



Law Council  
OF AUSTRALIA

# ILS New York Chapter – Networking Event for Australian Lawyers Working and Studying in New York

**Speech delivered via online by Dr Jacoba Brasch QC, President  
of the Law Council of Australia.**

**14 October 2021 (EDT)**

The Honourable Nicholas Greiner, Australian Consul-General to New York, Ms Mary Walker OAM, Chair of the Law Council of Australia's International Law Section, Ms Susan Davies, Convenor of International Law Section New York Chapter – and the Australian lawyers for whom this event is all about.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands upon which Mary and I speak and their leaders past present and emerging.

It is my great pleasure to 'beam in' from Cairns (on a sunny Friday morning), to join you all – although of course, I truly regret that I am unable to join you in person, as predecessors of mine have been able.

I also thank the Australian Consulate for so generously hosting this event for a third time. I have warm memories of the Consulate in New York – that's where I voted in the republican referendum when I too lived in New York.

Joining the familiar faces in the room are those of you new to New York, commencing or continuing your studies at New York's outstanding universities, or perhaps starting a new chapter of your legal career in this great city. You may have already noticed that the calibre of Australian lawyers is well-recognised around the world – something we can all be very proud of.

Just over 20 years ago, I embarked on a similar journey and came to New York to study an LLM at New York University as a Fulbright Scholar and NYU Graduate Merit Scholar. It was a terrific time – waking up each morning in the city that doesn't sleep was a dream come true. I lived in NYU on the corner of West 3<sup>rd</sup> and Broadway, with my study desk/dining table overlooking Broadway.

I soon discovered that the Naked Cowboy from Times Square would roller skate – naked – down Broadway the wrong way at about two in the morning. It became a study habit for me – I'd stop studying once I saw him and go to bed. But there were times he didn't skate by, and I'd get awfully worried about him. Twice I headed up town the next day to check he was OK.

I am still very close with fellow students from those days, even travelling to the US for weddings and special birthdays.

Now you can truly understand that I mean it when I say, 'I so wish I was there.'

My time in New York has served me extremely well in my own career, and impressed upon me the importance of philanthropy, pro bono work and service as a lawyer.

Since returning to Australia, I have sought to be faithful to those lessons of giving and contributing to the greater good, first through my home Bar, the Bar Association of Queensland's Council, the Law Council's Family Law Section and now as President of the Law Council. I am humbled by these privileges.

As Australia's peak legal body, the Law Council represents the 60,000 lawyers of Australia, both domestically and internationally.

The Law Council's focus is on federal law and the operation of federal courts and tribunals – and its submissions cover areas including family law, business law, migration law and national security as well as shaping legal profession regulation throughout Australia.

Internationally, the Law Council maintains strong relationships with counterpart peak legal bodies such as the American Bar Association, as well as international bodies including the International Bar Association and LAWASIA. The Law Council also plays an increasingly important role in the development of bar associations in the South Pacific, and acts as Secretariat of the South Pacific Lawyers Association.

In these COVID times, rarely has it been more important to maintain contact with our international colleagues and work together to share the ways we are dealing with collective challenges – such as maintaining access to justice, promoting the rule of law, and helping lawyers to weather the storm of COVID both mentally and financially.

I do hope that while you are in New York, you have the opportunity to get together with other Australian lawyers on a regular basis. I have so many fond memories of sharing quintessentially Australian things – like real football, vegemite and meat pies – with others who 'got it'. I wish the same for you all.

That said, as lawyers and students, may your contributions to the city be that New Yorkers come to recognise Australians for something *other* than kangaroos, Chris Hemsworth and excellent coffee.

Have a wonderful evening. Thank you.

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