



Media Release

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OPA IN-HOUSE LAWYER NAMED GOVERNMENT LAWYER OF THE YEAR

In-house lawyer for the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA), Phil Grano, was awarded the President of the Law Institute of Victoria Government Lawyer award for 2010.

The award is the second this year for Phil; in June he received the Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday honours list for services to people with a disability and to the law.

In the nomination for the LIV award, Phil was described as possessing exceptional skills and knowledge combined with compassion and commitment to people with disabilities.

The Public Advocate, Colleen Pearce, said that Phil played a pivotal role in the disability law community in Victoria.

"OPA is lucky to have Phil's services and exceptional commitment to the lives of vulnerable Victorians," Ms Pearce said.

Phil was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1993 and left in 1997 working as executive officer of Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service and at OPA as principal legal officer since 2002.

He was involved in a number of self-advocacy, employment and workplace services for people with a disability and held an executive position at Corpus Christi, a home for men addicted to alcohol, from 1994-2009.

Phil has been involved in complex litigation at VCAT and the Supreme Court where he has helped secure or protect the rights of people with a disability in a number of landmark cases. He provided advice to OPA during the well-known 'Korp case'.

At OPA, Phil provides legal advice to the Community Visitors Program, the Independent Third Person Program, the Advocate Guardianship Program and the Advice Service.

Phil has chaired a number of LIV committees including the Disability Law Committee and has provided education to his fellow lawyers on a wide range of disability and ethics topics. He facilitates relationships between the private, the community and public sectors most recently in convening stakeholders to address the issue of elder law financial abuse.

Law students routinely undertake placements at OPA as part of Phil's commitment to the next generation of the state's lawyers.

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