Introduction to New Staff at Law Claims

The level of support and assistance Law Claims provide to practitioners has just been bolstered with the addition of two new staff members. Geoff Thomas and Gianna Di Stefano have recently joined Law Claims and already their legal knowledge and expertise is benefiting practitioners. Both Geoff and Gianna have specific roles and responsibilities to fulfill and look forward to establishing close working relationships with many practitioners.

Geoff Thomas

Geoff Thomas commenced with Law Claims on 19 January 2009 as Senior Solicitor.

Geoff was admitted in December 1975, and was subsequently employed with Harrison and Partners for five years, followed by four years as a partner at Tindall Gask & Co. He then became a partner at Jervis, Smith & Thomas, subsequently known as Jervis Thomas & Doyle and then Jervis Thomas until that firm closed in mid 2006, and following which he was then a consultant at Fountain & Bonig.

During his 33 years in private practice, Geoff has practised in a broad range of areas, including workers compensation, personal injury claims (both motor vehicle accident and public liability), employment and industrial law, insurance law, wills and estates and general commercial work for small and medium business enterprises.

Geoff was appointed a Member of the Law Claims Committee in 1998 and then served as the Chair of that Committee, and was a Director of Lawguard Management Pty Ltd, from 1999 until joining Law Claims in his current position.

Geoff’s main areas of responsibilities include:

- receiving notification of claims and potential claims;
- managing claims files in an expeditious and appropriate manner which is responsive to the needs of the insured and underwriters, including:-
  a. preparing appropriate documentation and letters of instructions and terms of engagement to panel solicitors and Counsel;
  b. liaising with panel solicitors on the conduct of litigated claims;
  c. attending pre-trial conferences, evaluation conferences and mediations, and instructing panel solicitors on settlement and general conduct of claims;
  d. reporting to and consulting with Underwriters and the Claims Committee.
Law Claims encourages the notification of circumstances which may potentially give rise to a claim. Pursuant to the policy of insurance, notification must be made in writing. However, practitioners are encouraged to telephone Law Claims in order to discuss any potential issue that may give rise to a claim that is affecting their practice. Geoff Thomas can be contacted on (08) 8410 7677.

Gianna Di Stefano

Gianna Di Stefano has taken up the position of PI Risk Manager as at 25 May 2009.

Gianna was admitted in December 1992 and commenced working at Xenophou & Co (now Xenophon & Co) for over two years before her employment as a solicitor at Lawson Downs (now Lawson Smith Lawyers) for three years. Gianna returned to Xenophon & Co following Nick Xenophon’s election to Parliament and undertook the management of his suburban practice for the following 12 years.

Throughout Gianna’s 16 years of private practice, she has represented both plaintiffs and defendants predominantly in the area of personal injury litigation with specialist interest in medical negligence, motor vehicle accidents, workers compensation and public liability claims.

In her current position, Gianna will be undertaking law claims work in order to assist Geoff Thomas, Senior Solicitor and Libby Bishop, Director. Gianna can receive notification of claims and potential claims on (08) 8410 7677.

Gianna’s main areas of responsibilities include:

- managing, implementing and evaluating policies, direction and program scope set in collaboration with the Risk Management Advisory Group;
- managing the Risk Management Education Program (RMEP) including updating and development of educational packages to reflex emerging areas of legal risk;
- Law Claims Risk Management database development including review of all closed claims files to extract risk management issues;
- managing publication of monthly Riskwatch and Risk Alert articles for the Law Society Bulletin;
- analysing notifications of claims and circumstances for emerging legal practice risks and trends;
- providing risk management advice to practitioners.

Effective risk management can improve the performance of your practice and reduce practitioner’s exposure to complaints and claims. We offer a wide range of risk management topics from which to choose and encourage your attendance and participation in such sessions which can be held “in-house”. Gianna Di Stefano can be contacted on (08) 8410 7677.

For any queries about this, or other Risk Management Services offered by Law Claims, please contact Gianna Di Stefano, PI Risk Manager on 8410 7677.