

## The Origins of the Anglo-Australasian Lawyers Society

With the **Australia Acts of 1986**,<sup>1</sup> Australia brought direct appeals to the Privy Council from state Supreme Courts to an end – see a learned lecture by former Chief Justice of Australia the Honourable Murray Gleeson delivered to the **Anglo-Australasian Lawyers Society (AALS)** on 18 June 2008, available at [aals.co.uk](http://aals.co.uk). This legislation ultimately led to the creation of the AALS in the UK, Australia and later New Zealand.

The AALS' co-founders and early leaders, **Ian Hunter KC** with Australian judges **Ken Handley KC** and **Garry Downes KC**, had known each other for some time. Ken and Ian had become friendly in the 1980s when Ken was visiting the UK to argue Australian appeals in London. Ian was President of the *Union Internationale des Avocats* (UIA) between 1989-90, meeting Garry for the first time at the UIA's Interlaken Conference in August 1989, with Garry later becoming the UIA's first Australian President. Subsequently succeeding Ian as the AALS' UK Chapter Chair, **Christopher Jackson** was UIA Congress President for its Annual Congress in London in 1995 during Garry's presidency.

When Ken, Garry and Ian attended the ninth **Commonwealth Law Conference** in Auckland in April 1990, following passage of the Australian Acts, Ian raised the idea of trying to ensure that intellectual and social contacts between Australian and UK lawyers continued, notwithstanding that Australian lawyers would no longer be coming to London to argue cases. In early 1997, Garry, with Ian's support, set about putting flesh to the bones of this idea by making plans to set up an organisation originally to be called the **Anglo Australian Lawyers Society**. Robin Cooke (Lord Cooke of Thorndon) persuaded the founders to change the name to the **Anglo Australasian Lawyers Society** to involve lawyers from New Zealand. The initial idea was to have two Chapters, one in London and the other in Sydney.

Garry spent a lot of time and much effort in 1997 and the first half of 1998 seeking patrons and working with legal recruitment consultants **Garfield Robbins International** who became the Society's principal sponsor.

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<sup>1</sup> The **Australia Act 1986** is the short title of each of a pair of separate but related pieces of legislation: one an Act of the Commonwealth (i.e., federal) Parliament of Australia; the other an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. In Australia they are referred to, respectively, as the Australia Act 1986 (Cth) and the Australia Act 1986 (UK). The Australia Act (Cth and UK) eliminated the remaining possibilities for the UK to legislate with effect in Australia, for the UK to be involved in Australian government, and for an appeal from any Australian court to a British court. This act formally severed legal ties between Australia and the UK except for the monarchy.

Launched in the UK on 3 June 1998 and in Sydney on 16 July 1998, initial Society patrons included (in the UK) **Lord Alexander of Weedon QC**, **Peter Goldsmith QC** (later **Lord Goldsmith KC**) **Lord Steyn**, **Lord Goff of Chieveley** and **Lord Bingham of Cornhill**; and (in Australia) the **Hon Ken Handley AO KC** (of the NSW Court of Appeal), the **Hon Murray Gleason AC GBS KC**, Chief Justice of Australia, and **Daryl Williams AM KC MP**, Commonwealth Attorney General and Minister for Justice.

With 2023 marking 25 years of the AALS, the Society has grown to include chapters in Melbourne, Perth and New Zealand, each chapter regularly hosting a full calendar of events that have included **Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand** as speakers, Justices of the **High Court of Australia** and other senior judiciary of each country, former Australian **Prime Minister the Honourable Julia Gillard AC**, High Commissioners from each country, leading public international law scholars including **Judge Professor James Crawford AC** (International Court of Justice) in whose name the UK Chapter holds an annual lecture, **Professors Amal Clooney** and **Philippa Webb**, leading practitioners across many areas and others. Current patrons include (UK) **The Right Honourable the Lord Judge Kt PC**, former Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales; **The Right Honourable the Lady Arden of Heswall DBE**, former Justice of the Supreme Court; **The Right Honourable the Lord Walker of Gestingthorpe GBS PC**, former Justice of the Supreme Court; and **The Right Honourable Sir Peter Gross**, former Lord Justice of Appeal.

**Ian Hunter KC SC** (NSW)

**Hon Garry Downes AM KC**, retired Judge of the Federal Court of Australia