

A meaningful learning opportunity

2015 Mock Trial Competition Feature

Chad Silver, Litigation Barrister/Solicitor, Go To Court Lawyers, talks about his experiences as a Mock Trial Judge.



Grand final teams: Hale School and Mt Lawley SHS together with Cheryl Gwilliam, Director General of the Department of the Attorney General; The Honourable Wayne Martin AC, Chief Justice of Western Australia; and Elizabeth Needham, President of the Law Society.

In front of 25 of my law school peers, I rose with confidence to practise my cross examination skills and after several questions I committed a fatal error:

"You have committed previous offences before haven't you?" I asked as a young enthusiastic law student practising my criminal defence advocacy skills.

"Are you talking about the ones I committed with your client?" replied the witness. The room went silent and I tried to figure out what just happened ...

I must thank Mr Tony Power for instructing the now CCC Commissioner, the Hon John McKechnie QC, to enter the witness box before starting my cross examination. I must also thank Justice McKechnie, as he then was, for not holding back although it caused considerable embarrassment for me at the time. From that day on, I have only asked questions that had answers I knew were favourable to my client's case.

We often underestimate the value of creating meaningful learning opportunities for others, or the significance of our time when we

contribute to such learning opportunities and assist others.

Each year, the Society runs the Mock Trial Competition, which provides high school students with the opportunity to be involved in a mock court case in which teams contest a fictitious WA legal matter presented in the WA court system. The cases are presented by two teams, a prosecution/plaintiff team and a defence team, and the students take the roles of barristers, solicitors, witnesses and court officials.

Being a Mock Trial Competition judge involves volunteering a few hours of your time to preside over a mock trial and provide suitable feedback. After overcoming the anxiety of this daunting task, I volunteered to judge a mock trial. I attended nervously as two teams embarked on a legal battle arguing their respective cases. I somehow managed to get through the night without getting completely lost. The ability to listen and pay attention for a significant period of time was not easy given the convoluted manner in which the facts were being presented.

After several rounds, I had figured out

how to manage the Court and those appearing in front of me. By round three, the Mock Trial Coordinator had to drag me away from the Bench and subsequently reprimanded me for going over time.

The opportunity to volunteer in this year's competition has been a privilege and an honour. We must recognise the manner in which the many volunteer practitioners contribute to the skill development of the students involved, through either their coaching or adjudicating. In addition, this opportunity taught me how to assist the Bench in proceedings and how to ensure that what I wanted to communicate to the Bench was being understood.

I encourage others to volunteer as a judge or coach in the Mock Trial Competition, not only for the personal rewards but also because it provides such a worthwhile learning experience for both the volunteers and the students.

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2015 Mock Trial Competition Grand Final



Cheryl Gwilliam, Director General of the Department of the Attorney General; The Honourable Wayne Martin AC, Chief Justice of Western Australia; and Elizabeth Needham, President of the Law Society with winning team Hale School.



Murdoch Scholarship Recipient: Professor Jürgen Brohmer, Dean of Law Murdoch University; Calum Moultrie, Lake Joondalup Baptist College; and Mrs and Mr Moultrie.



Cheryl Gwilliam; The Honourable Wayne Martin AC; and Elizabeth Needham, with runnerup team Mt Lawley SHS.

The 2015 Mock Trial Competition came to a gripping close with a closely contested grand final trial between Mt Lawley SHS and Hale School in October 2015. Hale School emerged the victors with the Chief Justice of WA, The Honourable Wayne Martin AC, adjudicating and providing feedback. Elizabeth Needham, President of the Law Society, along with the Cheryl Gwilliam,

Director General of the Department of the Attorney General, presented both teams with trophies at the event that followed the trial.

With Thanks

The Society would like to extend a warm thank you to the volunteers who acted as coaches and judges in the 2015 Competition.

We are now taking registrations for volunteers for the 2016 Competition. Previous participation is not required and all volunteers are eligible to claim CPD points for their contributions. We will be running information sessions which will explain the competition in detail.

Please contact us on mocktrial@lawsocietywa.asn.au or on (08) 9324 8604 to register your interest.

Many thanks for participation in the 2015 Competition go to:

Adam Ebell	Dan McCarthy	James O'Hara	Maria Farrar	Rebecca Dennison
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