Australia Day Honours

Graeme Leonard

Monash University congratulates Mr Graeme Leonard (LLB 1995, BAI(Hons) 1996) who was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia on Australia Day for service to the community as an executive member of a range of peak Jewish organisations.

Graeme is a Board Member of Monash University's Foundation for Jewish Studies, and lectures part time at the Monash Faculty of Law.

Water water everywhere

Fifth year Arts/Law student Anna Landau recently travelled to the Middle East to look at an issue close to home – water management. Her visit was made possible through the Monash Law Faculty internship program which has developed arrangements with 11 organisations – mostly international – to offer unique opportunities for law students at Monash. The Ecoplace/Friends of the Earth Middle East Internship is offered to one student each year who has the chance to work with the largest grassroots environmental organisation in the world.

Joining forces with Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) – a non-government organisation dedicated to environmental cross-border issues between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Territories – Anna helped on a new water management initiative for the region.

Despite being one of the most water scarce areas on earth, the Middle East is home to the world’s most sacred river, the Jordan River. Described as a thriving water source in the Bible, in reality it is closer to a polluted, raw sewage canal. The Dead Sea, the world’s saltiest water body and an important tourist attraction for the area, is also facing dire implications and is dropping one metre each year, affecting the important tourism industry of the surrounding area.

Anna’s role included writing a letter requesting a look at the possible breaches posed by the World Bank’s plans alongside the Israeli and Jordanian governments to build a 200km water conduit bringing sea water from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea.

The move, which means dredging the coral reefs and changing the composition of the waters of the Dead Sea itself, is believed to overlook vital alternatives, such as rejuvenating the Jordan River, the Dead Sea’s natural fresh water source.

Anna also joined FoEME’s international delegation from Kenya, Italy, Germany, England, the United States and Israel on a week-long tour through Jordan, Israel and the West Bank.

According to Anna, “Israel and the Middle East have been dealing with water scarcity issues for a long time now, and I believe there is much Australia can learn from this region’s experiences – both good and bad. Water is precious, as we are well aware here in Australia. It is a resource everyone needs. The beauty of FoEME’s work is that it is able to advance sustainable regional development and create peaceful dialogue and cooperation within the turbulent region.”