

Children's Court Practitioners Training Conference

CHILDREN'S COURT TRAINING EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

The Inaugural Children's Court Practitioners Training Conference was successfully held on 28 and 29 March 2019 at the Hilton Hotel in Darwin and was attended by 74 registrants which included lawyers, educators, youth workers and police prosecutors from across the Territory.

Guest speakers on the night included local and interstate professionals from other Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand.

The conference was co-hosted by Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, Director of Public Prosecutions, North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, the Children's Court and the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice; with generous

contribution from the Law Society Northern Territory and the Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory.

The conference aimed to address the Recommendation of the Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory in relation to specialist training of legal practitioners working in the jurisdictions of Youth Justice and Care and Protection of Children. The key areas of focus were trauma, Aboriginal cultural competence, child and adolescent development, adolescent mental health as well as cognitive and communication deficits.

Some highlights of the conference include:

- Keynote Address: 'Children in the Youth and Family Court: the NZ Experience' by Judge Tony Fitzgerald, New Zealand District Court;
- Keynote address: 'FASD' by Dr James Fitzpatrick, Paediatrician/Director, Dr Carmela Pestell, Neuropsychologist and Annette Paul, Clinical Service Manager, Diagnostic and Justice Therapy Programs from PATCHES;
- Trauma-informed Practice and Adolescent Brain Development and Behavioural Patterns' by Jill Faulkner;
- 'New Directions for Child Protection in the NT: Signs of Safety – Lessons for the NT based on WA Experience' by Max Lewington, Director of Legal Services, Department of Communities, WA.

The conference provided an unprecedented opportunity for service providers of the children and young people of the NT to network and learn from one another's perspectives'. The training conference was very well-received and constructive feedback was received from all participants through questionnaires and a reflective session during the conference in relation to how participants considered that the recommendations of the Royal Commission can be best implemented.





“It was great to see a large room packed full of Children’s Court practitioners, from a variety of agencies and professional groups for the entire two days, who were so focussed and interested.

I was particularly impressed with the level of awareness and concern about the issues children in the youth justice and care and protection systems face and motivation to do something effective to address them.

The organising committee brought together a very impressive line-up of speakers covering critically important topics.”

**Judge FitzGerald,
District and Youth Court Judge,
New Zealand District Court**

It is intended that a Youth Proceedings Education Committee will be established in the near future with the view to develop and deliver a training program for NT legal practitioners in youth justice and care and protection.

The next Children’s Court Practitioners Training Conference will be held on 26 and 27 March 2020. ■



BOOK REVIEW

The seven elements of successful country law firms

Caroline Hart, The Federation Press, 2018

Whilst you should probably scroll past LinkedIn videos about the ‘three reasons you are losing market share’ and ‘two signs your business is failing’ you probably should make time for *The seven elements of successful country law firms* by Caroline Hart.

Most small practice lawyers don’t have time for business skills and besides the legal profession is a vocation, a calling, success is measured on the amount of legal work you do – right? Hart clearly demonstrates that there is more to being successful than legal knowledge and there are unique opportunities and benefits to rural practice.

Part celebration; part self-help and part guilty pleasure, (who wouldn’t enjoy a discussion about the ethics of a “dickhead tax” or how “their time management was up the shit”?) this book is a gem.

The hardest connection to make, for many of us in private practice, is the connection between the practice of law and the business of law. Hart’s extensive research and interviews with real lawyers, elbow deep in rural Queensland and New South Wales joins those dots. How is leadership important to the success of your practice? How can you drive profitability? What is the value of culture? What should be in your succession plan to deal with the first 72 hours after disaster strikes?

In short—traditional legal education rarely prepares owners of country law firms for their role. Hart mixes together some critical resources and the seven elements and presents them in snack sized chunks that even the most time-poor sole practitioner would find nourishing. Hart presents the useful case-studies and words from the coal face which are so uniquely relatable, the clearest lesson to take-away from this book is that you are not alone and it doesn’t have to be this way. ■

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