

**Message from the CEO, Heather Moore**

Hi and welcome to the December edition of the Legal Services Council's newsletter!

It has been another busy year and I am proud of what the Council, Admissions Committee and Secretariat have achieved. Highlights for 2024 include:



- Developing new standard costs disclosure forms which we are settling for user testing in early 2025.
- Issuing a Council guideline on conditional admission in May, which has seen conditional admission back up and running under the Uniform Law.
- New research on the impact of consumer remedies under the Uniform Law and the benefits (and challenges) for consumers, regulators and lawyers.
- Participating in the Legal Services Regulatory Dialogue established under the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement, including co-chairing the working group on qualifications, recognition and admission.
- Developing a video package capturing the experiences and views of the Western Australian Attorney General, Legal Practice Board and professional associations, two years after the introduction of the Uniform Law in Western Australia. Watch out for a special edition of the newsletter sharing the videos early in 2025!

As we come to the end of the year, I would like to thank the Council, the Council's committees, regulators, stakeholders and staff for their hard work and for being so

great to work with. We wish you all a safe and restful holiday period. We will finish up for the year on Friday 20 December 2024, returning on Monday 6 January 2025.

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### **Research project on consumer remedies**

Earlier this year, the Council engaged Heartward Strategic, an independent Australian social research agency, to find out more about the impact of consumer remedies under the Uniform Law. We are grateful to the regulators and legal professional associations in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia who shared their experiences and views.

Overall, the research found that the approach to consumer matters under the Uniform Law is seen as advantageous to regulators, consumers and lawyers. Stakeholders identified a range of benefits including:

- For regulators: wider range of regulatory powers, informal resolution of consumer matters separate to disciplinary matters and a focus on continuous improvement.
- For consumers: time, cost and wellbeing benefits, independent resolution, appropriate outcomes, improved knowledge of the process and trust in the legal profession.
- For lawyers: time, cost and wellbeing benefits including a sense of closure, increased knowledge of the process and support to comply with regulatory requirements.

The report is available [here](#) on the Council's website.

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

Participants from Australia and the United Kingdom (**UK**) reconvened the Legal Services Regulatory Dialogue, established under the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement, on 3 and 4 December. The Council, the Admissions Committee and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee were represented by the CEO of the Council and the Chair of the Committees, the Hon Justice François Kunc.

The Dialogue received updates from the four Working Groups established at the inaugural meeting in March 2024. The Dialogue resolved to extend the Working Groups into next year and to review their outputs and continuation in September 2025 – thanks again to everyone who is contributing to this work. The Dialogue also considered a draft report to be delivered to the intergovernmental Professional Services Working Group in

January 2025, with a public report on the Dialogue's work to be released next year.

The next Dialogue meeting is expected to take place in March 2025.

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

The draft updated costs disclosure forms and information sheets have been revised following a second round of stakeholder consultation in July. A big thank you to all stakeholders who have contributed to this work so far. The next stage is to design the cost disclosure forms, before we move to user testing.

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### **Uniform Law Summit 2024**

The Council's Uniform Law Summit was held in Sydney on 28 November. The Chair of the Council, Sitesh Bhojani opened the Summit, followed by an update from the CEO on the Council's key projects over the year. Attendees then had the opportunity to discuss the Legal Services Regulatory Dialogue established under the Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement, the research project on consumer remedies under the Uniform Law and mental health and wellbeing in the legal profession. We are grateful for the participation of all attendees and for their contributions during the day.



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## **International Conference of Legal Regulators and Conference of Regulatory Officers**

In October, the Chair, CEO and members of the policy team attended the joint International Conference of Legal Regulators and Conference of Regulatory Officers in Melbourne, expertly hosted by the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner. There were five plenary sessions at this year's conference covering artificial intelligence, mental health and lawyer wellbeing, indigenous issues, understanding consumers of legal services, and models of regulation. It was a great opportunity to catch up with colleagues and stakeholders from participating and non-participating jurisdictions.

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## **Annual reports**

The annual reports of the Council and Commissioner for Uniform Legal Services Regulation were tabled in the Victorian Parliament on 17 October 2024 and are available [here](#) on the Council's website.

The regulatory authorities play an invaluable role in this process, and with some extra help from the bodies which issue practising certificates in the jurisdictions outside the Uniform Law, the report includes a snapshot of the legal profession Australia-wide. Some of the key takeaways from the national data include:

- There are 101,289 solicitors and 6,607 barristers in Australia.
- The number of legal practitioners regulated by the Uniform Law framework is 81,546. This figure represents 75.6% of all legal practitioners Australia-wide.
- Females made up 54.5% of legal practitioners across Australia compared with 45.4% for males, with similar proportions in the Uniform Law jurisdictions.
- More than half of Australian legal practitioners practise in a city (55.3%), almost one third practise in a suburban location (30.8%), and close to one in ten practise in a regional area (8.8%), with similar proportions in the Uniform Law jurisdictions.

## Legal profession snapshot

Number of legal practitioners  
(solicitors and barristers)  
Australia-wide  
As at 30 June 2024



There are **107,896** legal practitioners in Australia

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