

Kerryn Christie

Lawyer

HSC Year: 2005 ATAR: 93.2



Training (eg TAFE, University etc)

- Diploma of Legal Practice at the University of Newcastle 2010
- Bachelor of Laws at the University of Newcastle 2010
- Bachelor of Communications at the University of Newcastle 2008

Special Educational Achievements

- Listed on University of Newcastle Commendation list for 2007 and 2008 for having a distinction average across all subjects.

Jobs

- June 2011-Dec 2011 – Secondment at Coal & Allied operations, managed by Rio Tinto Coal Australia
- Jan 2011- present – Lawyer at Sparke Helmore Lawyers, Upper Hunter, specialising in property and energy and resources law.
- June 2009- Dec 2010 – Assistant to Paul Marr, Criminal defence barrister in the Newcastle District Court
- June 2009 – December 2009 – Practical Placement at Legal Aid (Civil department) Newcastle

What are you doing now?

I am currently on secondment (loan) from Sparke Helmore Lawyers to Coal & Allied in their land and property department. I will return to work at Sparkes in the New Year.

Relevant Experiences since leaving school

- 2007 – 2010 Head mentor of the Supporting other Students mentoring program

Interesting Experiences

From the moment I started law school I wanted to work for Sparke Helmore, so I went along to a career evening during my first year, and marched straight up to the managing partner at Newcastle and asked her for a job. She smiled (at my naivety no doubt), gave me her card and said to call her when I was in third year. I kept that card on my corkboard for three years and then called her, as the 'girl from the careers night three years ago'. She let me apply for a summer clerkship there, when normally they are only offered to 4th years. I was unsuccessful, BUT, I did get to meet the HR people.

The following year was the GFC so there was no summer clerk, but I rang HR and asked them if I could come in and stack books for them over the summer for free anyway. They said I could come in for another interview, just in case, so I did. Still no job.

Then finally, at the end of my degree (some 5 years after first meeting the managing partner), I ring up HR and tell them I've seen an ad for the Sparkes job in energy and resources and that I want it. I go in for another interview (which at this stage is pretty much a, 'so how you been? Still with your boyfriend?' kind of chat rather than interview) and here I am 😊

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The moral of the story is to man up (or girl up) and go tell these important people that they need to hire you because you have a list of 50 reasons why you'd smash their job. Then, when they give it to you, go and smash it as you promised you would.

Other comments /Memories from Chatham High Days:

Ahh memories...Far too many to list, but some of my most favourite are:

- When we were little year 7's on year 12 muck-up day, we came to school to find all the sheep spray painted pink, and a tower of tables taller than F block in bottom quad. We were so impressed...until we realised we were the water bomb targets...
- We were in year 8 during the height of the Harry Potter craze. We made our teachers call out our Harry Potter names when they were marking the roll. I only answered to 'Ginny Weasley' for the entirety of year 8...Although Mrs Giles INSISTED we use our proper names on our end of year exams for science.
- Years 9 and 10 were our uber-awesome debating years so we smashed that scene (and showed Newcastle High who was boss)
- In year 12 I got busted coming back to school slightly late after lunch. I'll never forget Mr Langley yelling (having spied me in the senior carpark from his classroom window in E Block (when we HAD an E Block!!!)) "MISS CHRISTIE! I DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR YOUR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS! GET YOUR BE-HIND IN THIS CLASSROOM!"
- Being part of the generation that helped Awaba to a double trifecta in the school carnivals (yes, we won all three carnivals, two years in a row).
- Years 11 and 12 were TOUGH, but some of my best memories are of representing the school (enjoy being in the paper, it doesn't happen again once you leave Taree!) and giving speeches to the school assembly for things when I was school captain...I always did enjoy an epic speech. Those were the days.
- All in all we were a fun year, a naughty year (at times a challenging year) and I'm not trying to impress you, but we were also one of the cleverest the school has seen 😊

Tips for our students

Whilst completing HSC

- There really is no other way than to work hard! Don't try to reinvent the wheel in year 12, buddy up with someone and share the workload. There are no prizes for having done it all by yourself, it's the mark at the end that counts.

Going to University

- Apply for all the scholarships you can. Yes, it is a pain because often the applications are pages and pages long and need lots of info and documents, but you have a good chance of landing one of the regional students ones, and they make a massive difference to your time at uni if you don't need to worry so much about part-time work (Mine made \$28,000 worth of difference actually!)
- Be picky with your uni choice. They don't tell you this at the time, but the uni you go to will partly determine what job opportunities you get. For example, there are some law firms that will (strangely) only take Sydney graduates. Go to the best uni your marks will allow, particularly if you want to aim high in the job market.

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- Do try to get good marks at uni, your job depends on it. A wise lecturer once said to me that, 'P's may get degrees, but they won't get you a job. There are plenty of graduates flipping burgers at McDonalds right now'. You need to be competitive in the job market. We were told once that there are more law students in NSW than there are Lawyers in Australia...The job isn't a 'given' when you have the degree.
- If you're struggling for cash, sign up for mentoring programs. They often pay you in book vouchers, so it's possible to get your textbooks 'paid for' by the uni.
- Don't forget about your resume when you get there! Often we leave school with kick-ass resumes, but once we get to uni we coast along for a couple of years doing not much in the way of awesomeness. You do not want to get to your job interview with a 3-4 year gap in that CV...do the mentoring programs, get certificates (in fact, become a hoarder of certificates).

Getting a job

- Get as much practical experience before you finish uni as possible. Once you leave uni you'll realise how very little you actually know about working in your career of choice, so if you can get practical experience somewhere first, it makes you a more desirable candidate.
- Do keep some extra curricular activities going, because you need to have something else to talk about in a job interview other than your marks. Employers want to see that you're not a robot!
- Apply for lots of jobs so you can go to lots of interviews for practice. Then, when the job you really want comes up, you'll ace the interview for it.
- Use your initiative and make contacts. It's very much a 'who you know' world in graduate jobs.

Other Tips

I know the HSC seems like Everest in terms of your life's position right now, but it is not worth losing your hair over (as I did). Once you get to uni, however you get there, if you even want to go, you'll discover that it really didn't matter, and there are thousands of ways to get where you want to go, and half the time you don't even know where that is when you're still at school.

It's allllll good, it'll allllll be OK.

If all else fails, you find a way, because that's what winners do.