

CLOC AUSTRALIA SUMMIT



STRONGER BY DESIGN

Key insights from the 2026 CLOC Australia Summit

INTRODUCTION

Legal operations in Australia is moving from a back-office function toward a strategic seat at the table. In her keynote at the CLOC Australia Summit, Dr. Catherine Ball pointed out that the country currently ranks lowest in the OECD for corporate AI uptake. Speakers framed that ranking as room to learn from other markets, not a mark against the region.

Much of the conversation centred on closing the execution gap, the 35% of professionals whose AI strategy has not yet changed their daily work. Speakers tied that gap to two things: human-centred design and stronger knowledge management.

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I don't sit there and think that's a beating stick. I think that's a golden opportunity.

Dr. Catherine Ball, Scientific Futurist



FROM EFFICIENCY TO EXPANDED CAPACITY

Legal departments have historically been squeezed by rising complexity and flat resources. Speakers described a shift away from doing more with less and toward expanded capacity, using AI to get a strong first pass at speed so in-house counsel can spend more time on the work that matters: **strategy, judgment, and nuance**.

A tension remains, though. The industry expects legal teams to be ahead of the curve but finds them to stay behind it. Closing that gap means redefining disruption. Disruption isn't a tool sitting off to the side. It's technology becoming a practical, trusted, invisible part of the day-to-day practice of law.

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We've moved past the initial anxiety around generative AI. The conversation now is implementation: what legal ops should be doing, and how we keep proving the value of the legal work in the organisations that legal teams serve. The benefits of legal operations and legal engineering are becoming clearer, too. Legal engineering builds the tools, while legal operations creates the framework needed to maximise their impact. – **Matt Duncan, CLOC Australia Co-Lead and Head of Legal Operations, Transurban**

The afternoon's roundtable discussion, 'Reimagining the Legal Team of the Future,' led by Katrina Gowans, Group Counsel at APA Group, pushed this further. Attendees considered what a legal team built for the future would look like, what technology it would run on, what skills it would need, and how it would measure its own value.

THREE SPEEDS OF WORK



MANUAL

The traditional pace of research and drafting



AUGMENTED

Basic automation and search-based tools



AI-NATIVE

Real-time generation and specialised agents operating at the speed of thought

STRATEGIC VISION

FROM EFFICIENCY TO EXPANDED CAPACITY

LEGACY VERSUS GROWTH MINDSET



LEGACY MINDSET

Delegating authority entirely to AI. This risks model collapse and reliance on corrupted datasets. Legal outcomes built on flawed training data inherit that flaw at scale, and once a bad pattern is baked in, it's difficult to trace back or correct.



GROWTH MINDSET

Keeping humans in the loop. AI is a prediction engine built on mathematics. Humans provide the ethical judgment and nuance needed to prevent systemic error. Dr. Ball illustrated this with a coral reef metaphor: no single species does everything on a reef, and legal teams, law firms, and vendors need that same kind of symbiotic ecosystem rather than one dominant player trying to do it all.



Humans are the loop. You have to be in control of every single thing that this AI is putting out.

Dr. Catherine Ball, Scientific Futurist



FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

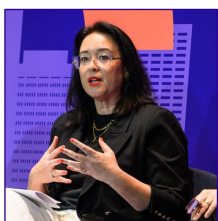
LEGAL OPERATIONS IS SHIFTING FROM BACK OFFICE TO STRATEGIC BROKER. Teams are moving beyond e-billing to impact the entire enterprise, serving as the bridge between business needs and legal outcomes.

2

AI ADOPTION IS DOUBLING, BUT THE EXECUTION GAP REMAINS.

While adoption levels are doubling annually, 35% of professionals report their AI strategy has yet to impact daily work.

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We released a report called [*Future of Professionals...*](#) thirty-five percent of professionals said that their named AI strategy had not translated into any sort of impact on their day-to-day work... Legal ops teams are the ones who really can own how strategy is embedded into teams.

Catherine Roberts, Senior Director AI and Legal Technology, Asia and Emerging Markets, Thomson Reuters

3

TRANSFORMATION STARTS WITH MINIMUM LOVABLE PRODUCTS.

Success comes from designing systems that are viable and lovable, reducing friction for the business.

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AI can actually genuinely change how the work gets done, creating more space for the human work that matters: judgment, strategy, and nuance.

Zoe Hibbard, Lead Commercial Counsel, Harvey

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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IS THE NEW DATA LAYER. Capturing tacit knowledge, the file about the file, is essential to prevent model collapse and keep AI output reliable.

5

HUMANS ARE THE LOOP. Rather than just being in or on the loop, humans must be the loop, exercising judgment, strategy, and nuance that AI cannot replicate.

FROM BACK OFFICE TO C-SUITE

WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ Legal ops was once seen as an administrative function. It now increasingly has a seat at the strategic table
- ★ The shift is from doing more with less to genuinely changing how work gets done
- ★ Owning the outcome matters more than outsourcing the cognitive thinking to AI

WHAT IT MEANS FOR AUSTRALIAN TEAMS

Legal ops must build power and authority by building relationships across the business

Teams must move from token boasting, measuring success by volume of AI use, to strategic dial-shifting

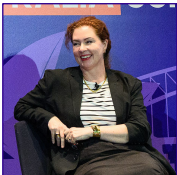
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Legal ops did start off as an administrative function... graduated to contract lifecycle management and law firm vendor management and strategic planning and training and technology and business intelligence... a component of finance, a component of information technology, a component of business decision-making.

Oyango Snell, President and CEO, CLOC

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We're already seeing instances of clients speaking to their law firms quite actively to say... we expect you to automate in a similar way, and we're not accepting your rate hikes... It's not an adversarial process. This is very much about negotiation and discussion.

Nikki Shaver, CEO and Co-founder, Legaltech Hub

SUCCESS STORY: IAG

By rotating Harvey licences based on use, IAG increased adoption and built five AI agents in two weeks.

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*Whenever someone received a licence and began using it, word of mouth adoption naturally followed, there was a real sense of FOMO. A common example was contract negotiations: I worked on the same negotiation that took someone else six hours, and I completed it in just 30 minutes. – **David Nguyen, Legal Operations Principal, IAG***

STRONGER BY DESIGN

HUMAN-CENTRED LAWYERING

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People buy with emotion, not with logic.

**Deb Hook, Director of Legal Operations,
University of Sydney**

WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ Legal design makes systems **human-centred**, **usable**, and **satisfying**
- ★ **The squint test**: designing documents so the most important action (for example, 'sign here') is immediately visible
- ★ Targeting a **Flesch-Kincaid grade** of 10 or lower to make legal advice digestible
- ★ **Method**: interview a cross-section of users to turn their words into jobs to be done, then map ideas on a feasibility-versus-priority matrix to isolate the minimum lovable features

SUCCESS STORY: UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

The Fast Track Contracts program redesigned 18 contract types to be mobile-friendly and intuitive. It saved 5,000 human hours in 18 months and won the Vice-Chancellor's Award.



MEASURABLE CAPACITY GAINS

WHAT WE HEARD

- ★ The panel split the opportunity into two categories: **AI contracting** to generate capacity within a team, and **external legal spend intelligence** to drive better law firm outcomes
- ★ **The scale of the opportunity:** **90%** of legal departments are under pressure to cut costs or lift efficiency, and **83%** expect rising work demand, with **45%** of all legal time spent on contracting alone, where AI is already delivering up to a **40%** reduction in manual effort
- ★ **The savings myth:** AI does not always result in a smaller bill, particularly in high-stakes tasks like annual report verification, where 100% human validation is required
- ★ Value shifts from time saved to **market dashboards**, using AI to tell a client what is market for a specific provision across the last 10 deals

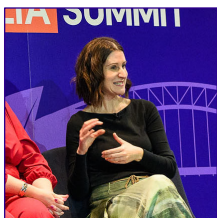
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Probably golden rule number one for us is to own the outcome. That doesn't mean don't use AI, but if you're doing work in the richer and deeper space, where the goal is real legal insight rather than just speed, to say 'this is what Claude said' or 'this is what Gemini said' I think is kind of missing the point.

Ben Langford, General Counsel, Woolworths Group

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That's gold to a client, and it's not about cost savings at all.

Lisa Kozaris, Partner, Chief Digital and Legal Solutions Officer, Allens



MEASURABLE CAPACITY GAINS

SUCCESS STORY: METRICON

Metricon built an AI playbook from two years of negotiated contracts, turning five years of one lawyer's experience into a repeatable system for first-pass contract review.

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*Metricon's AI journey did not begin with a massive transformation strategy. Instead, it began with a simple problem. **Marisa Muchow, Chief Legal Officer and Company Secretary, Metricon***

SUCCESS STORY: IAG SPEND INTELLIGENCE

A second IAG program used AI to cluster claims into categories and benchmark law firm performance on cost, time to close, and return on investment across its panel, turning invoice review into an ongoing conversation focused on value.

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*We don't want our law firms on one pylon of the bridge and in-house teams on the other pylon of the bridge, and we need to focus on the bridge between us to improve collaboration and outcomes. **Anna Golovsky, CLOC Australia Co-Lead and Executive Manager, Legal Operations and Agility, IAG***



THE DATA LAYER NEW ROLES IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

AI has increased the capability and scope of knowledge management.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
THE REFEREE	Manages governance and calls the safety lines.
THE ARCHITECT	Designs the larger knowledge ecosystem, including LLMs and repositories.
THE CURATOR	Extracts metadata and provides context for the file about the file.
THE GUARDIAN	Prevents model collapse by making sure the AI is fed gold standard data.

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Knowledge management essentially has three big components: one is capturing data, the second is how do you curate, and the third is how do you deploy.

Horace Wu, Founder and CEO, Syntheia



WHAT'S NEXT

THE ACTION PLAN



AUDIT YOUR LANGUAGE

Use Word's Editor tool to check Flesch-Kincaid scores and simplify templates



CAPTURE TACIT KNOWLEDGE

Use chatbots to interview lawyers at the end of matters to capture context that isn't in the raw file



BUILD THE CORAL REEF

Treat vendors and law firms as symbiotic partners, and ask them to build knowledge management solutions with you to prove value



IDENTIFY THE 10,000 STEPS

Break down workflows to find the specific parts best suited for AI automation versus human judgment

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Automate, innovate, elevate, accelerate, and collaborate.

Oyango Snell, President and CEO, CLOC



EVENT BY THE NUMBERS



200

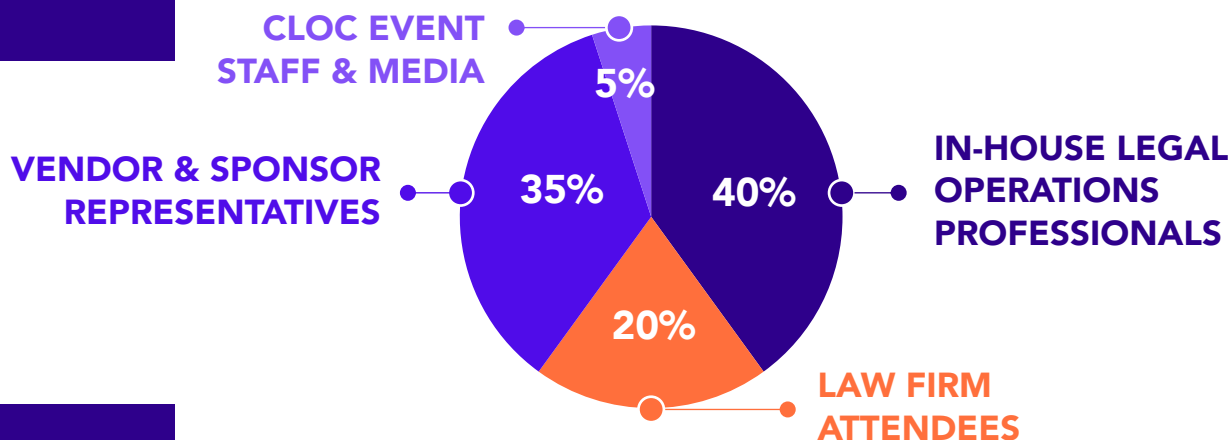
attendees
(33% increase
over 2025)



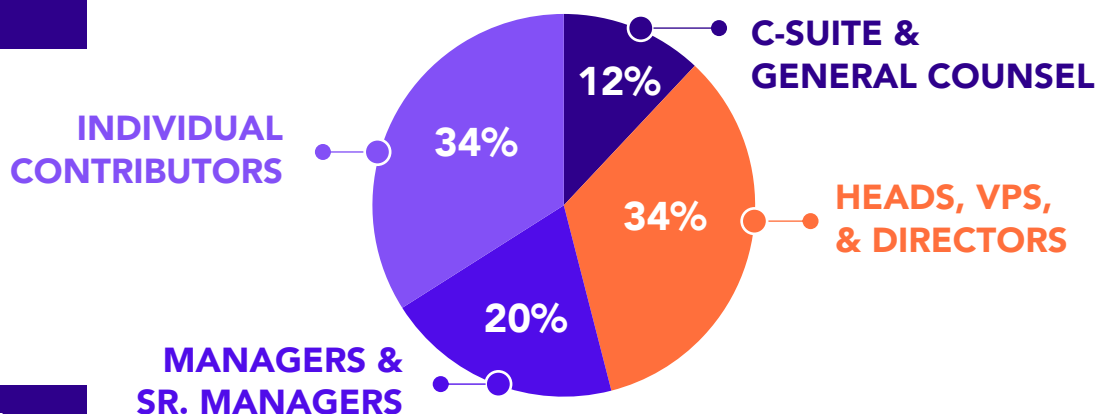
GEOGRAPHIC REACH

attendees travelled from across Australia, including Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Adelaide, as well as from the US, Singapore, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Kazakhstan.

ATTENDEE MIX



SENIORITY



ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE

Overall satisfaction	4.53 out of 5
Worth the time	4.57 out of 5
Worth the investment	4.53 out of 5
Would recommend	4.67 out of 5
Likely to attend again	4.67 out of 5

The Summit included a pre-event program on August 4, with a **General Counsel Breakfast** and the return of **CLOC Academy**, offering foundational and specialised training in vendor and knowledge management.