



## ACT Law Society Awards Night 2018

### Winners' full biographies

#### 2018 ACT Young Lawyer of the Year: Kellin Kristofferson, Artisan Law

**Kellin Kristofferson** was admitted in December 2013, and opened his own practice – Artisan Law – in 2016. He is 29 years old. Artisan Law is a business designed for community good, part small law firm, part social initiative. The firm's mission is to make Wills and estate law services more affordable and accessible in the Canberra region.

Kellin saw a need for these services after acting as executor for his own parents, who were not wealthy, and were not aware of the ramifications of estate law. Kellin was a 22-year-old student at the time, and found himself unexpectedly the oldest member of his family, and bewildered by the myths that abound about Wills and estate administration. During his supervised practice, he also witnessed countless situations where people could not afford, or were unaware of, the need for legal advice in estate matters. The avoidable disputes, and financial and emotional cost to families and communities, affected him deeply.

It was for this reason that Kellin left salaried employment for the uncertainties of small business. Artisan Law is a specialised estate law firm that offers Wills, Enduring Powers of Attorney, estate administration and elder law advice at heavily discounted rates for pensioners and low-income earners. On three days of each week, it is also a mobile service travelling to clients who cannot otherwise access legal advice.

Kellin accepts pro bono referrals every week from ACT Legal Aid, the Council for the Ageing (COTA), the Salvation Army and the Red Cross. Similarly, he accepts referrals from social workers at the Canberra Hospital and Calvary Hospital to assist with estate and Enduring Power of Attorney advice. A large portion of Kellin's daily work is devoted to pro-bono or reduced-fee services, and between two and four weeks each year, he gives up paid practice entirely to volunteer the services of his firm for 'Wills Days' that he co-coordinates with the Red Cross and Salvation Army. Each year, Kellin writes between 150 and 200 Wills pro bono for these two charities. He also volunteers to provide legal advice on Wills issues as part of the ACT Law Society's Law Week initiative each year.

Kellin also actively engages in community education about Wills and related topics by hosting workshops and information sessions with local not-for-profits. In the past few years, he has run such sessions at public libraries, for DUO (a disability support service provider), A Gender Agenda (a not-for-profit advocate for gender diverse people), Sharing Places (another disability service provider), at local schools, and ACT Legal Aid. He has appeared on ABC community radio to speak about Wills myths, and has created several tool-kits for executors and people planning their estates, which are free for use by the public.

Kellin has been a teacher in the Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice/Masters of Legal Practice combined programme at the ANU Legal Workshop since 2013, where he has taught courses on estates, professional ethics, and core practice skills, and written and recorded lecture podcasts. He has tutored undergraduate succession law, and also been a volunteer judge of ANU Law Students Society moots, negotiation and witness examination competitions for the past nine years, and has written and revised questions, manuals and other materials to assist the students and coordinators.

Kellin obtained his law degree with Honours from the ANU, and continues to maintain a relationship with the university. He has been invited to speak to students, including on the topics of innovation in legal practice and non-traditional business models. He is also a published academic, having co-authored



a chapter in *The Public Law of Gender*, published by Cambridge University. In 2013, he received a high distinction for his thesis on the social implications of life and indefinite sentencing.

In addition to his ongoing support of the Canberra branches of the Red Cross and Salvation Army each year, since early 2017 Kellin has sat on the board of directors for Sharing Places, which is a disability support provide for adults living with severe and complex disabilities.

Kellin is to be commended for his dedication and long hours spent managing his practice for the good of the community, volunteering the bulk of his limited personal time without expectation of recognition or reward.

## 2018 ACT Young Lawyer of the Year: Georgina McKay, Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Georgina has made a significant contribution to the legal profession in her short time as a lawyer after being admitted in 2014.

Georgina is currently a Legal Officer in the Transnational Crime Section of DFAT's Legal Division. In her almost three years with the Department, she has worked on high-profile and topical legal challenges facing the Department and the government broadly. These include the assertion of foreign state immunity on behalf of several Commonwealth agencies in foreign courts (a niche and highly specialised area of law), the coordination of sensitive and complex surrogacy matters that engage internal client areas in Australia and overseas (including consular, passport and bilateral desks), and the handling of complex complaints before the Australian Human Rights Commission.

She has advocated for cultural change within DFAT's legal areas, carrying forward the Secretary's 'Women in Leadership' strategy by organising inclusive leadership training for all legal staff. She has also facilitated the in-house counsel team's engagement with the local and broader legal community, including coordinating the Department's Women Lawyers' Association Corporate Membership, and promoting a culture of pro bono work and legal volunteering, which is new to DFAT.

She has initiated a number of enduring legal advices that are now on the Department's intranet, which assist internal clients manage low risk legal issues, and devised knowledge management tools in an environment of high internal churn (including through the development of 'induction guides' on complex areas of law). She has also actively mentored junior staff and new recruits.

Georgina's passion for supporting women in the law and promoting gender equality within the legal profession and the broader community is exceptional.

She is an active member of the Women Lawyers Association of the ACT (WLA ACT). Georgina has been a committee member of WLA ACT since 2014, first serving as Membership Officer for two years, and then as Vice President from 2016 to present. She is also Chair of the WLA ACT Awards Subcommittee.

She coordinated WLA ACT's introduction of barrister jackets for pregnant women. These adjustable jackets will be available shortly to barristers when pregnant, enabling them to continue appearances in comfortable clothing.

Under Georgina's recommendation, WLA ACT will be publishing a newsletter dedicated to breaking down the barriers that women face in becoming barristers. Georgina is also working with the WLA ACT committee to develop a scholarship for ACT women to attend the bar readers course. The costs of attending the course are significant, particularly as the course is located in Sydney, and as such, can be a prohibitive factor for women looking to pursue a career as a barrister. The scholarship will significantly reduce the financial burden and encourage more women to the bar.

Georgina is a regular volunteer at the Women's Legal Centre, working on the Centre's advice line to provide free legal advice in the areas of employment and discrimination law, family law, and family violence. The clients Georgina assists are often vulnerable and at a very stressful and emotional point



on their lives, and she approaches them with empathy and understanding, taking all steps to ensure the women receive timely and appropriate legal advice.

Georgina has also shown her commitment to diversity in the legal profession through her membership of the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group of the ACT Law Society and the body that oversees it, the Inclusion and Diversity Committee.

Georgina also provides guidance to junior members of the Canberra legal community. She has participated in both the ANU Women In Law Organisation mentoring program and University of Canberra Women Lawyers Mentoring Program since their inception.

Georgina also volunteers her time outside of the legal community. She has hosted a meal through the Welcome Dinner Project, which connects newly arrived Australians with established Australians over dinner conversation in the comfort of their own home. She has also volunteered with SHINE for kids at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, supporting children with a parent in the criminal justice system.

### 2018 Pro Bono Service Award: Clayton Utz pro bono partner Jennifer Wyborn

Jennifer is a Workplace Relations, Employment and Safety Partner in the Clayton Utz Canberra office. She has overseen a number of significant pro bono matters and is particularly passionate about matters that involve questions about the management of domestic violence in the workplace.

Jennifer has been the Partner leading the Pro Bono practice in Canberra since 2016. The team have made an exceptional contribution to the ACT community through their pro bono work for the Women's Legal Centre (WLC) and Canberra Community Law (CCL), and are passionate supporters and advocates for the community legal sector more broadly.

The pro bono work provided by Jennifer and her team has significantly increased the services these community legal centres are able to provide for socially or economically disadvantaged people in the ACT and advanced access to justice for women in Canberra.

Jennifer's team provide extended, reliable and expert pro bono services to a significant number of WLC and CCL's clients on a pro bono basis. They have run complex Federal Court matters and test cases on behalf of people who would otherwise go without representation. They treat these matters with as much respect and commitment as their private clients.

The team also manages Victims of Crime applications for WLC's clients, giving women dignity and a voice in the criminal justice system.

Jennifer has introduced an innovative reverse secondment arrangement with the WLC, where one of their staff is embedded one day a fortnight with the Clayton Utz team, gaining access to expert guidance and strategic advice on WLC cases. This professional development has been invaluable to increasing the skill and capacity at WLC. Jennifer and her staff also deliver free training for community legal sector workers in areas such as discrimination and employment law, providing access to professional development opportunities otherwise outside the budgetary limitations of the sector.

This approach has the effect of magnifying Clayton Utz's pro bono investment in the WLC. Instead of using their time to see what could only be a limited number of clients, they have upskilled WLC staff, which has greatly improved the quality and extent of services WLC are able to provide to clients. In this way, their support has advanced access to justice for all clients of WLC instead of just a limited few.

Jennifer sits on the Board of the Clayton Utz Foundation, which supports pro bono clients through a grants process, such as the grant which provides funding support to the Canberra Community Law's Socio-Legal Practice Clinic. This funding was critical to getting the Clinic pilot up and running in 2015, and they have continued to financially support the Clinic in the 2016 and 2017 financial years. This service allows CCL to take on the most difficult cases and thereby reduce homelessness in the ACT, particularly for women and children who have experienced family violence.



For the last seven years, Clayton Utz has provided two solicitors each year on a pro bono secondment to support CCL's Street Law Program. Since early 2018, Clayton Utz has also seconded a lawyer on a weekly basis to work in CCL's Night Time Legal Advice Service on a pro bono basis. In an environment where there continues to be insufficient resources to meet demand, this assistance has been crucial to enhancing access to justice for some of the most disadvantaged members of the Canberra community.

Jennifer and her staff also deliver free and tailored training for community legal sector and other community workers in areas such as discrimination and employment law. This improves community sector workers' capacity to identify legal problems before they escalate as well as providing access to professional development opportunities otherwise outside the budgetary limitations of the sector.

In 2018, the Clayton Utz pro bono practice in Canberra acted in 103 pro bono matters, provided 2,658 hours of pro bono work, at an average of 46 hours per lawyer, and 83% of their partners and lawyers performed pro bono work.

### The 2018 President's Medal: Julie Dobinson, DDCS Lawyers

Julie came to the law as a mature age student. Following school, she completed a Catering Course at East Sydney Tech. She worked in Sydney in catering for a number of years, including at the Prince of Wales Hospital as a caterer, before travelling to the UK. Whilst residing in the UK she completed a course in Womens Studies through the open university program, which re-kindled her interest in tertiary study as well as a keen interest in feminist issues. She took part in the now famous Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp protests.

Upon her return to Australia, Julie moved to Armidale in NSW and commenced her law degree at Macquarie University as a remote student, in 1985. Her first child (Nell) was born in December 1984 and whilst completing her degree she had two more children (Sam in 1986 and Ed in 1989).

Julie moved to Canberra in 1991 and completed her GDLP at ANU, commencing practice with Snedden Hall and Gallop in 1992. She started her own firm in October 2000, trading as Julie Dobinson & Associates. Her partner Phil Davey joined her in 2003 and they traded as Dobinson Davey Lawyers. In 2007 Lois Clifford and Di Simpson joined them and DDCS Lawyers was born.

Well-connected in the Canberra legal and business community, Julie has dedicated her time to serve on various boards and Committees. Julie initiated the establishment of the Canberra Region Family Law Professionals Association and served as the Association's first President. She served on the Executive of the Family Pathways Network for a number of years. In addition to involvement with various Law Society Committees during the course of her career, Julie has served as Chair of Law Australasia, which is a national association of approximately 25 independent law firms committed to best practice management and client service delivery. Until recently Julie Chaired the Board of the Women's Legal Centre (ACT). She serves on the Complaints Committee of the ACT Law Society. Julie also served on the committee of the Women Lawyers Association of the ACT.

In addition to these roles, Julie has also dedicated time to providing pro-bono advice for the Women's Legal Centre and has a lengthy involvement in providing advice through the ACT Law Society's Legal Advice Bureau.