

Tuesday, 25 June 2019

Unfair criticism and sexist attack on High Court Judges should not be tolerated

Statement from Law Council of Australia President, Arthur Moses SC

The front-page story today's Courier Mail, which attacks the spouse travel allowances of spouses of High Court of Australia Judges, is unfair and sexist.

The Law Council of Australia is especially disappointed the spouse of the High Court of Australia's Chief Justice has unfairly been drawn into the media report regarding travel expenses.

Under the guidelines clearly stated in the [Judicial and Statutory Officers \(Remuneration and Allowances\) Act 1984](#), spouses of the Chief Justice and Justices of the High Court are permitted to travel with them on official duties in Australia and overseas that involve staying away from home one night or more, and that this cost is borne by the Commonwealth.

Judges and their spouses are regularly invited to attend events in Australia and overseas, which are directly related to their important and vital work, to speak to the legal profession and the broader community on a range of matters. They attend these events out of duty and service to the courts.

The Chief Justice in particular is required to undertake travel in her role at the request of the legal profession in order to address the profession across the country. Often her spouse is invited to attend these events. I am sure that the Chief Justice attends these events out of a sense of duty, not because she wants to be away from home.

I am troubled that the spouses of previous male Chief Justices have not been the subject of attention when travelling with their partner, but the male partner of our first female Chief Justice is the subject of this attention for routine travel.

It is not appropriate that the spouses of judicial officers be drawn into these types of unnecessary and misinformed commentary which detract from the public service of our judicial officers.

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