

# De Minimis

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OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE STUDENTS OF MELBOURNE LAW SCHOOL

MONDAY 28 APRIL 2014



**Special royal souvenir page  
inside... Yours to keep!**



**Peter Botros** asks whether MLS 'Hot or Not' is hoax or not  
**Cal Samson** finds out what the royal hell is going on  
**Melissa Peach** gets locked out of the law building  
**Equity Uncle** surprises no one by getting cranky again

## Law ball rip-off!

ANDREA HENSON

The law ball is not an equal access event. At \$130 per ticket, the price for an evening of drinking, dancing and fancy eating is a steep one, and many students are being priced out of the experience.

Held once again at the swish Peninsula Docklands, the Corrs Chambers Westgarth Law Ball ticket includes a three course meal, all you can drink beer, wine, sparkling and the obligatory softies, plus a city-bound bus to take you to the after-party.

De Minimis contacted the Peninsula Docklands and as it turns

out, a five hour dinner and beverage package including security hire costs only \$90 per person. So why are we being charged an extra \$40 per person?

Will Davidson, the LSS treasurer confirmed that the LSS also receives "very substantial sponsorship" from a certain law firm to hold the event. Yet the ball is apparently run with the aim of "breaking even". Where is the money going? Good question. The LSS declined to provide a breakdown of costs for the event.

The surplus \$40 from each of the 500 ball attendees gives event organisers a hefty \$20,000 to play with, even more when you consider that non-students pay an extra \$10. So where is our money going? A 3km bus ride? Hiring a C grade band to play at us while we eat (oh, and 'shame' on us if we don't know them)? And how much could the after-party venue, which is accepting 500 paying customers, possibly charge for a Thursday night reservation? The figures don't seem to add up.

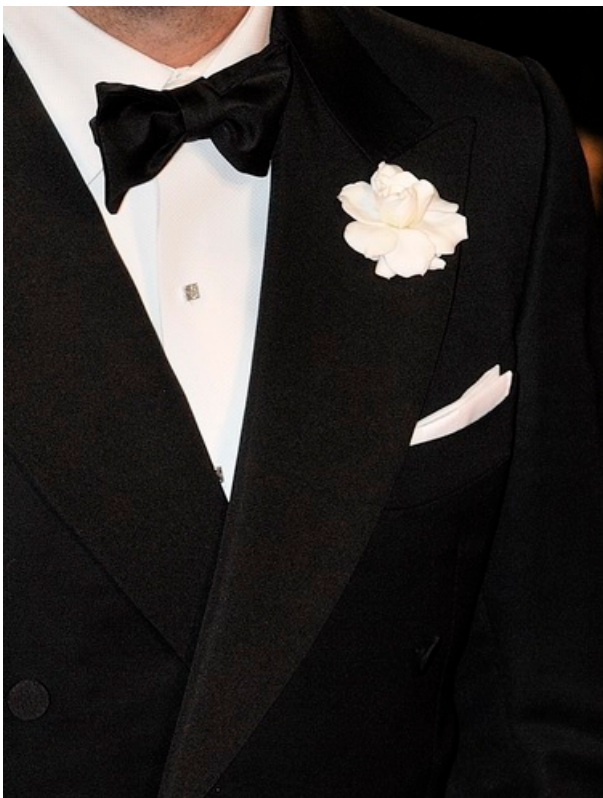
It is questionable how much of these extra event costs are even necessary and will actually be appreciated. Think about your pre-

vious ball experiences; have you ever eaten all three courses? Do you think you will make it to the after-party? My first thought is, 'Heck yes I've paid for it!' However; on a more realistic assessment of the situation, I don't know whether I'll be able to pull myself together after trying to drink my money's worth. I'd much prefer the option of deciding at the time and not having it included in the price of my ticket.

This highly anticipated event has not always been so exclusive. Held at the same venue, in 2011 tickets were sold at \$110 for students and concession tickets were available for \$70. The after-party, and its tab were walking distance away which meant no bus costs. The LSS has not offered concession tickets since.

The LSS has a tough job of balancing the quality of the event with making it reasonably priced, and at the moment the balance is not right. Furthermore, this balance is not restored by securing us 20% off at a formal-wear store. If you can afford to buy a new suit for every event you're not the one in need of financial relief. The same goes for UBER private drivers!

A greater focus on equal access needs to be factored into the law ball and LSS events more generally. This focus needs to prevail over making the event trendy, luxurious and exclusive. The Law Ball is an event for ALL students and not all students have \$130 to spare.





## SPECIAL ROYAL TOUR SOUVENIR PAGE



# The paradox of the republic

CAL SAMSON

What the hell is going on in this country's collective psyche?

For those following public opinion polls on the monarchy, the past couple of weeks have been confusing to say the least. But they sure are revealing.

A Neilsen poll last week found that 51% of respondents did not think Australia should become a republic.

What seems to have surprised most people, myself included, is that support is weakest with young people. Just 28% of 18-24 year olds currently support a republic, with 60% against and the rest undecided.

It comes on the back of a ReachTEL poll published in the Fairfax press in February which showed similar lack of public support, particularly among 'Gen Y'.

These numbers are all pretty much on par with a Fairfax poll from December 1976. Plus ça change...

And yet, at exactly the same time last week, Neilsen also found that only 35% of Australians supported the return of knights and dames, with 50% against. This is almost the exact proportions as the monarchy poll – only the reverse of what you'd expect. Early polls put the opposition to knights and dames as high as 70%.

There is probably some skew in this data, given the current visit by the royal baby, but the overall sentiment is pretty clear: Royals, yay; Royalty nay.

For me, this is the perfect illustration of the great paradox in the republican movement.

If Australia is ever going to break (symbolically, since all the real breaking is pretty much done) with the UK, then there needs to be a groundswell of modern nationalistic support.

One problem with this is that the younger generation, which leans further to the political left, are inclined to see overt nationalism as somewhat bad manners. Perhaps the epitome of the 'progressive monarchist' – an oxymoron almost anywhere else in the world – is Justice Michael Kirby.

But there is a bigger problem. Australians (like most citizens of most countries) really do believe we are the best country in the world. We're the 'lucky country'.

Compared with our peers we are the less stuffy Britain, the less crazy America, the brasher and bolder Canada, and the bigger, richer, New Zealand. We certainly see ourselves

as an independent nation on the world stage.

But inherently bound up in all that is the feeling of looking around and not seeing another system of government we like.

If Australia is the best, we collectively ask, and all of the other countries seem dysfunctional or kooky, why should we change?

This is the paradox of the republic. To make a change we need huge nationalistic pride – but that same pride inevitably leads us to conclude that nothing needs to change.

The same sense of independence and self-worth that makes us think knights and dames are quaintly archaic, is the same that makes us proud of our stable constitution and government.

*Cal Samson is a second-year JD student, and member of the Australian Republican Movement.*



# Rumours and conjecture

PETER BOTROS

Before the Easter break, the halls of the law school were rife with murmurs of a rumour whose content and importance had become more inflated than Clive Palmer's sense of self.

The rumour as DM heard it was that a group of male law students had been using a secret Facebook group and Law Ball pictures to rank and rate their female classmates. The perpetrators would even view the page in class and its content was so objectionable that at least one of the students involved had to remove themselves from the page.

One of the aggrieved female students had caught wind of these clandestine communications and allegedly reported it, first to the LSS, who took no action, then to the Dean who took up the issue with the Law Institute of Victoria (LIV).

Filled with outrage and intrigue, DM then sought to confirm the substance of the rumour only to find that, at least a large portion of it, was

false. Nick Jane, the LSS President, confirmed that no one had come forward with a complaint, and assured DM that if there had been a complaint, it would have been treated very seriously and passed on to MLS staff. The Dean was also contacted for comment, but after expressing her deep disappointment in the alleged conduct, she also confirmed that no complaint had been made to the MLS.

Several students were approached, and although dozens had heard the rumour, only a handful claimed to have seen any first hand evidence. That anecdotal evidence was primarily sightings of an offensive page, which contained generic sexually explicit images, open around the law school.

Having exhausted several avenues of inquiry, and in lieu of any NSA-style information gathering capabilities, DM cannot say how much, if any, of the original rumour was true, only that a large part of it was certainly untrue. In a profession where integrity and reputation are

of the utmost importance, the fact that this rumour escalated and then spread so rapidly is cause for concern in itself.

What is more concerning however is the possibility that the substance of this rumour could be true. There has been a strong push in the legal profession towards gender equality and the law school in particular prides itself as a leader in this field. Ask any person in the hallway and what you will surely hear is that gender inequality is a dying mode, and that when this generation is at the helm it will certainly be a thing of the past.

What this incident shows however is that for some, beneath this façade of equality, a culture of crooked masculinity and objectification still exists. Lawyers are often scorned by the man on the Clapham omnibus for spouting words that they themselves do not believe, and although we loath to admit it, it seems that there is at least some truth to that derision.

## Let us in

MELISSA PEACH

Spotted: two law students who refused to let me into the law building 20 minutes before it opened during the break. 'Sorry,' they simpered through the glass. 'The building opens at 10:00.'

Seething inwardly, I couldn't help but wonder who these parvenus thought they were, why they wouldn't just let me in only minutes before opening hours, and why *they* were able to tauntingly study in plain view of the plebes outside. I then realised that they must belong to a law student committee or journal, thus affording them the privilege to avoid the rules imposed on the rest of us.

The fact that only those on certain student committees and journals get 24-hour access to the law building is ludicrous. This policy feeds into the elitism and entitlement that already runs rampant throughout the law school.

What is it exactly that makes this elite group of students better than the rest of us? Are other law students not worthy enough to come and go as they please?



Is it because committee and journal members have much more important work to do than other law students? Doubtful. This assumes that the students with unfettered access to the law building have a higher volume of work, and that this work is more important.

However, many law students uninvolved in the law journals or committees juggle other (impressive) time-consuming extracurriculars and part-time jobs

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



# Equity Uncle

Dear Equity Uncle

How far can I mislead my classmates before it becomes sabotage? It's a card I can only play once, so when is the ideal moment?

Mr B Dickus

Dear Mr Dickus

What a miserable question. Anyway, last week Equity Uncle was hanging around the law school a bit, doing his annual Easter Egg Hunt in the library. The librarians hide Easter Eggs behind certain case reports and give hints like "unconscionable" and "trust" and then Equity Uncle tracks down Muschinski and crams his face full of chocolate. The librarians



are awesome. And Equity Uncle's Easter Egg Hunt would have been awesome too if the library weren't crammed with bloody first-years the whole time. Do you not have homes? Must you study at Easter? Equity abhors studying on holidays. Equity frowns on diligence.

Equity also frowns on misleading your classmates and asking miserable questions.

Chocolatey regards

Equity Uncle

## Save the Date! Writers' Soiree

FOR ANYONE WHO MIGHT WANT TO WRITE FOR  
DE MINIMIS, NO MATTER HOW REMOTE YOUR INTEREST

Pop round to  
The Corkman  
Tuesday 6 May, 12:30-2:30

**De Minimis**

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**Let us in**

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outside the law school bubble. Furthermore, some of this 'important' work consists of trivial tasks that could easily be accomplished by trained apes.

Do these law school nobles even use their 24-hour access to work on committee matters, or do they use it to study? I find it highly unlikely that anyone with this privilege would only use it to work on matters pertaining to their student groups and not also take advantage of the silent law building to catch up on schoolwork.

And what of regular law students, reduced in the eyes of the law school to commerce student status? If we dare stay after the building has closed, we will promptly be ushered out by the law school security guards, as I know all too well.

Are we a safety hazard, not trustworthy enough to enjoy the privilege of after-hours access? When I asked one of the security guards, who asked not to be named, whether he thought all law students should be allowed after-hours access, he stated 'I don't make the rules, I just enforce them.' Upon further questioning, he said 'Wait, are you interviewing me?'

In any case, I fail to see the problem with granting this privilege to all law students. Aren't all those who swipe in accounted for anyway?

For those of you screeching about the merits of work-life balance and how limited hours for the 'common' law student encourages this, then you're in the wrong profession. If you're so adamant about having work-life balance, then have one. Just don't impose this fantasy on the rest of us.

All law students should have 24-hour access to the law building, regardless of whether or not they're in some self-entitled committee. The current policy is elitist and unfair. Let us in!