



 Year 11 Oxley College student Molly O'Meagher is at the top of her game in the Future Lawyers Program. Photo supplied

A group of Southern Highlands students are getting ahead of the game with the law.

Four students from Oxley College have wasted no time setting their career paths as they take part in the NSW Law Society's 'Future Young Lawyers' program.

And in true dedication to their ambitions for the future the students have joined the program as an extracurricular course.

Coach and coordinator of Mock Trial team at Oxley College Olivia Cox said the the online program Law Society of NSW was open to students who were part of Oxley's Mock Trial team.

The four local students are among 650 students from 61 schools across NSW that are taking part in the The Future Lawyers Program which is open to students from Years 9-11.

Ms Cox said she had found the students who represented Oxley College in both the Future Lawyers Program and the Mock Trial team were passionate about the law and generally had an interest in pursuing a legal career post-school.

"Students were very excited when the NSW Law Society offered the Future Young Lawyers program, as they can still develop their legal skills while the Mock Trial competition is suspended," she said.

"Not only are our students gaining insights into the Australia legal system, they are also hearing tips and tricks from legal experts on topics such as cross-examination and advocacy skills.

"One former Mock Trial student emailed me recently and told me that her experience in Mock Trial really helped shape her into the person she is today.

"As a result, she is now applying to study a combined law degree at university next year."

Ms Cox said such "lovely feedback" from students reinforced the importance of offering and running such programs.

And there are high hopes in particular for one of Oxley College's current student participants.

Year 11 student Molly O'Meagher received full marks for Round 1 of the Future Young Lawyers quiz, giving her a ranking of equal first across the State.

Molly said she was "definitely" considering a career in law.

"Law is something that I have been interested in for as long as I can remember - analysing evidence and issues, trying to persuade through argument, being able to help protect someone's rights," she said.

Her career aspirations are encouraged by both her family and her school.

Molly said the Law Society program was really interesting and so relevant to what she had learnt in Legal Studies and Mock Trial.

"The most recent webinar was about advocacy and I learnt about different tactics to use in a court room and how these can be more effective - and also how these skills of persuasion can be useful in everyday life," she said.

"I thought I had a fair understanding of advocacy from my involvement in Mock Trial and debating, and from observing various court proceedings.

"However, the webinar showed me how there is so much more involved in this skill and how it varies, and also the unique rules that apply in different courts.

"There was a great example of a barrister accusing someone of fraud, but doing so in a really calm voice.

"I am excited about the upcoming webinars as well, culminating in some very specific guidance for Mock Trial.

"This course is so inspiring and has heightened my interest in law and the system within which it operates."

The Future Lawyers Program will run over six weeks with different topics and lecturers and will conclude in June 2020.

As far as Molly is concerned she said she would "definitely continue learning about law and the Australian legal system" when the course had ended.

"I will also be able to share my learning and encourage and assist future Mock Trial teams," she said.

"This course has inspired me to continue pursuing my dream of becoming a lawyer when I am older.

"I have loved being part of my school's Mock Trial team for the past 21/2 years. It consumes a lot of time, but it also challenges you to leave your comfort zone and to keep developing your skills.

"The organisation, analysis and communication skills have also crossed over and enhanced my academic study."

Molly said the content from the Young Lawyers program was also useful and relevant to her school studies.

"I love how the presenters are people who have a career in law and inspire us with their experience," she said.

"I find it really interesting and inspiring to hear what it is like to pursue this as a career from their perspective and real life experience."



 Richard Harvey. Photo supplied

President of the Law Society of NSW, Richard Harvey, said the Future Lawyers Program provided student participants with an opportunity to learn from experienced and knowledgeable solicitors within the comfort of their own home.

"When it became clear that Law Society's face-to-face Mock Law Programs would be impacted by COVID-19 lockdown restrictions we moved quickly to create a new online format for high school students," Mr Harvey said.

"During these uncertain times it is important to ensure we adapt to our current environment and create new opportunities for students considering a career in the law."

Topics covered in the program include An Introduction to Australian Legal Systems, Advocacy, Law Reform, Policy and Ethics, as well as Mock trial topics to keep teams on their toes.

"At the end of each week a quiz will be sent to participants and the results tallied," Mr Harvey said.

"After the six-week program concludes we will be announcing the student with the highest overall quiz score.

"All students that complete the program will receive a participation certificate and the student with the highest overall quiz score will receive a further 'Top Student' certificate."

Mr Harvey said the Future Lawyers program was being provided free of charge for all schools and students.

"My thanks to those solicitors who have volunteered their time to assist in delivering this program and are generously imparting their knowledge and experience to the next generation of lawyers," he said.

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