



Law Council
OF AUSTRALIA

Speech at the 35th LAWASIA Conference

Speech delivered by Law Council of Australia President, Mr Tass Liveris at the Opening Ceremony of the 35th LAWASIA Conference, College of Law, Sydney .

Date: 18 November 2022

Good evening.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognising their continuing connection to land, waters and community. In particular, I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation on whose lands we meet in Sydney. I pay my respects to Elders both past and present and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

It is a pleasure to be here in Sydney with you. The program for this year's LAWASIA Conference is filled with exceptional speakers focusing on diverse and interesting topics spanning human rights and the rule of law, family law, business law and alternative dispute resolution.

It has only been recently that Australia's legal profession has been able to come back together in person to discuss issues of importance, like those you will be focusing on over the coming days. I know this is also true for many of the overseas jurisdictions represented at this Conference, and we warmly welcome each of you back to Australia.

For me personally, this capacity to once again meet and tackle the major topics of the day, to focus on expanding our knowledge and

understanding, has been very welcome. I am always inspired to hear and learn from my colleagues and look forward to speaking with as many of you as possible over the course of the Conference.

I warmly welcome delegates from across the world – not only from all parts of Australia, but also from countries including Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, India, New Zealand, Fiji, Taiwan, Nepal, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Switzerland, Jamaica, Bangladesh, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, Thailand, Germany and Sri Lanka.

It has been my great privilege, in my time as President, to meet and work with distinguished leaders of the legal profession from almost all of these jurisdictions.

The Law Council of Australia values its friendships with counterpart legal professional organisations around the world, and particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. We come together bilaterally, and as members of LAWASIA, POLA, the International Bar Association, Commonwealth Lawyers' Association and the South Pacific Lawyers' Association – of which the Law Council is very proud to be Secretariat.

These exchanges inform and enhance our work on international, cross-border and universal legal issues.

They also provide opportunities to advance our shared commitment to promote and defend the rule of law, to the administration of justice, and to safeguarding and ensuring respect for human rights.

Just as the Law Council seeks to safeguard the rule of law in Australia, it is committed to responding in a principled, considered, and, where appropriate, firm way to international conduct that undermines or is contrary to the rule of law.

Unfortunately, we have felt compelled to step forward in this way in recent months. This has included condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine in violation of international law and apparent gross human rights violations; the unlawful use of the death penalty in Myanmar, where civilians are being tried before military courts; calling for adequate time and consultation on legislation which has the potential to impact the rule of law in Fiji; and raising concerns about attacks on judicial independence in Kiribati.

Of course, in addition to championing the rule of law, the administration of justice and human rights in our region, LAWASIA is also committed to advancing the standard of legal education by convening specialist conferences, such as this one, on substantive legal matters of universal relevance to legal practitioners.

The keynote and plenary sessions this afternoon will clearly set the tone for this prestigious event, with a keynote address from the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite, Assistant Minister for Defence, Veterans Affairs and the Republic, followed by plenary speeches from Australia's Privacy Commissioner, Angelene Falk, and Scientia Professor George Williams AO, one of Australia's leading constitutional lawyers.

The various streams of substantive legal topics on the conference program highlight the breadth of specialist expertise which exists amongst LAWASIA members.

The scheduled human rights and rule of law presentations and discussions will tackle issues which are sensitive, topical and universal – issues such as public sector integrity, judicial impartiality, data protection and privacy, the use of sanctions, discrimination based on sexual orientation and modern slavery.

In many of these areas, the Law Council has been outspoken in terms of the institutions and frameworks needed to best serve our democracy, legal system and the people of Australia. We have been particularly pleased that after years of advocacy on our part, the Federal Government has begun work towards establishing a National Anti-Corruption Commission and expressed in-principle support for a Federal Judicial Commission. The Law Council has been closely

engaged on the National Anti-Corruption Commission Bill, and continues to emphasise the importance of getting the detail of this legislation right.

LAWASIA could not achieve its high profile, and undertake its important work, without the generous support of a number of institutions. I should in particular acknowledge the support provided by the Law Society of New South Wales over the past decade. The Law Society has hosted the LAWASIA Secretariat and provided other forms of support which have enabled LAWASIA to flourish.

I wish the conference every success.

Thank you.

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