

**Launch of the Australian Academy of Law—17 July 2007**  
**Symposium on the role and future of the AAL**  
**Fragmentation or consolidation? Fostering a coherent professional**  
**identity for lawyers.**

**Chair's Introduction—Professor Rosalind Croucher, Commissioner, ALRC**

Your Excellency, Chief Justice, Attorney-General—

It is a great pleasure to introduce this important event to mark the launch of the Australian Academy of Law.

The overarching object of the Academy is aspirational—to advance the discipline of law, in a range of ways, including the establishment of the Academy itself, which is the focus of our attention today.

One particular aim is to provide a forum for cooperation, collaboration, constructive debate and the effective interchange of views amongst all branches of the legal community on all matters relating to the achievement of these objects.

The Symposium today reflects that aim.

It brings together outstanding people broadly from the ‘three branches’ of the legal community—judges, academics and legal practitioners—either as individuals but more particularly often exemplifying several aspects of experience and distinction in each person. They are indeed a ‘first eleven’.

Through the presentations and the discussion this afternoon we are fulfilling one of the main objectives of the newly born infant body.

My role today is as housekeeper, ringmaster and headmistress—to convey the necessary ‘housekeeping’ information for the afternoon; to oversee the speakers and the questions, and to keep everyone in order.

**The Panel's assigned tasks**

The esteemed Panellists were asked to address a number of questions concerning problems and opportunities from the perspective of the different branches of the legal profession under the broad theme reflected in the title for our session—‘Fragmentation or consolidation? Fostering a coherent professional identity for lawyers’:

- What do I do that advances the objectives of the AAL?
- What do I *not* do to advance the objectives of the AAL?
- In an ideal world, what do I wish I had time to do to advance the objectives of the AAL
- In an ideal world, what do I wish the other branches of the legal profession would do....
- How the AAL can help advance this project?

Put simply, they were asked to ‘bare all’, ‘fess up’ and provide constructive criticism of each other and ourselves.

Other questions may be added arising out of the proceedings this morning:

- Who, or what, is the legal profession today?
- Do we have an Australian legal identity?
- What is the role of ‘service’ in shaping professional identity?

The topic presents both a question and a challenge. It embodies the three tenses—past, present and future—respecting our past; understanding our present; learning from both to shape the future in advancing the discipline of law.

Each speaker was allocated 10-12 minutes to present on their allotted questions, after which there will be an opportunity for questions and panel discussion. The ‘batting order’ will take us across the three branches represented.

Our opening batsman is the Hon Justice Robert Nicholson of the Federal Court, Western Australia.....

The batting order thereafter is:

Dr Melissa Perry QC (SA & NSW)

Professor Michael Coper (Dean, College of Law, ANU and Chair of CALD)

Justice Susan Kiefel (Federal Court, Qld)

Bret Walker SC (NSW)

Justice Margaret McMurdo (CA, Qld)

Professor Michael Lavarch (Dean, Faculty of Law, QUT)

Justice Robert French (Federal Court, WA)

Professor Sally Kift (Senior Carrick Fellow, QUT)

**Please welcome to the crease Justice Robert Nicholson.**