
Elliott Johnston QC AO to receive civil justice award at Australian Lawyers Alliance SA conference today

Friday, 4 June, 2010

A man who has made a significant contribution to the pursuit of justice and equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – most famously while National Commissioner on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody – is the winner of this year's South Australian Branch, Lawyers Alliance Civil Justice Award.

Retired Judge, Elliott Johnston QC AO, will receive his award at the Australian Lawyers Alliance South Australian conference at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, Adelaide today (Friday, June 4) at 10.45am.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, has made reference to the significant contribution of Mr Johnston by saying:

"The processes and final reports that came out of the Royal Commission represented a pivotal moment in the history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Australia.

The reports removed what has been termed the 'great Australian silence', by making explicit the connections between the history of treatment of Indigenous peoples and its ongoing, contemporary impact. This is seen through the continuing experiences of disadvantage and discrimination, and most tragically through the deaths in custody of too many Indigenous people. The final recommendation of the Royal Commission's report also introduced into our national debates the concept of 'reconciliation'."

Alliance South Australian president, Tony Kerin, said Mr Johnston's fine legal mind incorporated the appropriate concern and empathy for those who came before him, when he was a Supreme Court Justice in South Australia.

"Throughout his life, he has displayed a fine understanding of the human condition and the manner in which circumstances can come to bear upon it, in his pursuit of justice."

"Elliott Johnston has been a role model for the legal profession to aspire to, and from whom to draw inspiration. He is a fine example of a lawyer but more importantly through his work and ideals has touched and influenced a great many in the broader community in an extraordinarily positive way."

The Australian Lawyers Alliance is a peak, non-profit legal body, which promotes access to justice. It has 1500 members Australia wide and hosts conferences annually in each state as a means of furthering justice, freedom and the rights of the individual.

For more details contact: Australian Lawyers Alliance, public affairs manager, Mandy Wyer on 0418 270 656 or Alliance SA president, Tony Kerin, 0417 809 579.