

Pseudolaw and sovereign citizens

An overview and key issues

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Key points

- The “sovereign citizen” emerged in the United States in the early 1990s. Although this language is prominent in media reporting in Australia, there is ongoing debate about its relevance and accuracy. Increasingly the language of “pseudolaw adherent” is preferred because it is analytically clearer, focusing attention on the shared beliefs and tactics of adherents rather than a label. It also reduces false negatives because many people who use these arguments may deny that they are sovereign citizens.
- Pseudolaw adherents are individuals who believe ordinary laws do not apply to them. Built on a conspiratorial world view, adherents deploy their own interpretation of law to refuse to register their vehicles, obtain drivers licences, pay council rates, or recognise the authority of courts.
- The impact of pseudolaw adherents is broad and diffuse. Despite not recognising the authority of courts or government, they frequently file voluminous documents with state actors, waste resources, increase costs on themselves and others, and erode confidence in the administration of justice and governance.
- The risk of violence cannot be dismissed. While most adherents are not violent, the narrative that underlies the ideology holds that governments are illegitimate, seeking to enslave citizens. This ideology has led individuals into confrontation and violence.
- The scale of the challenge is unclear. There is little available data on the number of pseudolaw adherents or their interactions with state authorities in New South Wales or Australia. Nevertheless, the evidence that does exist suggests that the number of pseudolaw adherents grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and numbers remain at an elevated level as compared to the situation pre-pandemic.
- The ideology developed in the United States, but its global spread has seen it latch onto other people and communities concerned about government. In Australia, we have seen sovereign citizen pseudolaw expressed by Indigenous peoples in native title proceedings, presented to mothers-to-be researching birthing options in inner west Sydney, and spread by people worried about COVID-19 era lockdowns and vaccine mandates.
- Pseudolaw is a commercial enterprise. Promoters and “gurus” make money selling false hope. It spreads because gurus adapt their scripts to different audiences.
- No court in the world has accepted a pseudolaw argument. However, repeated failure in court does not mean that pseudolaw offers nothing of value to those who adopt it. Pseudolaw can empower people who feel alienated from society and intimidated by legal processes.
- Most people turn to pseudolaw when they are facing a problem (such as a potential loss of licence, or council rates notice they cannot pay) and need a solution. But it grows because adherents do not trust that our political and legal institutions will work for them. Rebuilding social and institutional trust is key to combatting the ideology.

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a surge in the number of people asserting that Australian laws do not apply to them. Rather than anarchists or rebels, however, many of these people saw themselves as upholding the true version of the law. Drawing on strange interpretations of real legal sources and using legal or legal sounding language, they argued that their version of the Common Law overrode mask mandates, that the Magna Carta is directly enforceable in New South Wales, and that one's 'legal person' is distinct from the 'living man'. These arguments are characterised as 'pseudolaw'. While a diverse assortment of individuals and communities espouse pseudolegal beliefs, the most prominent adherents are popularly known as 'sovereign citizens' (though there is debate on the accuracy of this term in Australia).

Pseudolaw is damaging. It can transform routine and relatively simple legal issues like the failure to register a vehicle into much more complex and harmful ones. It hurts believers, their families and friends, and the legal system at large. Litigants waste time and money and forego the opportunity to obtain capable legal representation. Court staff and administrative agencies are swamped by voluminous meritless filings that stretch resources thin, slowing down routine processes for everyone else and imposing indirect costs on the entire community. It also creates opportunities for scammers, who make money selling pseudolegal scripts to the naïve and desperate. Beyond these prosaic problems, pseudolaw also carries a risk of physical harm. As we have unfortunately seen in recent years, including in NSW, sovereign citizens and pseudolaw adherents are politically motivated and, occasionally, violent. This ranges from harassment of local government officials right through to intimidation, attempted child kidnapping and even murder.

It is worth being clear. Pseudolegal arguments do not work. No court in any country has ever accepted such a claim. Nevertheless, the phenomenon does not appear to have dissipated in the years following the global health emergency.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an explainer about pseudolaw and sovereign citizens. It presents a definition and outline of pseudolaw, and an overview of the sovereign citizen "movement" as relevant to NSW and Australia. It explores the narrative that underlies sovereign citizen ideology and the forms of argument and behaviour that is expressed. As it explains, the narrative is flexible, capable of drawing in very differently situated individuals and communities, well beyond the extremist social groups in which the ideology first percolated.

The paper further explores why the phenomenon seems to have grown so significantly if it routinely and exclusively fails in court. It also provides an overview of the diverse impact pseudolaw adherents and sovereign citizens have on our political and legal institutions. While the scale of the problem is difficult to precisely identify, as there is no clear data on the numbers of adherents, the impact is both broad and diffuse. The paper concludes by offering several reflections on ways to respond to the growth of pseudolaw and legal conspiracies. Ultimately, it aims to inform the parliamentary community about this bewildering but dangerous phenomenon.

2. What is pseudolaw?

Legal advocacy requires creativity. When writing submissions or developing an argument in a challenging case, lawyers may need to push the law forward, expanding or extending a principle beyond its orthodox or conventional understanding. This is a natural feature of our legal system which adapts and evolves through judicial decision-making.

To the legally untrained, pseudolaw might look a little bit like creative advocacy. Adherents draw on real legal instruments, like constitutions, cases, and statutes, and present them in a way that seems to mirror ordinary legal argument. There are key differences, however. At least three elements comprise the fundamental features of pseudolaw.¹

First, although adherents draw on real legal instruments, they read those instruments in perverse ways that invariably allow them to avoid all legal obligations. Pseudolaw borrows the form and language of legal reasoning but produces entirely spurious conclusions.² It is often simplest to identify the difference between pseudolaw and novel but incorrect assertions of the law by exploring a few examples.

- In *Ryan v The Council of the City of Sydney*,³ a litigant appealed a decision of the NSW Local Court in relation to unpaid council rates. Relying on a misconstrued reading of the Australian Constitution, he argued that the *Local Court Act 2007* (NSW) and *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) were invalid.
- In *Arnold v State Bank of South Australia*,⁴ an adherent declared that the *Magna Carta* (a 1215 peace treaty issued by King John I of England) guarantees their rights to their matrimonial home and thus absolves them of the legal obligation to pay their mortgage.
- In *Walter v Mackay Regional Council*,⁵ a litigant argued that because the Australian Constitution provides the Governor-General shall be paid in pounds, all laws passed since the introduction of decimal currency are invalid.

In these three examples, litigants have cited real sources, but their conclusions make little sense: why, for instance, would a bank provide finance if there was no requirement to repay? The Courts declared the arguments were legally untenable.

The second key element relates to the narrative that motivates and underlies the reasoning behind pseudolegal arguments. Pseudolaw is not just an inscrutable assortment of mistaken and misapplied rules. Although adherents might resemble magpies,⁶ gathering shiny snippets from a diverse range of cases, statutes and legal dictionaries with seemingly no regard to precedent or jurisdiction, there is an

¹ The material in this section is drawn from H Hobbs et al, *The Internationalisation of Pseudolaw: The Growth of Sovereign Citizen Arguments in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, *University of New South Wales Law Journal*, 2024, 47(1): 309-342, p 313-315.

² See DJ Netolitzky, *Lawyers and Court Representation of Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument [OPCA] Litigants in Canada*, *UBC Law Review*, 2018, 51(2): 419-488, p 420.

³ [2018] NSWSC 265.

⁴ (1992) 38 FCR 484.

⁵ [2015] FCCA 351.

⁶ C McRoberts, *Tinfoil Hats and Powdered Wigs: Thoughts on Pseudolaw*, *Washburn Law Review*, 2019 58(3): 637-672, p 652.

internal coherence to the framework and argument they present. It might be incomprehensible to those of us on the outside, but pseudolaw is not merely “bad” or “incorrect” law. Rather, it is a ‘separate legal universe’ with its own confounding legal theories.⁷ This aspect is critical to appreciate. It holds the key to understanding the arguments made by pseudolaw adherents, as well as where the phenomenon came from and why it has spread across the globe.

The third key aspect is related. Those who cast themselves as subjects of pseudolaw’s alternative legal universe appear to genuinely believe that their doctrines represent the *true* position of the law. The level of internalised belief is significant. Courts routinely dismiss pseudolegal claims as frivolous, declaring the arguments ‘obvious nonsense’,⁸ legal ‘gibberish’,⁹ or ‘gobbledygook’.¹⁰ No court anywhere in the world has ever accepted a pseudolegal argument. But this fact does not stop their reappearance. As Peter Quinlan, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Western Australia, has recognised:

...in something of a paradox, the sovereign citizen almost always has a fervent belief in the importance of the ‘rule of law’ as they see it. Indeed, the sovereign citizen is deeply committed to the rule of law. It is simply that the ‘law’ for them happens to be the idiosyncratic subjective opinions that they hold...¹¹

Pseudolaw operates as a “get out of jail free” card for the adherent, immunising them from the obligation to follow the laws of the land. Importantly, however, because adherents believe their interpretation of the law is correct, they perceive themselves as upholding the law rather than as criminals or rebels. Taxes can be avoided, fines negated, and the need for licences eliminated, all without breaking the law. To the adherent, it is state law that has been corrupted. This perspective poses unique challenges for our political and legal institutions.

⁷ SP Koniak, When Law Risks Madness, *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, 1996, 8(1): 65-138 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1535685X.1996.11015779>> p 87-9, 106; C McRoberts, Tinfoil Hats and Powdered Wigs: Thoughts on Pseudolaw, *Washburn Law Review*, 2019 58(3): 637-672, p 643; DJ Netolitzky, A Rebellion of Furious Paper: Pseudolaw as a Revolutionary System (Conference Paper, Sovereign Citizens in Canada Symposium, Centre d’expertise et de formation sur les intégrismes religieux et la radicalisation, 3 May 2018) 1 <<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3177484>>; DJ Netolitzky, After the Hammer: Six Years of Meads v Meads, *Alberta Law Review*, 2019, 56(4): 1167-1208 <<https://doi.org/10.29173/alr2548>> p 1184.

⁸ *Bradley v The Crown* [2020] QCA 252, [1] (Sofronoff P).

⁹ *Meads v Meads* [2012] ABQB 571, [40] (Rooke ACJ).

¹⁰ *Deputy Commissioner of Taxation v Casley* [2017] WASC 161, [15] (Le Miere J).

¹¹ Chief Justice Peter Quinlan, The Rule of Law in a Social Media Age (Speech, Sir Francis Burt Oration 2022, 3 November 2022) <https://www.supremecourt.wa.gov.au/_files/Speeches/2022/TheRuleofLawinaSocialMediaAgeSirFrancisBurtOration2022.pdf> p 19.

3. Where did pseudolaw come from?

There is a long history of fringe pseudolegal ideas present in Australia. In the 1953 case of *Saffron v Delaney*, for instance, hotelier Abe Saffron argued that a judge had been appointed under the wrong seal and therefore his commission was invalid.¹² Similarly, in the 1970s, Western Australian wheat farmer Leonard Casely purported to secede from Australia and establish his own principality on the basis of a misconceived reading of the Magna Carta and the 1941 Atlantic Charter (issued by the UK and US before the US entered World War II).¹³ Prince Leonard Casley (as he styled himself) sparked something of a micronations boom in Australia, with many other self-declared nations popping up in the following years.¹⁴ Neither argument succeeded. Saffron lost his case, and the Casley family was eventually forced to sell their farm to pay a large tax bill to the Australian Taxation Office.¹⁵

Notwithstanding the existence of an earlier Australian pseudolaw, the contemporary form of pseudolaw that now predominates has been substantially influenced by the American “sovereign citizen”.

3.1 Sovereign citizens

Sovereign citizens first emerged in the United States in the early 1990s. While often described as constituting a “movement”, this language is inaccurate. Decentralised and amorphous, there is no single leader, central doctrine or consolidated collection of documents.¹⁶ Rather, sovereign citizens are a loosely affiliated group of individuals connected by a shared antagonism towards government, and a convoluted and conspiratorial interpretation of the law.¹⁷ Members are identifiable by a shared set of beliefs surrounding the capacity to lawfully avoid the operation of state law by using certain language and phrases (such as “I do not consent”, “I am a living man”, or “I am in the private”). These, and similar, arguments are a form of pseudolaw.

Contemporary sovereign citizens and pseudolaw adherents are demographically diverse. Today, adherents typically encounter the ideology online and through their social media feeds. The message is adapted to fit the medium. On Instagram it might be dressed in conversations about wellness and spirituality, on TikTok it could come in the form of income tax hacks, while on YouTube and Rumble it might appear as stolid presentations from people “just asking questions”. The ideology has also gone global. Although initially arising in the United States, its presence is now widespread, with scholars having identified sovereign citizen arguments in at least 32 countries across the English and non-

¹² (1953) 53 SR (NSW) 80.

¹³ See generally H Hobbs and G Williams, *Micronations and the search for sovereignty*, Cambridge University Press, 2022.

¹⁴ H Hobbs and G Williams, *How to rule your own country*, NewSouth, 2022.

¹⁵ H Hobbs and G Williams, The demise of the “second largest country in Australia”: micronations and Australian exceptionalism, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 2021, 56(2): 206-223
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2021.1935450>>.

¹⁶ C Kalinowski IV, A Legal Response to the Sovereign Citizen Movement, *Montana Law Review*, 2019, 80(2): 153-210
<<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3238417>> p 154.

¹⁷ H Hobbs et al, The Internationalisation of Pseudolaw: The Growth of Sovereign Citizen Arguments in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, *University of New South Wales Law Journal*, 2024, 47(1): 309-342.

English speaking world.¹⁸ Once again, the message is adapted to fit the political, social and legal context of its audience.

Underneath this diversity of expression and articulation lies a central narrative. That narrative developed out of the crucible of far-right, religious extremist, antisemitic and anti-government social movements that operated across the United States during the 20th century. Contemporary exponents may not be aware of this history or share the views of these earlier organisations, but the historical origins of the movement are crucial to understanding sovereign citizen beliefs, tactics, and the reasons behind its global spread.

3.2 The development of sovereign citizen ideology

Sovereign citizens represent the intersection of several overlapping political and religious extremist associations that emerged in the United States across the 20th century.¹⁹ The most significant antecedent organisation is the Posse Comitatus. The Posse Comitatus was a far right, white supremacist, fundamentalist Christian militia group that arose in the late 1960s. Influenced by the extremist Christian Identity religious sect, the Posse combined antisemitic religious theology with radical legal interpretation.²⁰ Translated literally as, ‘the power of the county’, the Posse believed that local government was the only legitimate unit of government. Every level of government above it – from state legislatures, federal agencies, and Congress, from district courts to the supreme court itself – was illegitimate.

The Posse enjoyed considerable support among farmers facing bankruptcy and foreclosure in the American Midwest in the 1970s and 1980s. However, it gradually broke down as its leaders died or were imprisoned. Nonetheless, as historians have observed, the Posse was much more successful as an “ideology”, durable even as its formal structures crumbled.²¹ Two successor groups emerged as the Posse’s formal influence waned.

The first became known as the Common Law movement. Consistent with their rejection of state authority, members of this sprawling movement purported to establish their own law schools and courts.²² Here they claimed to teach students about the true “Common Law” or “God’s Law” and apply those principles to resolve disputes. Composed of citizen juries, hand-drawn seals, and rulings, these courts looked official. They were not. Best understood as ‘instruments of harassment’,²³ these sham

¹⁸ CM Sarteschi, *American State Nationals: The Next Iteration of the Sovereign Citizen Movement* in H Hobbs et al (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025, p 227; M Pitcavage, ‘Foreword’ in H Hobbs et al (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025, p x. This includes Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, England, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Latvia, Lithuania, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Ireland, Russia, Scotland, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Wales.

¹⁹ S Young et al, *The Rise of Sovereign Citizen Pseudolaw in the United States of America*, in H Hobbs et al (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025, p. 95.

²⁰ M Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*, University of North Carolina Press, 1997, p. 69.

²¹ M Pitcavage, *Common Law and Uncommon Courts: An Overview of the Common Law Court Movement*, *Militia Watchdog*, 25 July 1997, p. 5.

²² SP Koniak, *When Law Risks Madness*, *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, 1996, 8(1): 65-138
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/1535685X.1996.11015779>>.

²³ FX Sullivan, *The “Usurping Octopus of Jurisdictional/Authority”: The Legal Theories of the Sovereign Citizen Movement*, *Wisconsin Law Review*, 1999 4: 785-823, p. 792.

courts were used to intimidate public officials for performing their duties by issuing fake indictments and convicting state actors (in absentia).

The second group that emerged from the ashes of the Posse Comitatus was less interested in court filings. In 1993, an attempt to execute a search warrant on a Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, led to an armed shootout (that killed 10) and an 8-week siege. When the FBI sought to end the siege, fires broke out through the compound, leading to the deaths of a further 76 people.²⁴ Convinced that this event proved the federal government was preparing to wage war on its citizens, far-right Patriot militias popped up across the country. To the members of these militias, federal government efforts to regulate gun ownership, collect taxation and even introduce environmental regulation was evidence that government intended to interfere with constitutional liberties and assert tyrannical rule.

The final overlapping group – tax protestors – is less of a direct ideological heir than a related political and legal movement. While there is a long history of tax protestors in the United States, the modern tax protestor arose in the mid-to-late 20th century, with courtrooms across the country confronting scores of frivolous claims designed to stymie and frustrate effective authority. As one court noted in 1977, the goal of these groups ‘is to do away with federal income taxation by making the burden so heavy on the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] and the federal courts that the government will have to yield’.²⁵ Sovereign citizens and pseudolaw adherents have adopted and adapted the arguments of tax protestors in frequent quixotic challenges to the constitutionality of state authority designed to frustrate and exhaust state actors.

3.3 Sovereign citizens or pseudolaw adherents?

In Australia, “sovereign citizen” is often used as an ‘umbrella term’.²⁶ The language is intended to encompass the broad and heterogenous group of people ‘united by a core hostility to government and the belief that laws do not apply to them without their consent or contractual agreement’.²⁷ However, given the development of sovereign citizen ideology and the emergence of an identifiable group is very clearly connected to the United States, there is ongoing debate about the appropriateness of this terminology in Australia.

Reflecting this debate, the label of “pseudolaw adherent” is increasingly common. One advantage of this approach is that it avoids a narrow definitional exercise. Instead of focusing on terminology, assessing whether individual X is *really* a sovereign citizen or something else, it draws attention to the underlying conspiratorial narrative that connects individuals who make these and similar arguments, and the set of beliefs and tactics that they share. It also connects with more recent scholarship on violent extremism. Described as the ‘age of incoherence’, scholars have identified a phenomenon of

²⁴ M Pitcavage, *Camouflage and Conspiracy: The Militia movement from Ruby Ridge to Y2K*, *American Behavioural Scientist*, 2001, 44(6): 957-981 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640121956610>> p. 961; L Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009.

²⁵ *Ex parte Tammen*, 438 F Supp 349, 356 (ND Tex, 1977).

²⁶ M McMahon, *Asserting Sovereignty: An Empirical Analysis of Sovereign Citizen Litigation in Australian Courts* in H Hobbs et al, (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025, p. 178.

²⁷ M McMahon, *Asserting Sovereignty: An Empirical Analysis of Sovereign Citizen Litigation in Australian Courts* in H Hobbs et al, (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025, p. 178.

'salad bar' extremism,²⁸ where individuals combine elements from seemingly contradictory fringe conspiracy theories to develop their own idiosyncratic and eclectic belief structure. "Pseudolaw adherent" is sufficiently flexible to cover all manner of individuals who use legal sounding but baseless arguments to claim they are not subject to state laws on the basis of a shared underlying conspiratorial narrative.

It also reflects an emergent trend within these communities. Increasingly, individuals espousing these beliefs disclaim identification as a "sovereign citizen". In *NNRM v Commissioner of Police*, for instance, the appellant rejected this comparison, denied being a sovereign citizen and declared it 'a defamatory slur'. As Judge Cash noted, 'Adherents have come to recognise that the term "sovereign citizen" carries negative connotations, and now go to some length to attempt to disassociate themselves from the term, despite repeating the same tired and discredited ideas long associated with so-called "sovereign citizens"'.²⁹ Each individual may have their own reasons for rejecting the label. At least for some, the terminology itself is an oxymoron. According to their own theories, "citizen" means "slave". One can be either a sovereign or a citizen, but not both.

²⁸ A Meleagrou-Hitchens and M Ayad, [The Age of Incoherence? Understanding Mixed and Unclear Ideology Extremism](#), George Washington University Program on Extremism, June 2023.

²⁹ *NNRM v Commissioner of Police* [2024] QDC 64, para 35. See further P Johnson, Sovereign Citizens: Ideology, Impacts and Judicial Responses, *Judicial Quarterly Review*, 2(4), 2025, p 95, 114-115.

4. What do pseudolaw adherents believe?

Consistent with its origins in extremist political and religious social movements, sovereign citizen pseudolaw is built on a conspiratorial world view. Adherents believe that the state has been taken over by malevolent forces. In their eyes, the law was once good and just and protected our individual liberties and freedoms. At some point, however, a shadowy cabal of corporate interests usurped control and now uses law to enslave and punish individuals and take away our rights and freedoms.

Adherents offer different moments of rupture:

- In *Helljay Investments v Deputy Commissioner of Taxation*,³⁰ the applicant argued that laws relating to income tax were of no effect because Australia suffered a ‘break in sovereignty’ when the government signed the Treaty of Versailles which ended the First World War.
- In *Joose v Australian Securities and Investment Commission*,³¹ the moment of rupture occurred in 1973, when the *Royal Title and Styles Act* was passed, which defined the formal title of the sovereign as Queen of Australia (not England).
- In *Sharples v Arnison*,³² the passage of the Australia Acts in 1986 (which formally severed the last constitutional links to the United Kingdom) was identified as marking the moment Australian sovereignty was usurped.

Australian courts have consistently dismissed these arguments as meritless. Nevertheless, this narrative is key to understanding sovereign citizen pseudolaw and its expression in NSW and Australia today. Pseudolaw is not just a set of strange views and arguments, but a conspiratorial worldview that sees malevolent forces wielding law as a mechanism to oppress ordinary people.

Adherents believe they do not need to follow the corrupted and wicked laws issued by the state. Rather, they claim loyalty to the true law that continues to protect individual rights and freedoms (variously described as the “Common Law”, “God’s Law” or “Natural Law”) and which still exists, though it is hidden. They believe it is possible to reclaim our rights and freedoms and restore the true law by engaging in certain legal tactics and manoeuvres. Several of the more common arguments and tactics are set out below.

4.1 The strawman argument

The strawman argument is one of the more intriguing pseudolaw theories.³³ The argument seeks to distinguish between real, flesh and blood, natural persons, and artificial or legal persons. Adherents believe that every person is born as an individual sovereign, with natural and inalienable rights. To assert authority over the natural, flesh and blood man, governments must make them subjects. This

³⁰ (1999) 166 ALR 302.

³¹ (1998) 159 ALR 260.

³² [2001] QCA 518.

³³ J McIntyre et al, The Strawmen Trap: Non-Appearance and the Pitfalls of Pseudolaw, *Australian Law Journal*, 2025 99(4): 319-335.

is done through the issuing of a birth certificate. When the state issues a birth certificate they create a duplicate, “artificial” person over whom the government has jurisdiction. It is this “strawman” that is subject to laws passed by Parliament and judgments handed down by courts. The natural, living man or woman, remains free from government control.

The strawman theory is a classic pseudolegal argument as it involves reading real legal principles and real legal documents in perverse ways. The theory draws, in part, on the concept of legal personality, which distinguishes between corporations and their owners, directors and agents. This foundational legal principle facilitates investment by protecting risk, but it can also allow agents to shield themselves from liability. Pseudolaw adherents distort this legal principle when seeking to escape legal accountability. The practice also draws on legal instruments. Adherents rely upon the fact that birth certificates spell out a baby’s name in all capitals.³⁴ In their view, the all capitals name represents the artificial legal person.

The theory leads to several attractive propositions for the believer. As Le Miere J explained in *Casley v Deputy Commissioner of Taxation*:

The idea is that an individual’s debts, liabilities, taxes and legal responsibilities belong to the straw man rather than the physical individual who incurred those obligations, conveniently allowing one to escape their debts and responsibilities.³⁵

To obtain this benefit, however, adherents must sever their connection to their strawman. Various legal rituals are made to perfect severance. If an adherent is appearing in Court, they may try to get the judicial officer to acknowledge that they are appearing as a ‘flesh and blood man’ or ‘individual person’, or as the ‘executor’ of the artificial strawman, in the belief that this will be effective evidence of the state recognising their assertion of natural sovereignty. In *Van den Hoorn v Ellis*,³⁶ for example, the appellant sought to distinguish between his natural and artificial personalities in appealing against a conviction and sentence for driving without a valid license, registration, or insurance. He explained that he was ‘Sovereign Freeman JOHAN’ appearing as an agent on behalf of and as the ‘owner of the created fictions known as JOHAN HENDRICK VAN DEN HOORN and JOHN HENRY VAN DEN HOORN, being created fictions fraudulently owned and controlled by legal fictions’.

In routine correspondence with government, courts and other state actors, they may also write their name in strange and non-standard ways. Doing so is supposed to represent that their natural self is distinguishable from their artificial personality. This may include capitalisation, inappropriate punctuation, and obscure or obsolete legal, quasi-legal or Latin terminology. In *R v Sweet*,³⁷ for instance, the applicant attempted to distinguish between the real ‘Kym-Anthony:’ and the artificial KYM ANTHONY SWEET.

The strawman argument has not succeeded in any court.

³⁴ *Kelly v Fiander* [2023] WASC 187 [12].

³⁵ *Deputy Commissioner of Taxation v Casley* [2017] WASC 161 [15] (Le Miere J).

³⁶ [2010] QDC 451 (22 November 2010).

³⁷ [2021] QDC 216.

4.2 The consent argument

The strawman argument revolves around the idea that the law does not apply to the claimant. A related argument centres directly on the notion of consent. In a peculiar, individualised account of the social contract, pseudolaw adherents believe that governments have no inherent authority over individuals unless one agrees to be subject to their authority. Governments are apparently aware of this, and so attempt to “trap” people into invisible contracts through birth certificates, drivers’ licences, dog registrations, etc. In essence, any interaction with a state actor constitutes an invisible contract. By stating “I do not consent” and destroying any state identity documents, pseudolaw adherents believe that they can make themselves immune from state law.

This argument is commonly seen during traffic stops and in driving related offences. By choosing not to register a vehicle or obtain a driver’s licence, a pseudolaw adherent is refusing to enter a contract with (to their eyes) an illegitimate government. One example comes from *Christie v Commissioner of Police*.³⁸ In this case, the applicant sought an extension of time to file a notice of appeal against a conviction for a speeding offence. He argued that he was not bound by the laws of Queensland because he is ‘a human being’ merely ‘occupying or inhabiting an area of land known as Queensland’ and as a human being ‘has no contract or agreement with representatives or agents or principal or anyone acting on behalf of the Queensland Police Service’.³⁹ A similar argument was present in *Best v Police (SA)*.⁴⁰ In this case the appellant submitted that he was not under an obligation to comply with the *Road Traffic Act 1961 (SA)* because he had not consented to the legislation. Neither argument succeeded.

4.3 The defective state authority argument

Perhaps the most common argument that is raised is that existing state law does not apply because it is defective in some way. Once again, this argument draws on the underlying narrative that the good law has been superseded by wicked and tyrannical laws. Adherents seek to demonstrate that the wicked law is of no legal effect because the good law still applies.

This paper has already noted several examples of this argument. Litigants have argued that the Magna Carta takes precedence over the Australian Constitution, and that a failure to pay the Governor-General in pounds means all legislation after the introduction of decimal currency is invalid. There are many other creative (though doomed) arguments. In *Planck & Planck*,⁴¹ a self-represented litigant filed an application for a stay of proceedings in his family law matter. He argued that royal assent to family law legislation and appointments by the sovereign were invalidly conducted because the sovereign had used the wrong seal and signet. In a series of cases run around the millennium,⁴² another adherent submitted that the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 (Cth)* was of no effect because the Governor-General who had provided royal assent was invalidly commissioned.

³⁸ [2014] QDC 70.

³⁹ *Christie v Commissioner of Police* [2014] QDC 70.

⁴⁰ [2015] SASC 190.

⁴¹ [2024] FedCFamC1F 341.

⁴² See for e.g., *Deputy Commissioner of Taxation v Levick* (1999) 168 ALR 783; *McKewins Hairdressing and Beauty Supplies v Deputy Commissioner of Taxation* (2000) 203 CLR 662.

These and other unorthodox legal claims have a superficial cogency but betray a misunderstanding of law and legal instruments.

4.4 Private prosecutions

Prior to the development of the office of the public prosecutor and the state assuming responsibility for and control over criminal prosecution, the common law allowed aggrieved individuals to undertake private prosecutions. While some organisations, like the RSPCA may still conduct private prosecutions, the vast majority of prosecutions today are led by the police and the Department of Public Prosecutions. Nevertheless, private prosecutions are still permitted, if rare. Under the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* (NSW) an individual may commence proceedings in certain circumstances.⁴³

The Common Law movement, discussed above briefly, popularised the use of court filings as a means to intimidate state actors. Pseudolaw adherents in Australia continue this tradition, sometimes using private prosecutions to harass elected representatives. In a recent South Australian example, a Port Augusta resident angry about a series of planning decisions, attempted to launch private prosecutions against 11 parties, including the Port Augusta mayor and chief executive, charging them with 372 offences.⁴⁴ The South Australian Magistrates Court declared the proceedings an abuse of process.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, adherents sought to initiate private prosecutions against public health authorities and elected members of government. Reports indicate that Dezi Freeman, the alleged murderer of two police officers in August 2025, was involved in a failed private prosecution of Premier Daniel Andrews.⁴⁵ These cases invariably fail. However, they illustrate how pseudolaw adherents may use legitimate legal processes to intimidate, threaten and harass state actors.

A related approach sees pseudolaw adherents purport to establish their own courts and convict public officials (and ordinary people) of alleged offences.⁴⁶ In 2025, a group of around 50 people gathered at Old Parliament House to 'indict' 266 public officials for 'treason, fraud, democide and other crimes against humanity'.⁴⁷ In another instance, from 2022, a group calling themselves the Sovereign Peoples Assembly of Western Australia, convicted Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and the premiers and chief health officers of each state and territory, for genocide, fraud, human trafficking and violation of the Nuremberg Code and sentenced them to a minimum of 120 years' imprisonment.⁴⁸ These two groups were motivated by the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Though they have no way to enforce their "judgment", other groups target ordinary people with no security. Nmdaka Dalai Australis, a pseudolegal organisation apparently based in Queensland

⁴³ *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* (NSW) ss 14, 49-54.

⁴⁴ *Robertson v Corporation of the City of Port Augusta* [2025] SAMC 79 (3 June 2025). See further, A Ganesan, [Court throws out man's attempt to charge government officials using archaic practice](#), ABC, 10 October 2025 (accessed 26 January 2026).

⁴⁵ B Butler and D Tran, [Accused Porepukah shooter and 'sovereign citizen' Dezi Freeman once called police 'terrorist thugs'](#), ABC News, 26 August 2025 (accessed 26 January 2026); Martin McKenzie-Murray, [The sovereign citizen "workshops" clogging up Australian courts](#), *The Saturday Paper*, 7 February 2026 (accessed 8 February 2026).

⁴⁶ As noted above, the Common Law movement popularised the notion of creating "Common Law" courts to harass and intimidate state actors.

⁴⁷ SB Canales, [Sovereign citizens hold event to "indict" Australian MPs in former Parliament House](#), *Guardian Australia*, 12 February 2025 (accessed 4 February 2026).

⁴⁸ Sovereign Peoples Assembly of Western Australia Common Law Court, [In the matter of Claim Number 28689025](#), 26 November 2022.

but with activity in NSW, has commissioned fake sheriffs to harass and intimidate parents and children involved in custody disputes.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ K Nguyen and M Workman, [A sovereign citizen group is using a fake court to justify child kidnapping and extortion](#), ABC News, 17 July 2024 (accessed 26 January 2026).

5. Has pseudolaw grown since the pandemic?

The answer is almost certainly yes, but, surprisingly, there is little empirical data on this question.

It is difficult to assess how many people in Australia adopted pseudolegal arguments prior to the pandemic. In 2015 reports indicated that the NSW Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics command estimated there were as many as 300 sovereign citizens in the state, and that their numbers were growing. Those reports suggested that the number of sovereign citizens in NSW had doubled from 2009 to 2011 and almost tripled from 2009 to 2012.⁵⁰ It is likely that these numbers have grown in the following years, but without access to data it is not possible to confirm. In any event, while some sovereign citizens present a particular risk of violence (see more below), focusing on this group might obscure the much larger number of people who adopt or espouse pseudolegal arguments in Australia. As I note below, there is a broad spectrum of people who make pseudolegal arguments, many of whom have little deeper ideological commitment to the “movement”.

There is also no clear data on how many people were attracted to pseudolaw arguments during and after the pandemic. There is only one study that has sought to explore this question. In 2024, Associate Professor Joe McIntyre led a qualitative and quantitative study on the emergence and impact of pseudolaw on South Australia’s courts.⁵¹

The study is limited in several respects. It focused on a single jurisdiction, looked solely at courts (rather than other state instrumentalities or agencies that might be confronted by adherents) and at least in its quantitative aspect, examined only reported judgments of higher courts (pseudolaw is more likely to appear in lower courts, where judgements are not routinely reported). Nevertheless, the report found clear evidence that pseudolaw matters had grown significantly in South Australia.

Qualitative interviews with judicial officers confirmed this finding. Interviewees reported that pseudolaw regularly appeared in South Australian courts, and that the pandemic and associated public health measures ‘acted as an accelerant’ for its growth.⁵² Moreover, the report found that pseudolaw matters remained at an elevated level post pandemic, as compared to pre-pandemic levels.

While it is likely that these findings can be extrapolated across Australia, there is unfortunately, no empirical data that can confirm this view. In the absence of data, the notion that pseudolaw has expanded in NSW and Australia is largely based on anecdotal evidence, conversations with public servants, and comments by members of the judiciary. Here, the view from judicial officers, particularly at lower courts, is clear. In 2023, NSW Magistrates remarked that they had seen a ‘sharp rise’ in the

⁵⁰ J Thomas and J McGregor, [Sovereign citizens: Terrorism assessment warns of rising threat from anti-government extremists](#), ABC News, 30 November 2015 (accessed 26 January 2026).

⁵¹ J McIntyre et al, [The Rise of Pseudolaw in South Australia: An Empirical Analysis of the Emergence and Impact of Pseudolaw on South Australia’s Courts](#), University of South Australia, 2024 <<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4996319>>.

⁵² J McIntyre et al, [The Rise of Pseudolaw in South Australia: An Empirical Analysis of the Emergence and Impact of Pseudolaw on South Australia’s Courts](#), University of South Australia, 2024, <<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4996319>> p. 52.

number of litigants appearing in court declaring that Australian law does not apply to them.⁵³ Senior members of the judiciary have affirmed this position. Justice Beech-Jones of the High Court of Australia has noted that 'sovereign citizens' were 'supercharged during COVID-19',⁵⁴ while NSW Chief Justice Andrew Bell described the movement as having 'ballooned' over the pandemic.⁵⁵

Even though there is no clear empirical data, the evidence that does exist indicates that pseudolaw grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This conclusion should not be surprising.

⁵³ S Kesteven and D Carrick, [Magistrates witness a 'sharp rise' in sovereign citizen cases brought before the local courts](#), *ABC News*, 8 May 2023 (accessed 26 January 2026).

⁵⁴ R Beech-Jones, [Seven random points about judging](#), speech at the National Judicial College of Australia Orientation Program, Brisbane, 17 March 2024, p. 4

⁵⁵ A Bell, [Truth decay and its implications for the judiciary: an Australian perspective](#), speech at the 4th Judicial Roundtable, Durham University, 23-26 April 2024, p 14.

6. If pseudolaw does not work, why does it appear to have grown?

People adopt pseudolegal arguments for a range of reasons, and they have varying levels of commitment to the arguments that they make. This section explores four interrelated factors for the spread of pseudolaw, and notes that people who adopt these arguments lie on a broad spectrum. Not all adherents are “true believers” dedicated to the ideology. The diversity of adherents is important to recognise when considering policy and legal responses.

6.1 Factors driving the spread of pseudolaw

Understanding the drivers of pseudolaw is critical to developing responses to counter its growth. There are four key factors that fuel the spread of sovereign citizen pseudolaw in Australia and across the globe.

6.1.1 Personal hardship

Many people adopt legal conspiracies because they are looking for a solution to a problem. In Australia, research suggests that pseudolaw arguments are especially common in traffic offences,⁵⁶ and family law matters,⁵⁷ as well as bankruptcy and repossession proceedings. In these cases, an individual is experiencing a significant personal hardship. In the case of driving offences, a loss of licence may lead to an inability to attend work, to unemployment, and to foreclosure or eviction. In parenting disputes, an individual may not only face a family breakdown but a loss of identity. In these matters, charged with emotional strain, pseudolaw might appear to offer a viable solution. While not every person experiencing personal hardship adopts pseudolaw, in circumstances of rising inequality, the pool of potential followers expands.⁵⁸

A similar pattern is evident at a global scale. The Posse Comitatus, one of the ideological ancestors of sovereign citizen ideology rose to prominence during the 1980s farm crisis in the American Midwest. During this period, hundreds of thousands of farmers faced a wave of bankruptcies and foreclosures. Buffeted by soaring interest rates and collapsing commodity prices, small family farms – already operating on slim margins – buckled under debt.⁵⁹ Amidst the devastation, some farmers gravitated to antisemitic legal conspiracies, hoping that pseudolegal arguments might prevent the loss of their farm and their sense of self.

The same dynamic repeated itself during the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis. Millions of people lost their homes, and the unemployment rate mounted. Anxious and uncertain, increasing numbers of people turned to pseudolaw for an explanation and a way out. It was during this crisis that sovereign citizen pseudolaw took root in Australia. Promoters, called “gurus”, toured Australia teaching people

⁵⁶ D Heilpern, Traffic Matters and Pseudolaw: The Big Shakedown in H Hobbs et al (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025, p. 249

⁵⁷ H Kha and H Hobbs, Pseudolaw and Family Law, *Australian Law Journal*, 2025, 99: 713-723.

⁵⁸ J Roose, The Paradox of Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizen Ideology: Vulnerability, Malevolence and Disengagement in H Hobbs et al (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025: p. 313; J Roose, [The “sovereign citizen” movement is growing. So is the risk of more violence](#), *The Conversation*, 29 August 2025 (accessed 4 February 2026).

⁵⁹ S Young et al, The Rise of Sovereign Citizen Pseudolaw in the United States of America, in H Hobbs et al (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025: p. 95.

pseudolaw. Most prominent among these gurus was David Wynn-Miller. In 2010, Wynn-Miller travelled to Australia and 'rake[d] in hundreds of thousands of dollars in just a few weeks',⁶⁰ teaching attendees at seminars along the East Coast, how to avoid their legal responsibilities by relying on his 'quantum grammar' (an odd linguistic system Wynn-Miller believed could negate all contracts, but which courts have routinely described as incomprehensible).

Pseudolaw spreads because it promises people a solution to their problems.

6.1.2 Empowerment

Pseudolaw always fails to achieve the legal outcomes it promises. Its arguments are consistently rejected by courts. However, this repeated failure does not mean that pseudolaw offers nothing of value to those who adopt it. On the contrary, legal conspiracies can meet a range of emotional and practical needs that the formal legal system often leaves unaddressed.⁶¹

For many people, law is experienced as alienating and difficult to navigate. Courtrooms, police interactions, and administrative processes can be intimidating, particularly for individuals already dealing with significant personal stress, such as the risk of losing a driver's licence or the breakdown of family relationships. In this context, pseudolaw can feel empowering.

Pseudolaw provides a simple and emotionally resonant explanation for hardship, framing personal or legal setbacks as the result of institutional corruption or hostile forces. It offers clear scripts and prescribed roles, giving individuals something concrete to say and do in situations where they might otherwise feel powerless or confused. It can also supply a sense of belonging, through networks of supporters who attend court, share experiences, and provide encouragement online. Together, these features help explain why pseudolaw continues to attract adherents despite its consistent legal failure.

Pseudolaw provides a community, a purpose and an explanation.

6.1.3 Structural issues

Pseudolaw does not appeal only to eccentrics or committed extremists. It frequently attracts ordinary people, often at points of acute stress or vulnerability. Entry into pseudolaw, then, is not always driven by ideology; more often it begins with a practical problem—a debt notice, an eviction, or a court summons—that feels overwhelming and unresolvable.

For many people, existing political and legal systems offer limited or unsatisfying responses to these personal crises. Legal representation is costly, court processes are complex and intimidating, and outcomes can feel opaque or predetermined. Dispute resolution is also often inaccessible. Although more than 25 per cent of people in Australia experience a 'substantial' legal problem every year, only three to four per cent of these serious disputes are resolved, directly or indirectly, through the justice

⁶⁰ Natasha Wallace, "["Messiah-Like Figure": is Doing Own Harvesting](#)", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 January 2011 (accessed 26 January 2026).

⁶¹ K Leader, Conspiracy! Or, When Bad Things Happen to Good Litigants in Person, *Legal Studies*, 2024 44: 498-518 <doi:10.1017/lst.2024.18>.

system.⁶² At the same time, surveys consistently indicate trust in democratic and legal institutions is strained.⁶³

In this environment, pseudolaw presents itself as a solution tailored to individual hardship. It offers explanations, certainty, and a sense of agency where official systems appear inaccessible or indifferent. It persists not because it works, but because many people feel they have few credible alternatives.

6.1.4 Commercial enterprise

A further factor in the growth of pseudolaw is less well recognised but highly significant: pseudolaw operates as a commercial enterprise.⁶⁴ As figures such as David Wynn-Miller demonstrate, self-styled gurus sell scripts and templates, run seminars and webinars, and recruit followers into paid membership websites. Access is monetised through tickets, memberships, and documents that claim to reveal the “true law”, supposedly concealed by corrupt institutions or hostile elites.

These entrepreneurs are adept at tailoring their products to different national and cultural contexts. American pseudolegal templates are repackaged to reference Australian legislation; English proponents construct theories around the Magna Carta and the monarchy; German networks translate and adapt materials to assert the ongoing authority of the German Empire. The spread of pseudolaw is therefore not merely an organic cultural phenomenon, but resembles a franchised business model, with ideas standardised, localised, and sold.

This commercial dimension is central to pseudolaw’s persistence and appeal. Behind many highly visible acts—such as filming traffic stops or overwhelming courts with paperwork—there is often a paid script, seminar, or downloadable guide. Requiring even modest financial investment helps convert curiosity into commitment. Once individuals have paid for access, they are more likely to persist, defend the belief system, and escalate their engagement, even when it repeatedly fails them.

6.2 A diverse and broad spectrum of adherents

Pseudolaw adherents are not a homogenous group. While the data that does exist suggests that the typical pseudolaw adherent is a middle-aged man from a regional area,⁶⁵ followers are demographically diverse, ranging from ‘educated professionals to retired senior citizens’ and consisting of both the wealthy and the poor.⁶⁶ This is because the “movement” is not driven by a consistent set of principles and doctrine but a flexible narrative that can and does adapt to other communities that share anxieties about government and the state. Indeed, sovereign citizen pseudolaw has been picked up by many individuals and communities that would not necessarily share the same views as far-right militia movements in the United States. In Australia, pseudolegal

⁶² C Coumarelos et al, *Legal Australia-Wide Survey: Legal Need in New South Wales*, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, 2012, p. 61.

⁶³ 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer *Global Report: Trust and the Crisis of Grievance*, Edelman Trust Institute, 2025; S Cameron et al, *Trends in Australian Political Opinion: Results from the Australian Election Study, 1987-2025*, November 2025.

⁶⁴ DJ Netolitzky, The History of the Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument Phenomenon in Canada, *Alberta Law Review*, 2016, 53(3) 609-642; S Young and H Hobbs, The Profit and Performance of Pseudolaw, *The Law Society Journal*, 2025, October, 76-82.

⁶⁵ J McIntyre et al, The Rise of Pseudolaw in South Australia: An Empirical Analysis of the Emergence and Impact of Pseudolaw on South Australia’s Courts, University of South Australia, 2024 <<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4996319>> p. 51-2.

⁶⁶ *Meads v Meads* [2012] ABQB 571, para 68.

narratives have been presented to mothers-to-be seeking birthing options outside the medical system,⁶⁷ expressed by Indigenous communities working through native title processes,⁶⁸ and shared by citizens worried about vaccine mandates and COVID-19-era restrictions on movement.⁶⁹

It is also important to recognise the scale of belief intensity. Just as people adopt these arguments for a variety of reasons, they possess varying levels of commitment and understanding of the underlying narrative and arguments they present. A rough categorisation of four types of adherents can be identified.⁷⁰

- **The naïve self-represented litigant:** The first group comprises relatively unsophisticated adherents who drift into pseudolaw without a genuine commitment to the underlying ideology. These are often people with limited legal literacy and little practical access to legal advice or support. When they come across pseudolegal arguments—most commonly through online searches—they may lack the skills needed to distinguish these claims from legitimate legal information.⁷¹ As a result, such litigants adopt pseudolegal language, terminology, and arguments in a misguided, and often reckless, attempt to shield themselves from fines or other legal obligations.

An example of this type of litigant appears in *Pivotto v Queensland Police Service – Weapons Licencing*.⁷² In this case, the litigant explained that although she had previously adopted pseudolegal arguments in correspondence with the police, she did not hold sovereign citizen beliefs. Rather, she had believed she was quoting the Constitution and acknowledged she ‘obviously received some poor legal advice without fully understanding what this advice meant’. The Tribunal accepted that the applicant was ‘naïve’. She could not explain the language she used in her letter, or what it meant. She simply followed what was set out on a pseudolegal website. Given her humility and recognition of her ‘stupid’ behaviour, the Tribunal Member set aside the decision to revoke her licence.

- **Mercenaries:** The second category consists of more legally sophisticated individuals who are often confident and confrontational, and who use pseudolegal arguments in a deliberate and strategic way. These litigants are not concerned with the theory or ideology behind the arguments. Instead, they employ pseudolegal methods solely to gain an advantage or to

⁶⁷ C King and A Burns, [In the “sovereign” birthing world, unqualified “birthkeepers” are charging thousands of dollars, and putting lives at risk](#), ABC News, 21 November 2024 (accessed 4 February 2026). The narrative around the free birth movement overlaps with pseudolegal ideas. Drawing on concerns women may hold with the medical system it encourages women to give birth without professional care. While this is a legitimate choice, it can connect with pseudolegal anxieties around state control and tyranny, and meld into decisions to avoid registering births.

⁶⁸ P Taplin et al, ‘The sovereign citizen superconspiracy: contemporary issues in native title anthropology’, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 2023, 34(2): 110-129 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/taja.12480>>.

⁶⁹ M O’Sullivan, Pseudolaw and Legal Fictions: Vaccine Mandate Claims During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Future Implications in H Hobbs et al (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025, p. 37.

⁷⁰ Material in this section is drawn from H Hobbs et al, Know your pseudolaw adherent: introduction to the symposium, *Journal of Judicial Administration*, 2025, 34: 157-163. See also DJ Netolitzky and J Rooke, Court and Institutional Responses to Pseudolaw and Pseudolaw User, *Australian Law Journal*, 2025, 99: 768-783; J McIntyre et al, The Rise of Pseudolaw in South Australia: An Empirical Analysis of the Emergence and Impact of Pseudolaw on South Australia’s Courts, University of South Australia, 2024 <<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4996319>>.

⁷¹ J McIntyre et al, The Rise of Pseudolaw in South Australia: An Empirical Analysis of the Emergence and Impact of Pseudolaw on South Australia’s Courts, University of South Australia, 2024 <<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4996319>> p. 58-9, 86; H Hobbs et al, Responding to Pseudolaw in H Hobbs et al (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025, p. 333, 340-342.

⁷² [2025] QCAT 130 (3 April 2025).

avoid a specific obligation or penalty. Their use of pseudolaw is therefore purely instrumental. Once it ceases to be effective, they abandon it in favour of another approach. In many cases, any apparent success is limited to delaying proceedings.

An example of this case can be found in *R v Kirsten (a pseudonym)*.⁷³ In this case from the NSW District Court, a woman adopted pseudolegal arguments in an apparent attempt to deliberately undermine the trial process and secure the jury's discharge or an unfair trial. It did not work.

- **True believers:** The third category comprises individuals who fully embrace pseudolaw ideology. These adherents are often the most challenging to engage with in legal and administrative settings, as they may adopt confrontational—and at times threatening—behaviour. They typically accept pseudolaw as a comprehensive belief system and may seek to operate outside established legal and social norms. For many, these beliefs form a central part of their personal identity and extend well beyond the immediate dispute into multiple aspects of daily life.
- **Gurus:** The final category consists of so-called “gurus” who act as primary sources of pseudolaw and play a central role in its dissemination. These individuals often profit financially by selling access to pseudolegal schemes or advice. They contribute significantly to the spread of pseudolaw by positioning themselves as authoritative figures, promoting these ideas to a wider audience, and supplying followers with scripts, templates, and guidance for use in legal and administrative settings.

An example of the latter two categories can be seen in the South Australian case of *Georganas v Georganas*.⁷⁴ In this matter, a woman was attempting to reclaim control of her mother's estate from her brother (a federal Member of Parliament). The woman refused to identify herself and challenged the authority of the court, accusing the judicial officer of committing “witchcraft”, “treason” and “necromancy”. The guru then stood up and sought to challenge the judicial officer. Around 50 supporters were sitting in the public gallery and stood and applauded as the judicial officer was forced to evacuate the court.

This typology presents an overview of the broad spectrum of those who adopt pseudolaw. Rather than a comprehensive account, however, it is best understood as a schema to organise thinking. Every individual adopts pseudolaw for their own reason.

⁷³ [2024] NSWDC 401 (9 August 2024)

⁷⁴ (unreported, Supreme Court of South Australia, Master Bochner, 8 August 2023). See further J Chricton et al, Winning by losing? Critical moments and communicative expertise in pseudolaw – an applied linguistic analysis, *Australian Law Journal*, 2025, 99: 724-737.

7. What is the impact of this phenomenon?

The impact of pseudolaw is difficult to quantify. There is little available empirical data on the number of pseudolaw adherents in NSW and Australia. Data is thus largely anecdotal, based on conversations with judicial officers, court administrators, local government representatives and other public servants. Nevertheless, the available data does suggest that the impact of pseudolaw adherents is significant.

7.1 On adherents themselves

Pseudolaw causes harms to those who adopt it. In encouraging adherents to reject legitimate state authority and ignore legal advice it risks escalating minor and insignificant disputes. A trivial parking fine might balloon to more than \$2000, dramatically increasing financial burdens.⁷⁵ Homes may be lost when borrowers attempt to “opt out” of mortgages instead of negotiating with lenders,⁷⁶ and parents may lose custody when they file frivolous documents instead of following court orders.⁷⁷ Individuals may also risk family estrangement, as they fall further into pseudolaw communities.⁷⁸ Sometimes, adherents are even imprisoned. In *Michelmores v Brown [No 7]*,⁷⁹ two pseudolegal adherents were sentenced to 30 days imprisonment for contempt – the first case of its type in Australia.

7.2 On systems of law and government

Pseudolaw adherents place significant strain on our legal and administrative systems.⁸⁰ In court, adherents, who are invariably self-represented, routinely file hundreds of pages of meritless documents, forcing judicial officers to devote significant time and resources to reading voluminous materials to assess whether a legitimate claim lies hidden. This is a real risk; legitimate legal claims and complaints can be buried under pseudolegal argument. In one 2022 New Zealand case, a judge excavated a claim for breach of contract from submissions ‘steeped in sovereign citizen theory’. The plaintiff explained to the Court they could not afford to hire competent legal counsel.⁸¹ Another risk is that a judge – understandably frustrated and tired – fails to provide procedural fairness to a pseudolaw litigant, only to have their judgment overturned on appeal.⁸² In these cases, a pseudolaw adherent might “win”, but it is important to note they did not win on the basis of any pseudolaw argument.

⁷⁵ *Rossiter v Adelaide City Council* [2020] SASC 61, [52] (Livesey J).

⁷⁶ E Baker, [This man advises his clients that elections, rates and mortgages are invalid](#), ABC News, 2 May 2023 (accessed 26 January 2026).

⁷⁷ H Kha and H Hobbs, Pseudolaw and Family Law, *Australian Law Journal*, 2025, 99: 713-723.

⁷⁸ M Lorigan, [Alleged cop killer Dezi Freeman's extreme and fanatical views existed for many years, say family and former friends](#), ABC News (1 October 2025) (accessed 4 February 2026).

⁷⁹ [2025] WASC 247 (20 June 2025).

⁸⁰ J McIntyre et al, The Rise of Pseudolaw in South Australia: An Empirical Analysis of the Emergence and Impact of Pseudolaw on South Australia's Courts, University of South Australia, 2024 <<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4996319>>

⁸¹ *Republic Arms Ltd v Corporation Trading as New Zealand Police [No 2]* [2022] NZHC 3185, para 6.

⁸² See for example *Hainaut v Queensland Police Service* [2019] QDC 223.

Adherents are also typically difficult to manage during hearings, refusing to listen to advice from judicial officers. They tend to challenge every single step in proceedings, increasing judicial workload by making the process of writing judgments more complex. In at least one case, an adherent even appealed an order that was made in their favour.⁸³ Overall, adherents increase costs on themselves and others, delay proceedings, and divert attention from other litigants with legitimate claims.

Demanding behaviour is directed towards other state actors.⁸⁴ Adherents waste the time and resources of local government by issuing frivolous challenges and notices to routine functions, increasing costs on ratepayers by forcing authorities to use the legal system to enforce compliance. Other state agencies, such as the Ombudsman, the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and NSW Health, have reported similar challenges.⁸⁵

For law enforcement, the impact can be particularly challenging. Police officers are on the front line of law enforcement and thus are often the first state actor to interact with a pseudolaw adherent.⁸⁶ Given adherents see police officers as agents of a tyrannical system, routine matters such as traffic stops or roadside breath tests can escalate from non-compliance and obstruction all the way through to violence.⁸⁷ In circumstances where adherents may perceive police officers as threatening their homes – such as through the execution of a search warrant – they may react with extreme violence. We have unfortunately seen this in the murders in 2025 of two police officers in Porepunkah, Victoria.⁸⁸ There are similar cases from around the world.⁸⁹

The behaviour of pseudolaw adherents also has a more personal impact on state actors and government officials. Judicial officers describe feelings of dread, and document the considerable impact on their health, well-being, and job satisfaction. Some judges have remarked that they are seriously considering early retirement.⁹⁰

7.3 Risk of violence

The impact of pseudolaw is not just in terms of the grinding nature of the phenomenon. The risk of intimidation and threats of violence is real and cannot be dismissed.⁹¹

⁸³ J McIntyre et al, *The Rise of Pseudolaw in South Australia: An Empirical Analysis of the Emergence and Impact of Pseudolaw on South Australia's Courts*, University of South Australia, 2024 <<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4996319>> p 76.

⁸⁴ S Young and H Hobbs, *The Impact of Pseudolaw on Local Government*, *Public Law Review*, 2026, 37 (forthcoming).

⁸⁵ See for example Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW, [Position statement: Energy and water complaints and sovereign citizenship](#) (November 2024).

⁸⁶ E Shakespeare et al, [Why are police a target for sovereign citizen violence](#), *The Conversation*, 27 August 2025 (accessed 4 February 2026).

⁸⁷ J J MacNab, ["Sovereign" citizen kane](#), *Southern Poverty Law Centre*, 1 August 2010 (accessed 4 February 2026).

⁸⁸ T Wertheimer, [Who is Dezi Freeman, the "sovereign citizen" wanted for killing police?](#), *BBC News*, 27 August 2025 (accessed 4 February 2026).

⁸⁹ See for example, [Reichsbürger trial: Man sentenced to life for murder](#), *DW*, 23 October 2017 (accessed 4 February 2026).

⁹⁰ J McIntyre et al, *Pseudolaw behind the judgments: the hidden impact on the administration of justice*, *Australian Law Journal*, 2025, 99: 685-698, p. 694; H Hobbs et al, *Special Issue on Judicial Reflections on Pseudolaw*, *Journal of Judicial Administration*, 2025 34(4): 157-200.

⁹¹ On the uncertain evidence as to whether there is a causal link between conspiracy theories in general and violence, see E Belton et al, *Linking Conspiracy Beliefs with Violence: A Scoping Review of the Empirical Picture*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2025, doi:10.1080/09546553.2025.2462601. Note that this study does not examine pseudolaw or sovereign citizens directly.

The movement's origins in the United States are in overtly extremist, violent and gendered organisations. Even if individual adherents are not violent, the ideology has an inherent – if latent – potential for violence.⁹² United States criminologist Christine Sarteschi has followed the movement for many years and has amassed more than 600 cases of violence (dating from 1977), including arson, child abuse, rape, sexual assault, attempted kidnapping, mass shootings, and homicides.⁹³ Violence in the United States may be connected to the militia origins of the movement but given developments in Australia over the last few years, the threat has become increasingly recognised.

In 2015, the NSW Police Force described sovereign citizens as a potential terrorist threat.⁹⁴ In 2017-18, a man who exhibited strong support for sovereign citizen ideology sent a letter to a member of the NSW Parliament threatening death or grievous bodily harm.⁹⁵ In September 2021, a raid by South Australian police on the property of a prominent pseudolaw adherent, found to be a leader of the 100-person strong anti-government group *Commonwealth Justice Assembly*, uncovered a cache of illegal weapons.⁹⁶ In 2023, NSW police were involved in two different sieges involving sovereign citizens.⁹⁷ In 2024, a Tasmanian man with sovereign citizen beliefs was convicted of assaulting his wife and throwing acid on police.⁹⁸ Most tragically, in August 2025, two police officers attempting to execute a search warrant were killed allegedly by self-described "sovereign citizen" Dezi Freeman.⁹⁹

It is not only law enforcement that may be targeted. Judges have discussed threatening and intimidating behaviour, particularly in local courts in remote and regional areas where security is light.¹⁰⁰ Internal analysis by the Australian Federal Police has highlighted the risk of violence particularly to public office holders. That report found that:

We are largely seeing these groups take action in the form of non-violent protest, including co-opting other demonstrations. However, there is also a propensity for fixation on high office holders and public figures, as well as some within the movement urging violence.¹⁰¹

Elected local government officials have already been targeted. In 2023, fifteen councils across Victoria reported that members of the pseudolegal organisation My Place disrupted their meetings and activities. Yarra Ranges Council was forced to close a session to the public after repeated outbursts during a discussion on urban planning from a crowd of 100-plus agitators. At other

⁹² C Sarteschi, *Sovereign Citizens: A Psychological and Criminological Analysis* (Springer, 2020) vi-vii, 31-41.

⁹³ Personal communication with C Sarteschi, January 2026.

⁹⁴ J Thomas and J McGregor, [Sovereign citizens: Terrorism assessment warns of rising threat from anti-government extremists](#), *ABC News*, 30 November 2015 (accessed 26 January 2026).

⁹⁵ *Hardy v State of New South Wales* [2021] NSWCA 338, para 18.

⁹⁶ E Tlozek, [Man in custody after police raid alternative community meeting over public safety concerns](#), *ABC News*, 17 September 2021 (accessed 26 January 2026).

⁹⁷ P Duffin, [Man who shot himself in siege linked to Sovereign Citizen movement, police suspect](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July 2023 (accessed 26 January 2026); C Sibthorpe, [Moving towards violence': Authorities alert to radicalised sovereign citizens](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 December 2023 (accessed 216 January 2026).

⁹⁸ *Diplomat Dan v State of Tasmania* [2024] TASCRA 9; S Powell, [Port Sorell man 'Dan' in court over allegations of assaulting wife and throwing acid on police](#), *ABC News*, 5 June 2024 (accessed 26 January 2026).

⁹⁹ T Wertheimer, [Who is Dezi Freeman, the 'sovereign citizen' wanted for killing police?](#), *BBC News*, 27 August 2025 (accessed 26 January 2026).

¹⁰⁰ Anonymous, Reflections from a Female Magistrate, *Journal of Judicial Administration*, 2025, 34(4): 168-172. See further, JB Hunter et al, 'In their own words – judicial stress and satisfaction: self-represented litigants and sovereign citizens', *Judicial Officers' Bulletin*, 37(10), 2025: 103; L Wong, [Rise in threats by sovereign citizens sparks call for Victorian judges to receive security allowance](#), *ABC News*, 2 December 2025 (accessed 4 February 2026).

¹⁰¹ S Dametto, [The Sovereign Citizen Movement in Australia](#), undated (accessed 26 January 2026).

meetings, protestors called for “citizens arrests”.¹⁰² According to the Municipal Association of Victoria, anti-government groups target councils because they are accessible.¹⁰³

Similar events are occurring in New Zealand. In 2023, a public meeting was derailed when audience members booed two members of the Hamilton City Council off a stage, chanting “cowards!”, while a man threatened to arrest the two councillors before they safely escaped.¹⁰⁴ In 2024, a sovereign citizen was convicted and imprisoned for threatening to kill Prime Minister Jacinda Arden.¹⁰⁵

As these incidents highlight, the risk of intimidation and violence should not be minimised. Adherents threaten more than simply the smooth administration of justice and governance.

7.4 On society at large

Pseudolaw also contributes to broader institutional erosion. By positioning courts, police, and governments as illegitimate or captured by malicious forces, pseudolaw narratives undermine trust in public institutions and the rule of law. While most adherents are not violent, this worldview can increase hostility toward authority figures and normalise non-compliance with lawful processes.

Undermining trust can also prove self-fulfilling. The refusal to pay for routine government services forces the state to spend money to enforce compliance, resulting in fewer resources for service provisions. Citizens experience worse infrastructure, reduced services and more friction, confirming the view that the state is no longer working in the interests of ordinary people.

¹⁰² C Waters, [What are 15-minute Cities and How Did they Ignite a Conspiracy Theory?](#), *The Age*, 19 February 2023 (accessed 26 January 2026).

¹⁰³ R Dexter and B Preiss, [Victorian Councils Targeted by Conspiracy Theorists’ Campaign of Disruption and Influence](#), *The Age*, 22 April 2023 (accessed 26 January 2026); A Bogle and A Ore, [Disruptions by Conspiracists Forced some Victorian Councils Online. Will they Affect Local Elections?](#), *The Guardian*, 12 October 2024 (accessed 26 January 2026).

¹⁰⁴ S Young and H Hobbs, The Impact of Pseudolaw on Local Government, *Public Law Review*, 2026, 37 (forthcoming).

¹⁰⁵ S Conchie, [Richard Sivell Jailed for Death Threats against Former PM Jacinda Arden](#), *New Zealand Herald*, 31 July 2025 (accessed 26 January 2026).

8. How should society respond?

The impact of pseudolaw is significant. It escalates disputes, imposes considerable costs on society and adherents themselves and may contribute to declining institutional trust. It is vital that effective responses to counter the appeal and growth of this phenomenon are developed. Thus far, however, most responses to pseudolegal activity have been reactive and piecemeal, designed to address immediate operational pressures (such as the courts introducing new processes to manage larger filings, or local government moving meetings online to avoid intimidation), rather than the underlying drivers of the phenomenon. What is required instead is a broader coordinated strategy that moves beyond institutional self-protection and engages with the structural conditions enabling the movement's growth. Several issues should be considered.

One general point is important to note first. The spread of pseudolaw 'is indicative of growing social problems, including social unrest, dissatisfaction, disaffection, stratification and inequality'.¹⁰⁶ These are society-wide challenges, and require responses at an institutional level. Administrative, legal and other processes should be made both accessible and comprehensible to the community. Plain language legal resources should be made available on government and court websites. Civics education and legal literacy campaigns should be developed to help provide a baseline knowledge that can inoculate individuals who come across pseudolaw online. However, an effective response must operate at both the structural and interpersonal levels. Coordinated, society-wide strategies are essential, but they should be complemented by empathetic engagement rather than ridicule, particularly given that social isolation and grievance often provide fertile ground for these beliefs.¹⁰⁷ Building connection, strengthening community, and communicating with respect can help adherents recognise that pseudolaw not only fails, but may leave them in a worse position than if they had addressed the original issue. Although engaging with adherents can be challenging, ridicule or mockery from state actors risks reinforcing perceptions of hostility and exclusion that sustain the movement.

8.1 Identifying scale

The first challenge is the lack of accessible or available data. We simply do not know how many pseudolaw adherents there are in NSW, their levels of commitment to the ideology, and whether they are active in espousing their beliefs. Without clear data, it is not possible to accurately gauge the scale of the impact caused by adherents or develop appropriate responses to counter the phenomenon.

One aspect of this challenge is that pseudolaw is not a formal movement. There is no membership list or stable organisation, and adherents are unlikely to characterise their arguments as *pseudo-law*. Relatedly, engagement with pseudolaw is often situational and intermittent. Most people adopt these arguments when dealing with a particular issue or specific legal problem and disengage once that issue has been resolved. The majority of pseudolaw activity also occurs outside formal institutions. Pseudolaw thrives on social media and other online forums. This activity is invisible to the state,

¹⁰⁶ H Hobbs et al, The Internationalisation of Pseudolaw: The Growth of Sovereign Citizen Arguments in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, *University of New South Wales Law Journal*, 2024, 47(1): 309-342, p 322.

¹⁰⁷ H Hobbs et al, Responding to Pseudolaw in H Hobbs et al (eds), *Pseudolaw and Sovereign Citizens*, Hart, 2025, p. 333.

which only “sees” pseudolaw when it is submitted in court filings or otherwise expressed to state agencies.

In addition, data collection is not generally designed to capture belief-based behaviour. Courts will record whether a litigant is self-represented but will generally not record whether the litigant is advancing pseudolegal arguments or orthodox legal arguments. While a judgment may note the presence of pseudolegal argument, references are inconsistent and are not coded in a way that supports simple analysis. Similarly, state agencies such as the Ombudsman or local government may record the number of complaints received, but not whether these complaints turn on ideology related to sovereign citizens.

8.2 Law enforcement is necessary but can fuel the narrative

Law enforcement is a necessary element of responding to pseudolaw. Adherents should not be able to avoid legal obligations and responsibilities. When litigants file frivolous proceedings, they should be struck out. When adherents harass or intimidate judges, police officers or citizens, they should be held to account. When gurus promise that a \$200 script or \$50 subscription fee will unlock the secret that will absolve a client of ever having to pay council rates or traffic fines ever again, consumer affairs authorities should investigate. Police should take action when these same sites encourage their clients to lie to courts and law enforcement. Given the global dimensions of pseudolaw and its risk of violence, international cooperation is also important. This could include intelligence coordination, multilateral law enforcement strategies, and informed threat assessment training.¹⁰⁸

The challenge, however, is that enforcing the law risks fuelling the narrative that underlies pseudolaw.¹⁰⁹ For the believer, every courtroom loss is proof that the judge is also corrupt, every crackdown on “sovereign citizens” evidence the state is tyrannical. Every prosecution transforms a guru into a martyr. For the believer, a loss is not a defeat but proof they have identified the real conspiracy. Enforcement is necessary but it cannot be the only response.

8.3 Rebuilding trust

It is easy to defer to law enforcement, but pseudolaw is not only a problem for the legal system. It has spread because adherents have lost faith in our legal and political institutions. Addressing the symptoms without repairing the underlying alienation and trust deficit thus risks pushing people further toward conspiratorial belief systems.

The Scanlon Foundation’s long-running survey on social cohesion has consistently found that – excluding the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 – a majority of respondents do not think the government in Canberra can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people.¹¹⁰ While the Foundation’s latest 2025 report found that social cohesion generally remains stable, reflecting

¹⁰⁸ L Khalil and K Hardy, [The global sovereign citizen movement](#), *Lowy Institute*, 8 February 2026 (accessed 20 February 2026).

¹⁰⁹ See discussion in C Veldkamp and P Bentley, [Doxed man launches petition to have sovereign citizens declared domestic terrorists](#), *ABC News*, 7 October 2025 (accessed 4 February 2026).

¹¹⁰ J O’Donnell et al, *Mapping Social Cohesion: Social Connections through Troubled Times 2025* (Scanlon Foundation Research Institute 2025) 18.

resilient social bonds, it also revealed growing strains and tensions. Increasing economic pressures and a decreasing sense of belonging suggest fissures in which legal conspiracies could take hold.

Any long-term response to pseudolaw requires rebuilding social and institutional trust. Trust erodes when individuals experience legal and administrative systems as confusing, punitive, or indifferent. For people facing debt or family breakdown, even procedurally fair outcomes can feel unjust if they are explained poorly or delivered without empathy. Rebuilding trust requires institutions to demonstrate not only authority, but fairness, transparency, and responsiveness. Plain-language communication and clear explanations of decision-making all help counter the perception that the system is arbitrary or hostile.

So too does respectful treatment.¹¹¹ Given that not all adherents are true believers and that many may have picked up and applied their pseudolegal arguments out of a naïve attempt to avoid personal hardship, there may be scope for dialogue. Former adherents have explained that their journey out of the pseudolaw rabbit hole began with a positive experience in court, where a judicial officer spoke to them in a calm and respectful manner, and gave the adherent the sense that they were heard.¹¹² These experiences suggest that judges, and perhaps other state actors, can play a positive role in undermining support for pseudolaw (in some cases) by focusing on the humanity of the adherent. Instead of antagonising or ridiculing believers, there is scope for understanding and listening. Of course, this approach may not work in all cases, particularly for those more clearly invested in the ideology.

Rebuilding trust requires credible alternatives to pseudolaw. Many individuals are drawn to pseudolegal claims because they promise a solution to an immediate and pressing problem; simply demonstrating that this promise is illusory has done little to stem its spread. Individuals are more likely to disengage from pseudolegal beliefs when they experience lawful processes that work for them—where advice is accessible, procedures are comprehensible, outcomes are transparent, and participation feels meaningful. Rather than focusing solely on disproving adherents' claims, efforts should therefore prioritise reducing bureaucratic blockages and administrative frustrations and ensuring that government services are straightforward and responsive. By making legal and political institutions visibly functional and fair, we give people a reason to place their trust in them.

Parliament and elected Members can play an important role in this project. Parliament is a unique institution in that it serves as a forum for the diverse interests of citizens to be 'heard, ventilated, and potentially incorporated into the design of policy and administration'.¹¹³ Parliamentary structures such as committee processes, public inquiries, and second reading debates, are designed to slow down the legislative process to create time for reflection and refinement. Beyond any change to government policies and programs, these processes have a legitimating function. Allowing for diverse voices to be heard and considered, helps to reduce tension and can provide reassurance in the work

¹¹¹ S Young and H Hobbs, Pseudolaw beyond the bar, *Australian Law Journal*, 99(9), 2025: 680, 684.

¹¹² A Bogle and C Wilson, "I do not consent", *ABC News*, 31 August 2025 (accessed 4 February 2026). K Newton, [How sovereign citizen claims fail but keep clogging courts](#), *UNSW Newsroom*, 11 June 2025 (accessed 4 February 2026).

¹¹³ H Hobbs and G Williams, Australian Parliaments and the Pandemic, *UNSW Law Journal*, 46(4), 2023: 1314, 1321. E Rayment and J VandenBeukel, Pandemic Parliaments: Canadian Legislatures in a Time of Crisis, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 53, 2020: 379.

of our political and legal institutions.¹¹⁴ Making this crucial work – of law-making, of representation, of scrutiny – visible, accessible and comprehensible, can help. That requires support for parliamentary education programs, and broader civics campaigns.

¹¹⁴ R Packenham, Legislatures and Political Development, in Allan Kornberg and Lloyd D Musolf (eds), *Legislatures in Developmental Perspective*, Duke University Press, 1970: 521, 530.

Pseudolaw and sovereign citizens

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