



www.austlii.edu.au

AustLII Foundation Limited

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AustLII – A Good Investment

Supporting AustLII - A good investment

There are four main reasons why AustLII should be supported by the legal profession, businesses generally and the wider community:

1. AustLII delivers high quality and cost-efficient services

The legal profession and many commercial and government sectors have a strong vested interest in funding AustLII so as to secure free access to the legal information that they, or those they represent, need to conduct their business. From an operational perspective, contributing to AustLII is a sound investment. It is also a cost-effective investment, because AustLII delivers access at a cost of less than 1¢ per page accessed.

2. AustLII stimulates a competitive market

AustLII provides a free-access product into the same legal information marketplace within which commercial and government legal information providers compete. Its quality has made it the most-used online provider in Australia. The 'AustLII alternative' impacts on the price settings of commercial providers, stimulating them to keep their prices reasonable, and to increase the value-adding of their products. AustLII also cooperates with some commercial publishers to assist them to improve the coverage of their products.

3. AustLII provides public benefits to the whole community – essential legal information

AustLII provides free access to public legal information to everyone, irrespective of their means. This supports the effective functioning of the rule of law, and provides essential legal information that benefits both community support organisations and individuals. All contributions to AustLII therefore have this community service or charitable benefit (recognised with DGR status), a reason in itself to support AustLII.

4. AustLII supports good public policies on legal information

AustLII supports free-access policies and opposes monopolistic practices in relation to legal information. Free access to legal information is necessary for the rule of law and democracy to function effectively. These interests need an advocate, because public and commercial bodies do not always support, or even recognise, free access and other public interests in legal information. AustLII works to expand the scope and quality of legal information available for free access, and defends it against poor public policies.

What is AustLII?

The Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII) was founded in 1995. It is the largest free-access provider of online Australian legal materials, a founding member of the Free Access to Law Movement, and one of the largest providers of world-wide free-access legal content. AustLII collaborates with other free access LIIs around the world to operate three international multi-LII systems for legal information: Asian Legal Information Institute (AsianLII); Commonwealth Legal Information Institute (CommonLII); World Legal Information Institute (WorldLII); as well as developing the LawCite international citator with the same group of collaborators. In addition, AustLII jointly operates the New Zealand Legal Information Institute (NZLII) and the LII of India, in cooperation with local partners in those countries.

How is AustLII structured?

The Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII) is comprised of two entities:

- The AustLII Foundation Limited (a public company limited by guarantee with charitable Deductible Gift Recipient tax status), which is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the infrastructure and services that delivers the online library of Australian legal information to the community.
- The AustLII Research Centre (a joint research centre of UNSW Australia and the University of Technology Sydney), which conducts leading edge international research in technologies for developing legal information systems.

These two arms of AustLII operate in a symbiotic partnership – revenue opportunities that accrue to the academic arm from research grants and contract research feeds-back into and opens opportunities for the Foundation while stakeholder engagement activity by the Foundation can often be leveraged for grant applications available to the Research Centre.

What is the AustLII 'hybrid' business model?

When the AustLII Foundation Limited was established in late 2008 as a charitable not-for-profit company limited by guarantee it was decided that the most appropriate business model should be that of a hybrid supporter/contributor/donor model utilising Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) charitable tax status. On the advice of expert fund-raising consultants it was not considered appropriate to pursue subscription or advertising models because of the risk that the contractual obligation to these stakeholders would conflict with AustLII's public policy mission of free access to legal information and may threaten its charitable status.

AustLII does not and cannot seek user access subscriptions or advertising because they are inconsistent with its free access policies and its charitable status. Instead, AustLII asks all its users, those who publish via its services, and those who otherwise benefit from its operations, to make an annual contribution that reflects the value of AustLII to them and to the Australian community.

AustLII aims to achieve a broad and balanced diversity of contributions and other sources of funding. It avoids tying its funding to any one provider or type of provider - such as a grant body, government fund, or levy on the legal profession. The diversity of AustLII's contributors needs to reflect the diversity of its stakeholders, so as to maintain AustLII's independence and ability to serve all its stakeholders, and to provide a robust long-term funding model.

What does AustLII provide?

AustLII offers unrivalled breadth to its coverage of current Australasian legal information, and increasingly comprehensive historical depth as well. Its content and services include the following:

- Over 780 legal databases, with at least 25 new databases added each year, one every two weeks.
- All Acts and Regulations enacted in every jurisdiction in Australia, enriched by an expanding coverage of Bills, Explanatory Memoranda, Gazettes etc.
- The decisions and case law of all significant courts, tribunals and regulatory authorities in Australia (over 120), plus the historical decisions of superseded bodies. New sets of decisions are added on request.
- A Treaties Library of all international treaties that Australia has entered into since Federation, and related documents, the largest national collection on the Internet.
- Legal History Libraries which provide near-comprehensive annual Acts since 1788, plus extensive historical series of law reports from most Australian jurisdictions.
- A Legal Scholarship Library of nearly 100,000 academic and judicial papers, theses and monographs.
- The Sino search engine, which combines simplicity of use with sophisticated features when needed, and (most of all) very fast search results.
- Interconnection of more than 2 million documents by over 80 million hypertext links.
- The LawCite citator, which automatically integrates citation data from cases and articles both on AustLII and on cooperating Legal Information Institutes from around the world. It also links or refers to other external databases. LawCite currently indexes more than 5.5 million cases and articles.
- AustLII Communities, providing a wiki-based collaborative and free-access platform allows those with interest and expertise to write commentary and publish information on Australian law and legal issues, automatically linked to the primary and secondary legal resources located on AustLII (case law decisions, legislation, treaties, journals, etc.)

Who uses AustLII?

In 2017 the AustLII website received 258 million page accesses (over 700,000 per day) and 40 terabytes of data were downloaded. AustLII maintained its number one market share of nearly 20% of the online legal category throughout 2017 (figures provided by Hitwise). This category includes websites from legal information providers in government, publishers, courts and tribunals, law societies, legal firms and the bar. Identifiable usage came, in order of largest use, from the commercial sector, government educational and community sectors.

What does AustLII cost?

The AustLII Foundation Limited is a public company limited by guarantee with charitable Deductible Gift Recipient tax status. It is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the infrastructure and services that delivers AustLII's online library of Australian legal information to the community. The Foundation requires approximately \$1.2 million per year to do this.

Expansion of AustLII's databases and infrastructure, and innovative research, is funded by competitive research grants obtained within the University sector by the AustLII Research Centre, which is the other half of AustLII's operations. The Research Centre receives nearly \$1 million in grant funding each year.

Who funds AustLII?

The legal profession, business and industry, courts and tribunals, government agencies, educational institutions and the general community all make contributions to support AustLII. Each year more than 300 organisations and individuals contribute in amounts ranging from \$5 to \$50,000. AustLII Foundation's stakeholder-driven donation funding model has proven to be an efficient and cost-effective vehicle to maintain AustLII's services - but this requires ongoing support from all AustLII's stakeholders, particularly its users.

The AustLII Foundation's strategic funding objectives are:

- a) Increasing the value of contributions made by the current contributor base;
- b) Increasing the number contributors from the various user and stakeholder segments;
- c) Pursuing opportunities to negotiate project contracts with other parties, consistent with AustLII's mission and goals;
- d) Developing a capital preserved endowment, the earnings of which can contribute an increasing amount to AustLII's operating revenue in perpetuity.

These objectives are addressed by funding strategies that cover immediate and short-term activities, medium-term plans and a long-term vision for AustLII's future.

The AustLII Research Centre is regularly awarded competitive research grants from the Australian Research Council under its Linkage Infrastructure Equipment and Facilities and Industry Linkage programs. Grants have also been received from such grant making bodies as the Victorian Legal Services Board, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the American Bar Association and AusAID.

[figures correct as at 31 December 2017]