

Deputy Premier John Rau

Attorney-General
Minister for Justice Reform

Thursday, 3 September, 2015

QC or not QC?

The State Government will engage with the legal profession and the judiciary concerning allowing Senior Counsel to apply to be Queen's Counsel.

Attorney-General John Rau said he had discussed this issue today at the Adelaide meeting of State and Territory Attorneys-General.

"Following a change made in 2008, all new appointments in South Australia have been known as Senior Counsel (SC)," he said.

"I am aware of some views within the legal profession across Australia that there should be an option for SCs to become QCs.

"Victoria recently confirmed its 2014 decision to allow SCs to apply to be QCs, following a comprehensive review of their system. Queensland reverted to the use of QC in 2013. I believe New South Wales may be considering this issue very soon as well.

"Legal consumers need to have consistency and transparency across the country, so as to be able to compare like service providers.

"I think most people would recognise a QC as being a senior lawyer appointed to a prestigious position, many struggle to instantly recognise SC in the same way.

"There is much to be said for an harmonised national framework. With one half of the national profession now appointing QCs, this is a real issue.

"These are our State's top lawyers and it is relevant that this prestigious appointment is easily recognisable, both within Australia and overseas.

Mr Rau said he would seek feedback from the legal profession concerning making the title of QC an option.

"At this stage I am not proposing any changes to the way the appointments are made, I do however think it is time to calmly reflect on whether the change in 2008 needs to be revisited."