

Welcome to the second Newsletter for 2026.

FIRST NATIONS SCHOLARSHIP

Closing date of Friday 27 March 2026 at 5pm (AEDT)

A notice has been sent to Law Deans in the following terms:

“Australian Academy of Law First Nations Scholarship 2026

The Australian Academy of Law offers the *Australian Academy of Law First Nations Scholarship* tenable in 2026 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 (LEC).

The amount of the award is \$6,000 for one year only.

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

The winner will be announced by the end of April 2026.

The award cannot be deferred to a later year. Applications based on the Selection Criteria below are through nominations by the respective Law Deans to the [AAL Secretariat](mailto:aalsecretariat@academyoflaw.org.au):

aalsecretariat@academyoflaw.org.au by the **closing date of Friday 27 March 2026 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 2027.

Selection Criteria

1. Academic ability and likelihood of professional 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.

Interviews

Shortlisted applicants may be required to attend an interview in April 2026 with the Selection Panel.”

I am pleased to say that the Selection Panel will be **the Hon Pamela Tate AM KC**, **the Hon Justice Michael Lundberg**, a judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia, and **the Hon Kevin Lingren AM KC**.

I thank them for their willingness to take on this role.

VALE

Please join me in noting with sadness the death on 1 February 2026 of **Emeritus Professor David Brown**, one of the founding scholars at the UNSW Law School, joining as a lecturer in 1974. He remained closely connected to the Faculty for over 50 years.

He made significant contributions to the fields of criminal law, criminology, and penology, most notably through eight editions of the *Criminal Laws* co-authored textbook. He was widely published. He was also the founding editor of the *Alternative Law Journal*.

He had a deep commitment to social justice. He will be greatly missed.

He became a Fellow of the AAL in 2010.

AAL ESSAY PRIZE FOR 2026

The AAL will again offer its Annual Essay Prize, which was launched in 2015.

The topic for this year is:

“Section 51(xxxi) of the Commonwealth Constitution confers power on the Commonwealth Parliament to make laws with respect to the acquisition of property on just terms from any State or person for any purpose in respect of which the Parliament has power to make laws.

What is the relationship between s 51(xxxi) and:

- (1) the other powers under s 51; and
- (2) the rest of the Constitution?

Has the 2025 trilogy of cases, *Commonwealth v Yunupingu* [2025] HCA 6, *G Global 120 TE Pty Ltd v Commissioner of State Revenue (Qld)* [2025] HCA 39, *Russian Federation v Commonwealth* [2025] HCA 44, resolved that relationship?

Do you agree?”

The annual essay prize is offered in furtherance of the objects of the Academy under its Constitution. Those objects include: “[to] establish and advance funds to provide scholarships and research grants which advance legal education and the discipline of law and promote ethical conduct and professional responsibility” and “[t]o promote the highest standards of legal scholarship, legal research, legal education, legal practice, and the administration of justice”

The Prize is open to anyone, wherever resident, who is studying or has studied legal subjects at a tertiary level, or who is working or has worked in a law-based occupation.

There is no limit by reference to the age or seniority or experience of, or position held by, a person who may submit an essay.

The amount of the Prize is \$10,000.

I am pleased to report that the judging panel will include [the Hon Professor WMC Gummow AC KC](#) (chair) and [Professor Sarah Murray](#).

I am very grateful to these distinguished lawyers for giving their time to judge the essays.

The deadline for submission of essays will be 31 August 2026.

PLANNING FOR 2026

On 9 December 2025 we held the annual events planning meeting.

The proposals for 2026 include:

- Australia’s integrity oversight system – a functional or fancy notion
- Judicial Independence: A comparative review
- Legal education/preparing for practice (with [Professor Michael Legg](#) of the Centre for the Future of the Legal Profession)
- Commonwealth legislative drafting
- Institutional well-being for courts and well-being in the legal profession and in academia
- The increasing burdens on trial and appeal courts, noting recent developments in the law
- Regulation of social media and misinformation & disinformation
- “Sovereign citizens”: common problems and practical solutions for courts
- The harmonisation of the rules, practices and procedures of courts in Australia

If you wish to speak on any of these topics or if you have another topic please contact the Secretariat or a member of your local event organising committee: see:

[About - Australian Academy of Law](#)

GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE AAL’S DGR STATUS

Fellows may recall that the AAL's Deductible Gift Recipient status lapsed as at 30 June 2025.

I am very pleased to report that following the diligent efforts of [the Hon Kevin Lindgren AM KC](#), the Assistant Minister for Productivity, Competition, Charities and Treasury, [the Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP](#), has recently written to advise the AAL that the Government has announced its intention to amend the tax law to renew the specific listing of AAL as a DGR for **gifts made after 30 June 2026 and before 1 July 2031**.

Renewal of our specific listing as a DGR involves a change in the tax law, specifically an amendment to Division 30 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*. The deductibility of donations to the AAL is subject to the amending legislation being passed by Parliament.

In addition to the Treasury, the ATO has a role to play in the process that precedes the introduction of the amending legislation, and on 18 February 2026 the ATO wrote to the AAL: "We have advised Treasury that Australian Academy of Law has met the Public Fund Requirement."

The Government will introduce legislation as soon as practicable to give effect to its decision.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

ACT event 24 March 2026

Time: 5:00pm – 7.00 pm AEDT

Place: High Court of Australia, Parkes, ACT

Michael Coper Roundtable: **The Australian Integrity Oversight System; A Functional or Fancy Notion?**

Presented By **Professor John McMillan AO**.

All AAL Fellows who are in Canberra on 24 March 2026 are invited to this Michael Coper Roundtable event. This is a Fellows only, in-person event.

The chair will be **Ian Govey AM**.

There are now a great many independent statutory agencies that share an integrity and accountability oversight role in government. They are sometimes spoken of as an integrity system - even as a fourth branch of government. Is that a useful concept? What oversight agencies belong to the integrity system? What are the benefits or drawbacks of conceiving of an integrity oversight system in government?

The [flyer is here](#). Registration is essential.

Tasmanian event for Fellows Thursday 9 April 2026 5.15 PM - 7 PM

There will be an event in Hobart on 9 April 2026 at the Supreme Court of Tasmania, Hobart.

I thank **Chief Justice Shanahan** for making the venue available.

A tentative list of speakers is:

Chief Justice Chris Shanahan who will give a short speech

Mr Greg Barns SC on hate speech laws

Professor Gabrielle Appleby commenting on those laws from the perspective of legislative process

Mr Michael O'Farrell SC providing an overview of those topics

The Hon Alan Blow AO speaking about the trial of Matthew Wright in Darwin in 2025, which he conducted.

Further details will be announced soon.

If you will be in Hobart on that date and would like to attend, please RVSP to the **Secretariat**: aalsecretariat@academyoflaw.org.au

London event Tuesday 16 June 2026

Also there will be an event on Tuesday, 16 June 2026 for 8:30 AM (informal breakfast), finishing at 10 AM, at 3VB (Three Verulam Buildings, Gray's Inn, London, WC1R 5NT).

We have identified a number of young Australian lawyers in practice or engaged as academics in the UK to give presentations (10 minutes each) about their work and what they envisage for the future, followed by discussion. The list is:

Dr Kate Parlett: Chair

Ms Camille Boileau

Dr Jordan English

Dr Cameron Miles

Ms Micha Schwartzstein

Ms Hope Williams

There are as well six or so names of other young Australian lawyers in practice or engaged as academics in the UK who we will invite as well, but not for the panel this time.

I thank **Sir Ross Cranston** for proposing this event and this format. I also thank the 3VB events team which will undertake the arrangements.

If you will be in London on that date and would like to attend, please RVSP as soon as possible to the Secretariat: aalsecretariat@academyoflaw.org.au

Thursday 9 July 2026 Austin Asche Oration 2026

The **Austin Asche Oration** in Darwin will be given in 2026 by AAL Fellow **Justice Marcus Solomon** of the Supreme Court of Western Australia.

Please note this date in your diary. Further details, including the venue, will be announced soon.

Melbourne event - 21 or 22 October 2026

Professor Matthew Groves will be speaking on Australia's integrity oversight system.

The format we presently contemplate would be for Professor Groves to speak, for that to be followed by two commentators, and then a Q&A session.

It is proposed that the event be livestreamed so that it will be available to a wide audience.

Mr Eamonn Moran PSM KC has kindly agreed to be a commentator.

Further details, including the venue and the name of the other commentator, will be announced soon.

Patron's Address by Chief Justice Gageler Wednesday 28 October 2026 in Sydney

The Patron's Address will be given in 2026 by the AAL's Patron **the Hon Stephen Gageler AC, Chief Justice of Australia**. The venue will be the Banco Court of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, and I thank **Chief Justice Andrew Bell** for allowing the AAL to use this courtroom.

RECENT EVENTS

Sydney - 6 February 2026

Although not an AAL event, I was pleased to attend, as President of the AAL, a special boardroom lunch organised by **Norton Rose Fulbright**. The lunch was addressed by, amongst others, the Attorney General of England and Wales, **Richard Hermer KC**, the Attorney General of Ireland, **Rossa Fanning SC**, the Commonwealth Attorney General, **the Hon Michelle Rowland MP**, and the Attorney General of New South Wales, **the Hon Michael Daley MP**. Dominant in the speeches of these four Attorneys General was the rule of law.

Canberra - Tuesday 10 February 2026 Disputes between States of the United States - 5.15PM- 6.30PM - ACT Supreme Court

The US Supreme Court is the top US appellate court, but the US Constitution also makes the Court a trial court, giving it original jurisdiction over, among other things, suits by States against other States. This jurisdiction remains exclusive to the Court, making it the sole forum for inter-State disputes. Yet the Court uses a variety of prudential doctrines to avoid these cases. Those doctrines systematically discriminate against plaintiff States in certain types of inter-State disputes, depriving those States of a forum and hindering political resolution of these conflicts.

In this public lecture, **Professor Heather Elliott** explained the often perverse aspects of the Court's approach to these cases, the problems that flow from that approach, and potential solutions.



From left to right: Chief Justice of the ACT Supreme Court Lucy McCallum, the Hon Alan Robertson AM SC, Professor Heather Elliott

The event was very well attended, with about 50 people in the courtroom and about 70 online. Professor Elliott's stimulating paper was followed by a Q&A session.

I thank **Chief Justice McCallum** for making the courtroom available.

Professor Elliott's paper is [here](#).

Victorian event 17 February 2026

A "Meet the Fellows" event was held on 17 February 2026 from 5.30 pm. - 7 pm.

The venue was the Level 16 Conference Room, Federal Court of Australia, Owen Dixon Commonwealth Law Courts, 305 William Street. I thank **Chief Justice Mortimer** for allowing the meeting to be held there.

The evening was an opportunity to meet and catch up with new and existing AAL Fellows, in an informal setting. Some 25 Fellows attended. Those I spoke to regarded the event as both enjoyable and informative: a great success.

Six of the new Fellows in Victoria, as shown in the photograph below, spoke for 5 to 10 minutes each on topics arising from their recent work.



From left to right: Professor Ying Khai Lien, Associate Professor Judith Marychurch, Professor Alison Duxbury, Emeritus Professor Michael Bryan, Professor Paula Gerber, and the Hon Justice Catherine Button

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

Alan Robertson
President

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