

Lavan hires National Indigenous Law Student of the Year 2016

1 February 2017

Lavan is proud to announce the appointment of National Indigenous Law Awards (NILA) student of the year, Johanna Byrne, in the firm's 2017 graduate intake.

Johanna, who will receive her Bachelor of Laws qualification from Southern Cross University in March, was presented with the award by the Attorney-General's department. The NILA award recognises the achievements of Indigenous Australians who improve justice outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Johanna impressed the NILA judges with her idea for establishing a legal clinic at Southern Cross University. At the clinic, law students and students from other disciplines will provide advice to people in the Indigenous community in situations where they may not otherwise have access to advice.

Johanna overcame personal tragedy to complete her law degree, raising seven children by herself after the unexpected death of her husband in 2014. Seeking a new start, Johanna relocated from Coffs Harbour to Perth where she continued her studies online. Johanna leaves her role of the last 12 months at Legal Aid Western Australia to join Lavan.

Johanna played an active role in the student community and in the School of Law and Justice at Southern Cross University and, in 2016, Johanna was awarded the Bruce Miles Foundation scholarship which provides Indigenous law students with textbooks.

Managing partner Dean Hely said "We are very proud to welcome Johanna to our firm and to support the continuing development of her professional career. Johanna has shown amazing resilience, commitment and tenacity in overcoming personal tragedy to raise seven children on her own while excelling in her studies and university life.

Lavan hopes to play an important role in supporting Johanna in her legal career and in achieving her aspirations to support the disadvantaged in the community including the Indigenous community".

Johanna Byrne said, "It is an honour to receive this award and I look forward to taking the next step in my legal career working with the highly professional team at Lavan. What attracted me to Lavan was their genuine reconciliation values which are reflected in their Reconciliation Action Plan."