

## The Law Reform and Social Justice Program

### STUDENT PROFILE: *Jessica Lee*



Up until my penultimate year, my experiences at the ANU were centred on the non-law components of my degree: French and political science. Studying French led to a semester's exchange in Lyon, studying politics led me into involvement with the SRC and editing the student newspaper. However, up until this stage I had remained relatively disengaged from my law degree, possibly because I had no desire to join my fellow students in the scramble for clerkships and paralegal positions. What had appealed to me about studying law was the opportunity to obtain a skills set that theoretically would be of use to the parts of society most in need of assistance. How I would go about doing that didn't seem to come up at all in class.

By chance that I was in the law school one Thursday afternoon, procrastinating over some take home exam or other, when a friend of mine convinced me to go to an LRSJ meeting. In one hour, five students presented on five different projects that they had been working on – from attending a maximum-security prison in order to educate inmates about the legal system, to helping at the immigration centre by teaching conversational English. And as quickly as that I realised that there was an entire side of studying law that I had been ignoring.

The LRSJ program presents students with an alternative to the traditional paths one envisages when they think of the legal profession. It creates opportunities and fosters initiative in students who may otherwise have felt disconnected from traditional paths into the professional world.

My involvement with the ACT Human Rights Act project has not only equipped me with invaluable IT prowess, but it has also given me the opportunity to build relationships with those on the other side of the lectern. Our team's case summaries are proofread by ANU lecturers and academics at the top of their respective fields and published on a resource widely used by the Human Rights-engaged community. Our team has had to overcome a number of logistical obstacles and familiarise ourselves with legislation and cases that take us well beyond knowledge required for class. We've learnt technical skills, developed our writing styles and are getting to know a groundbreaking piece of Australian legislation.

Becoming involved with the LRSJ community also afforded a fantastic opportunity to work with the pre-trial bench of the Extraordinary Chambers of the Cambodian Courts. Under the guidance of Simon Rice, Judge Rowan Downing and the ANU law internship program, I was able to obtain course credit for a research paper that was submitted to the ECCC. Before beginning the paper, I had little to no confidence that any research I might be able to provide would come near anyone entrusted with power in such an important trial process. This project instilled in me some confidence in my own written work, and this is the beauty of the LRSJ program: it creates an environment where students are given a great deal of time and guidance from members of the faculty. They are given freedom to run with their ideas, develop important skills and have confidence in the fact that they have an enormous amount to offer the wider community.

### The LR&SJ Program



The Law Reform and Social Justice (LR+SJ) Program at the Australian National University. LR+SJ is part of the ANU College of Law. It was established in 2007 with the creation of the position of Director of Law Reform and Social Justice, currently filled by [Associate Professor Simon Rice](#).

Please see the website to discover more about the [Law Reform and Justice Program](#).

The Student Social Justice Initiative is supported by the Law Reform and Social Justice Program. It is operated by students of the ANU College of Law to engage law students in a range of social justice activities.

If you are a student or staff member interested in becoming involved in any of these projects, please contact us at [lrsj@law.anu.edu.au](mailto:lrsj@law.anu.edu.au).