



ANNUAL REPORT
16.17

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Queensland Law Society's 2016-17 annual report presents our corporate performance information for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

This report records our activities, achievements and challenges for the 2016-17 financial year and evaluates them against strategic and corporate planning goals and targets. It also provides a summary of our corporate performance, our planning around the next strategic plan, and priorities for initiatives in 2017-18 and beyond.

QLS is incorporated under the *Legal Profession Act 2007* and defined as a statutory body under the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*. QLS Council is responsible for overseeing the Society's governance and setting the strategic direction. The Society's annual report complies with Queensland Government reporting requirements.

This report aligns with the Society's 2013-18 strategic plan and measures corporate performance against four strategic objectives: growth, leading the profession, embedding a culture of excellence, and strengthening our financial sustainability.

Our commitment to accessibility

This annual report can be accessed at qls.com.au/annual-reports, via the Queensland Parliament website or in print form by contacting us (see below). Our website also contains the required reporting in relation to the Council of Queensland Law Society as a government body. Recent annual reports can be accessed via our website.

Please contact us if you require assistance in understanding the annual report or for referral to interpreter services. Our open data reports can be accessed via data.qld.gov.au.



Feedback

If you have feedback or questions about content in this annual report, please contact:

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8 September 2017

The Honourable Yvette D'Ath MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
and Minister for Training and Skills
1 William Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Attorney

I am pleased to submit for presentation to the Parliament the Annual Report 2016-17 and financial statements for Queensland Law Society.

I certify that this Annual Report complies with:

- the prescribed requirements of the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* and the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2009*, and
- the detailed requirements set out in the *Annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies*.

A checklist outlining the annual reporting requirements can be found on page 122 of this document.

Yours sincerely

Christine Smyth
President
Queensland Law Society

E-mail: president@qls.com.au

ABOUT US

Queensland Law Society (QLS) is the peak representative body for the legal profession in Queensland, providing leadership, guidance and support for more than 13,000 members.

The Society empowers good lawyers, advocates for good law and serves the public good by providing a clear and passionate voice for solicitors and the legal profession in Queensland. The Society engages with the government, the public and the legal community on issues of importance to the profession.

The Society is a versatile, responsive and collegiate representative body which supports and advocates on behalf of the Queensland legal profession. It represents the profession with courage, fidelity and service in an ethically sound, calm and professional manner.

Across many platforms and in partnership with its members, the Society provides:

- high quality ethical support and guidance to Queensland solicitors, including direct ethical consulting, bespoke educational sessions and published guidance statements
- calm, clear and courageous advocacy on matters of importance to the legal profession and the broader community
- accessible, high-quality ongoing professional development and specialist accreditations
- practical resources and opportunities for the profession to maintain and develop professional skills
- support and guidance on trust account issues and trust account compliance
- direct practice support consultancy services to new and developing law firms throughout the state
- regulation of trust account provisions of the *Legal Profession Act 2007*, external administration of law practices and management of the Legal Practitioners' Fidelity Guarantee Fund
- records administration for the issuing of Practising Certificates
- professional indemnity insurance to the members of the Queensland legal profession through Lexon Insurance Pte Limited.

Our vision

To lead the legal profession by advocating for good law, supporting good lawyers and always acting in the public good.

Our purpose

To be the profession's trusted advisor through providing quality advice, advocacy, and learning and professional development for our members.

Our values

Our values frame our service delivery, legal profession leadership and internal and external relationships.

Respect We value people and acknowledge their contributions.

Integrity We are honest and fair in our actions.

Service We work together to anticipate needs, exceed expectations and honour commitments.

YEAR IN REVIEW

The 2016-17 financial year was productive for QLS across all areas of the organisation and the broader profession. Below are highlights from our year.

JULY

- 15 Early Career Lawyers Conference 2016
- 21-23 30th Family Law Residential 2016
- 27 Domestic Violence Best Practice Guidelines launch



AUGUST

- 5 District Law Association Presidents' Workshop, attended by Chief Justice Catherine E Holmes
- 11 North Queensland Intensive
- 26 Government Lawyers' Conference 2016
- 19 QLS Senior Counsellors' Conference

SEPTEMBER

- 16 Criminal Law Conference 2016
- 8-9 Property Law Conference 2016

OCTOBER

- 21 Personal Injuries Conference 2016
- 21 Brisbane solicitor Margaret McNamara presented with the QLS Agnes McWhinney Award.

Solicitors Michelle Lember and Aimee McVeigh receive Outstanding Achievement Awards

NOVEMBER

- 4-5 Succession and Elder Law Residential 2016
- 16 Linda Lavarch delivers the inaugural Queensland Tristan Jepson Memorial Foundation Lecture at Law Society House, Brisbane
- 17 QLS joins in hosting the Legal Profession White Ribbon Breakfast raising awareness of domestic violence
- 24 QLS Annual General Meeting
- 25 Conveyancing Conference 2016
- 28 Specialist Accreditation Breakfast, Cairns
- 29 Specialist Accreditation Breakfast, Townsville

DECEMBER

- 2 Specialist Accreditation Breakfast in Brisbane with the Chief Justice



JANUARY

- 1 Christine Smyth commences as 2017 QLS President, succeeding 2016 President Bill Potts
- 31 Legal Practitioners Admissions Board 'Queensland Lawyers' Companion' launch

FEBRUARY

- 2 New Year profession drinks hosted by QLS President Christine Smyth to welcome members



- 9-11 Bundaberg Roadshow
- 18 Legal Profession Dinner and awards with the keynote address by Tara Moss
- 28 QLS and QPS launch the Search Warrant Guidelines

MARCH

- 1 Annual QLS Legal Careers Expo in Brisbane for students interested in joining the legal profession
- 17-18 Queensland Law Society Symposium 2017

MAY

- 16 Law Week Queensland Legal Walk in support of QPILCH
- 18 Leading Wellbeing in the Legal Profession
- 17 Open Day at Law Society House and presentation of QLS Equity and Diversity Awards
- 26 2017 Queensland Law Society Annual Ball

JUNE

- 2 Best Lawyers' breakfast celebrating members acknowledged in Chambers Asia-Pacific Guide, Best Lawyers in Australia list, The Legal 500 Asia Pacific and Lawyers Weekly 30 under 30 Queensland state finalists
- 9 Gold Coast Symposium 2017

PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW 2016-17

The 2013-18 Strategic Plan sets out four goals to achieve **our vision** to lead the legal profession by advocating for good law, supporting good lawyers and always acting in the public good, and **our purpose** to be the profession's trusted advisor through providing quality advice, advocacy, and learning and professional development opportunities for our members.

The Society's Corporate Plan 2016-17 advances these goals, focusing on these four key areas. The Society's performance in concluding the 2013-18 Strategic Plan and the 2016-17 Corporate Plan is outlined in this report.

	Initiatives	Actions
 Grow membership	1. Develop new membership offerings for paralegals and new lawyers (0-3 years Post-Admission Experience (PAE))	Define membership offerings and value proposition for paralegals and new lawyers, including stakeholder consultation
		Explore and scope a new offering of accredited training for paralegals
	2. Utilise our data to drive targeted membership growth tactics	Identify existing non-member practitioners and implement targeted tactics to convert them to members to improve conversion rate
		Implement tactics to decrease membership attrition rate
	3. Review our core Information Technology (IT) applications that support delivery of services directly to members, to ensure they facilitate product and service excellence into the future	Full review of iMIS (member database) and Seamless (website platform) and their suitability for delivering a range of services directly to members
	4. Reposition our flagship publication <i>Proctor</i> as an interactive online resource	Undertake a project to design and implement <i>Proctor</i> online, including a stakeholder management and transition plan
 Lead the profession	5. Provide a Practice Support Outreach Program to newly opened law practices, whether they are sole practitioners or recently established micro/small legal practices	Review outcomes of June 2016 Brisbane tranche engagement with targeted law practices
		Conduct a second tranche of targeted engagement with Gold Coast/Sunshine Coast law practices
		Roll out the offering throughout the State of Queensland to newly opened legal practices whether sole practitioner or micro/small legal practices

This report is structured to present our achievements against each of these areas of focus:

- **Grow:** Serving our members to grow our membership (see pages 11-17)
- **Lead:** Leading the profession through setting professional standards, providing ethical guidance and targeted advocacy (see pages 18-27)
- **Culture:** Embedding a culture of excellence in member service (see pages 28-34)
- **Strength:** Strengthening our financial sustainability (see pages 35-38).

Targets	Achieved
Business case and recommendations presented to Council by end March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In progress – QLS no longer offers legal qualifications to support staff; however, is continuing its stakeholder consultation with the Early Career Lawyers Committee to define its offerings and reach out to newly admitted solicitors ● Completed – QLS has explored accredited training for paralegals and found there is significant compliance requirements and resource imposts. It has been recommended that scoping no longer be advanced.
Exceed 88% membership conversion rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completed – QLS implemented four campaigns: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complimentary membership (Conversion 39.4%) 2. Full member – non-renewal (Conversion 10.7%) 3. New Practising Certificate (PC) non-members (Conversion 8.5%) 4. Government and Community Legal Centre (CLC) reduced rate membership (Conversion 3.4%) ● Completed – overall conversion at 2016-17 renewals close (1 July 2017) finished just under the target at 87.40%. In comparing the overall conversion with previous years, it is observed that the rate of attrition of membership loss is slowing each year.
Review and recommendations for system upgrade or replacement by January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completed – iMIS upgrade ● In progress – a more thorough review of the operation of the application in line with business processes is currently underway through the Information Management (IM) Governance Board Project RoadMap.
Project implementation plan complete, including technology platform design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In progress – the Proctor Online project is on hold pending IM roadmap technology decisions ● Completed – QLS has implemented LawTalk on blogging platform 'Medium'. Content that might exist on Proctor Online has been posted here and has a high engagement via social channels.
<p>Practice Support Outreach Program for newly opened legal practices whether sole practitioners or micro/small legal practices to be implemented from October 2016.</p> <p>Based on feedback from Brisbane tranche, the performance measures to be reported moving forward are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the one thing we have spoken about in the session you can implement immediately? • Would you recommend this service to others? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completed – the third quarter outcomes reinforced previous feedback that tools are needed to assist practitioners with the following: scoping and management of client files, technology to assist in integrated delivery of client matters, and resources for further costs disclosure ● Completed – sessions have been undertaken across Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Cairns and Bundaberg ● Completed – the QLS Ethics Centre undertook 72 practice support visits throughout Queensland. From 1 July 2017 the Practice Support Consultancy Service will form part of the Centre's business as usual.

	Initiatives	Actions
 Lead the profession	6. Establish educational diversion programs for “at risk” practitioners in conduct and trust account matters	<p>Complete conduct course design and materials in consultation with Legal Services Commission (LSC), Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) and other stakeholders</p> <p>Design governance for conduct course</p> <p>Engage a consultant to design trust account course</p> <p>Complete trust account course design and materials in consultation with stakeholders.</p>
	7. Position the Society as a thought leader and raise the profile and reputation of the profession	<p>Utilise communication and media opportunities strategically to build the Society’s profile and influence</p> <p>Create a thought leader centre/area on the website supported by content philosophy and process</p> <p>Develop a fully integrated campaign to promote the profession of law in Queensland, the practitioners and the roles they play in the community and the value of specialist accreditation.</p>
 A culture of excellent member service	8. Entrench a deeper knowledge of the Society’s role and purpose in every staff member and ensure they believe in and can clearly articulate the benefits of QLS membership	<p>Roll out an online induction and education tool</p> <p>Introduce legal updates and industry news as part of our staff training program.</p>
 Strengthen our financial sustainability	9. Invest in our IT systems and infrastructure to address IT and business continuity risks	<p>Implement Council-approved IT roadmap initiatives for 2016-17 and development and approval of an IT business continuity plan</p> <p>Development and approval of a three-year rolling Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) plan for IT infrastructure.</p>
	10. Develop a robust asset management strategy	<p>Submission to Council on the options for future use of Law Society House</p> <p>Asset management strategy developed and approved.</p>

Targets	Achieved
Conduct and trust account courses operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Completed – course and design materials approved in consultation with LSC, QCAT and other stakeholders  Completed – governance for conduct course has been designed  Completed – consultant to design trust account course has been engaged  Completed – first trust account course scheduled for August 2017.
Website area operational; campaign developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Completed – social media and media engagement and activity has been high, facilitated by the Elder Abuse Awareness campaign trial  Completed – LawTalk blog is a successful interim website  Completed and continuing – in June 2017, QLS launched a trial, run with the assistance of the Australian Medical Association of Queensland, to raise awareness about elder abuse. In the trial, Queensland general practitioners were asked to engage patients who exhibit symptoms of elder abuse, to reach out and call support services such as the “Elder Abuse Helpline” and QLS Find a Solicitor Service. The trial will continue into the 2017-18 financial year  In progress – QLS will consider how best to promote the value of an accredited specialist while also being consistent with the Strategic Plan purpose of promoting the value of solicitors in the community and supporting the professional values of fidelity, service and courage. This is part of a wider strategic communication plan within the QLS Membership Services, and Marketing and Design departments for the 2017-18 financial year.
Online induction and education tool implemented for ongoing use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Completed – online induction tool PD Online has been implemented, with access provided to all new staff prior to their first day
Deliver a minimum of four legal update/industry news sessions as part of staff training program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Completed – four training sessions have been held for staff in the areas of advocacy, legal news and law 101 overviews.
Approved IT roadmap initiatives achieved IT business continuity plan approved and implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Completed and continuing – the Disaster Recovery Plan has been completed as a key element of the Business Continuity Plan. The Business Continuity Plan is under development and will continue into the 2017-18 financial year
Three-year rolling CAPEX plan for IT infrastructure approved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Completed – CAPEX plan for IT infrastructure approved.
Asset management strategy in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Completed and continuing – submission made to Council for options for future use, with issues currently under Council consideration  In progress – the asset management strategy is under development and is continuing into the 2017-18 financial year.

PRESIDENT'S REVIEW

Does your brain have rights? Can it be protected from Cyber-manipulation? Can a computer assess capacity and is it OK for Artificial Intelligence to decide who gets parole? Are these the sort of questions you expect as QLS President?

Well yes, and as our profession continues to adapt to the changing technological landscape there will be more of the same. Our challenge as solicitors is to be versatile in the face of disruption, and it is to our credit that we have been able to do so.



A voice for the profession

That isn't to say that the traditional role of the Society – as a calm, clear and courageous voice for the profession – has changed; it has simply expanded. In response to that expansion I have sought to elevate the profile of the Society and use that as a platform to guide and drive public debate on matters of import to the profession. As a result, the Society has seen its media profile grow across many platforms, and we have become the go-to option for both media and government on high-profile issues and significant legislative changes. I am very proud of the fact that I have been able to give a voice to our profession which is both respected and heeded.

Good Law

That voice has been heard in both the court of public opinion and in the halls of government, with law-makers paying particular heed to the Society's expert opinions on a broad range of legislative proposals and amendments. Supported by our hard-working and exceptionally dedicated advocacy team and QLS Committee members, I have appeared at eight parliamentary committee hearings and overseen around 130 submissions, to ensure the Society fulfils its mission of advocating for good law. It isn't just government listening either – our insurers are hearing us too, with most members benefiting from a 20% reduction in Lexon insurance premiums.

Good Lawyers

My drive as President has been to create a Law Society that would be of great practical use to solicitors – the sort of Society I needed when I was starting and building my career.

In my view, the Society needs to be mentor, educator and professional friend; a collegial place which supports solicitors through thick and thin.

To that end, last year as Deputy President I devised and launched the Modern Advocate Lecture Series as a vehicle for both ethical education and professional engagement. I have continued to support this series as President, and it is gratifying to note how well it has been received and how enthusiastically patronised it is.

Over the first six months of 2017 I have pushed for a Solicitor Advocate Workshop to provide members with the skills needed to run matters as an advocate in Magistrates courts, tribunals and appellate courts. This initiative is now part of the strategic goals of the QLS Ethics Centre and is part of the Society's commitment to supporting good lawyers. Queensland's near 12,000 solicitors do the lion's share of the state's advocacy, and I see it as imperative that their skills are developed and supported by the Society.

It is also important that the Society is there in times of need, and such times were upon us in early 2017. Queensland was hit hard, as was our profession and our businesses, by severe weather events.

I was able to visit some of our flood-affected regions in north Queensland, the Gold Coast, Ipswich and Logan, to support our members following the wrath and aftermath of Cyclone Debbie. I am deeply proud of the tenacity and intestinal fortitude of our affected members, whose commitment to their clients and communities never wavered, and who continued to serve them in such difficult circumstances; it was truly inspirational to see.

For the Public Good

My term has also been focused on protecting the vulnerable – whether that be our children, domestic violence victims or our elderly.

This year we launched a trial campaign with a sample of general practitioners (GPs) in Queensland to enable the elderly to report abuse they may be suffering. This initiative has already borne fruit, with the state government committing two million dollars in funding support. Solicitors have an obligation to both lead and serve their communities, and this is a great example of the public good we can do.

The Society further supported the community through campaigning heavily and consistently for the reversal of funding cuts to community legal centres. The campaign was successful, and the Society will continue to advocate tirelessly for greater funding for the vulnerable in the community.

A bright future

I am very proud of the Society's achievements over the last 12 months – achievements that would not have been possible without the support of the Society's passionate and hardworking staff; I thank them all for their efforts. I also thank our members, whose direct work on committees and support for QLS initiatives is invigorating.

We have achieved a lot and have a lot more to do. I look forward to the challenges ahead safe in the knowledge that together we have what it takes to handle them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Smyth".

Christine Smyth
President

CEO'S REVIEW

Good law, good lawyers, for the public good. These simple words explain the mission of Queensland Law Society and underline the role Queensland's solicitors play in our democracy. We stand as sentinels between order and chaos, guardians of what is fair and just, not what is popular or newsworthy.



Resilience shines through

In the past year, the Society has embraced that role with fervour and has worked hard to support the state's almost 12,000 solicitors in their vital work throughout the community. I am proud of the fact that, despite the momentous change running through the profession and the many economic challenges we have faced, the solicitors of Queensland have continued to provide their clients with excellent service and to discharge their roles as officers of the court. Our profession can be proud of the work we have done, and continue to do, in the service of our community.

In many ways, the Society itself is a microcosm of the profession and has been through similar challenges in what has been a year of change. Unexpected changes both internally and externally led to risks but also to opportunities for QLS. I am proud to say that the Society's staff seized the opportunities rather than being daunted by the challenges (and the results have been good) and continued our work to put our members at the centre of everything we do.

Despite the challenging environment of the year I am happy to report our financial result for the 2016-17 year was in the black. It is especially rewarding to note that this was achieved while delivering all expected services to our members, and without any compromise on the high quality our members have come to expect.

These positive outcomes are the result of a lot of hard work from Society staff, and I publicly acknowledge and thank everyone for their efforts during the year. As a not-for-profit membership organisation, the Society relies on its staff going above and beyond, and doing more than the tasks in their job description; I consider myself fortunate to be leading a team possessing such dedication and enthusiasm.

I also acknowledge the efforts of the many members who volunteer for the Society, through our committees, presenting CPD seminars, contributing articles for publication and in many other ways. These efforts are vital to our Society's delivery of its agenda, and I find their dedication inspiring. It is very easy to come to work when our members are so devoted to the profession.

Noteworthy initiatives

This year has also seen the delivery of some outstanding initiatives, notably the launch of the Queensland Law Society Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This has been a long-term goal of the Society and to see it come to fruition is very satisfying. The hard-working team members behind the RAP project deserve credit for their achievement in delivering an important milestone in our profession's journey towards reconciliation.

Another initiative of which the Society can be proud is the Modern Advocate Lecture Series. The Series – an initiative of QLS President Christine Smyth – aims to provide continuing professional development in ethics, in any environment conducive to fostering collegiality, and in professional friendship between barristers and solicitors, in particular in the ranks of our early career lawyers.

Launched by the Honourable Chief Justice Catherine Holmes, subsequent lectures have been delivered by Land Court President Fleur Kingham and former Court of Appeal President Margaret McMurdo AC. The Series has been a great success, with every lecture so far a full house; it will continue on as part of the ethical education provided by the QLS Ethics Centre, and lectures will take place four times each calendar year. The first lecture in 2018 will be delivered on the Gold Coast, with further regional lectures also in the pipeline.

Supporting the Regions

Indeed, another area of growth for the Society in financial year 2016-17 was regional engagement, with many professional development events taking place throughout regional Queensland. In addition, the Ethics Centre's Practice Support Consultancy visited many regional practices with further visits planned for the year ahead. I look forward to even greater engagement with our regional members throughout 2017 and 2018.

Looking ahead

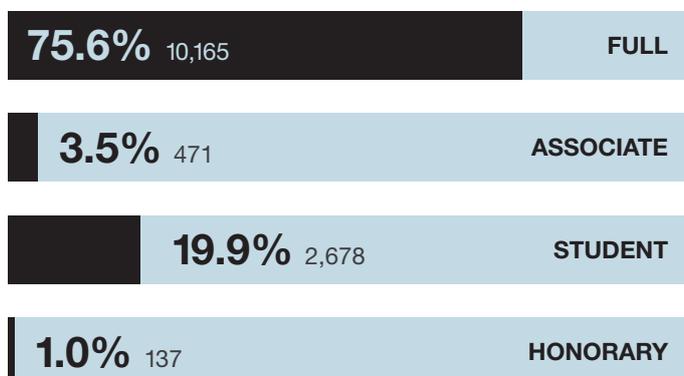
Without question, the past financial year presented the Society with many challenges and, no doubt, there will be more of the same in the year ahead. As this report shows, the Society is well placed to respond to those challenges, continue to advance the legal profession and its clients, and put our members first in all that we do. With the dedication of our staff and the support and hard work of our volunteer members, I am confident that the year ahead will be a successful one for us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Dunn', written in a cursive style.

Matt Dunn
Acting Chief Executive Officer

MEMBERSHIP SNAPSHOT

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY CATEGORY



TOTAL MEMBERSHIP GREW TO **13,451**
1.5%

49.1%
4,993

50.9%
5,171

GENDER OF FULL MEMBERS

The proportion of female full members continues to climb, with females accounting for 49.1% of all full members, up from 48.3% last year. This change is driven by newly admitted practitioners, of which approximately 60% are female.

Female full members account for more than 50% of full members in large law firms (50+ practising certificates) and, outside of law firms, in the Corporate or Government sectors. Male full members account for 53.7% of all full members working for law firms.

FULL MEMBERS WORKING IN LAW FIRMS

Of all QLS full members, 77.6% work for law firms, marginally up on last year's percentage of 77.4%. The most notable change was the increase in full members working for small firms (6-19 practising certificates) and the corresponding decrease in full members working for medium firms (20-49 practising certificates). Current numbers reflect proportions similar to those in the 2014-15 financial year.



FULL MEMBERS

10,165

FULL MEMBERS BY SEGMENT

Post-admission experience	Number	%
0-5 years	2,888	28.4%
6-12 years	2,708	26.7%
13-20 years	2,057	20.2%
21+ years	2,511	24.7%

FULL MEMBERS BY GENERATION

Generation	Male	Female	%
Builder	83	6	0.9
Baby Boomer	1,640	516	21.2
Generation X	1,774	1,631	33.5
Generation Y	1,668	2,832	44.3
Generation Z	5	6	0.1
Unknown	1	3	<0.1
Subtotal	5,171	4,993	-

Generation category and year of birth range:

Builders 1925-1945; Baby Boomers 1946-1964; Generation X 1965-1979; Generation Y 1980-1994; Generation Z 1995-2010