



Australian Government

# Media Release

Australian Law Reform Commission

Tuesday, 17 July 2007

## **Promoting a 'healthy legal culture' the focus of new Australian Academy of Law**

Strengthening the 'legal culture' of an increasingly diverse legal profession will be the focus of Australia's newest 'learned academy', with today's launch of the Australian Academy of Law (AAL) in Brisbane.

In its landmark report on the civil justice system, *Managing Justice* (2000), the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) highlighted the problems associated with the fragmentation of the legal profession, and recommended the establishment of the AAL.

ALRC President Prof David Weisbrot—a Foundation Fellow of the AAL—said *Managing Justice* made it clear that ethics, education and accountability play a critical role in shaping the Australian legal culture, which in turn determines how effectively the legal system operates in the public interest.

“The Australian legal profession has changed dramatically over the past three decades. The profession is now subject to competition and consumer laws; incorporation and multidisciplinary partnerships are now permitted; legal practice has gone national—and, indeed, globalisation is a real feature of practice for the 'mega-firms', which did not even exist until the late 1970s,” he said.

“We have asked lawyers to be 'more businesslike' and they have responded accordingly. But this puts tremendous pressure on the 'service ideal' that traditionally distinguished 'professions' from businesses. We now desperately need to rethink and rearticulate the core ethics and principles that bind lawyers together.

“The AAL will be unique in its ability to draw together the leading thinkers in the various branches of the profession, including senior judges, practitioners and academics—and there is lots to talk about, including the future of legal scholarship, education and training, national ethical and practice standards, career satisfaction and pro bono service.

“The strong need for the Academy of Law can perhaps best be seen in the very warm endorsements received from eminent members of the legal profession, and the nearly 100% acceptance rate,” Prof Weisbrot said.

He said the Chief Justice of the High Court, the Hon Murray Gleeson, is the Patron of the new AAL, and strong support for its establishment has been offered by the Council of Australian Law Deans; state and territory chief justices; law societies and bar associations; and law reformers.

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Formal launch of Australian Academy of Law—**11.30am Tuesday 17 July at Government House, Brisbane** by:

- the Chief Justice of Australia, the Hon Justice Murray Gleeson AC
- Attorney-General, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP and
- ALRC President Prof David Weisbrot AM

The launch will be followed by a Symposium, *Fragmentation of consolidation? Fostering a coherent professional identity for lawyers*, to be held from **1.30pm–4.30pm**, at the same venue.

**Media contact:** Russell Grenning on (07) 3842 5975 or 0414 882 964.  
**Media contact for Chief Justice Gleeson:** Fiona Hamilton on 0414 476 503