

Mock Trial Competition

by Sarah Bright

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Since 1987, the Law Society has run the Mock Trial Competition. Currently in its 36th year, the Competition provides secondary school students the opportunity to immerse themselves and experience trial advocacy in a real court room setting.

2023 was a busy year for the Mock Trial Competition with more than 1,100 students from 56 schools around Perth and South-West Western Australia registering to take part. This level of interest marked the return of the Mock Trial Competition to its pre-pandemic days. It was pleasing to see such enthusiasm and interest from the students after the years of pandemic related disruption.

The 2023 Mock Trial Competition kicked off in February and saw 116 student teams compete in 170 mock trials in the three qualifying rounds from March to June. This included less advantaged schools who were eligible for the Student Access Programme, an equity of access initiative, thanks to our partnership with Francis Burt Chambers. These mock trials took place predominantly at the 1903 Supreme Court Building, the Old Courthouse Museum and at the Mandurah Courthouse. Students enjoyed experiencing their trials in these historic buildings and it was wonderful that their families were able to attend (once again) to watch their kids in action from the public galleries.

At the end of Round 3, the top 16 teams proceeded to the finals rounds. In 2023, those teams included students from Presbyterian Ladies' College (three teams), Rossmoyne Senior High School (two teams), Bob Hawke College, Kingsway Christian College, Churchlands Senior High School, Aquinas College, St Mary's Anglican Girls School, Carey Baptist College, Chisholm Catholic

College, St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls, Mount Lawley Senior High School, Iona Presentation College and Penrhos College.

From August to September, the Competition proceeded on a knock-out basis through the Preliminary, Quarter-Final and then Semi-Final Rounds. The Grand Final, between Bob Hawke College and Rossmoyne Senior High School, was held on 18 October 2023. The Honourable Chief Justice Quinlan presided over the mock trial, the case materials for which centred on a fictitious criminal law fact scenario involving a Taylor Swift look-a-like and an over eager fan. With everything "Tay-Tay" the flavour of the evening, the Grand Final Mock Trial took on a fun entertaining tone which culminated in a delightful judgement peppered with actual Swift lyrics which had the whole court room laughing. Thank you to His Honour Chief Justice Quinlan for adjudicating and making the 2023 Mock Trial Grand Final such an enjoyable (and memorable) experience. And thank you to Midaiah Harnett for authoring the witness statements for the mock trial.

At the end of the judgment, Bob Hawke College were announced as the winning team of the 2023 Mock Trial Competition and had the Perpetual Trophy presented to them by the 2023 President of the Law Society, Ante Golem. Congratulations to Bob Hawke College and to the teachers and coaches who had supported the students throughout the year. Well done! Coming in as Runner-Up was a team from Rossmoyne Senior High School. Congratulations to the Rossmoyne SHS Team and to their teachers and coaches Gerald Hoe and Nicholas Fung. Thank you also to former President, Alain Musikanth SC, who attended on behalf of Francis Burt Chambers.

The Law Society thanks the Department of Justice and the Supreme Court for

providing the use of the courts for the Competition. Thank you to the court staff, especially security staff, who helped to facilitate the running of the competition across all seven rounds. We thank Law Society members and the practitioners and law students who volunteered their time throughout the year to act as mock trial judges, coaches and to prepare/review new case materials. This Competition is only made possible by the dedication of such volunteers and we are extremely appreciative of the time and energy they commit to ensuring their skills and knowledge are passed to the next generation.

The Law Society particularly wishes to thank Aoning Li, Ashley Roberts and Midaiah Harnett who authored new case materials and to those who otherwise contributed to the development of case materials in this year's competition (especially those who reviewed and gave feedback to the Grand Final Case Materials).

Lawyers interested in volunteering as a coach, judge or to assist in developing new case materials are invited to register your expression of interest [here](#).

CPD Points are available to lawyers with practicing certificates (up to 6 each CPD Year). Please contact Sarah, the Mock Trial Coordinator at mocktrial@lawsocietywa.asn.au if you are interested in getting involved in the 2024 Competition in any capacity or if you have any queries. ■