

Monday, 23 October 2017

2017 Australian Young Lawyer Award winners announced

A 29-year-old commercial lawyer, James Skelton, has taken out the 2017 Australian Young Lawyer Award.

Mr Skelton has been engaged with NSW Young Lawyers since 2013 with involvement over a range of committees. However, his main contribution has been to the Communications, Entertainment and Technology Law (CET) Committee, where he has spearheaded a range of initiatives and edited and participated in submissions on topics ranging from online copyright infringement to serious invasions of privacy.

Mr Skelton leads the NSW Young Lawyers' Wellbeing and Diversity Working Group, which focuses on understanding the psychological, physiological and social factors affecting the wellbeing of lawyers, their colleagues, and their clients.

Mr Skelton specialises in the areas of commercial, intellectual property and technology law at Swaab Attorneys. He won the 2017 Lawyers Weekly "30 Under 30" Award for commercial law in Australia and was previously a finalist in the 2016 & 2017 Australian Law Awards for "Young Gun of the Year."

Law Council of Australia President, Fiona McLeod SC, praised Mr Skelton's contribution.

"James is an incredibly dynamic and accomplished young lawyer well deserving of this honour," Ms McLeod said.

"Understanding and improving the wellbeing of lawyers is vital for a strong and healthy legal profession. James' work in this area lead to lasting benefits for lawyers and their colleagues.

"This year it was a pleasure to see James' leadership in action as he coordinated the first ever float to enter the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade on behalf of NSW Young Lawyers.

"I was among a great group of around 40 people who marched under the rainbow banner James organised, emblazoned with 'Equality Under the Law.'

"I have no doubt James will make an outstanding contribution over the course of what I assume will be a long career in the law."

The 2017 Australian Young Lawyer Award (Organisation) was won by the NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Committee for its Refugee Assistance Project (RAP).

The project aims to address unmet legal need by providing free legal assistance to asylum seekers and refugees with the visa application process.

"The RAP provides form-filling assistance to asylum seekers and refugees who are subject to the Fast Track Assessment process and might otherwise find the entire process impossible," Ms McLeod said.

"The RAP has done tremendous work in assisting asylum seekers and refugees to exercise their right to seek asylum.

"The work of RAP volunteers has undoubtedly reduced the risk of refoulment posed by the Fast Track Assessment."

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