THE LAWRENCE-BRENNAN ESSAY COMPETITION

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry (RANZCP, Forensic Faculty) and the Medico-Legal Society of Queensland Inc. (MLSQ) agreed in 2017 to jointly establish an academic essay prize that will be awarded annually and is open to advanced trainees and recent Fellows within all medical and surgical sub-specialities, and lawyers (Barristers and Solicitors) under 5 years admission.

The competition name honours Dr Joan Lawrence AO, an eminent Queensland psychiatrist who devoted many years to promoting greater rapport between medicine and the law; and prominent Queenslander, the former Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, the Honourable Gerard Brennan AC KBE QC.

The 2019 MLSQ Annual Conference theme is, “Driving Me Crazy: The Impact of Impairment”. The conference will address both medical and legal aspects of physical, mental and legal capacity to drive; including duty of care and vicarious liability. Driving is an important aspect of personal independence and is therefore highly valued – whether for work or play. Nevertheless, motor vehicle accidents cause harm. The public must be protected from the impaired driver.

❖ How do we assess all the elements associated with impairment and the capacity to drive safely?
❖ What are the factors which have the most significant impact on one’s ability to drive?
❖ In a professional context, do these same factors also impact on our ability to work effectively?

We invite candidates to write a 2000 word essay based on this quote from British author, broadcaster and tech philosopher, Dr Tom Chatfield:
"Modern motor vehicles are safer and more reliable than they have ever been - yet more than 1 million people are killed in car accidents around the world each year, and more than 50 million are injured. Why? Largely because one perilous element in the mechanics of driving remains unperfected by progress: the human being"

Please consider this quote in addressing the question:

"Is the advent of self-driving vehicles the answer?"

Please discuss the issues raised from the perspective of your own discipline with reference to relevant clinical issues, research, or case law. Essays should be written in a style that is accessible to both lawyers and doctors.

We have three distinguished judges drawn from the senior ranks of medicine, law and academia. All essays will be submitted anonymously to the Judges, so please attach a separate front sheet with your name, email address and contact phone number. The Judges will be provided with a standardised set of criteria for marking.

Essay submissions and any further enquiries should be emailed to MLSQ committee member Dr Curtis Gray at: drgray.amicus@gmail.com

The closing date for essay submission is 5.00pm, Friday 19 July 2019.

Submissions cannot be accepted after this date.

The winner will be announced at the MLSQ 2019 Annual Conference on Saturday 17th August 2019. The winning essay will be published by MLSQ in the conference handbook.

The winner will receive a cheque for $1000 and complimentary registration for the MLSQ 2019 conference at the Surfers Paradise Marriott Resort (accommodation not included).