

## Anti-Poverty Awards for Young Victorians: 2004 Recipients

Here is a short snapshot of the 2004 Award Recipients:

The winner of the overall award was:

- Ms Sophie Kovic. When applying for the awards, Sophie was a junior solicitor at the major law firm Mallesons Stephen Jaques. Active in community life from an early age, Sophie's recent contributions in a local context had been through Malleson's community social responsibility programs, including agency programs such as Good Start Breakfast Club and Learning for Life. It is customary for junior solicitors to be involved in Pro-Bono work. Sophie relished the opportunities this gave her in dealing with legal issues for the homeless and refugees. She worked to expand Malleson's offerings in the latter area by encouraging pro-bono associates into migration agent training. Sophie's particular passion with respect to the eradication of poverty is in the area of international humanitarian services and human rights. She sought and was offered an internship with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. This took her to Quito in Ecuador where she worked with local officers of the UNHCR to provide immediate life necessities and longer term resettlement options for displaced persons from Colombia. Sophie debt financed a significant portion of this experience herself. Sophie used her award to undertake another program with the UNHCR, this time in Baku, Azerbaijan. As a result of her award she decided to resign from Malleson's and travel to France to increase her French language skills and to study for a Master of International Law degree. This will increase her opportunities to work in major international refugee advocacy agencies.

Finalists who received encouragement awards were:

- Mr Tam Nguyen: for his work to develop the *Hands for Hope* organisation (with its particular emphasis on promoting an extended educational experience for children in rural Vietnam) as well as establishment of the Australian chapter of *Engineers Without Borders*
- Ms Katherine Marshall: for her development of structures for facilitating social work to asylum seekers. Katherine's work with the Hotham Mission in Melbourne also included research and advocacy around minimum standards of care for asylum seekers and a significant social work case-load with asylum seekers.
- Ms Genevieve Sheehan: for her pioneering work (in the Australian context) with affordable small loans for low income Australian families, to encourage financial awareness and confidence. Genevieve's work also includes provision of loans to facilitate establishment of small businesses (to provide a sustainable income stream for people).
- Ms Ildi Amon: for a range of social service projects including the borrowing of funds from Melbourne's Methodist Ladies College (and paying off of those funds) to provide a business start-up loan to the poor in the Philippines.
- Mr Christopher Turton: for work with the Centre for Communication and Development in Kolkata, India - working to empower some of the most oppressed groups in India. This includes young children having to work in dangerous employment conditions to survive.