



NSW Council for Civil Liberties Annual Dinner 31 July 2015

Opening Remarks

Although 800 years seems very recent when compared to the culture and wisdom passed through thousands of generations of the First Peoples of Australia, it's nevertheless worth noting at this Annual Dinner of the NSW Council for Civil Liberties that 2015 marks the 800th birthday of the signing of the *Magna Carta*, whose legacy has included the development of the rule of law and civil liberties in modern democracies such as Australia.

There are a number of important clauses in the *Magna Carta*, including clauses 39 and 40, which bear repeating:

39. No free man shall be seized or imprisoned or stripped of his rights or possessions or outlawed or deprived of his standing in any way, nor will we proceed with force against him or send others to do so except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land.

40. To no one shall we sell, to no one shall we deny or delay right or justice.

Clause 39 gave us the rule of law and trial by jury and clause 40 ensured that no one would be above the law and that we would all enjoy timely access to justice. These principles continue to resonate and are as important today, if not more so, as when they were inscribed in the *Magna Carta* among multiple provisions designed to end a squabble between the Barons and King John.

These are principles fundamental to the work that the NSW Council for Civil Liberties has tirelessly undertaken in the decades since its formation in the 1960's.

Tonight I am delighted to announce that you will be hearing from a number of people whose important work has in recent years furthered the protection of the rule of law and civil liberties in New South Wales, Australia and beyond: Stephen Blanks, the President of the NSW Council for Civil Liberties, and our Secretary, Lesley Lynch and, of course, our keynote speaker, Professor Gillian Triggs.

Pauline Wright

Vice President NSWCCCL

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