

SYMPOSIUM / CONFERENCE

“ BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME “: THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF LAW SCHOOLS IN JAPAN

AN INTRODUCTION

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On 21 February 2005, the Asian Law Centre at the University of Melbourne law school hosted a symposium, *Build it and They Will Come: The First Anniversary of Law Schools in Japan*, with the support of The Japan Foundation and Blake Dawson Waldron.

The symposium was an opportunity for scholars and lawyers involved in the design, construction and operation of Japan’s new law schools to reflect on the challenges and successes of the law schools, which commenced operation on 1 April 2004. It was also a chance for observers from outside of the reform process to talk about their perceptions of legal education in Japan.

The introduction of graduate law schools was one of the most controversial outcomes of the Judicial System Reform Council’s (*Reform Council*)¹ review of the role of the administration of justice and judicial infrastructure in Japan. This is therefore an exciting and possibly confusing time for legal education in Japan. Will the new law schools improve the quality of lawyers and increase access to justice in Japan? What impact will they have on important stakeholders, including students? How will legal scholars cope with the changes? What if nothing changes at all?

The papers collected from the Symposium consider these questions and more. They have been published across this Journal and the *Australian Journal of Asian Law* (volume 7 (3), 2005) thanks to the co-operation of Professor Tim Lindsey, Ms. Amanda Whiting, PD Dr. Harald Baum, Dr. Luke Nottage and Associate Professor Kent Anderson.

These articles present an important historical record of the first few moments of the renovation (Smith et al.) of Japanese legal education, with one author pointedly asking “where is the Zen?” (Taylor). They include commentary and personal accounts about

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1 Established by the Law to Establish the Judicial System Reform Council [*Shihô kaisaku shingi-kai setchi-hô*] Law No 68/1999.

how regional, non-Tokyo and small, private universities are tracking (Nishida, Nottage and Kuroyanagi), and new research into curriculum development (Dierkes and Saegusa). Readers will be able to compare the views of teachers (Foote) and students (Lawley and Steele). Post-law school issues such as the bifurcation of the legal profession and its impact on legal education are also considered (Chan).

Finally, Rokumoto's article, which opens this issue of the Journal, is an excellent exposition of the reforms and their grand aims. Although the Symposium was not the genesis of Rokumoto's article, he also deals with issues identified by participants and provides a backdrop for the commentary provided by the other authors.

Read as a whole, the articles provide an interesting snapshot of the "massive exogenous institutional shock" (Dierkes and Saegusa) caused by the legal education reforms that have emerged from the Reform Council's findings.