

Practicing law in the Northern Territory was

Court 1, Supreme Court of the Northern Territory

Monday 16 May 2011



As part of the Northern Territory Law Week celebrations, the Northern Territory Young Lawyers hosted the Young Lawyers v Senior Lawyers Debate. Held in Courtroom One of the Supreme Court, the debate topic acknowledged the Court's Centenary Year with the topic: 'It was more fun to practice law in the Northern Territory 100 years ago'.

A star-studded senior team of Suzanne Cox QC, Alistair Wyvill SC and Wade Roper, went head to head with young guns Damien Jones, Camille Carey and Klarin Sivyer. The pressure was on – the senior team have won for the last two years running! With our pride on the line and the real danger of a miss-match being on the cards, the Young Lawyers stepped up to the

plate and didn't disappoint!

The adjudicator for the debate, The Hon Justice Stephen Southwood, assumed the role of the Chair, entertaining the crowd by humourously adding to the descriptive paragraphs the participants had written about themselves. Lesson to future debaters: always behave in court or run the risk of letting a Supreme Court judge have free rein over your biography!

In opening the affirmative argument for the seniors' team, Wade Roper gave an analytical account of the Northern Territory's unique jurisprudential history. However, becoming bogged down in detail and in speaking beyond his allocated time; Southwood J was prompted to interject to the learned

Counsel's argument by questioning its relevance. Mr Roper may have felt like he was back in court for an evening session!

Kicking off for the Young Lawyer negative team, Klarin Sivyer was quick to introduce an impenetrable and solid foundation of argument, setting the team up nicely and paving the way for Young Lawyer superstardom! In rebuttal Suzanne Cox QC reminisced about the old days! The stories of lawyers appearing in front of the same Judge everyday and of stevedoring Barristers unloading ships following court adjournment really capturing the imagination of the Territory's young legal minds.

Second speaker for the Young Lawyers, Camille Carey, compromised any argument put

NTYL Co-Presidents Ash Marsh and Sophie Anderson

Wade Roper



as more fun 100 years ago!



forward by the opposition, by pointing out that one hundred years ago women could not practice the law. The absence of women in the Law and the dull vacuum of talent and intellect as a result, did not make the law 'more fun' to practice 100 years ago ... women were instead at home having 'little Ropers' and washing dishes. Indeed, how boring would the profession be without the sharp wit of the Territory's female practitioners to give the boys a run for their money? We are sure Justices Blokland and Kelly would certainly have something to say about that!

Alastair Wyvill SC in summing up for the affirmative team, spoke of some of the great characters who have practiced law in the Territory over the years and the absence of

Camille Carey

such figures in recent times. Great characters indeed Mr Wyville, but can you really say they are more 'fun' than today's Chief Justice roaring around on his Harley?!

Third speaker for the negative, Damien Jones pre-meditatively delivered the knockout punches to the opposition and in doing so saw it fit to make the proclamation 'we win' as a crescendo mid-way through his speech. Adjudicator Southwood J did not disagree and awarded the debate to the Young Lawyers! We done Klarin, Camille and Damien! A victory for the record books!

We thank Justice Southwood for adjudicating the debate, and the members of the senior team for giving up their time to make a most entertaining and enjoyable night! Unfortunately it is the last time we

will see Mr. Jones debating as a Young Lawyer (perhaps he will join the senior team next year!) – so for all you up and coming eager debaters, you will have some big shoes to fill! Luckily we have Klarin and Camille for a few years yet! Thank you Damien for entertaining us for the past three years.

Young Lawyers also thank the Law Society for their ongoing generous support, without which we simply wouldn't be able to host events such as the Great Debate. In particular, Young Lawyers would like to thank former CEO Barbara Bradshaw for her endless support and encouragement, and congratulate her in her new role with the Department of Children and Children. ●

The Hon Justice Stephen Southwood

