

MEDIA RELEASE

17/5/06



High Court decisions victory for justice

A national lawyers' organisation is hailing two High Court decisions as a victory for justice for people suffering psychological injuries caused by the negligence of others.

The Australian Lawyers Alliance says that today's High Court decisions highlight the importance of access to justice and that courts should not put hurdles in front of people seeking just compensation.

Lawyers Alliance president Richard Faulks said the decisions show that the law "should be interpreted in a common sense way and that the rulings of the Queensland courts had been unfair and harsh".

The High Court overturned decisions of the Queensland Supreme Court in the cases of three former police officers and six former wards of the state who were claiming compensation against the State of Queensland.

The police officers are seeking compensation for psychiatric injuries they claim they developed after being put in life-threatening situations and the wards are seeking compensation for alleged abuse as children in foster care.

The Supreme Court found that their claims were invalid as they fell outside the three-year limitation period for such actions.

"People who suffer abuse as children often do not become aware of the serious impact it has had on their lives until much later in life," Mr Faulks said.

"It is important that such people can seek appropriate remedies when they do become aware of those links."

"The limitations previously imposed in such cases is not just an issue confined to Queensland and will have implications for other jurisdictions."

"What underlies today's decisions is the Queensland *Personal Injuries Proceedings Act*, which is another example of governments making laws that are supposed to make the process simpler and access to justice easier, but can in fact have the opposite effect," Mr Faulks said.

Contact: Kyrn Stevens, Lawyers Alliance Communications Manager: 0408-974127