



Wednesday, 13 March 2019

This week's Access to Justice and Pro Bono Conference to focus on issues of injustice, legal assistance funding

Improving pathways to justice, boosting legal assistance funding and tackling issues facing the pro bono legal sector will be central themes at the [7th National Access to Justice and Pro Bono Conference 2019](#) this Thursday and Friday (14-15 March) at Canberra's Hotel Realm.

The biennial conference, presented by the Law Council of Australia and the Australian Pro Bono Centre, is a unique forum for legal professionals, judges, government law officers, academics and students from across the country and overseas to come together to discuss critical access to justice issues currently facing Australians.

Law Council President, Arthur Moses SC, said the conference is an important opportunity to facilitate and inspire meaningful conversations about the diverse challenges facing the pro bono sector and the issues impacting access to justice in Australia.

"Legal assistance funding in Australia is only a fraction of what it needs to be. Some of our most vulnerable people are falling through the cracks, as the [Law Council's Justice Project](#) illustrated," Mr Moses said.

"The Law Council has called for at least \$310 million a year to provide adequate funding for Legal Aid Commissions, community legal centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services and family violence prevention legal services. This would provide a much-needed injection of funds for frontline legal services to increase civil legal assistance.

"Disadvantaged Australians are not the only ones impacted by the shortfall – many Australians simply can't afford legal representation and if required to attend court, are forced to appear alone.

"Those working in the legal assistance sector, together with lawyers engaging in pro bono work, are integral to progress social justice. This conference is an opportunity for those working in the sector to come together to share experiences, learn from each other and advocate for change."

The conference will feature 28 sessions, with topics including:

- Elder abuse;
- Cultural diversity and the law;
- The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse; and
- The future of the legal assistance sector.

Esteemed speakers include Senator Amanda Stoker (representing the Attorney-General, Christian Porter), Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus QC, ACT Attorney-General Gordon Ramsay MLA, Judge Kate Hughes of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia and Chief Justice Helen Murrell of the Supreme Court of the ACT.

[A full program is available here.](#) *Journalists are welcome to attend sessions of interest. Please email or phone the media contacts below to register.*

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The Law Council of Australia is the national voice of the legal profession, promoting justice and the rule of law.