

Youth faith in the criminal justice system lacking: Prize winner

The 1999 National Award for Outstanding Representation of Indigenous Children has been awarded to Territory solicitor Veronica McClintic, in recognition of her commitment to and work with Aboriginal children in the legal system.

In her acceptance statement, Ms McClintic spoke of the inequality of indigenous people in Australia and the need for Aboriginal youth to have faith in the criminal justice system.

"It is really important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be supported in various ways to participate in the criminal justice system, particularly in the areas of policy and lawmaking," she said. "There are many ways this can happen.

"In particular, the availability of pre law courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who haven't had the same educational opportunities as others, should be encouraged and widened. Also, we should encourage policies that allow for specific places to be set aside in law schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," she said.

A Darwin local, Ms McClintic had to move to New South Wales for her university studies in law. When she returned to Darwin she completed her articles with the then

Department of Law. She later worked in both prosecutions and commercial law. Her support and advocacy for Aboriginal people developed through her work with Aboriginal victims of crime and with the Northern Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, where she had sole responsibility for all matters involving indigenous children in the Darwin Juvenile Court.

Her work with young indigenous people revealed the lack of faith that exists among Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

"There is still enormous suspicion of the various elements of the criminal justice system amongst our young people - suspicion of police, or prisons and of courts," she said.

"The over representation of Aboriginal people in prisons and detention centres is still a major issue we need to address, so that this suspicion can be dispelled, and young people are encouraged to participate in constructive ways within the criminal justice system."

Ms McClintic was recently appointed to the Department of Public Prosecutions as a Crown Prosecutor.



Veronica McClintic in her office at the Director of Public Prosecutions

Contribution to Territory youth law recognised

Elizabeth Morris has been recognised for her contribution to youth law with the presentation of the Award for Outstanding Representation of Young People in the Northern Territory.

In her work for young people Ms Morris has made significant contributions to policy and law reform in the Northern Territory.

Ms Morris has worked with the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission for the past nine years and for at least five of



those years has been specifically practising in relation to matters concerning young people.

In her work with the Commission she has developed both the administrative arrangements and the juvenile practice in order to provide a better service for young people.

Most significantly, Ms Morris has compiled and edited a complete collection of Supreme Court of the Northern Territory decisions in relation to juvenile matters. This has provided legal aid practitioners in the Territory with ready access to the often complex cases that make up juvenile justice.

Ms Morris has recently been appointed as Deputy Coroner.

The Law Society congratulates her on her successes.

Note to practitioners from the Darwin Local Court Registry

Practitioners are asked to exercise care when writing to the Darwin Local Court regarding matters coming before the Court. Except in exceptional circumstances, letters should not be addressed to the presiding officer regarding issues of fact to be decided by the Court. Should a practitioner consider it appropriate to correspond with the presiding officer, then copies of such correspondence should be sent to all parties - unless the letter relates to an ex parte application.

Provided by the NT Magistrates Court.