

Email usage by lawyers

I confess to a pet interest in the development and usage of email among lawyers in practice. If we can have service by DX, post or fax surely email is acceptable as a form of communication.

There are some 1000 email addresses registered with the Law Institute of Victoria for Friday fax by email (an oxymoron?) and shortly the Institute on our behalf as a VSCL project will email a letter from the Society to its registered addressees to endeavour to assess the immediacy with which lawyers treat email. (Please respond quickly when you receive the email message, hopefully in the next week or so.)

As a committee we have circulated minutes electronically and have had many time-saving discussions online in place of telephone and personal meetings. Again I commend this form of communication to you in everyday practice. If anyone should set the lead for responsible use of email in practice, it should be our members.

Interstate and trans Tasman relationships

Another development may be an ANZ or Australasian Society for Computers & the Law. At present in conceptual discussion mode only, it is an avenue to help with the development of a strong national body in which our Society should play a leading role.

Acknowledgments and thanks:

We thank Corrs Chambers Westgarth and Russell Kennedy for the generous use of their offices for many meetings and Blake Dawson Waldron whose excellent seminar facilities we have used on several occasions.

Your committee has grown this year to its full complement and new members have made notable contributions such as Jason Taliadoros who managed our highly successful monthly meetings, Peter Searle who supports our web site on Netjustice and David Webber who worked with our stalwart Kent Davey co-editor of the Journal, to locate excellent speakers for the monthly meetings. Our retiring treasurer Debra Kruse ensured that we are well and truly solvent and balanced.

In addition, a number of other committee members made what I believe were major contributions to this most successful year. Tony Beal as mentioned, has set up, maintained and developed www.vscl.org.au to be a site to be proud of. Kate Paras who unfortunately had to resign part way through this year, took over as secretary last year from our long-standing secretary Paul Gleeson. Kate was a perfect secretary in helping to push your President along his sometime tardy way and ensuring that our records and all communications were carried out in a timely and effective manner. Thank you Kate.

Finally, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the work carried out by Paul Gleeson initially as secretary for some four years, as Vice President this year, and on Kate's resignation picking up the secretarial duties again. All this on top of a major contribution to the re-write of our constitution to register as an Incorporated Association last year, management of member records and generally acting in a positive and tireless manner for the benefit of the Society. My personal thanks to you

Paul, and our Committee and members thank you for these efforts for the VSCL. We are pleased that Paul can find the time to remain on the Committee.

To the incoming committee I wish all success. Our Society is vibrant and effective and can only go from strength to strength provided we have dedicated workers on the committee. Next year's committee to be led by Tony Beal, clearly has the capacity to enhance the reputation of the Victorian Society for Computers & the Law and its leadership in this state.

Please join with them and help wherever you can by enrolling members and volunteering to help in the effective management of the Society.

Thank you again for the privilege of serving as President.

John Macmillan
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15 September 1998.
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Press Release

PictureTel's Live200 wins PC Computing MVP award for third consecutive year

PictureTel Corporation, the world leader in visual collaboration, has received the 'Most Valuable Product' (MVP) Award from PC Computing magazine (in the videoconferencing hardware category) for the PictureTel Live200 desktop system, for PCs running the Windows NT operating system.

This is the third consecutive year that the Live200 has won top honours in this category and the seventh major award the product has won overall since its introduction.

PC Computing called the Live200, *"The best Windows NT-based videoconferencing out there [that] gives?superb audio and video."*

The Live200 is a Windows 95 and Windows NT standards-based, single board desktop videoconferencing solution for personal computers with a PCI bus. It is available from PictureTel's partners in Australia and New Zealand.

Gordon Makryllos, managing director of PictureTel Australia and New Zealand, said: *"It is a tremendous honour for PictureTel to again receive this award from PC Computing."*

"Winning our third consecutive MVP award is further confirmation of our success in delivering to our customers a desktop system that is easy to use and delivers high-quality performance for businesses' mission-critical collaboration needs."

About PictureTel

PictureTel Corporation is the world leader in developing, manufacturing and marketing a full range of videoconferencing solutions. The company's systems meet customers' videoconferencing needs from the desktop to the boardroom. PictureTel also markets network coiferencing servers and a comprehensive range of enterprise-wide services.

The company provides complete videoconferencing solutions to customers in distance learnng, health care and financial services. Additional PictureTel information is available on the Internet at www.picturetel.com. PictureTel videoconferencing elimnates the barrier of distance, enabling people to be 'Anywhere Now'.

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