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ARTICLES

Know Your Pseudolaw Adherent: Introduction to the Symposium – *Harry Hobbs, Stephen Young and Joe McIntyre*

This symposium presents first-hand reflections from nine Australian and New Zealand judicial officers confronting the rise of pseudolaw. These self-represented litigants challenge court authority using sovereign citizen rhetoric, legal fictions, and disruptive tactics. In the introduction to this symposium, Hobbs, Young and McIntyre propose a typology of adherent types – naïve litigants, mercenaries, true believers, and gurus – illustrated through real case examples. They argue that the nine reflections demonstrate that judicial responses should be tailored to the adherent type, balancing fairness with control. In an era of misinformation and eroding public trust, the symposium underscores the need for accessible, reasoned, and clearly communicated judgments. 157

Sovereign Citizens in New Zealand: Irritant or Symptom? – *Hon Justice Matthew SR Palmer*

Drawing on case law and personal reflections, Justice Palmer of the Court of Appeal of New Zealand identifies patterns in litigant behaviour, including distorted legal reasoning and conspiratorial beliefs, and links these to broader social confusion and distrust. While courts often dismiss these arguments swiftly, Justice Palmer argues for a dual strategy: uphold legal reasoning and enhance public trust through clear, plain-language judgments. In a world of misinformation, judicial legitimacy depends not only on legal correctness but on accessibility and effective communication. 164

Reflections from a Female Magistrate – *Anonymous*

In this reflection, an anonymous female Magistrate reflects on the growing challenge of managing pseudolaw litigants – individuals who reject legal authority and disrupt proceedings with conspiracy-driven beliefs. As the author demonstrates, these cases are often exacerbated by gendered hostility toward female judicial officers. The author identifies two groups of pseudolaw adherents – misguided individuals and belligerent disruptors – and offers practical strategies, including limiting audience influence, empowering registry staff, and allocating more time for hearings. Without increased resources and systemic change, the Magistrates’ Court will continue to face mounting delays, intimidation, and procedural strain from this expanding and confrontational movement. 168

Reflections on Pseudolaw and the Local Court – *David Heilpern*

Drawing on 22 years as a NSW Magistrate, Professor Heilpern’s reflection highlights the immense pressures placed on the Local Court by the disruptive burden of pseudolaw adherents. These self-represented litigants deploy incoherent, debunked arguments, causing delays, overwhelming resources, and undermining court authority. Their tactics – voluminous filings, jurisdictional challenges, and scripted rhetoric – exacerbate already

strained systems. This movement persists, testing judicial patience and threatening the integrity of an overstretched legal system, but there are rare successes, such as Robert Sudy’s transformation into a vocal anti-pseudolaw advocate. 173

Encounters with Pseudolaw – Glen Cash

In this article, Judge Cash of the District Court of Queensland reflects on managing pseudolaw in the courtroom, drawing on first-hand encounters with self-represented litigants advancing sovereign citizen-style arguments. Beginning with early challenges in *R v Sweet* and later in *NNRM v Commissioner of Police (Qld)*, Judge Cash traces a learning curve from initial frustration to strategic patience and procedural control. Pseudolaw adherents rely on irrelevant or misunderstood sources and waste court time, but can be managed through calm engagement, limits on submissions, and familiarity with pseudolegal rhetoric. 176

Sovereign Citizen Protestors in Court: A Perspective from the Australian Capital Territory – Gregor Urbas

In this reflection, Special Magistrate Urbas examines the courtroom strategies and legal outcomes of self-identified “sovereign citizens” in the Australian Capital Territory. Drawing on recent cases, including Freedom Embassy protestors charged with unauthorised camping and resisting arrest, Urbas SM argues that Australia’s existing criminal law and procedure can adequately address such unconventional litigants. Despite their reliance on “pseudolaw” and self-representation, fair judicial outcomes are possible. 179

Two Judicial Strategies for Responding to Pseudolaw in the Courtroom – Grant T Riethmuller AM

In this reflection, the Hon Justice Riethmuller of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia explores how courts can effectively respond to pseudolegal arguments, particularly those arising from sovereign citizen ideologies. Such litigants reject judicial authority through performative, incoherent submissions, aiming to provoke rather than persuade. Justice Riethmuller offers two practical tips: first, avoid engaging in demands to prove jurisdiction, which destabilises proceedings; second, translate pseudolegal submissions into standard legal issues without validating its framework. Drawing from recent cases, Justice Riethmuller illustrates how “reframing” enables courts to maintain procedural fairness and legal integrity. 182

The Rise of Self-represented Litigants and Pseudolaw in South Australia – The Hon Justice Mark Livesey

In this reflection, the Hon Justice Livesey notes that the Court of Appeal is increasingly burdened by self-represented litigants, many of whom present pseudolegal arguments influenced by “sovereign citizen” ideologies. These cases generally lack merit, overwhelm court resources, and complicate judicial proceedings. To manage this class of litigant, President Livesey discusses several strategies implemented by the Court of Appeal, including early identification, administrative rejection of non-compliant filings, summary dismissal powers, and guidance documents for unrepresented parties. 186

Reflections on Pseudolaw – Associate Justice Michael Daly

Drawing on practical experience from the Magistrates Court, Associate Justice Daly of the Supreme Court of Tasmania emphasises the importance of procedural fairness, calm communication, and adaptability. Key tactics include identifying the litigant, setting respectful boundaries, and avoiding engagement with pseudolegal rhetoric while ensuring a fair hearing. Examples show how de-escalation and pragmatic flexibility can

keep proceedings on track. Ultimately, maintaining judicial control, fairness, and clear procedural direction are essential to resolving such cases efficiently, without validating incoherent arguments or compromising the authority and integrity of the court. 192

The Increasing Intersection of Pseudolaw and Generative AI – *Chris Bleby*

In this reflection, the Hon Justice Bleby examines the emerging intersection between pseudolaw and generative AI in appellate litigation. Through recent cases, Bleby JA highlights how self-represented litigants increasingly invoke AI as authoritative, submit hallucinated case law, or use AI tools as surrogate legal counsel. While not all AI use signals pseudolegal reasoning, these patterns reveal concerning trends in misinformation, procedural misuse, and the erosion of substantive legal argument. His Honour underscores the need for courts to remain vigilant, balancing fairness with firm boundaries against technologically amplified pseudolaw. 195

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