

## Message from the acting CEO and Commissioner, Stephen Bray

Welcome to the June edition of the Legal Services Council's newsletter.



I have commenced as the acting CEO of the Legal Services Council and Commissioner for Uniform Legal Services Regulation on 10 June 2025, following the departure of Heather Moore.

Heather has left to take on the role of Executive Director of the NSW Bar Association. During her time at the Council, Heather achieved a great deal and we are very grateful for her excellent work. We wish Heather all the best, and look forward to working with her in her new role.

So - a bit about me! I began my career working as solicitor in a large law firm in Sydney, as an Australian Youth Ambassador as the Court Assistant to the Chief Justice of Samoa, and then in the UK as a Government solicitor. For the last 13 years I've worked in senior roles in the NSW Government on law reform, policy, regulation and interjurisdictional negotiation. Some projects I've been involved in are the national reforms to defamation law, reforms to civil liability following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, reforms to child protection law following the *Family is Culture* review – and of course – legal profession regulation.

I am honoured to be taking up this role, and see the important role that the Council has in ensuring effective regulation of solicitors and barristers, and driving towards consistency in regulation in the context of a common Australian legal services market.

The Council has a busy work program ahead of it for 2025, including:

- Review of costs disclosure thresholds, and the short form cost disclosure
- Review of practical legal training
- Review of the Accreditation Standards for Australian law courses
- Participation in the Legal Services Regulatory Dialogue established under the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement
- Various other changes to conduct and continuing professional development rules

I look forward to working with you in this role.

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## Strategic Plans

At its meeting in May, the Council adopted its Strategic Plan for 2025-2026. The Plan identified priority projects for the coming year, including costs disclosure thresholds review, review of practical legal training and the expansion of the scheme to non-participating jurisdictions. The Strategic Plan is available on the Council's website ([link](#)).

The Admissions Committee and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee have also adopted Strategic Plans for 2025-2026 which are available on the Council's website [here](#) and [here](#). Both Plans identify priority projects including the review of practical legal training and work on the Standards for the accreditation of law courses.

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## Council and Admissions Committee appointments

I am happy to share that Amber Cerny was appointed to the Council, from 28 January 2025 to 17 March 2027. Amber is a partner at HWL Ebsworth Lawyers and the Chair of the Business Law Committee and Deputy Chair of the Privacy and Data Committee of the Law Society of New South Wales.



I am also pleased to advise there have been a number of appointments to the Council's Admissions Committee:

- the Hon Justice Matthew Howard of the Supreme Court of Western Australia, from 10 February 2025
- the Hon Justice François Kunc of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, reappointed from 1 July 2025
- Madeleine Dupuche, reappointed from 1 July 2025
- the Hon David Habersberger KC, reappointed from 1 July 2025
- Robert Hollo SC, reappointed from 1 July 2025

On 11 June 2025, Joshua Thomson SC was appointed as President of the Western Australian Court of Appeal, as a Judge of Appeal and as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia.

As a result of these appointments, Justice Thomson will resign from the Council. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Justice Thomson for his tremendous contribution to the Council and wish him well in his new role.

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## **Vale Stuart Clark AM AFSM**

It is with sorrow that I learned of the passing of Stuart Clark AM AFSM.

Stuart was an outstanding member of the Council's Admissions Committee from June 2017 to June 2021.

He was a former Partner at Clayton Utz and served as President of the Law Council of Australia in 2016.

Stuart played an important role in the development of the Legal Profession Uniform Law in New South Wales and Victoria.

In 2015, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to the law, strategic reform and the Rural Fire Service.

On behalf of the Legal Services Council, I offer my sincere condolences to Stuart's family and friends.

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## **Amendment to the Admission Rules**

On 16 May 2025, the Council made the Legal Profession Uniform Admission Amendment (Qualifications) Rule 2025 ([link](#)) and accompanying Council guideline ([link](#)). These will both commence on 1 July 2025. The Rule provides guidance to the admitting authorities on factors to take into account when considering whether a foreign lawyer is eligible for an exemption under s 18 of the Uniform Law. The Guideline sets out further detail on the operation of the Rule.

Thank you to all of you who contributed to the development of the Rule and guideline.

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## **Practical legal training**

The Council's Admissions Committee and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (LACC) are undertaking a review of practical legal training, covering issues of cost and quality. The Committees are grateful for the feedback that was received on the project scope circulated to key stakeholders in April.

We are developing a national survey on practical legal training, which will seek responses from new solicitors and their supervisors. We expect this to be distributed within the next few months.

We look forward to working with you as the review progresses.

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## **Update on the Legal Services Regulatory Dialogue**

The Council, the Admissions Committee and the LACC have been involved in the Legal Services Regulatory Dialogue set up under the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement. The Dialogue is a mechanism through which representatives of the legal sector in both Australia and the UK can come together to consider regulatory issues relevant to trade in legal services.

In January 2025, the Dialogue submitted a progress report to the intergovernmental Professional Services Working Group (PSWG), as required by the Free Trade Agreement. The PSWG considered this report at their meeting in Canberra in April.

The Dialogue met again in March 2025 and agreed to meet in September 2025 and March 2026, ahead of the end of its minimum term in May 2026. The Dialogue is working on preparing a public report on its work, for publication later this year. The Dialogue has also asked the four working groups it established to continue work and report back to the plenary meetings in September and March.

In participating in the Dialogue, we have been coordinating across legal profession regulators and admitting authorities in all States and Territories.

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## **Accreditation standards for Australian law courses**

Consultation closes soon on revisions proposed by the Admissions Committee and the LACC to the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses. The draft changes address the emergence of online delivery and new digital technologies, as well as other matters such as intensive or block delivery.

Click [here](#) for the consultation paper and click [here](#) for the draft revised Standards. A feedback form is also available by clicking [here](#).

Please send any submissions to [submissions@legalservicescouncil.org.au](mailto:submissions@legalservicescouncil.org.au) by Friday 20 June 2025.

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## **Update on the costs disclosure thresholds review**

The design process of new standard costs disclosure forms is now complete. The new standard cost disclosure forms are in an interactive format and intended to be user friendly.

The development of updated standard costs disclosure forms and associated guidance is being undertaken in accordance with the recommendations within the final report in the review of the costs disclosure thresholds in the Uniform Law published in December 2023 ([link](#)). The purpose of these proposed changes is to increase the utility of the forms to lawyers and improve the clarity for consumers of legal services.

The review considered the effectiveness and regulatory impact of the existing cost disclosure thresholds and whether they enhance the protection of clients of law practices and the protection of the public, empower clients of law practices to make informed choices about the services they access and the costs involved, promote regulation of the legal profession that is efficient, effective, targeted and proportionate, and promote interjurisdictional consistency in the law applying to the Australian legal profession.

We are now moving to user testing with consumers and lawyers. Thank you to everyone who has given us feedback on these forms so far. There will be more stakeholder consultation later in the year.

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## Update on indexation

On 29 May 2025, the Legal Profession Uniform Law (Indexed Amounts) Notice 2025 was published on the Council's website in accordance with rule 111A of the Legal Profession Uniform General Rules 2015.

Rule 111A adjusts the maximum threshold for costs in a costs dispute under which a designated local regulatory authority and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal may deal with a costs dispute, as well as the maximum amount that they can order to be paid in a costs dispute (sections 291 to 293 of the Uniform Law; section 99 of the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014* (Vic)). This adjustment is made in line with the published consumer price index (CPI) and ensures the regulatory authorities and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal maintain their jurisdiction to determine costs disputes in line with inflation.

The Notice sets out the indexed amounts that apply to the original amounts of \$10,000 (\$31,440) and \$100,000 (\$314,330) referred to in sections 291 to 293 of the Uniform Law; and \$25,000 (\$78,585) referred to in section 99 of the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014* (Vic) from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. The Notice is available [here](#) and the editorial note to rule 111A which includes the indexed amounts for FY2025/2026 is available [here](#).

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