

FOREWORD

The publication of the inaugural issue of the *Melbourne Journal of International Law* is an important event in the vast and varied field of international law scholarship. A university journal carries the best and most original thinking of the younger generation, who will in their time be shaping the contours of international law to meet the needs of the new century. Especially in our time, when so many new departments of international law are being moulded and so many traditional departments are being reshaped — environmental law, space law, the handling of non-state actors, the evolution of socially oriented concepts such as rights and duties *erga omnes* and inter-generational rights — these voices are invaluable.

International law would not have grown to its present stature without the benefit of a range of ideas constantly passed into it from a variety of sources — academic and professional; religious and secular; individually oriented and socially driven; and traditional and modern. A law journal is a forum for the expression of these ideas and reaches through to the heart of the international law establishment.

Australia has much to contribute in a special way because of the vast cultural spread that it embodies, and the University of Melbourne is well positioned for this purpose. The *Journal* is fully refereed and covers both public and private international law. It strikes the important balance between issues of practical and academic import, while maintaining an emphasis on Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. The *Journal* is set up and produced by an editorial board composed of an enthusiastic and committed group of law students from the University of Melbourne.

We live in an age increasingly dominated by technology: legal systems, both national and international, must rise to meet this new challenge and responsibility. We also live in the midst of epoch-making changes in the political landscape of the entire global community. An all-embracing network of commerce is encircling the planet and giving new nuances to old problems such as autonomy and self-determination. The concept of active international cooperation has replaced the old concept of mere passive coexistence.

These are exciting times for international law and provide a fascinating backdrop for the emergence of a new journal of international law. I am sure this new journal will rise to this challenge and give young Australian international lawyers a new forum from which their voices and views can make their impact on the vibrant discipline of international law, upon which so much of the world's welfare depends.

I congratulate all those responsible for this journal and wish it much distinction as it carves a niche for itself in the rich and immensely varied world of international law.

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