

The Sugerman Lecture: “Reclaiming the Founding Vision”

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The 100th volume of the *Australian Law Journal* is a milestone in the life of the Australian legal profession. The milestone is worthy of our celebration. I am delighted to be part of that celebration. Since its first issue appeared on 5 May 1927, the ALJ has endured through almost a century of change in Australian law, legal practice and legal institutions. It has been the journal of record of that change. It has been a forum for the profession to reflect on its work and debate its future. It remains, as it was described on the occasion of its tenth anniversary, “a legitimate source of pride to all members of the legal profession in Australia”.¹

Inaugurating this annual lecture series named in honour of the ALJ’s founding editor, Bernard Sugerman, I do not attempt to offer a comprehensive account of its evolution and its many contributions over the years. That task is being undertaken, in the detail it deserves, in a series of deeply researched and illuminating articles by Larissa Reid of the NSW Law Courts Library, being published across this year and next, tracing the story of the ALJ decade by decade.²

Instead, I want to pay tribute to the ALJ by returning to its beginnings. The idea I propose to explore is that the founding of the ALJ can be understood as an essential element of a larger moment in the history of the Australian legal profession. That moment was a period from the late-1920s through to the mid-1930s which also saw the establishment of the Law Council of Australia in 1933 and the convening of the first Australian Legal Convention in 1935. Each of these initiatives contributed a piece of the infrastructure that would begin to draw lawyers across the country into a national conversation. Taken together, they represented the emergence of a new and genuinely bold vision. The vision was of a truly national and distinctively Australian legal profession, which collaborated to address issues of common

* Chief Justice of Australia. This inaugural Sugerman Lecture was delivered on 3 September 2026 at the Banco Court of the Supreme Court of New South Wales to mark Volume 100 of the Australian Law Journal. I acknowledge the considerable assistance I have received from Matthew Traeger in preparing this lecture.

¹ “The Tenth Anniversary of the Australian Law Journal” (1937) 11 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 2.

² Larissa Reid, “History of the Australian Law Journal: The 1920s: A New Voice for the Legal Profession” (2026) 100 *Australian Law Journal* 102; Larissa Reid, “History of the Australian Law Journal: The 1930s – Part I: Consolidation and Growth” (2026) 100 *Australian Law Journal* 277.

concern, was actively engaged in the improvement of Australian law and our legal system and was grounded in a set of shared professional standards, values and commitments.

Given the overwhelming fragmentation of the six State professions at the time, the ambition was striking. Since that time, important elements of that founding vision have been realised. In other key respects, the project remains incomplete. The centenary of the ALJ invites us not only to celebrate the role the ALJ played during its early years in fostering this conception of a truly national Australian legal profession but also to rededicate ourselves to the work of carrying that vision forward.

A fragmented legal profession

A little more than a quarter of a century after Federation, the professions of the six States remained essentially separate and local in their organisation, institutions and sense of identity. In most States there were law societies and in some there were bar associations, but no mechanisms existed for formal interaction between those professional bodies across jurisdictions.

Taken as a whole, the profession was also small. By the early 1930s, there were around 4,300 qualified lawyers in Australia. Most solicitors worked in small firms or as sole practitioners. The era of national firms was far away. Legal education was vocational in its purpose. The four law schools that then existed had few full-time staff members, with teaching primarily handled by practitioners and geared to preparing students for entry into practice.

Legislative innovation at the Commonwealth and State levels was producing growing and increasingly discordant bodies of statute law, resulting in some areas in substantial divergences between laws of the States. There was very little by way of nationally focussed or nationally distributed legal writing. English textbooks and legal periodicals remained the predominant sources of reference and of intellectual orientation.³

What existed, essentially, was a collection of small and fragmented professional communities united by a common legal inheritance but only weakly connected to one another in practice.

³ Gordon Hughes, *The Law Council of Australia: The People, The Profession and The Institutions* (Halstead Press, 2013) at 25-26, 157; David Weisbrot, *Australian Lawyers* (Longman Cheshire, 1990) at 2.

A national journal, a national association and a national meeting

This was the landscape into which the ALJ arrived in 1927. The ALJ was a collaboration between its publisher, the Law Book Company, and its founding editor, Bernard Sugerman, who was then 22 years old and only a year into practice as a barrister in Sydney. He would remain at the helm of the ALJ for the entirety of his accomplished, twenty-year career at the bar. He would also serve, at various points, as the editor in chief of the Australian Digest and as an editor of the Commonwealth Law Reports. He would go on to appointments as a judge of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration and subsequently as a judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, becoming a founding member and eventually President of the New South Wales Court of Appeal.⁴ For present purposes, his significance lies in the fact that, at the very start of his distinguished professional life, he took on the responsibility of bringing this new national publication to life.

The purpose of the ALJ was described in a foreword to the first issue written by the Commonwealth Attorney-General, John Latham, as a being “a medium for the distribution of information and the interchange of ideas among legal practitioners in every State of the Commonwealth”.⁵ So began a pattern of monthly publication in a form that remains recognisable to us, with each issue reporting on topics of current interest, providing notes on areas of law of practical relevance to practitioners, and covering the major decisions of the High Court as well as State and English courts.

Gaining momentum around the same time was the idea for a national association of lawyers. An editorial in one of the first issues of the ALJ identified that “[t]he legal profession appears to be one of the few professions or businesses in Australia which are without a Federal Organization of some kind. No one can doubt that much good work can be accomplished through the agency of such a body”.⁶

Previous attempts had not been successful. In 1911, the Law Institute of Victoria had invited other State bodies to visit to discuss the formation of a Federal Legal Council but the meeting did not proceed

⁴ M Z Forbes, “Sugerman, Sir Bernard (1904–1976)”, Australian Dictionary of Biography (online) <<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sugerman-sir-bernard-11799>>.

⁵ J G Latham, “Foreword” (1927) 1 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 1.

⁶ “An Australian Law Association” (1927) 1 *Australian Law Journal* 184 at 185.

despite being timed to be held during the Melbourne Cup week. A few years later, a draft constitution had been prepared but agreement could not be secured from all the States.⁷

The breakthrough came in 1933, by which time the disagreements between the State bodies about the shape of a national association had been resolved and delegates representing the law societies and bar councils of the States met over three days in Sydney. The meeting called itself the “First Conference of Australian Legal Societies” and was chaired by Attorney-General Latham. The meeting’s achievement was the agreement by the delegates to the wording of a draft constitution of the body that would come to be known as the “Law Council of Australia”. The Law Council came into being following the adoption of the constitution by each of its constituent bodies.⁸ It was characterised in the ALJ, in words which reflect the ambition that must have been felt by those involved, as “an emulation, within a more confined sphere, of the laudable intentions of the founders of the Commonwealth”.⁹

The creation of a national body catalysed the next development: the organisation of regular gatherings of lawyers from across the country. In 1935, the Law Council hosted the first “Australian Legal Convention” in Melbourne. The Convention was opened by Latham who only a few weeks earlier had been appointed as Chief Justice of Australia. Latham explained the objectives of the Convention to include “to advance the study of the law and to improve and develop the law” and hoped that it would “help towards producing a sense of unity in our profession”.¹⁰ Learned papers delivered at the Convention were reproduced in a special supplement to the ALJ. Three more Conventions would be held before the end of the decade, in Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane, and each was a significant occasion.

The founding vision

The establishment in quick succession of a national publication, a national association and periodic national gatherings were closely connected. Behind them was an overlapping cast of characters, chief among them Latham, Sugerman and the leaders of the State law societies and bar associations who devoted their

⁷ Gordon Hughes, *The Law Council of Australia: The People, The Profession and The Institutions* (Halstead Press, 2013) at 27-28; Law Institute of Victoria, *The Law Institute of Victoria 1859-1959* (1959) at 47.

⁸ “Current Topics” (1933) 7 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 1-2; Gordon Hughes, *The Law Council of Australia: The People, The Profession and The Institutions* (Halstead Press, 2013) at 29-30.

⁹ “Current Topics” (1933) 7 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 2.

¹⁰ “Australian Legal Convention, 1935” (1935) 9 *Australian Law Journal* (Supplement) 1 at 1.

efforts to this national project. Each initiative created the conditions for the next. Together, they were the product of, and gave expression to, a new vision for what the Australian legal profession could be.

The thrust of the vision was that practitioners should begin to think of themselves not as divided into six communities connected simply by a common heritage, but as members of a national profession. A sense of shared identity would be valuable because a profession that could think nationally, act nationally and unite around common values would be better equipped to service its clients and fulfil its public responsibilities.

I do not suggest that this vision was announced in a single manifesto or that every person behind these events would have articulated the ambition in the same way. But revealed in the objectives and pages of the first volumes of the ALJ, the resolutions and activities of the Law Council, and the papers and discussions from the early Conventions, is a strong and coherent conception of what a truly Australian legal profession would look like and why it was worth pursuing.

Five elements of that vision come through most clearly. First, it was a vision of a profession connected by the exchange of information and ideas across State borders, capable of acting together on matters of common concern. Second, it was a vision of a profession which understood itself as bound by shared professional standards. Third, it was a vision of a learned profession. Fourth, it was a vision of a profession actively engaged in the improvement and distinctively Australian development of the law. Fifth, and underlying the other elements, it was a vision of a profession conscious that its ultimate purpose was to serve the community. Let me elaborate on each of those elements.

A connected and collaborative profession

Driving the establishment of the ALJ, the Law Council and the Conventions was the recognition that the exchange of information, ideas, perspectives and lessons across jurisdictions would benefit the individual practitioner as well as the profession as a whole.

In his foreword to the first issue of the ALJ, Latham identified a basic structural challenge confronting the profession. There was “one Federal and six State bodies of statute law and one Federal and six State judicial systems”, with “substantial divergencies” between the States in some areas of law. The

result was that it could be easy for practitioners or legislators in one jurisdiction to remain unaware of what was happening in others. A significant decision or development in one jurisdiction could pass unnoticed elsewhere. The ALJ would, Latham said, “help to provide the means for removing [these] difficulties”.¹¹ On the ALJ’s tenth anniversary, Latham reflected that the short notes on cases benefited practitioners in all the States by “having their attention directed to decisions which otherwise they might have missed”.¹² In this way, the ALJ sought to help practitioners appreciate the wider context of Australia’s law and legal institutions. The Conventions were a physical manifestation of this aspiration, with Latham reflecting at one of the early Conventions that there was real value in “an opportunity for meeting one another socially as well as forensically in order that we should become aware of ourselves as a profession”.¹³

In addition to exchange, the vision called for collaboration. It was recognised that there were matters of broader concern that no single State body could address alone. Herbert Mayo KC, who was a leading South Australian advocate for the creation of the Law Council, who served as the Law Council's first President, and who would later become a judge of the Supreme Court of South Australia, explained it in this way:¹⁴

Each separate legal system has its own problems. But many, and perhaps the most important, are shared in common. As to these common problems, obviously, intermittent and unconnected efforts in each jurisdiction must have much less likelihood of success than united effort.

The Law Council was designed to facilitate collaboration on shared problems, with the ALJ describing it as establishing a means whereby the State professions could “obtain the advantages of concerted consideration and action in matters of general Australian interest and importance”.¹⁵

Shared professional standards

The issues seen as suitable for collective endeavour from the outset included the development of shared professional standards. Among the resolutions passed at the First Conference of Australian Legal

¹¹ J G Latham, “Foreword” (1927) 1 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 1.

¹² “The Tenth Anniversary of the Australian Law Journal” (1937) 11 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 1.

¹³ “Third Law Convention: Opening of Convention” (1938) 11 *Australian Law Journal* 363 at 365.

¹⁴ Herbert Mayo, “The Future of the Law Council of Australia” (1939) 13 *Australian Law Journal* 183 at 184.

¹⁵ “Current Topics” (1933) 7 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 2.

Societies in 1933 was a recommendation that “an earnest endeavour be made to attain an adequate standard for admission to practise as members of the legal profession so as to ensure that every practitioner is fully qualified”.¹⁶ Mayo reflected on this topic at the fourth Convention in 1939, explaining that “[t]he necessity for a proper grade of skill and knowledge is of a national concern”. He went on:¹⁷

It is probably true to say that our professional status is never likely to be higher than that acquired by a person just, and only just, able to qualify. And the standard so set by [that minimally qualified person] may be accepted by the public as the standard not only of the profession in his State but throughout the Commonwealth. If that be so, it is a matter of concern to the community, and vital to the profession present and future, that an adequate minimum grade should be fixed for the whole country. There can be no ... reason ... why the grade for qualifying, or the rules for admission, should vary throughout Australia.

To this Mayo added the desirability of a uniform code of ethics, which could be adopted by the Law Council in consultation with the State bodies and in turn adopted by the profession throughout Australia.¹⁸ Reciprocal admission between the States was also flagged by the ALJ as early as 1927 as being worthy of consideration,¹⁹ and was endorsed as a priority by a resolution of the Law Council in 1937.²⁰ Behind these aspirations was a belief that elevating the standards to which the profession held itself, and seeing them observed in all jurisdictions, would enhance the community’s confidence in the profession nationwide.

A learned profession

The profession was also called on to be actively engaged in the intellectual life of the law.

A theme of Latham’s address at the First Conference of Australian Legal Societies in 1933 was the law’s status as a “learned profession”. Being a member of the profession involved, in his view,

¹⁶ “Current Topics” (1933) 7 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 1.

¹⁷ Herbert Mayo, “The Future of the Law Council of Australia” (1939) 13 *Australian Law Journal* 183 at 185-186.

¹⁸ Herbert Mayo, “The Future of the Law Council of Australia” (1939) 13 *Australian Law Journal* 183 at 187.

¹⁹ “An Australian Law Association” (1933) 7 *Australian Law Journal* 184 at 185.

²⁰ Gordon Hughes, *The Law Council of Australia: The People, The Profession and The Institutions* (Halstead Press, 2013) at 196.

responsibilities to “promote and advance the study of law ... [and] legal principles”. This was, he reflected, an area in which the profession in Australia had not yet “fully realised its obligations”. He considered that the study of the law should not be left only to universities and other educational institutions but should be “a field of action for the profession as a whole”. His wish was to see “the Australian legal profession, as a profession, making contributions to the study of the law.”²¹

The ALJ was a means of building this culture, in a form that blended practical and scholarly perspectives. Latham’s foreword to the first issue of the ALJ explained that, beyond facilitating the sharing of information, it would be a vehicle for “providing legal, as distinct from political, criticism of the judgments and statutes which make the law under which the people of Australia live”, adding that the “achievement and maintenance of a high standard in legislative and judicial work is greatly assisted by independent competent criticism of such work by members of the legal profession”.²² On the ALJ’s tenth anniversary, Sugerman himself observed that “Australia has perhaps not as yet accorded to legal scholarship as much recognition and appreciation of its value in the development of the law as it has received elsewhere. The Journal always has and will seek to assist in making good this omission”.²³

The early Conventions supplemented this role of the ALJ by providing opportunities for leaders of the profession to present longer papers on Australian law, furnishing in words used by Justice Evatt at the second Convention in 1936 “evidence of a renaissance in Australia of legal learning and research”.²⁴ The tradition of publishing the Convention papers in the ALJ brought the discussion to a wider audience. Together, the ALJ and the Conventions had the effect of inviting all practitioners to think about Australian law as something capable of criticism and development.

A profession engaged in the improvement of the law and the legal system

A related component of the vision was that the profession should see itself as having a duty not only to reflect on law as it is practised, but also to lend its expertise and experience to improving the law and the legal system: the work we now describe as law reform.

²¹ “First Conference of Australian Legal Societies” (1933) 7 *Australian Law Journal* 14 at 15-16.

²² J G Latham, “Foreword” (1927) 1 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 1.

²³ “The Tenth Anniversary of the Australian Law Journal” (1937) 11 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 2.

²⁴ “Law Council of Australia Dinner” (1936) 10 *Australian Law Journal* (Supplement) 21 at 22.

Latham addressed this topic at the first Convention in 1935. “We as lawyers”, he said, “should concern ourselves actively with the improvement of the system under which we work”. He explained:²⁵

Law is intimately related to national ideals, and it should be regarded, as in fact it is, as a powerful social instrument for the advancement of the people, and not as a set of technical rules by the understanding and application of which a profession earns its living. ... It should be actively recognised that, in this sphere and others, it is the function and the duty of the profession to serve the public. There should be a real and continuous endeavour to improve the legal instruments with which the profession works.

This point was reiterated at the next Convention by Robert Menzies, who had by then succeeded Latham as Commonwealth Attorney-General. “The business of a lawyer”, he said, “is more than the business of performing certain services for certain rewards”. The profession had “begun to realise that we have responsibilities, not only for the honest practising of the law ... but also in some respects for the quality and nature of the law that we practise”. He called for a profession “prepared as a matter of public service to volunteer its work, its research, and its time and trouble in the working out of great reforms in legal procedure”.²⁶

A commonly stated aspiration was the achievement of greater uniformity of law across the States. At the First Conference of Australian Legal Societies a resolution was passed expressing the desirability of uniformity, with Mayo observing at the fourth Convention in 1939 that the fragmentation of statute law and the divergence of legal precedent “leads ultimately, not to clarity, but to confusion”.²⁷ In a paper delivered at the same Convention, E L Piesse, a Victorian solicitor who would later serve as President of the Law Institute of Victoria, identified a range of areas well-suited to harmonisation, and encouraged the State bodies to lead the way by drawing up and circulating draft legislation and using their influence with their own Parliaments to have bills introduced.²⁸

²⁵ J G Latham, “Law and the Community” (1935) 9 *Australian Law Journal* 2 at 7.

²⁶ “Law Council of Australia Dinner” (1936) 10 *Australian Law Journal* (Supplement) 13 at 26.

²⁷ Herbert Mayo, “The Future of the Law Council of Australia” (1939) 13 *Australian Law Journal* 183 at 184.

²⁸ E L Piesse, “Uniformity of State Laws – A Proposal for Action” (1939) 13 *Australian Law Journal* 176 at 181.

Harmonisation was linked to the ideal of a truly national profession. An editorial in the ALJ in 1933 envisioned a time when a lawyer, “having been admitted in one State ... will be able to obtain admission in another State with the minimum of restriction; and when, if practising before the Courts of such other State ... will be dealing with legislation which on questions unaffected by purely local considerations, will be the same in both nomenclature and contents, as that in the State of his admission”.²⁹

A profession in service of the community

Underlying the other elements of the vision was a deeper idea: the profession could fulfil its responsibilities only by having a proper appreciation of the relationship between the law and the community, and that this appreciation should be shared by all Australian practitioners.

This was the message Latham chose to highlight in his opening address at the first Convention in 1935, simply titled “Law and the Community”. According to Latham, “it should never be forgotten by the members of the legal profession that the justification of the existence of the profession as a profession is to be found in the value of the service they render to the people”.³⁰ Latham emphasised the connection between law and the people by invoking the foreboding international context of the time in which he spoke involving the rise of authoritarianism: in fascist Italy where there had been a “definite rejection of freedom in favour of discipline and authority under an all powerful State”; in Soviet Russia where “liberalism and democracy [had] also been deliberately rejected”; as well as in Nazi Germany. Common to these systems was the subordination of law to the will of the state, the law having been made an instrument of those who governed instead of a constraint upon them.³¹ Latham concluded in that address in 1935: “[t]he effective protection of the rights of the citizens depends very largely upon the existence of a body of lawyers who are independent, honourable, capable and fearless”.³² This was in keeping with his observation on a previous occasion that the independence of the legal profession and the judiciary in Australia are “the safeguards on which the independence and liberty of the community depend”.³³

²⁹ “Current Topics” (1933) 7 *Australian Law Journal* 1 at 2.

³⁰ J G Latham, “Law and the Community” (1935) 9 *Australian Law Journal* (Supplement) 2 at 8.

³¹ J G Latham, “Law and the Community” (1935) 9 *Australian Law Journal* (Supplement) 2 at 5-7.

³² J G Latham, “Law and the Community” (1935) 9 *Australian Law Journal* (Supplement) 2 at 8.

³³ “First Conference of Australian Legal Societies” (1933) 7 *Australian Law Journal* 14 at 18.

From Latham's premise follows a broader and deeper understanding of the Australian legal profession's responsibilities. Its commitment to high professional standards, to the development of the law and to the improvement of the legal system is necessary because of the essential role that law plays in the functioning of Australian society. This idea was expressed at the First Conference of Australian Legal Societies by Neal Macrossan, then of the Queensland bar and later to become Chief Justice of Queensland, when he observed that the coming together of the profession in a national association would "show the community of Australia that the professions of the law are not bound together merely as trade unions for their own protection, but in order to see that the work they do is done in the best possible way for the benefit of the community in which they live".³⁴

The vision impaired

Those, as I see it, were the strands of the vision that emerged in the establishment and early work of the ALJ, Law Council and Conventions.

Each of the three constituent elements of the infrastructure that manifested the vision has notably endured. The inauguration of this lecture in its centennial year is an illustration of the constancy and contemporary relevance of the ALJ. The Law Council of Australia has long been and remains vigorous in pursuing its national mission identified in contemporary terms as that of representing the profession at the national level, speaking on behalf of its constituent state and territory professional bodies on national and international issues and promoting the administration of justice, access to justice and the improvement of the law.³⁵ Increasingly, the Law Council has been complemented in those pursuits by the Australian Bar Association which was established in 1963. The Australian Legal Convention, having been held regularly between 1935 and 2009, was revived under the auspices of the Council of Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand in 2025 and will be continued with the support the Law Council in 2027.

What then has come of the vision itself? The answer is not that its early articulation resulted in an immediate transformation of the legal profession in Australia. It did not. The legal profession *has* evolved

³⁴ "First Conference of Australian Legal Societies" (1933) 7 *Australian Law Journal* 14 at 22.

³⁵ Law Council of Australia, "About Us" (online) <<https://lawcouncil.au/about-us>>.

in profound ways over the past century – as the pages across 100 volumes of the ALJ record. Yet the vision itself remains in significant respects unfulfilled.

The decades immediately following the moment I have described were, in many ways, a period of stagnation for the profession's evolution. Depression, war, distance, and the stubbornness of local interests and traditions undoubtedly slowed the momentum. Aspects of the description I gave of the profession in the 1920s and 1930s would remain applicable for much longer, including at the time when I entered the profession in the 1980s.

Movements towards national integration which began in the 1990s were less generated from within the profession than they were thrust upon it, beginning with the unedifying litigation which resulted in the decision of the High Court in *Street v Queensland Bar Association*³⁶ enforcing the prohibition on discrimination against inter-state residents in s 117 of the Constitution to strike down protectionist admission requirements. The *Mutual Recognition Act 1992* (Cth) and cognate State and Territory legislation which entitled a person admitted to practice in one jurisdiction to be admitted in another jurisdiction, and which led to the advent of the National Practising Certificate Scheme, were not specifically directed to the legal profession but were part of a broader exercise in micro-economic reform in which the legal profession was swept up.

The idea of developing a genuinely national regulatory framework for a genuinely national legal profession was taken up by a National Legal Profession Reform Taskforce appointed by the Commonwealth Attorney-General in 2009. The process resulted in the Legal Profession Uniform Law, which commenced in New South Wales and Victoria in 2015, with Western Australia joining in 2022.³⁷ By establishing common professional standards in its participating jurisdictions, the Uniform Law has brought around three quarters of the Australian profession within a single regulatory framework. But it is not yet truly national.

³⁶ (1989) 168 CLR 461.

³⁷ The Law Society of New South Wales, "New Framework for the Legal Profession Uniform Law" (online) <<https://www.lawsociety.com.au/practising-law-in-NSW/rules-and-legislation/legal-profession-uniform-law/new-framework>>; Legal Services Council, *Information Sheet for Legal Practitioners: Overview of the Uniform Law* (July 2022).

Adverting to the slow take-up of the Uniform Law in a keynote address at the Uniform Law Conference 2026 in Perth in July, Latham's successor and my predecessor, Robert French, made the point that just as "[p]arochial notions of an archipelago of distinct [federal, State and Territory] judiciaries are the vestiges of a vanished past" in Australia so too "[p]arochial notions of an archipelago of distinct State and Territory based professions are the vestiges of a vanished past".³⁸ The past may have vanished; the vestiges are yet fully to be erased.

The vision renewed

The Australian legal profession stands at just over 100,000 within an Australian population of almost 28 million within a world population of over 8 billion within which the non-re-emergence of geopolitical forces akin to those highlighted by Latham in his opening address at the first Australian Legal Convention in 1935 cannot be taken for granted. The relatively small national profession stands stronger when it works together; the Australian community and its democratic institutions are the beneficiaries. That was the core of the founding vision of the ALJ and remains as important now as it was a century ago.

We are the present leaders and custodians of the profession. This occasion allows us to reflect on the founding vision and provides us with an opportunity to recommit ourselves to its future realisation.

³⁸ Robert French AC, "A National Legal Profession, Quantum Computing, Standard Gauge Railways and Dingo Fences" (Speech, Uniform Law Conference 2026, 24 July 2026) at 8.