

Parties' responses to key legal issues disappointing

The responses to a pre-election questionnaire issued by the Law Council of Australia indicates that both the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the Coalition lack commitment to dealing with the key policy issues of importance and relevance to the Australian legal profession.

Access to justice, federal court resourcing, asylum seekers and anti-terror laws were just some of the issues the Law Council invited political parties to address in the lead up to the 7 September Federal Election.

The Law Council also sought views on a number of other significant issues, including same sex marriage, the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Indigenous imprisonment rates.

Law Council of Australia President, Mr Michael Colbran QC, said both the ALP and the Coalition failed to respond with any new commitments.

"The feedback provided by both major parties did little to indicate that there would be any significant shift in policy in relation to the identified issues of concern and importance to Australian lawyers and to Australians generally," Mr Colbran said.

The response to the Law Council's legal assistance sector funding concerns was particularly disappointing, with Labor and the Coalition failing to commit to any specific target in relation to legal assistance funding.

"While both the Attorney-General and Shadow Attorney-General have voiced their concern to improve access to justice, the responses on this issue show a lack of political will to actually do so.

"Unless there is a commitment to increase this funding, thousands of ordinary citizens will continue to go unrepresented.

"The social and economic cost to the community of this neglect will continue to increase," Mr Colbran said.

"The major parties' lack of clear policy direction displayed in response to the issues outlined was, on the whole, very disappointing – only the Australian Greens seemed to appreciate the importance of addressing many of these issues as a matter of priority," Mr Colbran said.

The full list of key legal issues and responses is available [online](#).

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