

Chairperson's Letter 2018-19

The Honourable Vickie Chapman MP
Deputy Premier
Attorney-General
Attorney-General's Department
45 Pirie Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Dear Deputy Premier,

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Legal Services Commission for the financial year ending 30 June 2019, pursuant to section 33 of the *Legal Services Commission Act 1977*.

In compliance with its mandate, the Commission continues to provide high quality, efficient and economic legal assistance services, with expenditure in line with budget.

In January 2019 the Commission recorded 40 years of providing legal assistance to the South Australian community. This important anniversary afforded an opportunity to reflect on the Commission's legacy of the provision of access to justice for those persons who would otherwise be unable to afford the benefit of legal advice and representation. I acknowledge the excellent work of the current Director and staff of the Commission, as well as that of former Directors and employees who have served the organisation over the last 40 years. I thank them all.

In the same spirit I thank those 600 plus members of the legal profession who constitute the Commission's legal practitioner panels and provide legal assistance through grants of aid. Over the last 40 years the enduring partnership between the Commission and the private legal profession has been instrumental in supporting the South Australian justice system with the highest standards of efficiency and professionalism.

The allocation of legal representation work among the legal practitioners at the Commission and those in private practice has consistently stayed at a 35/65 split. This year in-house legal practitioners acted on 4 345 grants of aid and private legal practitioners acted on 11 816 grants of aid.

I thank current and past Commissioners with whom I have worked for their good governance, advice and support. In April the Commission farewelled long-standing Commissioner Alan Herald. He had been a Commissioner since 2012. A senior accountant of many years national and international experience, he was appointed to provide financial expertise and guidance to the Commission. I welcome new Commissioner Debra Contala who has a wealth of experience providing high-level financial advice to statutory bodies, including when she held the position of Public Trustee.

This will be my final report as Chairperson as my term will expire in December 2019. I have been Chairperson since December 2013 and during that time I have presided over significant changes to the Commission's governance and service delivery. I am proud of my achievements as Chairperson and I believe that I leave the Commission in a strong position for the future.

As a final note of caution I observe that there has been no resolution to the impact of major indictable reform introduced in March 2018. This reform has resulted in considerable delay in cases progressing from the Magistrates Court to the District Court and it is likely that there will be a spike in the number of cases to be funded by the Commission once that delay is resolved. Careful budgeting will be needed to cover this expense.

I thank you Deputy Premier for your continued support. I have enjoyed working with you. It has been a pleasure to serve the South Australian community through the significant work of the Legal Services Commission.



Michael Abbott, AO QC
Chairperson

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41st Annual Report 2018-19

Legal Services Commission of South Australia

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