

AUSTLII MEDIA RELEASE



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Australasian Legal Information Institute

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Celebrating 15 Years of Free Access to Law

AustLII celebrated 15 years of free access to law at a reception today attended by over 150 donors, data providers, supporters and stakeholders from throughout Australia.

AustLII instigated free access to case law and legislation when it was not freely available for the public or the legal profession and consequently transformed access to legal information in Australia and has assisted in doing so in many other countries.

AustLII's use of neutral citations facilitating immediate citation and hypertext linking has made it possible for value-added decisions to be freely available to the public as soon as judgments are delivered.

Professors Graham Greenleaf (UNSW) and Andrew Mowbray (UTS) started AustLII with a \$110,000 research grant from the Australian Research Council. Today, AustLII is both a research institute and a company limited by guarantee. Through the AustLII Foundation Limited hundreds of donors support AustLII to ensure sustainable free access to law in Australia.

Commonwealth Attorney-General Robert McClelland said the Commonwealth Government has been a strong supporter of AustLII. "It is heartening that the Government's aims of better access to information, clearer laws and improved legal education are so well reflected in the work achieved to date by AustLII," said McClelland.

"It seems hard to believe today that 15 years ago, AustLII was nothing more than a good idea for which funding was sought. AustLII has grown to become Australia's largest online legal public library - providing accurate and up-to-date legal information free of charge to a multitude of users."

Greenleaf and Mowbray were motivated to create AustLII to provide free access to the Australian public to the essential legal information needed for the rule of law and democracy to function effectively.

"We believed we would provide a service of great value to academic research, the legal profession, the business community and to Courts and government", Greenleaf said. "We believed it would be in the interests of these institutional stakeholders to collaboratively support a free access model. AustLII was therefore created to "free the law" in Australia from the shackles in which it was found up to the mid-90s, and to innovate in the provision of legal information systems."

As part of the celebrations, AustLII provided guests with a commemorative brochure documenting its 15 year history, acknowledging AustLII's major contributors and providing a snapshot of its current range of services.

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