

2027
9 - 13 MAY



25TH COMMONWEALTH LAW CONFERENCE

Darwin, Australia

Programme at a Glance

Resilient lawyers in a resilient Commonwealth
Can justice equal prosperity?

Saturday 8th May 2027

	Family Law Symposium	Chief Justices' Roundtable	CLA Council Briefing	President's Dinner for Council/ExCo/Past Presidents

Sunday 9th May 2027

8.00 – 16.30	Conference Registration and Assistance Darwin Convention Centre						
	Bar Leaders Summit (Invitation only)	Attorneys General Roundtable (Invitation only)	CLA Council Meeting for Council members only (hybrid)	CJEI Patrons Meeting	AGM for CLA members		NextGen Forum (open to all young lawyers under 40)
10.00 – 11.15	Session 1					9.45 - 10.15	Welcome and Introductions
						10.15 - 10.45	Keynote

							10.45 -11.15	The Art of Advocacy
11.15 – 11.45							11.15 – 11.45	Coffee break
11.45 – 1.00	Session 2						11.45 – 12.30	Ethics in Action
1.00 -1.15	Wrap up photo						12.30 – 1.15	Expertise to Earnings and Expansion: Monetising and Utilising Legal Experience
1.15 – 2.15	Lunch						1.15 – 2.15	Lunch
							2.15 – 3.00	Wellbeing for Junior Practitioners
					3.00 – 3.00 pm Refreshments		3.00 - 4.00	Speed Mentoring
					3.30 -4.30 AGM for CLA members only			
18.00 – 20.00 Welcome reception for all conference delegates at the Main Hall and Speakers Green precincts of Parliament House Those accompanying persons who have purchased an accompanying person ticket are also welcome to attend.								

Monday 10th May 2027

9.00 – 10.00	Opening Ceremony
10.00 – 10.30	Tea / Coffee Networking Break
10.30 -12.00	6 th Soli Sorabjee Memorial Lecture Plenary Panel 1 A Resilient Commonwealth In A Broken World <i>The Commonwealth's unique ability to reach consensus on a range of global issues, and its capacity to use that strength to influence global outcomes.</i>

12.00 – 13.00	Lunch Break				
	Stream A Democratic resilience: rule of law and institutional integrity	Stream B Economic resilience: law, markets and sustainable growth	Stream C Community and human rights resilience: protecting people in time of change	Stream D Professional and technical resilience: the future of legal practice and justice systems	Stream E Shared legal challenges across the Commonwealth
13.00- 14.30	A1 Measuring the Rule of Law: Progress or Plateau? <i>What do the data really reveal</i>	B1 When Governments Become Customers: Is Commercial Arbitration Enough?	C1 Recognition Without Protection? Same-Sex Rights Across the Commonwealth <i>Legal progress—or constitutional patchwork?</i>	D1 Digital Sovereignty and AI: Who Owns the Future of Law? <i>From users to controllers of technology.</i>	E1 Indigenous Justice: Overrepresentation, Reform and Resistance
	A data-driven assessment of rule of law performance across the Commonwealth. This session highlights where progress is real, where it is stalling, and what the next five years demand from legal institutions. Partner: World Justice Project	Governments increasingly do business with global investors, but disputes can affect far more than the parties at the table. Is commercial arbitration enough when the stakes extend to public policy, national resources and entire populations? This session will examine the ever-changing legal regimes with which clients have to comply and will canvass how as legal professional we can assist clients to comply and how we protect them when we don't.	What happens when a family crosses a border, but its legal status does not? As Commonwealth jurisdictions follow increasingly different paths on same-sex rights, this session explores the challenges of recognition, enforcement, parental rights and the protection of children.	Artificial intelligence may be global, but the control of it is not. As states, institutions and businesses seek greater influence over data, algorithms and digital infrastructure, who will shape the legal rules of the digital future? Partner: Nigerian Bar Association	The evidence is not new and the statistics are not new. Reports are written, inquiries held and recommendations made. Yet Indigenous peoples remain disproportionately represented in criminal justice systems across many Commonwealth jurisdictions. Why has progress proved so elusive?
14.30 – 15.00	Tea / Coffee Networking Break				
15.00 – 16.30	A2 Protecting the Protectors: Safeguarding Lawyers at Risk <i>When lawyers are targeted, justice is weakened</i>	B2 Cyber Risk Without Borders: Law in a Data-Driven World <i>Are legal frameworks keeping pace with digital threats?</i>	C2 Family Violence and Technology: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly	D2 AI in Legal Practice: Ethics, Risk and Regulation <i>Practical guidance for a transforming profession</i>	E2 Customary Law and the Constitution: Bridging Principle and Practice <i>Can legal pluralism truly work?</i>
	When lawyers are silenced, intimidated or driven into exile, it is not only their independence that is at risk but the rule of law itself. As	The next cyberattack may cross half a dozen borders before breakfast. Legislation usually prefers a more leisurely pace. As cyber threats and	Not every form of domestic abuse leaves a physical trace. From surveillance and fabricated evidence to the non-consensual sharing of intimate	Artificial intelligence may be able to draft a legal argument, but it is unlikely to bear professional responsibility for getting it wrong—	Customary law is often deeply embedded in community life. Legal pluralism sounds straightforward until different

	threats to lawyers increase worldwide, this session explores new international protections, support for displaced practitioners, and mechanisms for holding perpetrators to account. Partner: Law Society of England and Wales	regulatory demands multiply, how can lawyers help clients stay compliant, secure and one step ahead?	images, technology is reshaping family disputes and challenging traditional legal responses. How should the law adapt?	and it cannot be struck off. As AI becomes embedded in legal practice, how can lawyers harness its potential while managing ethical duties, professional risk and regulatory expectations?	legal systems produce different answers. As jurisdictions seek to recognise customary law within constitutional frameworks, what happens when customary rules, legislation and constitutional rights pull in different directions? Can principle and practice be reconciled without sacrificing certainty, legitimacy or justice?
17.00 – 18.00	Bar Council of England and Wales International Moot				

Tuesday 11th May 2027					
9.00 – 10.30	A3 Business and Human Rights: Retreat or Reinvention? <i>Is corporate accountability being diluted?</i>	B3 Weaponised Tariffs: Trade Wars by Another Name <i>When economics becomes coercion</i>	C3 Best Interests Under Pressure: Children in Overburdened Courts <i>Can justice systems still prioritise the child?</i>	D3 Tech for Justice: Prevention, Not Just Cure <i>Can innovation reduce legal crises?</i>	E3 Truth, Reconciliation and Treaty: What Works? <i>Can legal processes heal historic injustice?</i>
	From greenhushing to artificial intelligence, new pressures are testing corporate commitments to human rights, environmental responsibility and labour protections. Are hard-won gains being diluted, or are businesses simply changing the language of accountability to meet a changing world?	A tariff may look like a tax, but sometimes it behaves more like an opening bid in a negotiation nobody realised they had joined. As trade measures are increasingly used to secure political, strategic and economic concessions, is the rules-based trading system giving way to a more transactional model—and where does that leave states caught in the middle?	When courts are overwhelmed, someone inevitably waits. What happens when that someone is a child? This session explores how family justice systems balance scarce resources with the obligation to protect children's rights, welfare and long-term interests.	Legal problems do have a habit of travelling in packs. As Dame Hazel Genn's work has shown, a single setback can trigger a chain of disputes affecting every aspect of life. Can technology help identify problems earlier and prevent legal crises before they escalate?	Acknowledging historic injustice is one thing; addressing its consequences is another. This session compares truth-telling, reconciliation and treaty processes across the Commonwealth and asks which approaches have delivered meaningful and lasting change.
10:30- 11:00	Tea / Coffee Networking Break				
11:00– 12.30	Plenary Panel 2 Resilience Of Freedoms Hard Won Expression, Religion, Assembly, Association, Movement – how fragile are they in 2027 across the Commonwealth?				

12.30 – 13.30	Lunch Break				
13.30 – 15.00	A4 Policing Protest: Speech, Assembly and the Limits of State Power <i>Where do rights end and public order begin?</i>	B4 Sanctions, Standards and State Power: Navigating Global Enforcement Regimes <i>FATF, UN measures and targeted sanctions in a fractured world</i>	C4 The Death Penalty: Why Is the Commonwealth Lagging? <i>Progress stalled—or resistance entrenched?</i>	D4 Court-Integrated or Independent? <i>The Future of Mediation and ADR</i>	E4 Land rights – are they real recognition or mere consolation prizes?
	A democracy must tolerate dissent, but no society can function without order. As protest movements become more disruptive and state responses more robust, who gets to decide when protest has gone too far—and by what standards?	A bank transfer can now attract as much scrutiny as a border crossing. In a fractured world, power is exercised not only through armies and diplomacy but through sanctions, financial controls and regulatory standards. How should lawyers navigate an increasingly complex web of global enforcement regimes?	Some countries retain the death penalty but no longer use it. Others continue to defend it while rarely enforcing it. As global abolition gathers pace, why does the Commonwealth remain home to so many states caught between retention and reform? Partner: The Death Penalty Project	ADR was once the rebel cousin of the justice system. Now it is being invited into the family home. As courts increasingly embrace mediation and other forms of dispute resolution, what happens when the alternative becomes part of the establishment—and who, if anyone, should be worried about it?	Land rights are intended to recognise enduring connections between Indigenous peoples and their traditional lands. But do existing frameworks provide meaningful restitution, or simply formalise the principle that "you can have what's left"? This session examines competing models of recognition and their practical consequences.
15.00– 15.30	Tea / Coffee Networking Break				
15.30 – 17.00	A5 Speaking Truth to Power: Who Protects Expression in the Commonwealth in 2027?	B5 Restoring Stolen Wealth: Cross-Border Justice for Victims of Corruption <i>From tracing assets to securing redress across borders</i>	C5 Climate Justice Youth Court	D5 Beyond Borders: Rethinking Legal Ethics for a Global Profession <i>Is a unified framework inevitable?</i>	E5 Balloon Debate: Dispute Resolution – court room or chamber room; which is the lawyers' choice
	In 2027, censorship rarely arrives wearing a uniform. It may come through regulation, litigation, algorithms or commercial pressure. As the forces shaping public debate multiply, who protects the right to challenge authority and uncomfortable truths?	Money may not grow on trees, but it can disappear into an impressive number of jurisdictions. Corruption may be committed in one country, while its proceeds acquire a remarkably international lifestyle. How can stolen wealth be traced, recovered and returned to those who have lost out?		The modern lawyer is increasingly global; professional ethics remain stubbornly local. As legal systems take different views of the lawyer's role—as advocate, technician or trusted adviser—can common ethical standards survive across borders, or do they require a passport of their own? Curated by Steve Richman IBA	Alternatives to full blooded litigation in the public courtroom have developed over the past 40 years although the principles involved are as old as humanity. When we advise a client to seek to resolve a dispute what do we choose and why; litigation, arbitration, mediation or conciliation? In this participative session leading practitioners will advocate for their chosen method of resolution in hot debate. The audience will have the opportunity to ask questions

					and join the debate. This is a battle for votes and you the audience will decide which is your chosen method of dispute resolution.
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Wednesday 12th May 2027

09.00 – 10.30	A6 Small States, Big Pressures <i>Rule of Law on the Frontline</i>	B6 Fighting Corruption Together: Regional Models that Work <i>Can collaboration outperform fragmentation?</i>	C6 Climate Rights in Action <i>From Advisory Opinion to Accountability</i>	D6 Government Lawyers Under Pressure: Ethics vs Instructions <i>What happens when the client is the state?</i>	E6 Military justice in an era where commanders pay no attention to international law
	When your population would fit inside a city suburb and your national budget may be smaller than the fortune of a single billionaire, resilience becomes more than a buzzword. How do small states uphold the rule of law while facing some of the Commonwealth's biggest challenges?	Corruption has never been troubled by national borders. Why should those fighting it be any different? This session explores how regional partnerships can strengthen enforcement, recover stolen assets and turn cooperation into one of the most effective anti-corruption tools.	The recent ICJ Advisory Opinion has sharpened the connection between climate change and human rights. But courts can declare rights more easily than they can enforce them. How can emerging legal principles be translated into practical obligations, effective remedies and meaningful accountability?	Who is the client when the client is the state? As governments confront increasingly contentious legal issues, this session explores the ethical responsibilities of government lawyers when professional duties, model litigant obligations and official instructions pull in different directions.	Military organisations depend upon obedience. The rule of law sometimes depends upon disobedience. As technology transforms the collection of evidence and scrutiny of military conduct, how should modern military justice systems balance discipline, accountability and legality?
10:30- 11:00	Tea / Coffee Networking Break				
11:00– 12.30	Plenary Panel 3 A Resilient Legal Profession And Judiciary Attacks on our independence are nothing new, but how are Commonwealth judges and lawyers maintaining it?				
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch Break				
13.30 – 15.00	A7 Defending Judicial Independence: From Principle to Practice	B7 Resilient Lawyers, Prosperous Societies <i>Can justice drive economic growth</i>	C7 Climate Litigation and the Polluter Pays Principle <i>Can courts enforce environmental accountability?</i>	D7 From Conflict to Cohesion: Lawyer Wellbeing in Practice <i>Addressing the hidden drivers of burnout.</i>	E7 Can the Law Keep Pace? <i>Child Sexual Exploitation in the Digital Age</i>

	<i>How do we measure—and protect—it?</i>				
	Everyone supports judicial independence—at least in principle. But how do we tell the difference between constitutional aspiration and everyday reality? This session explores new ways of measuring judicial independence and asks whether it may be one of the clearest indicators of the health of the rule of law. Partner: World Justice Project	Nobody ever built a factory because they admired a country's procedural rules. Yet investment, innovation and growth depend on trust in legal institutions. How do resilient lawyers and justice systems help create the conditions in which prosperity can flourish?	Everyone supports the polluter pays principle in theory. The difficulty lies in identifying the polluter, measuring the damage and assigning responsibility. As climate litigation grows, can courts turn environmental responsibility into meaningful accountability?	Lawyers are trained to resolve conflict for other people. They are often less comfortable addressing it within their own organisations. This session explores how unresolved tensions can undermine wellbeing, and how early intervention can help create healthier and more resilient workplaces.	Judges, prosecutors and regulators examine how Commonwealth law is responding to online child sexual exploitation, AI-generated abuse material, platform regulation and cross-border enforcement gaps.
15.00– 15.30	Tea / Coffee Networking Break				
15.30 -16.30	A8 Hot Button	B8 CLEA Moot final	C8 Breaking Barriers, Building Prosperity: The Law's Role in Women's Economic Empowerment <i>When women thrive, economies grow</i>	D8 AI and the Courts: Justice or Algorithm? Can justice be delegated to machines?	E8 Olympic Law at a Crossroads: Speech, Sovereignty and the Meaning of Nationhood <i>Who gets to compete, and who gets to speak?</i>
			How can legal reform unlock inclusive economic growth across the Commonwealth? Drawing on the World Bank's <i>Women, Business and the Law</i> initiative, this session explores how laws, policy frameworks and effective implementation can remove barriers to women's economic participation, strengthen private sector development and advance UN Sustainable Development Goal 8. Discover how Commonwealth lawyers can help shape legal systems that deliver opportunity, productivity and shared prosperity.	A court can delegate tasks. Can it delegate judgment? As artificial intelligence moves from the back office towards the courtroom, this session examines the opportunities, risks and human rights implications of machine-assisted decision-making.	The Olympic Games celebrate nations, yet questions of identity and expression remain deeply contested. The Olympics aspire to political neutrality, but politics has a habit of turning up anyway. Who should be allowed to speak on the Olympic stage, and who should be recognised as a nation entitled to compete? This session examines whether the Olympic movement's rules still reflect modern realities

18.00	Gala Dinner
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Thursday 13 th May 2027					
9.00 – 10.30	A9 Courts, Sovereignty and Policy: Who Decides? When should judges intervene— and when should they not?	B9 Pro Bono as a Catalyst for Commonwealth Prosperity	C9 Water is Life in Lore, what about the Law?	D9 Beyond Adjudication: The Role of Therapeutic Justice in Modern Courts	E9 Hot Button
	Every difficult constitutional case eventually arrives at the same question: who gets the last word? As courts, governments and international institutions grapple with competing claims of rights, sovereignty and public policy, where should the line be drawn between judicial oversight and democratic choice?	A few hours of legal advice will not transform an economy. Yet justice rarely appears in economic statistics, even though prosperous societies depend upon it. How can pro bono legal expertise strengthen institutions, support vulnerable communities and become a catalyst for wider social and economic change across the Commonwealth?	In this session, you will be immersed in water while you explore the rights of nature. Drawing on experiences in member countries of the Commonwealth Association, the speakers will consider the cultural, environmental and economic significance of water and the implications of legal personhood.	Every legal process sends a message - not only to the parties before the court, but to the community. This session explores how therapeutic court practices can strengthen justice and the community by treating courts as institutions of communal repair rather than mere adjudicators. Drawing on Commonwealth innovations in therapeutic justice and problem-solving courts, it will be explored how legal processes can generate social cohesion, restore relationships, and support community well-being. The session invites consideration as to whether the true measure of a justice system is the case it resolves, or the communities it leaves behind.	
10.30 - 11.00	Tea / Coffee Networking Break				

11.00 – 12.30	Plenary Panel 4 A Resilient And Sustainable Global Climate Challenges facing and achievements made by Commonwealth lawyers				
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch Break				
13.30 – 15.00	A10 Lawfare on Trial <i>SLAPPs, Journalists and the Legal Profession</i>	B10 When the sea is mapped, who, in practice, holds the pencil? Sovereignty at Sea: Where Does the Coastline Really End?	C10 Resolving Environmental Conflict Through Mediation <i>Can communities lead the solution?</i>	D10 Judicial Wellbeing <i>From Recognition to Action</i>	E10 Hot Button
	Jointly convened with UNESCO, this Commonwealth panel examines strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs): their toll on press freedom, judicial systems and defending lawyers.	A few million tons of concrete can sometimes create maritime claims; a rising sea can threaten to erase them. As some states build islands to expand their maritime reach while others risk losing islands and the rights that depend upon them, can the law of the sea still provide clear answers about sovereignty, resources and maritime boundaries?	Explores how mediation can resolve complex environmental disputes while preserving relationships and legitimacy.	Judges are expected to be wise, resilient, and available at all hours. Being human can make that difficult. Four years after the Nauru Declaration on Judicial Wellbeing, and the call for an International Day dedicated to it, are courts doing enough to support those entrusted with upholding the Rule of Law?	.
15.00 - 15.30	Tea / Coffee Networking Break				
15.30 -16.00	Conference Wrap Up				
16.00 – 17.00	Closing Ceremony Presentation of the Commonwealth Law Conference 2027 Rule of Law Award Presentation of the CLE Commonwealth Moot Winner Announcement of the CLC29 destination				