

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare!

Advocacy Workshop 28-30 May 2010

Over the last weekend of May 2010 the Law Society hosted an Advocacy Workshop at the Darwin Supreme Court. Young practitioners had the opportunity to learn from the cream of the crop of the Territory's legal profession to appreciate and practice the art of advocacy.

All participants were required to prepare and present an opening and an examination-in-chief in a mock civil application for an interlocutory injunction. Although the case study dealt with a civil matter, the skills required would be equally applicable in a criminal case.

It was all about manner, not material!



Riley J makes his point

Friday

28 participants arrived at the Jury Muster Room on the Friday evening for an introductory session. Weary from a long week at the office, there were a few nervous, albeit eager faces, as Justice Trevor Riley and Rex Wild QC gave an informal briefing about how to get the most out of the workshop and what to expect.

Justice Riley invited the group to identify qualities that make a great advocate. In large writing on the whiteboard he displayed the suggested traits, including preparation, confidence and discipline. Rex Wild QC reminded everyone the importance of an advocate having integrity; to have respect for the Court and for the Court to respect the advocate is pivotal to the success of your case.

The advice was then to, "Prepare, Prepare, Prepare" as everyone went home and began to organise their case strategies, openings and examination-in-chief well into the night.

Saturday and Sunday

Participants were divided into three small groups and got to know each other; this would be the group they worked with for the whole weekend and one which allowed for an intimate learning environment.

Everyone was encouraged not to be concerned about performing in



Rex Wild QC

front of their peers. A supportive environment was created from the outset which allowed participants to get involved in the weekend and work to their full potential.

The prepared openings were presented and each person then had the opportunity to review their speaking style. Feedback was provided on manner, technique, style and body language.

After lunch the tutors then guided the discussion on the importance of nailing the examination-in-chief. Justice Riley let the participants in on a secret...while everyone believes cross-examination will define a case, the best advocates get the best results during examination-in-chief.

The examination-in-chiefs were then tackled over Saturday and Sunday with everyone having the



Beth Wild, Paul Broughton, Josh Brock and Thiagus Cheliah watch a role play

opportunity to be the witness, the advocate and the Judge. Again, like the openings, participants were able to watch their performance and receive helpful hints from their teachers along the way.

On Sunday afternoon, everyone retreated back to the Muster Room and debriefed with their new friends about the ups and downs of the weekend. The atmosphere was described as “warm and fuzzy” as people found new enthusiasm for their careers and began to realise their potential as lawyers and as successful advocates.

It was an incredibly successful weekend!

One participant said:

“I really enjoyed the workshop and found it very beneficial.

It was well structured and planned and it was a very non threatening environment conducive to putting yourself out there and having a go without fear of failure. Justice Riley and Rex Wild QC had their own styles but were consistent in their positive approach which was great”.

Another young lawyer made the following comments:

“Everyone who attended the workshop got a great deal out of it.

It was great being taught by experienced NT advocates such as Rex Wild, Ian Reid and Brian Cassells.

The course touched upon a whole range of different ways to be an effective advocate.

One thing I found particularly beneficial was learning of simple things like the importance of the correct court etiquette and how to hold yourself in court from Rex.

It was also invaluable to get tips on leading evidence and examination-in-chief from Judge Riley.

It is hard to think of another jurisdiction where a sitting Judge would be available to teach junior lawyers in this way.”

The Society anticipates that this will now be an annual event on the CPD calendar.

The Society would like to extend its gratitude to facilitators of the event, being Justice Trevor Riley, Rex Wild QC, Peter Barr QC, Brian Cassells, Lex Silvester, Ian Read and Dr. Les McCrimmon.

The Law Society Northern Territory would also like to thank the Western Australia Young Lawyers for their assistance in providing support material for this workshop. ●



Imogen Taylor and Rosemary Jacob during examination-in-chief