

## Editorial/Redaksioneel

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Welcome to the first issue of *De Jure*, 2014. You will notice that the *De Jure* has a new editor and editorial assistant in the person of myself and Mr Robert Steenkamp respectively. In resuming the role as editor after a three year hiatus during which Professor Steve Cornelius assumed the responsibility, I would like to thank Professor Cornelius for his loyal and dedicated service to the journal and to congratulate him on the bumper year, 2013, in which four issues appeared. Sadly, budgetary constraints will not allow this feat to be repeated on a regular basis. Thank you also to the members of the Editorial Board and Advisory Committee for your continuing support and guidance. Those unsung many who serve as peer reviewers, who are essential to the maintenance of the outstanding quality of the journal, must also be acknowledged for your vital inputs. Finally, thank you to each and every one of you who contribute to, and read the journal regularly. Without you there could be no journal.

2014 is set to be a legal extravaganza! What with the legal challenges to the Gauteng e-tolls, SABC's refusal to air certain political party advertising prior to the elections, the Platinum mine-worker's strike, the Nkandla Report, the Oscar Pistorius trial and the anticipated Dewani trial, at local level, the situation in the Crimea, the loss of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH 370 and the ferry disaster in South Korea, amongst others, at international level, there is certainly grist for the legal mill aplenty.

The media's interest in Pistorius and Dewani has certainly fired up a new enthusiasm for the law. There can be no doubt about the influence the media has on the stories that attract public attention! Criminal matters that receive widespread coverage present parties to the case with unique challenges. The presence of television cameras in the courtroom may influence the behaviour of the witnesses and other role players. That said, as with the OJ Simpson trial and the trial of Conrad Murray for the death of Michael Jackson, the public seems unable to get enough of the Pistorius trial.

Law students, certainly those at the University of Pretoria, have had their noses glued to the television, studying the trial at every opportunity. Lecturers have taken advantage of the opportunity to teach burden of proof, role players in court cases, aspects of criminal law and procedure, evidence and court practice. Examination in chief, cross examination and re-examination, the use of expert witnesses, and the value of forensic evidence has been made real through the television coverage. The impact of crime on the victim and her family, the accused and his family and the wider community is writ large for all to see.

Personally, I am sceptical about such broad media coverage of one high-profile case, coverage which, at times, displaced other, more important news. There were times when South Africans could have been oblivious to Syria, the Crimea, the death of 16 on Everest on 18 April

2014, and the like. Pistorius took centre stage. That said, however, it seems that this approach to high-profile and controversial legal matters is here to stay.

It appears that, like television, social media may also have an effect on court cases. Facebook, twitter, the Internet and the like, make it possible to spread news, rumour, opinion and conjecture instantaneously to huge numbers of people. The challenges that these media constitute for court processes would make for interesting research. So too, the law regulating journalistic ethics could benefit from further research. Certainly, there can be no question that the Pistorius trial will inspire journal articles, class discussions and conference papers in the future. Such opportunities to engage with relevant, current and topical legal issues should not be overlooked. It is thus an exciting time to be editing a legal journal and *De Jure* looks forward to your forthcoming contributions with excitement and enthusiasm.

**Caroline Nicholson**  
Editor