



Submission to the National Review of Practical Legal Training

Part A: Respondent Details

Name	Monash Law Students' Society (Monash LSS)
Organisation	Monash University Faculty of Law
Contact	president@monashlss.com
Responding as	Representative group
Jurisdiction	Victoria (with national interest)
Publish response?	Yes

Part B: Introduction and Overarching Position

1. Introduction

The Monash Law Students' Society ('Monash LSS') welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Legal Services Council's Admissions Committee and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (LACC) in response to the Consultation Paper on proposed reforms to Practical Legal Training (PLT), published in April 2026.

The Monash LSS represents law students at Monash University, one of Australia's leading law schools. Our members include students enrolled in the LLB, JD, and combined degrees, many of whom will be directly affected by the proposed reforms. We also represent students who intend to pursue careers in academia, policy, the public sector, NGOs, and other non-practising roles.

Our submission is guided by a fundamental belief that law degrees must strike the right balance between academic rigour and vocational preparation. The law degree is not, and should not become, a mere credentialing exercise for admission. It is an academic qualification that serves a broad and diverse cohort of graduates, the legal profession, and society. Reforms that tilt the degree too far towards vocational training or that treat PLT as an opportunity to redistribute skills training into the degree without adequate resourcing, prescription or protection of academic content risk undermining both the quality of the profession and the integrity of legal education.

2. Overarching Position

The proposed reform package is premised on a sensible redistribution of practical training across the educational pipeline. The Monash LSS does not oppose the principle of this redistribution. We recognise that the current PLT model has significant shortcomings such as cost, quality variability, and disconnect from the realities of legal practice. Structured reform of PLT is appropriate and overdue.

However, we have significant concerns about how several of the proposals are framed and what they imply for the academic stage of legal education. In particular, we are concerned that:

- The proposals risk treating the law degree primarily as a pre-admission vocational training vehicle, rather than as an academic qualification.
- The integration of practical skills into law degrees, without national prescription of content, resourcing, and standards, will produce uneven outcomes that disadvantage students at under-resourced institutions.
- The compression of PLT into a four-to-five week capstone, combined with reduced competency standards, may produce graduates who are insufficiently prepared for independent practice.
- The consultation paper does not adequately recognise that not all students study law to become solicitors, and a degree designed primarily around admission requirements may ill-serve the majority of students.

Part C: Responses to Consultation Questions

The Monash LSS provides the following responses to the consultation questions. These responses should be read alongside our full submission narrative at Part C, which provides the legal and policy reasoning underpinning these positions.

Law Courses

Q1.1 Do you support the proposal for the LACC to amend the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses to require law courses to demonstrate how they have included practical teaching and training of the practical skills identified at Appendix F, with appropriate assessment?

Supported in principle, with significant qualifications.

The Monash LSS supports introductory exposure to practical skills within the law degree, but does not support the use of the law degree to assess or certify entry-level PLT-equivalent competency. A clear distinction must be maintained between introductory skills exposure (appropriate in the degree) and assessed, competency-based professional practice training (appropriate in PLT).

If skills requirements are introduced into law courses, they should be clearly defined, limited in scope, and nationally prescribed to minimise institutional variation. The proposals do not currently address resourcing implications for law schools. Without additional resourcing, skills requirements risk being implemented superficially or at the expense of existing academic content.

Q1.2 Do you suggest any amendments to the proposed skills schedule (Appendix F) in respect of the knowledge areas and skills to be included in the delivery of law courses, as identified in column three of the table?

Yes. The Monash LSS recommends the following in relation to the degree-stage column of Appendix F:

- Legal Research (items i and ii) is correctly identified as not requiring PLT assessment. This should be confirmed explicitly. Legal research is already deeply embedded in Priestley 11 teaching.
- Ethics items (i) and (ix) are correctly identified as not requiring PLT assessment. Law schools are better placed than a short capstone to cultivate the professional identity, humility and wellbeing awareness these items address.
- AI literacy should not be treated as a static requirement. Both law schools and PLT providers should be required to maintain current content subject to periodic accreditation review.
- The following Appendix F skills should remain primarily the responsibility of PLT providers and should not be required to be assessed in the degree: client communication and instructions; court processes and advocacy; negotiations (to entry-level professional standard); drafting legal documents; and record-keeping and matter management.

Q1.3 Would law schools be able to implement these changes by the beginning of the 2028 academic year, as proposed?

The 2028 commencement date is ambitious. The Monash LSS recommends a staged implementation with adequate consultation, resourcing commitments, and transition support, particularly for smaller and regional law schools.

Rushed implementation risks tokenistic compliance that produces no genuine improvement in graduate outcomes.

Reform of PLT — Practical Knowledge and Skills

Q2.1 Do you support the proposal to amend the PLT Competency Standards to reflect the categories and skills set out in the skills schedule at Appendix F as the practical knowledge and skills required at the time of admission?

Supported in principle, with the following qualifications:

- The Monash LSS does not oppose rationalising and focusing the PLT Competency Standards. The current standards are complex and over-specified.

Q2.2 Do you suggest any amendments to the categories or skills set out in the skills schedule at Appendix F?

Yes. See Q2.3 below for specific additions. In addition, the Monash LSS recommends:

- The Appendix F third column should be clearly labelled as illustrative suggestions, not minimum accreditation requirements.
- Trauma-informed practice (item vii of Ethics) should be explicitly required in PLT rather than 'may be appropriate'.

Q2.3 Do you think that the following areas need to be specifically included in the skills schedule: (i) CALD backgrounds; (ii) Sexual harassment; (iii) AML/CTF; (iv) ADR; (v) Negotiation skills; (vi) Drafting other legal documents?

(iii) AML/CTF obligations – Yes. With Tranche 2 reform now underway, legal practitioners will face significant new compliance obligations. Entry-level lawyers should have basic awareness of these obligations and their firm's responsibilities. This is appropriately a PLT-level competency.

(iv) ADR awareness – Yes. The profession's increasing reliance on mediation, conciliation and arbitration means that entry-level lawyers who cannot advise clients on ADR pathways are inadequately prepared.

(v) Negotiation skills – No additional expansion recommended. Negotiation in simple commercial and contract contexts is already included. The distinction between using negotiation to teach substantive law (appropriate in the degree) and certifying competency to negotiate on a client's behalf (appropriate in PLT) should be maintained.

(vi) Drafting other legal documents – No. The current scope (simple contract; Summons or Statement of Claim) is appropriate for an entry-level standard. Further additions risk recreating the over-specification of the current Competency Standards.

In addition, the Monash LSS recommends adding a pro bono and access to justice referral skill to the Client Relationship category: the ability to understand how to refer clients to pro bono and community legal services where the client cannot afford private representation.

Q2.4 Should the option for graduates to undertake Supervised Workplace Training as a way of completing PLT be retained?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q2.5 If the option of Supervised Workplace Training is to be retained, what aspects of the skills schedule should be delivered by an approved provider or as approved programmed training?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q2.6 Should there be any other amendments to Supervised Workplace Training?

No specific submission made on this question.

Reform of PLT — Delivery of PLT

Q3.1 Do you support the proposal for the LACC to amend the PLT Standards to reduce PLT courses to a minimum of four weeks in length, together with up to one week of pre-reading and viewing of preparatory materials?

Not supported without demonstrated equivalence.

The Monash LSS does not support reducing PLT to four weeks without robust evidence that this produces equivalent outcomes to longer programs. Professional judgment, ethical discernment, and practice-ready skills take time to develop. The positive results in Tasmania under a longer, fully in-person model suggest that duration matters.

Any reduction in duration must be conditioned on demonstrated equivalence, with particular attention to outcomes for graduates in smaller and regional practice settings.

Q3.2 Do you think that a four-week period is too short or too long for a PLT course, taking into account the other proposals in relation to law courses and post admission training?

Too short, in the current reform context.

The assumption that compressed PLT will be adequately supplemented by skills integration in the law degree and PALT is not warranted without national prescription, consistent resourcing, and independently assessed standards in place. Until those preconditions are met, a four-week capstone is insufficient.

Q4.1 Do you support the proposal for the LACC to amend the PLT Standards to provide that a PLT course may be, but does not have to be, delivered at a graduate diploma level or equivalent?

Not supported. PLT should retain Graduate Diploma classification.

The Monash LSS is strongly concerned that removing the Graduate Diploma requirement may result in loss of FEE-HELP eligibility for students. PLT costs currently range from \$6,000 to \$16,000. Students who cannot pay upfront depend on FEE-HELP to access PLT. If FEE-HELP is lost, a two-tiered system will result: those with financial means access a shorter, cheaper qualification, while others must take a longer award course and incur greater debt. This is directly at odds with equity principles.

The Committees should make an explicit commitment to preserving FEE-HELP eligibility before finalising these proposals.

Q4.2 If you support this proposal, would any additional safeguards be required for PLT providers (given they would not necessarily be regulated by TEQSA)?

As the Monash LSS does not support Proposal 4, we do not provide a response to this question.

Q5.1 Do you support the proposal that the LACC amends the PLT Standards to require that PLT coursework is to be delivered in person or, in exceptional cases (as determined by the PLT provider), by synchronous online delivery?

Supported.

Online and blended delivery should be recognised only as exceptional alternatives to in-person delivery for PLT coursework.

Q6.1 Do you support a review of the PLT Standards to ensure that assessments are rigorous in measuring whether students have developed the required knowledge and skills?

Yes, strongly supported.

Rigorous, independently assessed standards must be maintained regardless of delivery mode or program length. Assessment rigour is particularly critical if PLT is compressed: a shorter program must not also mean a shallower assessment standard.

Q6.2 Do you think that there is a need for the LACC to amend the PLT Standards to provide guidance on how incidents of academic misconduct should be recorded and reported to the admitting authorities in student conduct reports?

No specific submission made on this question.

Workplace Experience

Q7.1 Do you support the LACC retaining the requirement for a minimum of 15 days of workplace experience prior to admission?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q8.1 Do you support the LACC updating the Standards on PLT Workplace Experience to provide more information on the types of tasks and hours allocated to the development of specific skills for students completing their workplace experience?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q9.1 Do you support the LACC working with stakeholders to prepare guidance for supervisors on the supervision of workplace experience?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q10.1 Do you think that legal profession regulators should review the training that is offered to lawyers who wish to improve their supervisory skills?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q10.2 Do you think that there is a need for additional training for lawyers who wish to improve their supervisory skills?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q11.1 Do you support the LACC amending the Standards to allow a PLT provider to approve workplace experience being undertaken while the student is studying a law course?

Supported with caution. Allowing pre-degree or mid-degree experience to satisfy the workplace requirement creates flexibility, but paralegal or clerkship work completed years before PLT may not map meaningfully onto the skills being assessed. Any pre-degree experience counted toward the requirement should be assessed against the same standards as post-degree experience, with PLT providers required to make an affirmative determination of equivalence.

Q12.1 Do you support the LACC amending the PLT Standards to set out the obligations of PLT providers to assist students in sourcing workplace experience opportunities?

Yes, supported. PLT providers should have obligations to actively assist students in sourcing placements, with particular attention to students in regional locations, those with caring responsibilities, and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who cannot afford unpaid placements.

Post-Admission Legal Training (PALT)

Q13.1 Do you support a new requirement being imposed for early career lawyers to undertake 15 hours of PALT in each of the first two years of practice?

Supported in principle, with significant qualifications.

PALT as a complement to rigorous PLT is appropriate. However, PALT must not be used to justify a weaker pre-admission program. The pre-admission foundation must be adequate in its own right.

The 15-hour annual requirement is modest. Its adequacy depends entirely on the strength of the pre-admission program. If PLT is significantly compressed, 15 hours is insufficient to fill the gap.

Structural equity concerns must be addressed: lawyers in large firms with structured graduate programs will have materially better access to PALT than lawyers in sole practices, small regional firms, or community legal settings.

Q13.2 Do you think it is appropriate for this requirement to be implemented as a condition on practising certificates?

With reservations. Tying PALT to practising certificate conditions creates enforcement risk for new lawyers in unsupportive employment environments or who have not yet secured employment. The Committees must address what happens when an employer does not support attendance or when a new lawyer is unemployed.

Q14.1 Do you support the proposal for lawyers who practise exclusively as barristers to be exempt from the requirement to undertake PALT?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q15.1 Do you support the proposal that PALT should be delivered in areas identified and developed by PALT providers?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q15.2 Do you support the idea that lawyers can choose to undertake PALT in one practice area, or up to four different practice areas?

Supported. Flexibility in practice area selection is appropriate for early-career lawyers whose practice focus may not yet be settled.

Q16.1 Do you support the proposal that lawyers who are undertaking PALT should have further restrictions on their ability to practise?

No specific submission made on this question.

Delivery of PALT

Q17.1 Do you support the proposal that PALT should be delivered in person or, in exceptional circumstances, by synchronous online delivery?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q18.1 Do you support the proposal that the content and providers of PALT should be approved by the regulator that issues practising certificates to solicitors?

No specific submission made on this question.

Q19.1 Do you support the proposal that PALT should incorporate rigorous assessment?

No specific submission made on this question.

Clinical Legal Education

Q20.1 Do you support the Committees considering options for the inclusion of clinical legal education as a component of PLT?

Yes, supported. CLE is, at its best, one of the most educationally rich experiences available to law students. The Committees should explore how CLE can be incorporated in ways that maintain quality and equitable access.

Q20.2 If introduced, should clinical legal education be a mandatory component of PLT or an optional extra?

Optional, unless genuine national access can be guaranteed. CLE is not uniformly available across Australian law schools, and making it mandatory without guaranteeing access would be inequitable. CLE should remain optional unless and until access is consistent nationally.

Q20.3 If clinical legal education is optional, should completion of clinical legal education satisfy the requirements for PALT?

Supported, subject to demonstrated equivalence of learning outcomes and supervision standards. A poorly supervised clinic is not equivalent to a structured PLT placement.

Q20.4 Who should be responsible for delivering and supervising clinical legal education?

Law schools are best placed to deliver and supervise CLE within the academic stage. PLT providers and legal profession regulators should have oversight roles where CLE is used to satisfy PLT or PALT requirements.

Q20.5 Do you support the Committees inviting a working group to explore how clinical models of legal education could be employed as part of PLT?

Yes, strongly supported.

Supervision of Early Career Lawyers

Q21.1 Do you think there is a need for additional guidance to supervisors of early career lawyers, to improve supervision?

Yes, strongly supported. The national survey identified that supervision quality has declined, particularly in remote and hybrid work environments, with supervisors focused on output efficiency rather than genuine mentoring. Better standards are needed.

Guidance should include: minimum contact requirements; explicit expectations about mentoring (not only correction); access to support resources for early-career lawyers experiencing difficulty; and monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

Q21.2 Do you support legal profession regulators establishing a working group to develop additional guidance and resources for supervisors of lawyers as part of their supervised legal practice?

Yes, strongly supported. Better supervision standards benefit early-career lawyers, clients, and the profession. A working group approach is appropriate to ensure the guidance is developed with input from relevant stakeholders.

Implementation Timing

Q22.1 Do you support the proposed transitional arrangements and implementation timeframe set out at Proposal 22?

The proposed 2028 commencement date is ambitious and creates real risk for students currently in their second and third year of a law degree.

The Monash LSS advocates for a staged implementation framework with the following commitments:

- Students currently enrolled in PLT programs will not be adversely affected mid-course.
- Provider market stability will be monitored during transition.
- Implementation will be evaluated against student outcomes data and adjusted where evidence warrants.
- Smaller and regional law schools and PLT providers will receive targeted transition support.