



# Commonwealth Lawyers Association

## Council Members – Role & Responsibilities

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA) was established in 1983 and exists to maintain and promote the rule of law throughout the Commonwealth by ensuring that the people of the Commonwealth are served by an independent and efficient legal profession.

The Association's objectives, as enshrined in its Constitution, are to maintain and promote the rule of law in the Commonwealth by: -

- ensuring that a common bond of Commonwealth is preserved and fostered;
- strengthening professional links between members of the legal profession;
- maintaining the honor and integrity of the profession and the promotion of uniformity in the standards of professional ethics;
- encouraging improved standards of education and the promotion of exchanges of lawyers and students.

The CLA undertakes a wide range of activities including the organisation of the biennial Commonwealth Law Conference, drafting submissions and interventions on legal issues of relevance to the profession around the Commonwealth, as well as the ongoing provision of services to the members. Additional information on all activities is available on [www.commonwealthlawyers.com](http://www.commonwealthlawyers.com)

The Council is largely responsible for the substantive and policy work of the association and works closely with the Executive Committee (ExCo) also effectively the Board of Directors, which has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the association. Liaison between the two committees is facilitated by the Secretary General and the officeholders (President, Vice Presidents and Treasurer), in addition to the immediate Past President and one or two other members who sit on both committees. The Council is representative of the breadth and diversity of the Commonwealth and its members are based in different countries and regions.

Council members serve a two-year term and can stand for re-election. Whilst historically appointed by the CLA membership at the General Meeting held at the biennial Commonwealth Law Conferences (CLC), the Constitution was changed in June 2021 to allow for Council election by membership e-voting with the first election of Council members under the new system to take place later in 2021.

Since the advent of the global health crisis, the CLA Council has met virtually via the Zoom platform and embraced all the benefits of digital technology to facilitate the quarterly meetings of Council which generally last two hours. It is envisaged that virtual meetings will continue to be the norm moving forwards, although an in-person meeting at the CLC in any given Conference year will be an aspiration when the prevailing health crisis dissipates. Council members are expected to attend all these meetings although the CLA cannot provide funding or technical support for such.

Council members are encouraged to be active and play a constructive role in all aspects of the work of the CLA and thereby contribute to its growth and development. Council members must be willing to promote the Association at a national, regional and international level.

Council Members are a vital channel of communication and every opportunity should be taken to report back and to consult as widely as possible. Council members are encouraged to 'champion' the CLA and:

- Report on issues of concern locally and within the wider region. These should be raised with the Secretariat and discussed amongst fellow Council members so as to identify and agree an appropriate response. This is to make the CLA more responsive to 'live' and relevant issues and raise the profile of the organisation 'in country'.
- Report on relevant projects/activities/events of which you are aware that are taking place locally and within the wider region and at which the CLA should have a presence.
- Represent the CLA, promote the work of the association and report back on feedback and outcomes.
- Organise one CLA branded event every two years eg. lecture, seminar, training workshop, reception etc. This could be a stand-alone event or organised jointly with other relevant organisations but it is vital that the CLA be included in all promotional materials and at the event itself. The Secretariat will assist where possible.
- Attend and participate in Council meetings on a regular basis. Members should not miss more than two meetings in a row. Ad hoc working group meetings are sometimes convened, and members are expected to attend these as appropriate.
- Assist with all aspects of the CLAs work including drafting statements on issues relating to the rule of law, future project development, interventions and other activities including the promotion of the CLC and regional conferences.

Council membership provides an opportunity to serve the legal profession in the Commonwealth by contributing to initiatives and projects relating to the profession and rule of law. Council members have a vital role to play as the CLA moves into the next strategic period.

**Commonwealth Lawyers Association**  
**July 2021**