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MEDIA RELEASE

WINNER ANNOUNCED FOR THE INAUGURAL ACICA ESSAY COMPETITION

The Australian Centre for International Commercial Arbitration (ACICA) is pleased to announce the winner of the inaugural ACICA Essay Competition as **Michael Riordan** from Melbourne. Michael is in his fifth year of a Bachelor of Law / Bachelor of Commerce degree at Monash University.

In this first year of the competition, ACICA invited entries from Australian-based law students studying a bachelor, Juris Doctor or Master level law degree, and lawyers based in Australia in their first five years of practice. The topic was *International Arbitration and Climate Change*, and entries were received across a broad range of focus areas including investor-state dispute settlement and the clean hydrogen industry.

Michael's essay entitled "*Can Climate Change Policy and Investor-State Dispute Settlement Coexist: Evaluating the Role of Investor-State Dispute Settlement in Renewable Energy*" explores retaining Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) as essential for investment in the renewable energy sector while arguing that the current ISDS regimes must be adapted to meet the changing needs of an environmentally-focused world. It was an excellent essay in a competitive field.

Michael told ACICA that he initially became interested in international arbitration whilst studying comparative energy law on a semester-long exchange at the University of Bergen: "*Whilst the subject only provided an introduction to the role of international arbitration in the energy sector, it still highlighted the complex legal issues that international arbitration offers due to its jurisdictional challenges and the global scale of conflicts..... As a young global citizen, climate change is a topic that attracts much concern and contemplation. An intriguing aspect of this is the role that climate change has to play in shaping the law in the years to come.*"

Competition entries were assessed by an esteemed panel of judges, chaired by Damian Sturzaker (Marque Lawyers) and consisting of the Honourable Wayne Martin AC QC (Francis Burt Chambers), Lucy Martinez (Martinez Arbitration), Professor Jacqueline Peel (University of Melbourne) and Judith Levine (Levine Arbitration).

Mr Sturzaker remarked "*On behalf of the judging panel for the inaugural ACICA International Arbitration and Climate Change essay competition I want to congratulate everyone that submitted an essay. The essays were on a uniformly high standard and were surprisingly diverse. Many essays offered important insights into the underlying premise of the competition: how can international arbitration be used to have an impact on climate change? All of the essays recognised the existential nature of climate change and embraced the challenge of using arbitration, whether via investment treaties or commercial agreements to effect long term change.*"

ACICA President Brenda Horrigan congratulated Michael and all of the participants who submitted entries to the competition and extended ACICA's gratitude to the panel of judges, who gave significant time and effort to the competition.

Mr Riordan has been awarded a guest seat at the ACICA table for the ADC ADR Awards Night Dinner in 2020, a cash prize of AUD1,100.00, a year's complimentary ACICA Associate membership and publication of his essay in the December 2020 edition of the ACICA Review.

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