



Government of South Australia
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The Transformative Power of a Linked Law Reform Class

Reflections and insights from the experience of the South Australian Law Reform Institute (SALRI)

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Research Assistant, SALRI

Introduction to the South Australian Law Reform Institute (SALRI)



- An independent non-partisan Law Reform body in South Australia, based at the University of Adelaide Law School.
- Formed by an agreement in 2010 between the Attorney-General of South Australia, the University of Adelaide and the Law Society of South Australia.
- Based on the Alberta and Tasmania Institute model.
- Small in size and resources, producing a significant output and impact.

For more information on SALRI's beneficial effect on law reform in South Australia see: David Plater and John Williams, 'The South Australian Law Reform Institute a Decade On: "May You Continue Well into the Future"' (2022) 43(1) Adelaide Law Review 37.

SALRI's objectives

To conduct reviews and research on references, with a view to:

- modernise the law
- eliminate defects in the law
- simplify the law
- consolidate any laws
- repeal laws that are obsolete or unnecessary
- ensure uniformity, where desirable, between laws of other States and the Commonwealth



Pictured (left to right): Professor Geoff Muecke, Jemma Holt, Professor John Williams (Director of SALRI), Dr David Plater (Deputy Director)

SALRI's Key Contributors

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graph TD; A[SALRI's Key Contributors] --> B((The Law Reform Class)); A --> C((Contracted Research Assistants  
(often former or current students of the Law Reform Class))); A --> D((Expert Advisory Board)); A --> E((Permanent Staff  
Director: Professor John Williams  
Deputy Director: Dr David Plater  
Admin: Louise Scarman)); A --> F((Local Lawyers, Experts, Interested Parties, Academics and the Community));
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The Law Reform Class

Contracted Research Assistants

(often former or current students of the Law Reform Class)

Expert Advisory Board

Permanent Staff

Director: Professor John Williams

Deputy Director: Dr David Plater

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Local Lawyers, Experts, Interested Parties, Academics and the Community

SALRI's Linked Law Reform Class

- A class made up of approximately 20 law students from the University of Adelaide, led by SALRI's Deputy Director, Dr David Plater
- Invitation only by academic performance within the Bachelor of Laws Program
- Year-long elective course



The Course

- Covers various topics such as theories, practices and processes for achieving reform of the law
- Class engagement with a wide range of invited guest speakers
- Students examine a topic related to current and/or potential SALRI references
- Assessment comprises a literature review and research assignment, presentations, class participation and feedback, and editorial/research activities on SALRI references

Consultation and going beyond the usual suspects

SALRI is committed to an active and inclusive consultation process, including:

- Community and expert roundtables and interviews
- Surveys
- Visits to regional and rural South Australian communities



For more information on SALRI's consultation, see: Sarah Moulds, 'Community Engagement in the Age of Modern Law Reform: Perspectives from Adelaide' (2017) 38 (1) Adelaide Law Review 441.

The value of the Class to SALRI and to law reform more broadly

- A cost-effective collaboration which significantly enhances SALRI's capacity and impact
- Student research can, and does, feed directly into SALRI reports
- Increased partnerships and multi-disciplinary input
- Youth engagement
- Fresh perspectives, valuable insights and innovative solutions
e.g. modernising key aspects of law reform processes including consultation methods



Parliamentary Acknowledgement

“Thanks for their contributions ought go, firstly, to Professor John Williams and to Dr David Plater, both of whom are longstanding and well-recognised leaders of SALRI. Also, over the course of those years significant contributions have been made by [...] the law reform class at the University of Adelaide. [...] David Plater's leadership of that class, and the way he therefore engages those who are coming through with areas of reform that can be focused on, is an extension of SALRI and a tremendous one.”

South Australia, Parliamentary Debates, House of Assembly, 28 September 2023, 5552 (Mr Teague, Shadow Attorney -General)

Benefits to the students and the Law School



My experience and insights

Student of the Law Reform Class (2022)



Contracted Research Assistant



Community Consultations in Regional South Australia (approximately 250km from Adelaide!)



Currently working on SALRI's Supported Decision -Making Project. Thank you to the Law Foundation of South Australia for their support on this important reference.

Other Student Testimonials



Meg Lawson spoke of her experiences on the LGBTIQ reference :

“During my degree, I was part of the law reform class at the University of Adelaide in 2016, during which I was exposed to the vexed partial defence of provocation and more generally had an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how law and policy intersects with social values, political context and the practical effect it has on vulnerable groups. Since then I have been fortunate enough to continue to work closely with SALRI. I was one of the co-authors of the Stage 2 Report and prepared a paper entitled Homicide Sentencing : Background Research which was published alongside the Report. The legislation now passed in South Australia was introduced as a direct consequence of SALRI’s recommendations in the Stage 2 Report. It is an incredible feeling to have contributed to effecting such an impactful and important reform to the law, especially for the LGBTQI community. It is a reminder that anyone, whether you are a law student or at the peak of the profession, has the ability to effect real positive change.”

Olivia Jay spoke of her experience in helping the project :

“I was a member of the law reform class in 2018. As a student, I completed work that ended up getting used in SALRI’s reports, and I saw my fellow students complete work that was directly used in the Provocation report. Since being a student, I have worked with SALRI on the provocation reference and resulting Bill (and now Act). As a not yet admitted lawyer, it has been incredible to see the way that I and other students have been able to contribute to this important reform so early in our careers. It shows that, with passion, you don’t need to be a professional to make a tangible impact. I am proud to be a part of SALRI, and am amazed at the impact that the team has been able to make through the work on this reference.”

Examples of SALRI's work

Recent work:

- **Providing a Voice to the Vulnerable: A Study of Communication Assistance in South Australia (2021)**
 - David Plater, Holly Nicholls, Simone Basso, Anita Brunacci, Jemma Holt, Jennifer Jacobs, Anisa Leaver, Geoff Muecke, Melissa Oxlad, Olga Pandos, Martine Powell, Natalie Wade and Brooke Washusen, Providing a Voice to the Vulnerable: A Study of Communication Assistance in South Australia (South Australian Law Reform Institute, Adelaide, 2021)
- **Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act Review (2022)**
 - David Plater, Divya Narayan, Anita Brunacci, Holly Nicholls, Jemma Holt, Michaela Okninski, Olga Pandos, Taylor Portelli, Rachel Tan, Kim Tran, Sylvia Villios and John Williams, 'Autonomy and Safeguarding are not Mutually Inconsistent': A Review of the Operation of the Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act 1995 (SA) (South Australian Law Reform Institute, Adelaide, 2022)
- **Mental Health Act Review (2023)**
 - Olga Pandos, John Williams, David Plater, Anita Brunacci, Michaela Okninski, Elaine Marinas, Isabella Quek, Rachel Tan, Divya Narayan and Sofia Arlotta, Review of the Mental Health Act 2009 (SA) (South Australian Law Reform Institute, Adelaide, 2023)
- **Suppression Orders (2024)**
 - Jemma Holt, David Plater, John Williams, Geoff Muecke, Yasmin Ilhan, Lisa Cooper, Olivia Gerhardy, Taylor Portelli, Gemma De Nichilo, Sarah Klimek and Elaine Marinas, Stemming the Unstoppable Tide? An Evaluation of the Role and Operation of 'Suppression Orders' in South Australia (South Australian Law Reform Institute, Adelaide, 2024)

Current work (nearing completion):

- **Supported Decision -Making and Microboards**
 - Co-authors Associate Professor Sylvia Villios, Dr Mark Giancaspro, Associate Professor Beth Nosworthy, Dr Peta Spyrou, Dr David Plater, Professor John Williams, Brooke Washusen, Simon Headland and Emily Conroy.
 - We acknowledge the generous support of the Law Foundation of South Australia.
- **Review of the Real Property Act 1886 (SA)**

Upcoming work:

- An examination of the role and scope of the Criminal History Jury Disqualifications in South Australia and the implications for Indigenous jury participation
- Review of the Bail Act 1985 (SA)

All of SALRI's reports are accessible at :

<https://law.adelaide.edu.au/south-australian-law-reform-institute>

Summary

SALRI's link with the Law Reform class has:

- increased SALRI's capacity and output
- substantially benefitted students and the Adelaide Law School
- had a positive impact on law reform more broadly



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Thank you!

For more information on SALRI's work, see:

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[LinkedIn](#)

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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LAW REFORM INSTITUTE



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