



The Victorian Bar Foundation

The Victorian Bar Foundation Limited
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May 2020

Dear Member of the Bar,

These are unprecedented times. The Victorian Bar Foundation acknowledges the deep uncertainty facing members of the Victorian Bar and the wider community as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the face of this uncertainty, the Foundation was pleased to recently hear from two young students it has supported, Robina Ali and Hussain Alamein. In 2010, Robina came to Australia from Afghanistan as an orphan refugee. Ten years later, as you can read about in her **attached** written piece, Robina is now in a position to undertake her Juris Doctor and build a career as a lawyer as she hopes to do. Hussain came to Australia with his family fleeing the risk of persecution from Iraq and then Iran. He notes his gratitude for the support he has received to overcome the financial and mental barriers of being a refugee from a regional area trying to attain a medical degree in his **attached** written piece.

The purpose of this letter is to encourage those of you who are in a position to do so, despite these uncertain times, to donate to the Victorian Bar Foundation.

As you may know, the Victorian Bar Foundation is the prime vehicle through which the Victorian Bar contributes to the objective of progressing the interest of justice in Victoria, particularly through legal education.

The Foundation is quite separate and distinct from the Victorian Bar Benevolent Fund, which focuses on assisting members of counsel who are in need of such assistance.

In the course of recent financial years, the Victorian Bar Foundation has made donations to the following causes:

- a) **the Menzies Foundation's** establishment of **the Sir Ninian Stephen Menzies Scholarship in International Law**, a scholarship providing for its recipient to undertake post-graduate studies in international law at a prestigious university in Australia or abroad
<https://www.menziesfoundation.org.au/what-we-do/law-scholarships>
- b) **Trinity College's** establishment of the **John Gibson Scholarship**, a scholarship (in honour of deceased Victorian Bar member, John Gibson) providing for a student from a refugee background, such as Robina Ali and Hussain Alamein, to attend Trinity College
<https://www.trinity.unimelb.edu.au/about/news-media/news/supporting-the-john-gibson-scholarship>
- c) **the Melbourne Law School's** establishment of the **James Merralls Visiting Fellowship in Law**, a fellowship (in honour of Victorian Bar member, James Merralls AM QC) providing for world leading private or constitutional law scholars to teach at Melbourne Law School
<http://law.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/mls-news/issue-11-june-2014/james-merralls-visiting-fellowship-in-law>;

- d) the **Monash University Refugee Scholarship Program**, supporting specific scholarships to eligible refugees across both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees
<https://www.monash.edu/study/fees-scholarships/scholarships/find-a-scholarship/monash-asylum-seekers-scholarship-4094>);
- e) **Victorian Bar Foundation Student Achievement Award and Mentoring Program**, the Foundation supports a High School Student Scholarship and Mentoring Program under which \$1,000 is allocated to student prize winners from 15 schools in the City of Hume region. This program was designed to provide encouragement and support to students from 15 outer north western suburban high schools who have shown an interest in and aptitude for the study of the law. You can see the students accepting their awards in the attached photo taken late last year. (<https://www.vicbar.com.au/public/community/victorian-bar-foundation>); and
- f) the **Indigenous Barristers' Development Fund**, a fund administered by the Bar's Indigenous Justice Committee, to assist in the retention and development of Indigenous Barristers at the Victorian Bar.

In the longer term, the Victorian Bar Foundation's aim is to create a freestanding corpus that is able to regularly contribute not only to purposes similar those described above but also to other scholarships appropriate educational beneficiaries and like initiatives.

The Victorian Bar Foundation was established as a not-for-profit organisation in 2011. At present the Board of the Victorian Bar Foundation comprises:

The Hon Justice John Digby (Chairman), The Hon Chief Justice William Alstergren, The Honourable Justice Paul Anastassiou, The Hon Justice Stewart Anderson (Treasurer), The Hon Susan Crennan AC QC, Ross Gillies QC, John Karkar QC, Neil Young QC, Philip Crutchfield QC, Jennifer Batrouney QC, Georgie Coleman, Justin Hooper (Honorary Secretary) and Katherine Lorenz (Victorian Bar Foundation Company Secretary).

On behalf of the Foundation's directors, I ask those of you who are in a position to make a donation to the **Victorian Bar Foundation** do so before 30 June 2020.

Yours sincerely,



John Digby
Chairman

Att. Victorian Bar Foundation Donation Form
Victorian Bar Foundation Student Achievement Award and Mentoring Program photo
Robina Ail written piece
Hussain Alamein written piece



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DONATION FORM

I hereby donate the amount of \$ _____ to the Victorian Bar Foundation.

NAME:

ADDRESS:
(Must be provided for forwarding of receipt.)

EMAIL:

SIGNATURE:

Please complete one of the following payment options:

PAYMENT OPTION A I have enclosed a cheque made payable to the **Victorian Bar Foundation**

PAYMENT OPTION B Please charge my VISA MasterCard (please tick one)

Name on card:

Card number

Expiry month: Year:

Signature of card holder:

Please forward this form with payment to the Bar office addressed to:

Victorian Bar Foundation
Level 5, Owen Dixon Chambers East
205 William Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
Email: vicbar@vicbar.com.au

Tax receipts will be issued once your donation has been processed.



The Honourable Justice John Digby (Chairman, Victorian Bar Foundation), Hume City Mayor Geoff Porter and Hume City Councillor Leigh Johnson with the winning legal studies students from schools in the City of Hume, who were awarded a \$1,000 prize in recognition of their academic excellence, as part of the Foundation's Student Achievement Award and Mentoring Program.

I am very privileged to be sharing about the help and support that Victorian Bar Foundation, via the John Gibson Scholarship provided through Trinity College. Before I continue to share about my incredible experience, I would like to take this chance to tell you about myself first. My name is Robina Ali. I came to Australia in 2010 from Afghanistan as an orphan refugee. Despite having no formal schooling, understanding of Australia's language or culture, I was determined to learn as girls do not have the opportunity to go to school in Afghanistan. This led me to study English at the Noble Park English Language School before transitioning to Dandenong High School.

After completing VCE, I realised that higher education was the best way to gain independence and move beyond the boundaries set for women in my community and country. As a result of my hard work and academic achievements, I received a direct-entry to the University of Melbourne. However, completing my studies seemed impossible as I was paying upfront for my university tuition fee, paying for my living and I had no family and financial support, resulting in me needing to work multiple jobs to finance my university education. Hence, my dream of completing my degree then going onto studying a JD at the University of Melbourne and becoming a lawyer would have shattered, if I did not get the support from Trinity College, the Victorian Bar Foundation and the John Gibson Scholarship.

My time at Trinity College has been an enormous experience, from getting the best educational support to building one of the closest friendships I have ever had. I was able to concentrate more on my studies, plan for the future and have less burden and worries. The staff at the college were always supportive and encouraging me to achieve better. As a result, my academic performance improved, I had hope in my life to accomplish all the things I have dreamt about, and this was only possible with the support from the Scholarship.

I would like to thank all the people who have contributed towards the Scholarship and due to their great efforts that I could finish and successfully graduated in July 2019. It is only because of generous and kind people like you, who have gone above and beyond to have given me the opportunity to get a world class education and follow my dreams. As a result of all the people who have contributed towards my success I can now hope to further my study in Juris Doctor and build a career as a lawyer in the near future.

Once again thanks to everyone who has helped me along this journey. I will always be grateful to think that you were a part of my successful journey that has still to continue.

Robina Ali



Dear Victoria Bar foundation.

It is with great pleasure that I write to you to express my gratitude for providing me the John Gibson Memorial Scholarship as this has enabled me to fulfil my dream of becoming a doctor.

Growing up in a family of Iraqi refugees that were twice displaced fleeing risk of persecution from Iraq then Iran to come to Australia, it was hard to imagine I'd grow up to become a medical student and hopefully a doctor soon. One of the main challenges that we faced as refugees was community involvement and integration. Luckily for us, the community in Shepparton took my family and I in with open arms and as such I have been able to excel not only in my academic life but also actively participated in leadership roles throughout my time in high school.

I was also lucky to have the mentorship and inspiration of my older brothers Ali and Mohammad who both attended the University of Melbourne and Trinity College on scholarships. Having their support and story inspired me to work hard as I realised that attending university was a realistic goal. It was only in hindsight many years later that I understood the value of my support network, which allowed me to focus on my studies and the pursue my dreams while many of my friends either lost their motivation or could not have the means to follow their dreams.

However, despite the supportive environment, my parents could not financially support my move to Melbourne. To be able to support myself throughout the university, I would have most likely had to take a gap year to work and would have had to spend many hours during academic years working. This would have distracted me from my studies, and it would have certainly hurt my chances of achieving the type of competitive results needed to be accepted into a postgraduate medical degree.

However, I kept my focus during high school and studied as hard as I could and applied for scholarships that would help me continue my studies. I completed my ATAR with a score that got me into a Bachelor of Biomedicine at the University of Melbourne and this, fortunately, also led to receiving the John Gibson Memorial Scholarship.

The John Gibson Memorial Scholarship meant that I was able to overcome the financial and mental barriers of being a refugee student from a regional area trying to attain a medical degree. It meant that I was able to move into Trinity College, a community that fostered my academic potential such that I was able to bridge the gaps in my studies and complete the Bachelor of Biomedicine with First Class Honours. These results led to me securing a place in Melbourne University's Doctor of Medicine Program and I am now six months away from becoming a medical doctor. During my studies I chose to spend nearly 2.5 years of my medical placement in Shepparton where I felt like I am finally starting to give back to the community in Shepparton.

Seeing how much I have achieved as a result of this scholarship, I always acknowledge the importance of the John Gibson Memorial Scholarship to help me overcome many barriers and finally be well on my way to becoming a doctor. I am and always will be grateful to the Victorian Bar Foundation for believing in me and I hope to one day pass on this investment in me to others and give back to the community.

Hussain Alamein

