

Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2025.

Congratulations

Please join me in congratulating the following Fellows on their appointments:

The Hon Justice Richard Niall, who has been appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria. He will take up this office on 3 February 2025.

AAL Deputy President **the Hon Tony Besanko KC**, who has been appointed as an International Judge of the Supreme Court of Singapore. He was sworn in on 10 January 2025.

Also please join me in congratulating the following 10 Fellows on their recognition in the 2025 Australia Day Honours:

Companions of the Order of Australia (AC) in the General Division

Scientia Professor Megan Davis

For eminent service to the law and to social justice, to the national and international advocacy of the rights of Indigenous peoples, and to the community.

The Honourable Justice James Edelman

For eminent service to the law and to the judiciary, to legal education and scholarship, as a mentor to academics and legal practitioners in Australia and internationally, and to the community.

Officers of the Order of Australia (AO) in the General Division

The Honourable Justice John Basten

For distinguished service to the law as a judge, to legal education, to board and commission roles, and as a champion of Indigenous and human rights.

The Honourable Duncan Kerr SC

For distinguished service to the law and social justice, to the Parliament of Australia, and to the people of Tasmania.

The Honourable Justice Brian Preston SC

For distinguished service to the judiciary and the law, to legal academia, and to environmental and natural resources governance and education.

Members of the Order of Australia (AM) in the General Division

The Honourable Ann Ainslie-Wallace

For significant service to the judiciary and the law, to legal advocacy education, and to professional associations.

Professor Philip Chung

For significant service to the law, particularly his contribution to public access to legal information, and to tertiary education.

Professor Andrew Mowbray

For significant service to the law, particularly his contribution to public access to legal information, and to tertiary education.

The Honourable Richard Refshauge

For significant service to the community of the Australian Capital Territory, and to the arts.

The Honourable John Sackar KC

For significant service to the judiciary, and to the law.

I also note with great pleasure that I too have been appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the General Division, for significant service to the law, to the judiciary, and to the legal profession.

Vale the Hon Austin Asche AC KC

It is with sadness that I bring to the attention of Fellows that the **Honourable Austin Asche** died on 14 December 2024 aged 99.

He was a member of the Queensland Bar from 1951-1954. He was called to the Victorian Bar

in 1954 and practised there until 1975. He took silk in 1972.

In 1976 was appointed to the new Family Court of Australia. In 1986 he was appointed to the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory and in 1987 was appointed Chief Justice of that Court.

He was the Administrator of the Northern Territory from 1 March 1993 to 16 February 1997.

Austin Asche retired as Administrator in 1997 and was later chair of the Northern Territory Law Reform Committee. He was also an adjunct professor in Law and Emeritus Chancellor at Charles Darwin University.

We shall miss his presence at the annual Austin Asche Oration, co-sponsored by the AAL with Charles Darwin University.

Wednesday 18 June 2025 – Dinner at Gray’s Inn

If you will be in London on 18 June, UK based Overseas Fellows please note, do let me or the Secretariat know if you wish to attend this evening event. There will be a dinner with a Fellow speaking on a legal topic of current interest and importance.

Partners are invited too.

I thank **Desmond Browne CBE KC**, for his great help. He has arranged for the dinner to take place at the Small Pension Room in Gray’s Inn, located next to Chancery Lane station. The address of Gray’s Inn is 8 South Square, London.



Numbers are limited, as the accompanying photograph shows, the maximum number who can be seated round the table is 14.

The likely cost will be £100 per person.

I will notify you of the speaker as soon as possible.

2025 AAL First Nations Scholarship

The Australian Academy of Law again offers the AAL First Nations Scholarship tenable in 2025 for a First Nations final year law student* studying for the LLB or JD or combined Law degree at any Australian law school, or the Diploma in Law through the NSW Law Extension Committee.

The amount of the award is A\$6000 for one year only.

The successful applicant may, additionally, have the opportunity of being mentored for up to a year by an AAL Fellow.

Applications based on the Selection Criteria below are through nominations by the respective Law Deans to the AAL Secretariat by the closing date of 28 March 2025 at 5pm (AEDT). Each Law Dean may nominate one Final Year First Nations law student.

Interested applicants should contact their respective Law Deans to seek to be nominated.

They must provide their academic transcripts, CVs, Personal Statements of no more than 500 words and a list of their existing sources of financial sponsorship (if any).

**A final year law student” means a person who will complete the LLB or JD or combined Law degree, or the LEC Diploma in Law, by April 2026.*

Selection Criteria

1. Academic ability and likelihood of success;
2. Not normally in receipt of any other substantial scholarship or award;
3. Proposed post-graduation career path evincing a commitment to the law and/or legal practice.

Shortlisted applicants may be required to attend an interview in April 2025 with the Selection Panel.

The winner will be announced by the end of April 2025.

[A copy of the Notice is here.](#)

Planning for 2025

A States and Territories Event Organising Committees Planning Session for 2025 was held on 11 December 2024. Ideas being explored for seminars and lectures in 2025 include:

- how can the practice of the law be made more efficient – some examples might be via:
 - (a) short form judgments;
 - (b) harmonisation of Rules of Court;
 - (c) use of audio-visual hearings.
- the use of AI in the courts, in practise and in the Academy
- legislative drafting
- whistleblowers
- Ch III of the Commonwealth Constitution and detention
- Sentencing and comparative approaches to sentencing
- judicial immunity
- suppression orders
- well-being in the judiciary, the legal profession and academia
- the regulation of social media

If there is a topic on which you wish to present a paper or wish to have as the topic for a seminar or other event, please contact the Secretariat or a member of the Event Organising Committees in your State or Territory as soon as possible.

<https://academyoflaw.org.au/Board-Committees>

2025 AAL Patron's Address

I am pleased to note that the new Chief Justice of Victoria, the **Hon Justice Richard Niall**, has agreed to give the 2025 AAL's Patron's Address. Further details of this event will be available in due course. It will be held in Melbourne, most probably in October 2025.

Donations to the AAL

Please consider making a donation to the AAL's charitable purposes via the Public Fund, which has deductible gift recipient (DGR) status. Donations may be made via the website:

<https://academyoflaw.org.au/Donations>

or directly to:

AAL Public Fund
NAB BSB: 082 514
Account No: 424 765 242

Publication of the proceedings of the joint event with the AIJA and the ALJ: *Enduring Courts in Changing Times*

Lastly, my favourite AAL photograph from 2024, taken by **Michael Murray** at the book launch in July:



From left to right, the Hon Robert French AC, former Chief Justice of Australia, the Hon Tom Bathurst AC KC, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and the Hon Andrew Bell, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales

You can buy your copy [here](#).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Robertson'.

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