

**Why this inaugural *New Zealand Asian Lawyers Event of the Year* celebration and why are we awarding life membership of NZAL? Why was this a sold out event as soon as it was advertised?**

1. A significant chunk of our profession are now Asian lawyers. Currently, the legal profession consists of 12.7% Asian lawyers, and close to 20% of lawyers in the 0-7 years post qualification experience cohort. These percentages continue to grow. It is important that NZAL helps this significant number of Asian lawyers to contribute fully to the profession and at all levels and parts of the Justice system - in the public interest. [NZLS Snapshot of the Profession 2024](#).
2. As clients transform and an increasing number of NZers are of Asian ethnicity, especially in Auckland (one third currently and up to 44% by 2043 by StatsNZ projections), CQ ( or cultural intelligence comprising of cultural knowledge and understanding and Asian language skills) become as important as IQ and EQ for lawyers (and judges) to ensure Asian parties access to justice. CQ is also critical for lawyers helping non-Asian New Zealanders in dispute with Asian parties to settle. [2023 Census Population Data](#)
  - [StatsNZ](#), “Asian ethnic population projected to increase”
  - [Auckland Council](#), “Auckland’s Asian Population”
3. Having written numerous articles on Asian parties in the Courts, there are common issues and challenges that Asian lawyers can and must assist to overcome. The top eight are:
  - (a) Interpretation and translation difficulties with viva voce and documentary evidence;
  - (b) Not understanding the court system, nor the law that applies in the specific area in contention which results in not understanding the role of judges, lawyers, and interpreters;
  - (c) The cultural overlay of their particular home country on how they interpret the law and implement it, or not, which may affect who did what to whom and why;
  - (d) Discovery and non-disclosure issues;
  - (e) No or little documentation, or falsified documents produced after the fact;
  - (f) A different understanding of acceptable business culture, transparency, and anti-corruption practices;
  - (g) An apparently higher rate of self-representation than their percentage of the population;
  - (h) An apparently lower rate of settlement of disputes out of court.
4. There is still work for *New Zealand Asian Lawyers* to do to ensure that Asian lawyers are able to break through the bamboo ceiling to the senior ranks of our profession and the Justice system. There are still many firsts to be achieved – an Asian judge in the Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court, and as Attorney General, for example. That is why we will be awarding *New Zealand Asian Lawyers* Life membership to Sir

Anand Satyanand and Judge Ajit Swaran Singh – as two outstanding Asian lawyers who have transcended the bamboo ceiling to senior ranks. It can be done!

5. I acknowledge:

- Hon Judith Collins, the past immediate AG, for supporting two inaugural NZAL events, the first being the NZ Asian Lawyer Awards. Your grit and determination has resulted in a career track record that's inspirational;
- Vanushi Walters, the shadow AG – will she be the first Asian women AG?
- Tony Herring and Clayton Kimpton, President and CEO of TLANZ – Clayton sought me out because he thought Asian lawyers were important and TLANZ supporting this event eventuated;
- The two members of the NZAL Board who delivered this event - Anjeet Singh is a successful criminal and traffic law specialist, who continues in the footsteps of her father, Judge Ajit Singh, who has served as a District Court Judge for over 24 years; and David Liu, a founding partner of Heritage Law, a boutique law firm based in central Auckland. Without David, there would be no sponsors apart from TLANZ, and thank you for all your care and help to get this event over the line;
- The sponsors, Spark; LexisNexis; Vincent Capital; and Hermitage Group.

6. Enjoy this celebration, see you next year as it will be run every year, and let's pack out a venue twice this size.