

# Media Release



Monday, 10 October 2016

## 2016 Australian Young Lawyer Award winners announced

27-year-old Adelaide solicitor Natalie Wade has won the Individual **2016 Australian Young Lawyer Award**, for her advocacy for equality within the legal profession and more broadly.

Ms Wade works as a solicitor in the Child Protection System Royal Commission, with a focus on children with a disability and their vulnerabilities within the State Care System. She has conducted academic research on the participation of individuals with communication difficulties in courts and her work has been published in the *Alternative Law Journal*.

In 2016, Natalie worked with the Law Society of South Australia regarding the need for changes to access to courts, and greater diversity in the employment of legal practitioners, resulting in the establishment of the Society's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Natalie is also a member of the steering committee for the AFL-4Me Program; an initiative run by the Intellectual Disability Association of SA, to provide free VIP tickets to the AFL for children with disabilities and their families.

Natalie is a volunteer with the Refugee Advocacy Service of SA, and an advisory member to the *Every Woman, Everywhere Campaign*; an international campaign advocating for a treaty on violence against women. Natalie is assisting the campaign in drafting a memorandum to the United Nations on the implementation and assessment clauses of the treaty.

Law Council of Australia President, Stuart Clark AM, praised Natalie's contribution.

"The impact of Natalie's contribution at such a young age is extremely impressive," Mr Clark said.

"She has actively supported and worked on campaigns for the needs of vulnerable people and she has supported the endeavours and goals of the young people who follow in her footsteps. She has also been a driving force behind the creation of committees to ensure our profession is truly inclusive and diverse.

"She has also achieved all of this whilst overcoming a significant physical disability which, as she understands better than most, society does not always accommodate for adequately."

The **Organisation 2016 Australian Young Lawyer Award** was won by NSW Young Lawyers Criminal Law Committee for the *Day in the Life of a Criminal Lawyer* program, an initiative that pairs undergraduate and Juris Doctor law students with volunteer criminal lawyers to allow students to gain insight into the practice of criminal law.

"Unlike other areas of law, the opportunity for law students to gain experience in criminal law is extremely limited," Mr Clark noted.

"For students who do not yet know which area to pursue, there are few avenues to gain criminal law experience. This program has addressed this issue and received terrific feedback from all involved. The program has also helped to facilitate greater awareness of employment opportunities outside of the Sydney metropolitan region, with a number of the placements located outside metro areas."

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