

No, There Aren't as Many Law Students as There Are Lawyers

The popular misconception amongst lawyers that there are as many law students as there are lawyers has been proved wrong.

In 1996 there were 20,558 law students in Australia's 27 law schools. In the states and territories, the law societies and bar associations had 35,865 practising lawyers on their records at the end of 1996 – that is, barristers and/or solicitors holding practising certificates. Thus law students were only 57% of that number.

The statistics do show some anomalies. For example, in the ACT there were 514 lawyers with practising certificates but 1350 law students. This is probably largely due to the fact that the Australian National University has traditionally enrolled law students from across Australia and its course has tended

to prepare many of its students for government service.

In the largest state, NSW, there were at the end of 1996 15,085 practising lawyers but only 6261 university law students. Students represented 41% of lawyers with practising certificates.

The situation is somewhat complicated in NSW as there were as well about 2000 students undertaking the Legal Practitioners Admission Board course. Even including them, the percentage is still only 55%.

These figures have been compiled in the *Australasian Legal Education Yearbook 1996*, published by the Centre for Legal Education. The *Yearbook* is a 200 page collection of nationwide statistics. It has chapters on law school students and staffing, university law libraries, practical training, continuing legal edu-

cation, admissions to practice and lawyers with practising certificates. The statistics are reported nationally, state by state and, where applicable, institution by institution.

The fear that the legal profession is about to be overwhelmed by hordes of law graduates is largely unfounded. In addition, other research completed by the Centre for Legal Education shows that up to 50% of final year law students do not see the private legal profession as their first choice for a career destination.

The *Yearbook*, which is available from the Centre for Legal Education for \$35 brings together information from various sources and as such is probably a unique collection of information.

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