

Law Council supports committee's inquiry into law reform body

The Law Council of Australia has backed calls by the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee for the reversal of funding cuts to the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC).

The Law Council of Australia also endorsed four other key recommendations made by the Committee's Inquiry into the ALRC including:

- the ALRC Act be amended to provide for a minimum of two permanent, full-time commissioners;
- an additional full-time commissioner be appointed, for each additional inquiry referred to the ALRC, in circumstances where the ALRC already has two or more ongoing inquiries;
- the ALRC's public information and education services program be resumed immediately; and
- the ALRC be provided with all necessary resources to enable it to continue to travel to undertake face-to-face consultations as part of its inquiry processes.

Law Council of Australia President, Alexander Ward, said the ALRC provides an outstanding contribution to Federal law reform in Australia and its ability to serve this function has been undermined significantly by actual funding cuts of around 15% under the 2010 Federal budget.

"The ALRC must be given sufficient resources to perform its functions effectively," Mr Ward said.

"The ALRC is a unique and valuable institution amongst Australia's allied democracies. Its capacity to contribute to law reform must not be undermined by a reduction in its funding."

The Law Council, through its secretariat, expert committees and specialist sections, has made submissions to the ALRC on over 30 topics since 1985, ranging from broad based inquiries into the Federal civil justice and criminal justice and systems, to more specific submissions on costs orders in family law proceedings.

"The Law Council has an extensive history working with the ALRC and acknowledges its invaluable contribution to law reform and legal development in this country," Mr Ward said.

"We will continue to support the ALRC's ongoing role as a permanent and separate law reform commission at the federal level and support the key recommendations of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee."

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