



### Three young lawyers take out the Australian Academy of Law's Annual Essay Prize for 2021

An essay championing movement lawyering as one of the keys to resolving issues confronting First Nations Peoples is the winning entry in the Academy of Law's 2021 Essay Competition.

This year's competition asked entrants to address the question *"Outstanding fundamental issues for First Nations Peoples in Australia: what can lawyers contribute to the current debates and their resolution?"*

The 14 essays submitted for the \$10 000 award canvassed constitutional recognition, treaty, interactions with the criminal justice system, gender, domestic violence, child protection and land rights.

Former High Court Judge, the Hon William Gummow AC QC chaired the judging panel and was joined by Professor Gabrielle Appleby and Tony McAvoy SC, Australia's first Indigenous silk.

The judges were impressed by all the (anonymised) submissions but considered that one essay in particular had the edge:

*"The authors undertook a rich analysis of the role that movement lawyering has played and can play in the furthering of First Nations interests. Incorporating new research on movement lawyering, as well as deeply engaging with the scholarship, it was in equal parts academically rigorous and practically focussed."*

The winners are all currently working as Associates to Judges of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

In their essay, Lillian Burgess, Suvradip Maitra and Giulia Marrama, while aware their views may not reflect those of the First Nations Peoples of Australia, argue that the problems they face require a unique legal response which goes beyond the traditional role of the lawyer:

*"Movement lawyering is a new theory but an old practice that involves lawyers aligning with a movement and contributing their uniquely legal skills for the cause. It means lawyers must commit to proactive community engagement and expand their work to incorporate the roles of translators, facilitators, educators and journalists."*

AAL President, Alan Robertson says the annual essay competition is an important part of achieving the Academy of Law's goal of promoting high standards of legal research, scholarship and education:

*"Each year we set a question which will further this goal and challenge lawyers to focus on important legal issues in need of resolution".*

The winning essay is published on the Academy of Law's website and will also appear in a 2022 edition of the Australian Law Journal.

Ends

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