

I am pleased to report on our work in 2013, a fulfilling year with efforts dedicated to providing relevant and effective services to our members, as well as ensuring their compliance with relevant professional rules and regulations.

It is common for some industries to have high and low seasons during the year, but for the Secretariat, it was one exciting high season throughout 2013.

Our membership approached the 9,000 mark, reaching 8,967 at the end of the year. To serve the needs of a growing membership, the Secretariat has expanded with six additional headcounts, namely a Member Services Officer, an External Affairs Officer, a Standards and Development Officer, a Monitoring Accountant, an Investigation Counsel, and a Librarian (part-time).

With the support and guidance of the Council and Committee Members, our team of 97 performed a wide range of tasks for our members. To highlight some of the statistically quantifiable ones, in 2013, we:

- (a) organised 512 training courses totaling 17,365 attendances, and accredited 4,712 courses under the Continuing Professional Development ("CPD") Scheme and the Risk Management Education Programme;
- (b) administered the annual Overseas Lawyers Qualification Examination for a total of 239 candidates;
- (c) coordinated the activities of 13 Law Society sports teams and 9 recreational teams;
- (d) organised over 130 social and networking events for our members including Family Fun Day, Summer Party, Sports Night, Christmas Party, Cooking Competition, Annual Cocktail, Spring Reception, luncheon talks, and many others;
- (e) issued over 30 submissions on public consultations and two press statements on issues relevant to the legal profession;
- (f) received over 25 delegations from Greater China and coordinated three overseas official visits by the Council to Beijing, Taiwan, and Korea;
- (g) arranged the signing of five memoranda of understanding / cooperation agreements with overseas professional bodies including the Luxembourg Bar Association, the Kaohsiung Bar Association, the Guangxi Lawyers Association, the All China Lawyers Association and the Shenzhen Lawyers Association;
- (h) organised the selection and sponsorship of 14 young lawyers as well as their participation, together with other Law Society representatives, at seven international conferences hosted by the American Bar Association, International Bar Association, LAWASIA, Commonwealth Law Association, Inter-Pacific Bar Association, AIJA (International Association of Young Lawyers) and the Union Internationale des Avocats;
- (i) coordinated over 50 community talks and public projects including Law Week, Teen Talk, the Legal Pioneer Mentorship Programme and the Helpline on free legal advice;
- (j) processed applications for the subscription of 8,967 members, 898 associate members and 236 student members, registration of 521 trainee solicitor contracts, admission of 627 solicitors, issue of 7,864 practising certificates in English and 3,387 in Chinese, registration of 1,520 foreign lawyers and 11 foreign firms, as well as issue of 507 certificates of standing;
- (k) handled 834 complaints on practitioners and employees of law firms and submitted 9 matters to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal Convenor;
- (l) conducted CPD audit on 485 practitioners;
- (m) visited 35 law firms on 83 occasions to provide assistance on their accounting procedures and to inspect documents to ensure compliance with the *Solicitors' Accounts Rules*; and

(n) administered the intervention into the practice of one law firm and vested the clients' accounts of one law firm in the Council for the protection of public interest.

Much of our work, however, is less quantifiable. Thus, more descriptive details on the work that we did in 2013 are set out in the respective reports of each Standing Committee that follows.

Our financial position remained sound and healthy. The fee rates of membership subscription, application for practising certificate, and registration as a foreign lawyer and a foreign firm were unchanged for the year.

On personnel movement, with the retirement of Joyce Wong after 20 years of service at the Law Society, Kenneth Fok was promoted to Director of Practitioners Affairs in November.

The mission that underlies everything we do for our members is to ensure that our work will make a positive difference to our members' legal practice. As a professional body, our goal of deepening our members' sense of belonging to The Law Society guides how we handle our daily work and interact with our members. Our efforts to build a friendly and approachable team to whom our members will turn as the first port of call for support have started to take shape. It was heartwarming to receive public recognition and appreciation in the media with regards to the professionalism and courtesy with which our colleagues handled enquiries.

As always, the Secretariat continues to adhere to The Law Society's guiding values of excellence, transparency, empathy, and fairness when performing our work. It has been my privilege to serve the profession as the Secretary General of The Law Society, and I look forward to the challenging yet enjoyable work in the year ahead.

Heidi Chu
Secretary General

