

Brexit 'opportunity' for Commonwealth, says leading lawyer



Brexit represents "opportunity" for Commonwealth lawyers, according to the president of the **Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA)**.

Alexander Ward (pictured), speaking to *Scottish Legal News* ahead of a [conference in Melbourne](#) this year, said he was not concerned about the administration of justice after Britain's exit from the **European Union**.

He said: "Having visited London in October 2016, I saw first-hand the effect of it and the worry it was causing people involved in the administration of justice.

"From the point of view of the Commonwealth, it represents opportunity. In London I was advised by a taxi driver that he was in favour of Brexit because of decisions made in Europe which prevented him from purchasing New Zealand lamb.

"There seems to be an across the board concern with respect to trade blocks. Brexit should not have a significant effect on the administration of law but it presents a complicated set of legal issues.

"As ever, the Commonwealth countries are happy to assist to fill any gaps left by the departure from the European Union."

Mr Ward also told *SLN* that lawyers in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland could look to the Commonwealth countries for examples of how UK jurisdictions could fuse their legal professions.

He said: "It was a fact of colonisation that when judicial systems were set up in remote areas, there would be an attempt to replicate the English system. To a degree, this is being reviewed now with what is called 'decolonisation' in a number of jurisdictions."

Mr Ward practises in South Australia, which has a fused profession - but said he is "now exclusively working as a barrister".

South Australia has an independent bar which is used "in the traditional way", but there is no impediment on solicitors acting as counsel.

Mr Ward said: "I practised as a barrister and solicitor for approximately 20 years. Any court work always greatly improved my role as a solicitor.

"Thus, if the situation of a fused profession is being considered in places such as Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, there are numerous examples where this can be seen in action in a number of the Commonwealth jurisdictions using almost identical legal structures. It is not necessary to look to the US jurisdiction, for example, as the only illustration of the fused profession."