



Commonwealth Lawyers Association

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Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
The Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

17th November 2022

By email: senator.wong@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister

Support for Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute (PacLII)

We refer to correspondence sent to your office from the Australasian Legal Information Institute (24.10.22) and from the Law Council of Australia (28.10.22) in relation to the funding of PacLII.

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA) is an international non-profit organisation which promotes and maintains the rule of law throughout the 56 member states of the Commonwealth. Our membership spans the Pacific, and our Australasia Hub actively promotes access to justice and legal information as key components of rule of law in the region.

CLA wishes to express its strong support for PacLII which is facing an existential threat due to withdrawal of funding.

PacLII is a vital piece of legal infrastructure across the Pacific used daily by lawyers, judges and students. It is also widely used by laypeople such as journalists and civil society groups. Across the Pacific, there are significant capacity constraints to access up-to-date case law and consolidated legislation. Commercial legal information services have limited coverage and are very costly, putting them out of the reach of most people.

Since its inception, PacLII has been a credible and current source of information about the law across the Pacific region. PacLII's free and up-to-date service plays a vital role supporting access to justice, rule of law and development of Pacific jurisprudence and legal systems. This in turn plays a

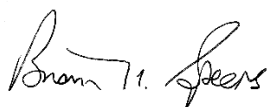
fundamental role in supporting the development of democratic institutions and just and peaceful societies across the region.

Commonwealth members, including Australia, have committed to promote access to justice in support of democracy and sustainable development. These principles are enshrined in the Commonwealth (Latimer House) Principles (2008), and more recently in the Commonwealth Law Ministers Declaration on Equal Access to Justice (2019). They are further reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 16 which strives to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

We understand that PaCLII is presently seeking funding from the Australian Government for approximately AUD\$1 million per year for the next five years and has provided your office with a detailed funding proposal for ‘*Maintaining and Enhancing the Sustainability of Free Access to Law in the Pacific Region*’.

CLA unreservedly endorses PaCLII’s funding proposal and urges you to support this vital infrastructure that supports rule of law across the Pacific.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Speers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

Brian Speers
President