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Lawyers slam privilege abuse

By Kate Gibbs

A "DANGEROUS PRECEDENT" threatened three hundred years of open government and free speech when the South Australian premier recently introduced legislation that attempted to curtail parliamentary privilege, according to a Holding Redlich partner.

Premier Mike Rann introduced legislation – subsequently withdrawn – into the South Australian Parliament that would take away the protection from prosecution, or the naming or identification of an MP, former MP, or public official of criminal sexual misconduct in Parliament.

The push followed comments made by Speaker of the

Parliament Peter Lewis, who claimed government ranks included a paedophile. Reacting, Rann asked Lewis to reconsider his position and resign from the Speaker's chair after he failed to provide evidence backing his comments.

"I think it is absolutely incumbent on [Lewis] to do the honourable thing, the decent thing and step down with the

dignity and the grace that the office of the Speaker deserves and that the Parliament deserves," Rann said in an *ABC Online* report.

Holding Redlich media and communications partner Nicholas Pullen told *Lawyers Weekly* that although the Bill was withdrawn after hours of derision from every source except Rann's own government,

this was a real threat to the tradition of free speech and open government in this country, and could have set a "dangerous precedent".

Pullen referred to England's Bill of Rights, and Article 9, which provided that "freedom of speech, and debates or proceedings of Parliament ought not be
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High Court consultations queried

THE ACTING shadow federal Attorney-General has condemned the system of making High Court appointments, arguing the process "is almost completely inside the head of the Attorney-General".

Labor announced last week it was concerned by reports that the Howard Government is holding secret interviews of candidates for the High Court. Senator Joe Ludwig, who is also acting shadow Attorney-General, said in an opinion sent to *Lawyers Weekly* that this creates a perception that the Government is assessing candidates' political

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Australian lawyers hit the NY Bar



By Kellie Harpley

WITH A PASS rate of 90 per cent from over 100 enrolments per sitting, the New York and California Bar Review Program has proved to be a successful pathway for Australian lawyers who want to sit the respective Bar exams.

The programs are designed to allow Australian lawyers to prepare for the exams in Australia, so they can then pursue work in US jurisdictions or simply increase their knowledge of the American legal system. Once the exams are completed, the Bar Review helps participants find interviews and positions with American firms through its affiliated business, Attorney Placements International, and has placed lawyers with international firms Skadden Arps, Sullivan & Cromwell and high profile NY law firm Moses & Singer.

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