

Biography for CBA Executive election: Rebecca Lee

The CBA has played a vital role in challenging the Government's plans for cutting legal aid. There are greater challenges yet ahead. I am very keen to contribute to the work of CBA in challenging the Government on these important issues which have the potential to do great damage to the criminal justice system. I am particularly concerned about the position of the junior bar, which faces the triple predicament of reduced fees, competition from solicitor advocates and the consequences of a diminishing number of two counsel cases. Each affects the junior bar now, and the viability of a high quality and diverse independent criminal bar in the years ahead. This in turn is likely to have dramatic consequences for access to justice and the quality of advocacy in the criminal courts. These are fundamental issues that have to be confronted now. I am also concerned that the Bar works in tandem with solicitors, recognising that a successful future for one branch of the legal profession is dependent on a viable future for all.

Prior to being called to the Bar in 2004 and commencing pupillage in 2005, I was employed at the Law Society (2002-05) and the British Council (1996-2002) in policy advice/research positions. In both organisations I was involved in or party to policy development and the 'corporate' response to government policy proposals. This gives me experience which I hope would assist in the CBA's effective engagement with ministers, officials and regulators when further reforms are proposed.

In the last two years I have been actively involved in my Chambers' response to government consultation on changes to legal aid, both in contributing to our Chambers written response and attending protests and meetings addressing the proposals, and in raising the profile of these important issues in the media.

The CBA has a lot of important work ahead. It requires committed and hardworking members of the profession to make their contribution. I am eager to be part of this effort and to contribute to the work of the CBA in defending the profession from invidious and damaging policies in respect of legal aid which jeopardise the future both of the criminal bar and of the criminal justice system as a whole.