

## **Equality within the Law Faculty: an overview of structures and services for students**

The Law School is concerned to ensure that all students have the right to fair and equitable treatment at the University in accordance with the University's commitment to the principle of equal opportunity in education and employment (University of Melbourne Equal Opportunity Policy, at <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/ppp/docs/21.html>). There is a range of structures and procedures set up to help achieve this goal at both University and Faculty level.

Within the Law School, all offices that deal with students have policies to deal with issues relating to equality of opportunity in relation to aspects of their own administration. The Faculty has also appointed staff members to act as Equal Opportunity Liaison Officers to provide a point of contact for students who have an issue outside these areas or who want to raise concerns for Faculty attention. There are Liaison officers for International Students, Queer (LGBTI) Students, Indigenous Students, Mature Age Students, and Disability.

The Liaison Officers are all members of the Faculty Equal Opportunity Committee, which also includes student representatives from the LSS, the Postgraduate Law Students Association, and the International Law Students' Society, as well as staff representatives from various administrative units in the Faculty, such as Undergraduate studies, JD administration, the Graduate studies and research offices. The Equal Opportunity Committee functions as a central location for communication among all branches of the Faculty, where issues can be raised and resolved by all members. A Law school web page on equality is under preparation at present.

At University level there are policies on a range of issues from cultural and racial diversity, gender equality, eliminating sexuality discrimination to accommodating disability and religious difference. Services for students with particular concerns or needs are provided by the International Student Services, Student Union Advisory Service, Postgraduate Association Advisory Service, Centre for Indigenous Education and Disability Liaison Unit. There are also procedures for making and resolving complaints of discrimination and sexual harassment (available by links from the Equal Opportunity Policies and Resources web page <http://www.hr.unimelb.edu.au/advice/support/dm/eopolicies>). Complaints procedures allow for initial confidential discussion with an advisor to explore the nature of the complaint and avenues for resolving it either informally or formally.

Students who have a concern about an equal opportunity issue have a number of points of contact open to them depending on the nature of the issue, and should be able to have their concern addressed through this variety of avenues. Although Australia's aspirations for equality and equality of opportunity may not yet be realised in practice, important steps towards this end have been taken and progress is continuing.

Beth Gaze

Chair, Faculty Equal Opportunity Committee.