

Author: James Parkinson

Mannkal Economic Education Foundation
Dissertation on Scholarship Experience

I would like to start by thanking the Mannkal Economic Education Foundation for making this scholarship possible and the University of Notre Dame for choosing me to partake in what was an amazing experience.

First, the lunch held at the Mannkal offices was a great opportunity to meet fellow invitees who would be attending the Samuel Griffith Society Conference in Adelaide. It was nice to know that when I arrived in Adelaide there would be at least a few familiar faces to overcome the initial anxiety some people often feel when meeting groups of people for the first time.

As for the Conference itself, one word probably summarizes the experience quite eloquently – amazing. The opportunity to meet and dine with esteemed legal professionals from all walks of life from former Justice of the High Court Ian Callinan through to the man who challenged Kevin Rudd's economic stimulus payments alone in the High Court – Brian Pape.

The central theme of the 2009 Conference was centered on the issue of enacting a Bill of Rights into the Australian political and legal system. Such an enactment (depending on its form) could have massive implications in terms of the judicial role for our courts in the Australian legal experience and it was somewhat relieving to see an avenue such as the Samuel Griffith Society Conference being embraced as an avenue for high level academic discussion to take place on the issue outside of the media hype and public perceptions on the matter.

Speeches on the topic ranged from the implications of such an enactment from the international, legal and political perspectives. Such key speakers included our own Attorney General, Christian Porter, the former Solicitor General for the Commonwealth, Dr David Bennett and Professor Ivan Shearer who touched on the international implications discussed above. It was an awe inspiring experience to be engaged in such discussions both inside and out of the conference presentations, but even more so to be asked by such high level professionals what my thoughts were on such issues, but in a manner that acknowledged my views as relevant to the debate at hand. In short, the inclusiveness of the atmosphere at the SGS, as a law student with little real world experience was great, as my thoughts going into the conference were along the lines of a sit and listen type of role – however this was hardly the case.

To close on my experience at the SGC Conference I would like to say that I thought it was it was an experience that no law student should turn down. To be engaged with legal professionals at a social networking level but also to take part in and observe the debates about issues that are centrally relevant to today's political/legal climate are all aspects of this scholarship that appealed to me and I'm sure would appeal to students in the future. On a final note, next year's

Author: James Parkinson

conference is being held in Perth and I think it would be great if the scholarship funds could maybe be spread around a bit more to allow more students to partake in this amazing opportunity – I know that I won't soon forget the magnificent experience the Mannkal Foundation afforded me.