Law Student Learning, Storytelling and Student Device Initiatives

What does it all mean and how do we make it work?
Background

• Law student learning today needs to be student centred and involve active learning.
• Students need to engage with how the law in society develops over time and how the law is made up of stories and storytelling.
• At the same time modern day students are accustomed to using technology in their lives.
Court Cases

• Judicial reasoning is thus an art, overwhelmingly discharged in printed words and sentences. It is an art that calls on skills of narration and storytelling.

• The stories are normally told in words alone. Sometimes words are accompanied by pictures, drawings or maps to make things clearer.

• Nowadays, judicial narrative appears in electronic form shortly after delivery of judgment, available on the court’s webpage.
Stories and Technology

• Modern technology has taken the act of storytelling to new heights, resulting in a range of opportunities.

• Tools for creating, learning, teaching, and sharing knowledge in engaging ways and through innovative formats.
iPad and Higher Education

• iPads were found to be a good tool to provide instant access to rich learning materials and to Internet resources... In addition, students often used iPads for information seeking.

• Students found an iPad to be a useful tool to increase flexibility, portability and productivity because it is small in size, easy to use and apps could be loaded.
iPad and Technology

• Technology provides for mobile learning and for students to engage in the educational space at anytime and anywhere. Students also expect to be able to work and learn whenever they want.

• There needs to be a connection between technology, the expectation of being able to access educational material at a convenient time and being able to link the educational material to a sound pedagogical learning environment.
iPad and Western Sydney University

- Western Sydney University distributed 11,000 iPads to every new student and all academic staff in 2013 to support learning and teaching innovations across the curriculum and in informal learning environments.
- Western Sydney wanted academic staff to make the most of iPads and custom-designed apps in class so that, even in the largest lecture theatre, students have access to just-for-me, just-in-time interactive learning experiences.
Free iPad initiative

• Recognises that, with digital technology revolutionising how students interact with the world, then it makes sense for technology to be used in an educational context.

• iPad initiative enables students to access University materials via Wi-Fi at any time of the day.

• iPad initiative is directed to first year students only. This means that students that second or third year students were not provided with an iPad.
Experience with the iPad initiative

• Use of mobile devices within the classroom provided an excellent opportunity for the storytelling pedagogy to be *introduced* to first year law students.

• As iPads were only issued to first year students, second and third year law students either had to bring their own devices or not have a device at all.
Experiences

• Teacher needed to ensure that online educational activities were designed so as to accommodate the various devices that students would have been bringing to class – be it a laptop, smart phone or even an iPad.

• Any mobile device used by second or third year law students provided an ideal opportunity to enhance the storytelling methodology by the academic teacher.
Current University Strategy

• The 2016 program takes that a step further as the University works with industry leading technology partners such as Microsoft, to determine the most suitable device for each of our courses.

• Student Device Initiative whereby a new device (either an iPad, Tablet or Windows Laptop) will be provided to all new commencing undergraduate students.

• Law students still receiving iPad.
Current University Strategy

• The move in 2016 by Western Sydney University to *widen* the provision of a device for students to include other technological devices acknowledges that different disciplines may need different approaches to be taken for their learning and teaching.