

Statement to Senate Estimates
The Hon Justice S C Derrington
22 October 2019

Madam Chairman, members of the Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement. I do so in the context of completing the first full financial year as President of the ALRC and would like to update you on the agency as a whole. I have been very grateful to have the continuing support of the Hon Justice John Middleton as a standing part-time commissioner and welcomed the appointment of the Hon Justice Robert Bromwich as a part-time commissioner for the duration of the Review of Corporate Criminal Responsibility.

You will be aware that the agency moved to Brisbane in October of 2018 as part of the Government's regionalisation agenda. The office, including the Michael Kirby Library, is now well-established on level 4 of the Commonwealth Law Courts Building on North Quay. The savings in rent that have been achieved by moving from the Sydney CBD to the Brisbane CBD, coupled with outsourcing of corporate services to the Attorney-General's Department, have enabled the ALRC to employ a full complement of 8 highly skilled lawyers, many of whom have postgraduate qualifications from the world's leading law schools including Oxford and NYU. The ALRC is a highly sought-after employer by applicants from around the nation.

We have also enhanced our internal probity measures by appointing an independent and external to Government chair of our audit committee, consistent with the Department of Finance's guidance as to best practice.

The ALRC has entered into MOU's with three universities, Monash, Sydney and Queensland, through which we are able to support internships for students from those universities who engage in research relevant to the current work of the ALRC jointly supervised by ALRC staff and university academics.

In the last financial year, the ALRC has produced:

- ALRC Report No 134: *Integrity Fairness and Efficiency – An Inquiry into Class Action Proceedings and Third-Party Litigation Funders*
- ALRC Discussion Paper No 86: *Review of the Family Law System*
- ALRC Report No 135: *Family Law for the Future – An inquiry into the Family Law System*

The ALRC has also been working on the two references received in April – the Review of Religious Exemptions in anti-discrimination law and the Review of Corporate Criminal Responsibility. We have already conducted 57 consultations in relation to the issues raised by this Inquiry and the Discussion Paper will be released on 15 November this year.

The ALRC is actively engaged with stakeholders of the current inquiries and remains actively engaged with speaking engagements, media requests, workshops, and academic publications relating to previous inquiries. Our engagement has also been enhanced by the launch of our new website earlier this year.

In addition to the matters referred to it by the Attorney-General, the ALRC has been involved in a nationwide consultation to discern areas of law that are generally considered ripe for reform. This project, 'The future of law reform', received almost 400 responses to an on-line survey, involved academics and industry in consultative workshops in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane on a range of topics and will culminate with the launch of the Report, and a suggested 3-5 year programme of law reform, by the Hon Michael Kirby in Brisbane on 2 December this year.

The ALRC has forged strong links with other law reform agencies, both within Australia and internationally. In July of 2020, the ALRC will be hosting the Australasian Law Reform Agencies Conference in Brisbane. This conference aims, primarily, to bring together law reform agencies from the Asia-Pacific region. The substantive theme of the conference will be approaches to law reform in family law and we hope to welcome in particular those agencies that have been working concurrently on family law reform alongside Australia, particularly New Zealand, Ontario, and Scotland.

The ALRC remains committed to research of the highest quality, broad and transparent consultation processes, and the formulation of evidence-based recommendations in response to the terms of reference for each inquiry referred to it by the Attorney-General.