

DR GUY POWLES – PACIFIC LAW EXPERT AND PIONEER OF ANTIPODEAN CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION

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On 19 July 2016, the Monash University Faculty of Law and its associated legal services suffered a sad loss in the death of Dr Guy Powles. Guy was a brilliant academic and legal practitioner and was much loved, respected and admired by his colleagues, both at Monash and abroad. He was a tremendous colleague and a hard-working member of academic staff. He was a true gentleman in every sense, and will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Guy had a long and fascinating legal career, which included establishing a free legal service in Wellington, New Zealand; being a magistrate in Samoa; supervising clinical students as a practising solicitor, teaching administrative law, legal ethics, insurance law and Pacific comparative law here at Monash; helping to establish a law school in Vanuatu and serving as a judge of the Court of Appeal in Micronesia. His primary field of interest and expertise was the law and practice of the peoples of the Pacific Islands, including PNG, and the development of their constitutions. As such, he served on the Nauru Constitutional Review Commission and advised the Tonga Constitutional and Electoral Reform Commission. Guy ‘retired’ from the University in 2001, but continued his many Pacific Law researches and sessional teaching and at the time of his unexpected death at 82, was a Senior Research Fellow engaged in the supervision of doctoral theses on Pacific Law topics.

In the sphere of clinical legal education, Guy was appointed as the first coordinator of the Faculty of Law clinical program at Monash and was instrumental in the establishment of Monash-Oakleigh Legal Service in 1979 and is considered its founder. It was Guy who first set out the twin objectives of running the clinical program – providing practical legal skills to law students and servicing the community. He was responsible for laying much of the groundwork for the core *Professional Practice* unit’s structure, ideology and assessment. That work helped immeasurably to legitimise clinical legal education at Monash and in turn, established its continuing credentials as a leading Australian clinical innovator.

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Over and above all his incredible achievements, Guy was a person of integrity and honour. In the fifteen-twenty years that we worked with him, we never heard him make a disparaging comment about a colleague. He might occasionally make a wry observation about someone's over-enthusiasm or their delayed response to a deadline, but in his Quaker way, that was about all. The worst epithet that he could accomplish (if someone had behaved atrociously) was that he was 'disappointed' with their attitude or behaviour. In his supervision of graduate research, Guy was a paragon of gentle guidance, though sometimes a little obtuse. He would prefer a long and discursive conversation that would meander around a topic, as one gradually got the sense of what he was hinting at. Not overly inclined to call a spade a spade if a gardening implement would do. And always determined therefore to ensure that subtlety, nuance and 'the grey' received proper acknowledgement in his teaching and academic writing. As befits a judge, he was a man of immense nobility of character that we felt honoured to know and to work beside. To know him was to have a genuine sense of being in the presence of a man to admire and emulate, someone with real character, rectitude, dignity and with a robust sense of what is right, responsible and decorous.

The memory of Guy will always be a blessing to those who knew him and loved him. He will be sadly missed by the thousands of students that were lucky enough to call him teacher, and by so many others, like us, who were privileged to call him colleague and friend.