



APLEC 2017

Emerging Legal Identity – The path to your best.
Presentation by Ben Battcock based on group
research undertaken with ANU colleagues

Emerging legal Identity -The path to your best

Early this year (2017) we followed up the students we surveyed in 2014 and about whom we had presented information at APLEC conferences. At that point the respondents had just begun their PLT course. We were able to conduct the first survey face to face, rather than online and had a very high response rate of 570 students.

Ben Battcock presented on the data in 2015 and Roberta McRae in 2016

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- This year's survey was online and by losing some students' contacts, (as they were no longer at a university email address) and because this survey was online, we had a smallish response of 51.
- However the responses present us an interesting insight into the workplace and the experience thus far, of some very newly admitted lawyers.

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The respondents lived all over Australia and O/S

- ACT – 10
- NSW – 18
- NT – 4
- SA – 2
- QLD – 5
- WA -1
- VIC - 9 and 2 O/S

Not all were admitted

31 of the respondents were admitted in 2015, 11 in 2016

7 hope to be admitted between 2017/18

3 say they will never seek admission.

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- 30 of the respondent are female, 21 male
- 46 Australian born
- 5 born overseas

Ages

23 2

24 - 30 38

31- 38 3

42 - 46 6

Over 50 1

Over 60 2

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Employment

- 22 were in their first job, 29 not.
- 14 had been in their current job for less than 6 months.
- 15 for 7-12 months
- 20 for 13 – 24 months
- and 2 for over 2 years

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Current employment

- Yes - I'm working in a government in-house legal environment 10
- Yes - I'm working in a private law firm that has up to 15 lawyers 7
- Yes - I'm working in a metropolitan community legal centre/legal aid setting 6
- Yes - I'm working within the courts/justice system 6
- Yes - I'm working in a multinational/large law firm (more than 50 lawyers) 4
- Yes - I'm working in a corporate in-house legal environment 3

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Current employment

- Yes - I'm working in a private law firm that has 30 to 50 lawyers 1
- Yes - I'm working in a private law firm that has 15 to 29 lawyers 1
- Yes - I'm working as a sole practitioner in a metropolitan environment 1
- Yes - I'm working in a rural legal centre/legal aid setting 1

- No - I'm working in non-law related industry but looking to change to a law-related employment 1

- No - I'm working in non-law related industry and not planning to change 8

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We asked about their job satisfaction

- 8 very happy with their job
- 18 somewhat happy
- 1 neither happy nor unhappy
- 3 somewhat unhappy
- 1 very unhappy

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We asked what do you most enjoy about your work?

- The variety of work 32
- The complexity of the work 26
- The clients 18
- The supervision and training you receive 15
- The opportunities it offers 19

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We asked what do you least enjoy about your work?

- The work you are asked to do 7
- The hours you are required to work 13
- The supervision you are given 7

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We asked have you changed jobs since you were admitted?

- No - I am with the same employer 22
- Yes - I moved from a non-law related job to a law related employment since admission 7
- Yes - I moved from another law firm to this law firm 7
- Yes - I moved from a law-related employment (e.g. in-house lawyer) to another law-related employment 8

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We asked if you changed jobs why did you do so?

- I found the job hours too long
- I did not enjoy the work
- I didn't mind the work, but I received no guidance or supervision
- The organisational culture was not to my liking
- The work culture was not to my liking

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We asked what work would you like to be doing in 5 years' time?

- I would like to be in the same area of law as I am now 34
- I would like to work in a different area of law 11
- I would like to leave legal work altogether 6

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Conclusion - Whilst this is a small and not necessarily representative sample we see some clear themes.

1. To be the best you need to be ready to change jobs and leave cultures or workplaces that you do not like.
2. Workplaces do not necessarily offer a level of supervision that is satisfactory for new lawyers.
3. New lawyers need to know the hours are likely to be long, the work demanding and not always to their liking.
4. But overall the work that is available for newly admitted lawyers is satisfying challenging and worth doing!