
Barristers Chambers Limited

ABN 17 009 694 375

Registered Office – Inns of Court – Level 5 – 107 North Quay – Brisbane Qld 4000

28 May 2025

Ms Cate Heyworth-Smith KC
President
Bar Association of Queensland
Ground Floor
Inns of Court
107 North Quay
BRISBANE Q 4000



Thank you for your letter of 26 May 2025.

First, I must say that I was surprised to see your suggestion that members of the BCL Board had been "*encouraged not to speak with (you) on this subject*" namely the possible relocation of the Bar Association of Queensland ("**BAQ**") from the Inns of Court. If you meant to infer that I was responsible for any encouragement, I assure you that is not the case.

I want all members of the Bar Association of Queensland, including those who are also shareholders in Barristers Chambers Limited ("**BCL**"), to discuss and consider the prospect of the relocation of BAQ from the Inns of Court which the members of my Board, including me, regard as a very significant policy decision on the part of your Council which should involve the support of the membership of BAQ as a whole.

Perhaps more importantly:

1. I am determined to take steps to ensure that all options available to BAQ moving forward, involve the prospect of its premises remaining within the Inns of Court which, as I have said, is a building owned by, and occupied by, practicing barristers (who are members of the Association) and always will be.
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2. With respect to that, I am keen to investigate any options within the building which might meet the Association's needs including, as landlord, the BCL Board considering:
 - (a) encouraging and permitting the reconfiguration of offices in the BAQ leased premises to accommodate any necessary increased staff in those premises, under the current commercially favourable terms offered and to be reoffered to BAQ; and
 - (b) the possibility of accommodating some or all of the Bar Practice Course in the Inns.
 3. The BCL Board as a whole has some misgivings the BAQ cannot continue to take advantage of the availability that the Courts (be that the Supreme Court, the Federal Court or even the Magistrates Court) to accommodate the Bi-Annual Bar Practice Course. If that is the case the BCL Board would consider any proposal to make available rooms on the 5th Floor of the Inns to augment the space required for the Bar Practice Course, in addition to any Court premises available and of course the modification of the larger rooms on the ground floor already leased by BAQ namely the Gibbs Room, the De Jersey Room and the Council's board room. I should say, members of my Board involved in the Bar Practice Court have expressed the view that by far the best option for accommodating the Bar Practice Courses, at least in part, is within the Court rooms in which they might ultimately aspire to appear as counsel.
 4. Unfortunately with respect to the Common Room on Level 5, the Board of BCL and I are presently unable to unilaterally offer those premises for use of all BAQ members generally, as those barristers who have invested in chambers within the Inns have no doubt done so on the basis that one of the advantages of that investment was the availability of the facilities provided by the Inns Common Room and its availability to cater for all those who choose, for a fee, to use the Level 5 mediation facilities. Of course, if arrangements are reached for the Bar Practice Course to be conducted from the 5th Level rooms from time to time, the Common Room facilities would be available to be used by Course convenor and participants at those times.
 5. Otherwise, please rest assured the interests of the members of the Board of BCL (which interests I understand are uniformly held) are guided:
 - (a) not so much by the rental income BCL enjoys from BAQ; but
 - (b) rather more, by the advantages of the historical efforts of senior members of the Bar in times past to create a building which could, and should, be the home of the Bar free of the vagaries of commercial premises, and more to do with the future of the Bar; and
 - (c) ensuring that increases in the costs of practicing as a barrister are, as far as possible, limited to ensure that, in particular, younger members of the profession, or those seeking to come to the Bar otherwise, are not dissuaded by excessive costs at the present time or into the future. Such financial concerns are at the heart of almost all of the discussions at the Board of BCL.
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6. Finally, I am personally delighted to read that the Council will be providing detailed information concerning the factors that have converged to, apparently, "*render the present tenancy to be unsuitable*" and the options that have been considered including costings, forecasts and comparisons. No doubt that disclosure will include the Council's consideration of the benefits of remaining in the Inns.
 7. My Board and I understand that such information will be made to all members of the Association (including shareholders in BCL), before any final decision is made by BAQ or its Council to relocate.

Please inform me, as a member of BAQ, urgently if that is not the case.

8. In the meantime, I would be delighted to accompany you or your delegate on an inspection of the current layout of the BAQ premises so that I might better understand the need for larger premises to accommodate the current levels of staffing (and be able to communicate that understanding to the members of the BCL Board).

I look forward to maintaining our cordial information exchange before any final decision is made by the Council of BAQ.

With compliments,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Christopher Hughes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christopher Hughes KC
Chairman