

# Report on the launch event of the Australasian Association of Private International Law



On Thursday 5 December 2024, a group of private international lawyers gathered in Melbourne and online for the launch of the Australasian Association of Private International Law (AAPrIL).

AAPrIL was founded in 2024 by lawyers and academics in Australia and New Zealand who are engaged in private international law. AAPrIL's aim is to bring together people committed to furthering understanding of private international law in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region.

The launch was held at the offices of Corrs Chambers Westgarth in Melbourne. After networking and drinks, the formalities were opened by Cara North, Corrs Special Counsel and AAPrIL Treasurer, who would be known to many following the blog for her work on the HCCH Judgments Project. Cara introduced Jack Wass, New Zealand barrister and AAPrIL's New Zealand Vice-President, who is co-author of *The Conflict of Laws in New Zealand* and who was Master of Ceremonies.

The event featured addresses from two of the most influential lawyers in private international law issues from either side of the Tasman Sea.

The Honourable Dr Andrew Bell, Chief Justice of New South Wales, gave a comprehensive pre-recorded address, speaking to the importance of the discipline and the growing number of judgments dealing with cross-border issues in Australia. His Honour has been deeply engaged in private international law for decades; he is the author of *Forum Shopping and Venue in Transnational Litigation* and a co-author of *Nygh's Conflict of Laws in Australia*, and acted as counsel in many of Australia's most significant private international law cases until his appointment to the New South Wales Supreme Court. Chief Justice Bell is the

inaugural Patron of AAPrIL.

The Honourable David Goddard, Judge of the Court of Appeal of New Zealand, then delivered a live online address that also spoke to the importance of the discipline. His Honour advocated for the continued modernisation of domestic laws to harmonise approaches to private international law problems between legal systems, encouraging governments to adopt instruments of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH). Justice Goddard is perfectly placed to speak to the subject: he was the Chair of the Diplomatic Session of the HCCH that adopted the 2019 HCCH Judgments Convention, Vice-President of the Diplomatic Session that adopted the 2005 Choice of Court Convention, and a member of the drafting committee for that Convention.

A highlight of the launch was the speech of Professor Mary Keyes of Griffith University in Brisbane, who is Inaugural President of AAPrIL. She has kindly shared the text of her remarks:

## **Speech by Professor Mary Keyes, AAPrIL President, at the Launch of the Association**

Good evening, distinguished guests, friends and colleagues here with us tonight, as well as those joining us online. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of these beautiful lands, to pay my respects to elders, past and present, and to first nations friends and colleagues.

On behalf of the Australasian Association of Private International Law, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to this important occasion at which we will formally launch the association. On behalf of the executive and the membership, thanks to Corrs Chambers Westgarth for generously hosting us this evening. Particular thanks are due to the wonderful Cara North, who is also the inaugural treasurer of our association, for making the arrangements for this evening, and to the team at Corrs.

I also acknowledge the other members of the AAPrIL executive, all of whom I am delighted to say are here in person. Our New Zealand Vice President, Jack Wass, from Wellington, has already introduced himself to you. I would also like to

introduce our Australian Vice President, Dr Michael Douglas, from Western Australia, our secretary, Professor Reid Mortensen, my fellow Queenslander, and Associate Professor Maria Hook, from New Zealand and Professor Richard Garnett, a local from Melbourne, who also serve on our executive. They have each devoted a considerable amount of their time, energy and expertise to the association and I am deeply grateful to each of them.

I would like especially to thank Reid, for his initiative and drive which were instrumental in establishing AAPrIL in July this year. This is truly indicative of his dedication to the advancement of private international law in Australia and the region.

The members of the executive came together to discuss forming the association this year because of our mutual love of private international law. We also shared a conviction that there was a need, in this region, for an organisation with its sole focus on the advancement of our field.

Private international law only grows in importance with every passing year. It is interesting to reflect on the incredible changes over the last 40 years which have transformed this field in New Zealand and Australia. That transformation is evident in the significant increase in the number of cases coming before our courts and the range of issues which arise in those cases. Long gone are the days when lawyers, courts and academics were obliged to rely heavily and sometimes exclusively on foreign authorities because of a lack of local cases, legislation and commentaries addressing particular issues in cross-border litigation.

Those of you who have already read our constitution - which is available on our website - will know that the objectives of the association include:

1. The promotion of knowledge of and interest in private international law within the region
2. The provision of a forum for sharing information and views about private international law
3. The promotion and support of lectures, seminars, colloquia and conferences in our field, and
4. Contributing to the development of private international law.

Australasia has a proud tradition of contributing to the development of private international law both practically and academically. The membership of our

association includes many of the current leaders in private international law from our region, from the judiciary, the profession, and the academy.

I am very pleased to report that the association currently has more than 70 members from New Zealand, Australia, and much further afield, including from Greece, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. This is a clear indication of the breadth of interest in private international law in this region. I encourage you, if you have not already done so, to consider joining the association. There are at least three excellent reasons to do so. First, be honest, can you really say that you are involved in many other organisations with members drawn from such a diverse range of countries? Second, if that isn't a sufficient inducement, then until July 2025, membership in the association is free. Third, what could be more fun than getting together with such an enthusiastic and fun group of private international law nerds?

Shortly, you will hear from two of our most eminent members, our patron, Chief Justice Andrew Bell of the New South Wales Supreme Court, and Justice David Goddard of the New Zealand Court of Appeal. Neither of them is able to join in person this evening but if there is one thing we have learned from the unfortunate experience of Covid 19, it is that technology is a great enabler of getting together even when circumstances prevent our doing so in person. The use of technology is critical for an organisation that has such a broad geographical reach.

Having said that, this launch is our first at least partly in person event. It is wonderful to see friends and colleagues here tonight and we look forward to many more such occasions. Since the association was established in July, we have held two online seminars, and we are working on our seminar program for 2025. We have also begun planning for our inaugural conference, which we hope will be an annual event. The call for papers will be made shortly. Our conference will be held in Brisbane in April 2025. We very much hope that we will see some of you there.

The executive is always keen to hear from current and potential members generally and specifically in terms of suggestions for events and activities. Please feel free to contact us at any time. We look forward to seeing you at our events and working with you as members of our association.

In addition to our other activities, our New Zealand Vice President has secured funding to support the development of an online Trans-Tasman Civil Proceedings Handbook, which will be available online and open access, through our website.

In conclusion, on behalf of the executive, thank you for your interest in and support of the association, and for your attendance this evening.



