# social justice and public interest

MENTORING PROGRAM HANDBOOK

**SULS 2016** 



We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the mentors who have volunteered their time to assist our students in pursuing their career goals in the social justice and public interest sectors.

Many thanks to all those who made possible the production and publication of the Social Justice and Public Interest Mentoring Program Handbook.

We would like to thank the Sydney Law School and the University of Sydney Union for their continued support of SULS and its publications.

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# foreword

On behalf of Sydney University Law Society (SULS), thank you for participating in the 2016 Social Justice and Public Interest Mentoring Program. We sincerely hope that the program will be very rewarding for both mentor and mentee.

Through this new program, SULS aims to provide an introduction to a professional legal career for students broadly interested in forging careers in social justice, or public interest law.

Not all students are fortunate enough to have access within their personal network to professionals through whom they can seek career advice. SULS seeks to fill this gap, to help students to find the information they need to build a successful career in their chosen area, and hopefully create longlasting links within the profession.

The purpose of the program is to connect students to mentors in their field of interest. We have approached mentors, primarily barristers and solicitors, who hail from social justice and/or public interest backgrounds. It is equally important to gain inside knowledge from professionals from a diverse range of legal backgrounds. We believe that this diverse insight is invaluable for students forming their career goals.

Of importance, this program exists to provide a new perspective on potential career paths for a Sydney University law student.

Our first Social Justice and Public Interest Mentoring Program would not have been possible without the support of our professional mentors, and the enthusiasm of our student mentees, and we hope that this program continues to run for many more years.

We appreciate the involvement of all participants, and we encourage you to share your thoughts and experiences with us so that we may strengthen the program for the future.

### Lorraine Walsh

SULS Vice-President (Social Justice) 2016

## Rachel Le Bransky

Social Justice Mentoring Co-ordinator 2016

# expectations

As this is an informal program, we do not impose rigid expectations on how the mentoring relationship should progress. We do hope that all participants bring a genuine willingness to engage with each other in a meaningful way.

## **MENTORS**

participate in order to lend advice about a student's career choices, on the basis of their own experiences. Ideally, mentors will learn about the mentees' interests, goals and concerns and try to help mentees reach solutions. They are not expected to help students with their assignment work or to find them a job. Mentors may also have general advice on handling stressrelated issues in the workplace, but cannot solve a student's problems for them.

# **STUDENTS**

have joined this program because they are interested in developing their careers in the social justice or public interest legal sector. Whilst we do not expect that students have a fully developed sense of career aspirations, students are nonetheless encouraged to have considered their careers and to come to mentors with ideas or questions that can form the basis of constructive and worthwhile discussion between mentor and mentee.

Outside of the organised networking evening, it is for the pair to decide how they will pursue the mentoring relationship.



# program launch

All mentors and mentees are invited to join us for the launch of the Social Justice and Public Interest Mentoring Program. This is the only formal event of the program, and we hope all participants are able to attend in order for mentoring pairs to be introduced.

Time: 6:00 – 8:00 pm Date: Wednesday 18 May 2016 Location: Faculty Common Room, Level 4, New Law School Building (F10) Dress code: Smart casual or work attire

# mentoring discussions

# **CAREER OPTIONS**

### **Questions for mentees**

- Do you know what you want to do after university?
- What steps have you taken towards your desired career?
- If you had the knowledge and resources to do anything, what would it be?
- Do you have particular concerns about your career (choices/goals)?

### **Questions for mentors**

- What is of particular interest about your field of practice and current role?
- When did you first develop a sense of where your career was going?
- What does a typical day or week at work look like?
- How did you get to where you are now?
- Would you choose the same career again?
- If you had the knowledge and resources to do anything, what would it be?

# **CAREER PATHS**

### **Questions for mentors**

- What subjects at university were most useful for your current career?
- Is it helpful/important to undertake further study?
- What paid or unpaid work did the mentor do before gaining full-time employment? Does any stand out as being particularly useful?
- Is there something else you could have, or should have, done to further your career?

# **CHALLENGES**

- What makes the job rewarding?
- What is the nature of your interaction with your colleagues? Could this be improved?
- What is the primary reason you do this job?
- What challenges do you face in this job?
- Does this field allow individuals to pursue a worklife balance? Are some roles more amenable to this than others?



SULS invites both mentees and mentors to provide feedback on the program. Your opinions will shape how the program is run in years to come. As this is the first year, we are keen to know both what worked and what may be improved.

We will release a feedback form after the networking evening for mentors and mentees to complete.

