Review of Academic Requirements

Submission to Items 6.1 and 6.2 that the knowledge of Ethics and Professional Responsibility (including basic trust accounting) should not be omitted from the Academic Requirements:

A lawyer’s professional responsibility is highly relevant to the practice of law. As pointed out by the Queensland Law Society, the way lawyers conduct themselves has a direct impact on public confidence in the profession and in the administration of justice.

It would be reasonable for clients, who depend on their lawyers, to assume that their lawyers are properly trained not only in the areas of law but in carrying out their duties ethically and to a professional standard. As such it is my submission that the knowledge of Ethics and Professional Responsibility (including basic trust accounting) should be weighted as much, if not more than other areas of law that are included as compulsory subjects in a law degree.

I believe a law school where students obtain a professional education in law not be discharging its responsibility as an educator if it has not educated and/or equipped its graduates with the information they need to act ethically.

As a course coordinator of the subject of Bookkeeping & Trust Accounting (and in the past, Legal Ethics) for over 10 years, I see first-hand from my students the lack of even a basic understanding of the legislative, practical and ethical requirements of a lawyer (never mind a lawyer that intends to operate a law practice). To send these graduates out into the workforce without sufficient exposure to these core competencies in my opinion will create additional challenges for the graduates as well as undermining the standards of the legal profession.

Having practiced as a solicitor, I have experienced the challenges of meeting and managing staff to meet the legislative requirements placed on a solicitor. Now as a trust account investigator with the Queensland Law Society, I witness on a regular basis breaches of the legislative requirements by solicitors, breaches that in some cases threaten the livelihood of the solicitor and tarnish the reputation of the profession.

I strongly believe that the subject Ethics and Professional Responsibility (including basic trust accounting) should remain as a compulsory subject in a law degree and should not be omitted from Academic Requirements.

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