

Wednesday, 22 March 2017

Lawyers gathering in Adelaide to discuss approaches to Australia's access to justice crisis

More than 200 lawyers, judges, government officials, and academics will gather in Adelaide this Thursday and Friday (23/3 and 24/3) for the sixth [National Access to Justice & Pro Bono Conference](#), the first to be held in the festival state.

The Conference, presented by the Law Council of Australia and the Australian Pro Bono Centre in conjunction with the Law Society of South Australia, is the biggest Australian event regarding the vital areas of access to justice and pro bono.

The Conference will feature leading international and local speakers, who will look at how Australians may be struggling to access justice and what opportunities there are to overcome this through legal services and pro bono work.

The keynote speaker this year is Professor Sheldon Krantz, the Executive Director of the DC Affordable Law Firm. He also serves as the Co-Director of the Justice Lab, which focuses on the access to justice crisis in the United States. Professor Krantz will also give a dinner address on 'The rule of law in the new America.'

The event will feature an address by Shadow Attorney-General, the Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP, and [many others](#).

Law Council of Australia President, Fiona McLeod SC, who will speak during tomorrow morning's opening, said the Conference fell at a critical time.

"The legal assistance sector is currently in crisis," Ms McLeod said.

"A steady erosion of government funding over a generation has now produced a situation in which hundreds of thousands of Australians are being denied legal representation when they seek it.

"Australian lawyers are contributing a remarkable 35 hours of pro bono legal services, per lawyer, per year. But this cannot be substitute for a properly funded legal assistance sector.

"That's why it is so critical for lawyers to gather and to exchange ideas around how the funding crisis might be addressed, but also how to innovate and collaborate to do the very best possible with the meagre resources currently available.

"We know that if people do not get access to justice their lives will often deteriorate in a myriad ways. The legal profession takes its responsibility to mitigate this extremely seriously," said Ms McLeod.

[Full event program available here](#). Media welcome to attend. Follow on Twitter: #A2J2017

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