

QLS Symposium 2017, Day 2 Saturday 18 March, Brisbane

Convention & Exhibition Centre

Opening address and chair notes, president

Session 8.30-9am, address 10 mins

Introduction and chair notes

- Good morning Attorney-General, distinguished guests and delegates.
- We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this event is taking place. We also acknowledge Elders past and present as well as our emerging leaders of tomorrow and thank them for their wisdom and guidance.
- If there is a fire, convention centre staff will act as fire wardens and will direct us to the designated assembly point located at South Bank TAFE's green park in Glenelg Street.

CLC Funding

This morning my speech is going to be a little more serious. it's about CLE funding. The Federal Government are waging a war on the vulnerable and the disadvantaged and that is why I would like to raise an issue that I believe is very important to our profession, and that is the issue of access to justice for the most vulnerable in our community.

- As many of you will know, the Federal Government plan to slash \$2 million – which is around 30% – of vital community legal services funding for Queenslanders at the end of this month.

- We, the QLS have joined together with the Queensland Government, Community Legal Centres Queensland and Centres across Queensland to urge the Federal Government to reverse this decision.
- QLS has waged its own war a long and hard campaign against these cuts over many years – and particularly over the last 12 months.
- Our CLCs are in a state of crisis and are heading toward extinction due to the Federal funding fiscal cliff, their future is now at risk.. This means that basic justice, the fundamental human right of all of our Queensland is being denied in particular to tens of thousands of people who are disadvantaged in our community each year.
- Many of you will have completed our annual Access to Justice Scorecard survey last year. We have just recently released the report from your responses, finding that one of the four main barriers Queensland legal practitioners recognise for the everyday Queenslanders is the lack of funding for CLC's.
- Of course, I congratulate those in our profession who undertake pro bono work very year that is most if not all QLD solicitors to demonstrate just how much work you do on a pro bono basis
- in 2015/16 our profession QLD solicitors contributed a total of 290,154. hours this an amazing contribution but is no substitute
- As wonderful as it is that our profession conduct pro bono work, it is cynical of the federal government to expect that access to justice to be provided by you, social infrastructure is the roll of the government that is why we pay our taxes.

- Thus far, our persistent pleas for more funding have fallen on deaf ears of the federal parliament who are ignoring Queenslanders. CLCs provide critical and vital legal assistance and advice to people excluded from receiving legal aid in cases such as family and domestic violence, housing, employment and social security matters these are basic human entitlements.
- And let's also consider what will happen when those services start disappearing! We may see a court system clogged up by self-represented litigants, more of our community members in prison because they cannot navigate the justice system on their own, increased homelessness due to the inability to pay fines or defend oneself, these are amongst many of the issues that these venerable QLD will face.
- We must see every part of the justice system funded – not just one of two cogs in the machine. CLCs represent an integral part in the fabric of a just and equitable society.
- In this past year alone community legal centres across Australia have turned away more than 160,000 disadvantaged Australians, disadvantaged and vulnerable people due to reductions in capacity and staff numbers and staff numbers to deal with requests for assistance.
- And where will these people end up? In the revolving door of our justice system?
- As an Accredited Specialist in Succession Law and someone who also practises in Elder Law, I am exceedingly concerned about this because it has a specific and direct impact on our ageing population.

- A hidden group of people becoming homeless is emerging with women over 55 often finding CLCs as their last resort for assistance.
- With nearly 27,500 of our homeless people over the age of 45, this is an emerging problem. How can the Federal Government deny basic access to justice for our ageing population?
- This is not fair, nor is it sustainable for a just society.
- I truly believe that it is a fundamental component of the rule of law that access to justice be available to all.
- Our Immediate past president Mr Potts put it well when he said last year that The highest embodiment of a lawyer's duty to the administration of justice is to help those in need navigate the legal labyrinth simply because they need us, not because they pay us.
- Through their pro bono work, Queensland solicitors strive to help homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, people suffering from mental ill-health, young people transitioning from state care to independence, refugees and others who cannot afford legal representation or legal aid.
- This morning we will be holding a press conference with the Attorney-General and CLC Queensland to further press our case ensuring justice for all Queenslanders.
- Conferences like these and issues such as funding to CLC's can't be brought to your attention unless we have support and today I would like to thank the support of our sponsors

Sponsors

- I would like to thank our major sponsor, Bond University's Faculty of Law.
- Executive Dean Professor Nick James and members of faculty are in attendance today.
- I also thank our gold sponsor Auscript, and our silver sponsor Brisbane BMW for your support.
- I encourage you as delegates to attend our trade exhibitors to collect the goodies and services they have on offer.

Housekeeping

- A few housekeeping notes today before we continue:
- Please ensure your mobiles are switched off or in silent mode.
- To ensure we keep to time throughout the day, we will not be reading out the biographies of our presenters. However, full details on each of our very well qualified presenters is on our Symposium website.
- Papers and presentations were sent through via email where available. Please note that some presentations and materials will be uploaded after the Symposium.
- I would especially like to thank our presenters for their time today and in your preparation for your presentations. I know myself how much time and energy you put in and it is a valuable resource to our members so I would like to personally like to thank you for your contribution. QLS will make a donation on behalf of all presenters to their nominated charities as a token of QLS's appreciation.

- And of course the CPD DVDs are on sale and you will receive a 50% discount if you purchase throughout the conference.

Feedback forms

We also have feedback forms, they are very critical to us it enables us to craft conferences to suit your needs so would you kindly fill those out throughout the day I would appreciate it. We have social media it's a new form of communicating these days for many of you but it's a vital form so please follow us on our social media, I have my own on Twitter @ChristineASmyth you can see I use it often.

Closing

- I would like to thank you once again for your attendance at this year's Symposium.
- I trust that you will find today's sessions both engaging and informative.

8.40am Introduction – Attorney-General

- It is now my privilege to welcome The Honourable Yvette D'Ath MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills.
- The Honourable Yvette D'Ath was elected, 22nd February 2014, and appointed as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills, 16th February 2015.

- Please join me in welcoming The Honourable Yvette D'Ath MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills to speak with us.

[Lead applause]

[Attorney-General speaks for 15 minutes]

8.55am Closing

- Thank you for joining us today Attorney-General.
- We will now move into our program streams which will be held in the following rooms:
 - Family will be held in **M3**
 - Criminal will be held in **M4**
 - Commercial Litigation will be held in **P3&4**
 - Business will be held in **P1&2**
 - Core CPD will be held in **here in Plaza Terrace Room**
- I look forward to speaking with you all throughout the day or at future events.