Queensland Law Society

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Office of the President

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**The Hon Justice Francois Kunc**
Chair
Law Admissions Consultative Committee

By email: submissions@legalservicescouncil.org.au, [redacted]

Dear Justice Kunc

**Consultation on Practical Legal Training reforms**

The Queensland Law Society (QLS) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on reform of Practical Legal Training (PLT). Thank you too for the opportunity to engage in the consultation sessions on this topic. We have included material relevant to the matters discussed in those sessions in this submission. We would welcome a national conference to further engage with the proposals and alternatives raised in this submission and elsewhere in order to achieve positive and effective national reform.

As both the regulator and membership body for Queensland solicitors, the Society has a direct and enduring responsibility for the integrity of professional formation and the protection of clients and the public.

**QLS position and guiding principles for reform**

QLS supports reform that ensures newly admitted lawyers are competent, ethical, and prepared to commence supervised practice in a manner that protects clients and sustains public confidence in the legal profession.

We believe this is best achieved through a reform framework that is coherent, evidence-led and guided by genuine national consultation with all stakeholders that contribute to shaping new lawyers across the legal education continuum.

**The Society considers the following principles fundamental to any reform of legal professional formation:**

- Professional competence develops over time and across settings; reform must be sequenced across the continuum.
- Structural change should follow, not precede, careful diagnosis, design and piloting.
- National consistency is important, but it must not be achieved at the expense of effectiveness, quality or equity.
- Public protection must remain the foundational purpose of admission and early professional training.

**Fundamental issues with the proposed reform framework**

QLS has material concerns with the following fundamental aspects of the proposed reform approach:

1. The focus of the reforms must be the protection of the public by ensuring practitioners are genuinely ready for admission.

2. The presumption that PLT as a structural stage of professional formation is not fit for purpose is not supported by the evidence.
3. The value PLT can play as a 'safe' stage in professional formation is not recognised.
4. The scope and limitations of the evidence base used as the foundation of the reforms is not recognised.
5. There is a need for comprehensive national consultation that brings all stakeholders together.

Focus of proposed reforms

As a regulator QLS has a direct interest in the quality of professional formation at all stages of the legal education continuum and therefore supports meaningful reform where it strengthens that continuum and enhances the capability of the profession.

However, we are concerned that aspects of the proposed framework risk weakening rather than strengthening the formation of competent, adaptable lawyers. Reform to the legal education continuum must not be driven by expediency, cost reduction or employer convenience. Its primary purpose must be the protection of the public by ensuring practitioners are genuinely ready for admission and capable of meeting the demands of practice from the outset.

While cost is a legitimate consideration in implementation, it cannot be the guiding principle in determining the content, structure, or timing of professional qualification. Where the objective of qualification is the protection of the public, quality and readiness must remain paramount.

Presumption PLT is "not fit for purpose"

The consultation material provides clear evidence of dissatisfaction with aspects of PLT as it is currently delivered. However, the material goes further by asserting these findings establish that PLT is no longer fit for purpose.

This conclusion is not supported by the evidence. While the surveys demonstrate dissatisfaction with PLT *as currently delivered*, they do not establish that PLT as a concept or structural stage of professional formation is inherently unfit for purpose.

This distinction is critical as it goes directly to the diagnosis of the problem. The Society is concerned that proceeding based on a diagnosis that PLT is structurally unfit risks dismantling a stage of formation that can fulfill its purpose when delivered to an appropriate standard.

The Tasmanian evidence supports this position. The Centre for Legal Studies, delivering twenty-four weeks of in-person, practitioner-led PLT, produced a graduate satisfaction rating of 86% and an 82% net agreement from supervisors that PLT is useful for bridging the gap between academic studies and entering the legal profession.

Combined with the national survey results, the weight of the evidence suggests that current dissatisfaction is driven by how PLT is delivered, not by what PLT is. The Society therefore urges the Committees to ensure the diagnosis underpinning the proposed reforms is properly established before structural changes to the legal education continuum are considered.

Critical role of PLT in professional formation

PLT also serves an essential educative function that extends beyond skills acquisition. It provides a structured, protected environment in which emerging lawyers can integrate knowledge, skills and professional judgement prior to admission.

One survey respondent captured this precisely: *'Early career lawyers need PLT. They need somewhere they can learn practical skills outside their workplace where they are free to learn and make mistakes* *without being worried about what their employer will think and any consequences in relation to future work that they receive.'*

This function cannot be replicated post-admission. Once admitted, that protected space no longer exists given the way our legislative structures hold out admitted persons as competent Australian legal practitioners to clients of legal services (with the consequential personal remuneration and billing expectations that inevitably follow). There is no statutory form or position of 'trainee lawyer / solicitor' recognised in our legal professional regulatory legislation, beyond the imposition of a practising certificate condition for supervision.

Relocating formative learning into the workplace does not resolve deficiencies in professional formation - it risks compounding them by placing early-career lawyers under greater pressure at a critical stage of development.

<u>Scope and limitations of the evidence base</u>

While the Society values the survey work commissioned as part of this review, which provides useful insight into perceptions of PLT, the evidence base has limitations which have not been considered in the development of the proposed reforms. This includes:

a) reliance on satisfaction data rather than objective measures of competence

The consultation material does not directly assess whether graduates are competent but instead relies on perceived competence (through supervisor ratings) and participant satisfaction levels. While relevant, this is not a substitute for objective evidence of educational quality or readiness for practice.

Stronger indicators of risk such as professional indemnity claims, complaints, and disciplinary outcomes are acknowledged but not systematically used to assess either the current PLT model or the proposed reforms, creating a significant gap in the evidence base.

b) lack of representation within survey respondents

The survey data is not fully representative of the cohort the reformed system must serve. The majority of graduate respondents had prior legal experience and were already working in the profession while completing PLT, and this cohort reported lower satisfaction with PLT.

By contrast, graduates without prior legal experience, who are the most reliant on PLT for structured pre-admission formation, report consistently higher satisfaction with PLT. They place greater value on the coursework and express a stronger need for structured learning. Their views are underrepresented in the dataset.

This raises a material concern that the dissatisfaction driving the reform agenda may largely reflect those for whom PLT is least critical, while the needs of those who depend on it most are underweighted. There is also a risk of disproportionate impact on graduates from non-traditional backgrounds, including those in regional and rural areas or without professional networks, for whom a robust, regulated formation pathway is essential.

<u>Need for comprehensive national consultation</u>

The Society acknowledges the significant contribution of the NSW Legal Profession Admission Board in stimulating national discussion on PLT reform.

While that work is extremely valuable, adopting the proposals as the template for national reform substitutes a single jurisdictional review for the deliberative national process required for reform of this scale. There are jurisdictional differences and issues which require proper consideration as a part of a sustainable and effective national educational framework.

As a result, the consultation risks becoming a question of whether to adopt the NSW model nationally, rather than an open inquiry into the optimal approach.

National consistency should not come at the expense of getting the reform right, nor should it be a bargaining chip to achieve a reform outcome. A genuine national reform process should include comparative analysis, piloting, and stakeholder-led exploration of alternative models, including options that strengthen quality within the existing structure.

As discussed at the consultation sessions, we have suggested an alternative model and potential next steps as set out in our **Appendix A** to this submission. We would welcome the opportunity to engage with that proposal further in the national interest.

### Response to individual consultation proposals

The Society's response to the individual proposals is informed by the principles set out earlier in this submission.

Viewed through this lens, the proposals fall into three broad categories:

1. Proposals the Society supports;
2. Proposals the Society opposes in their current form but which it sees reforms are required subject to appropriate design conditions and sequencing; and
3. Proposals the Society cannot support in the current context.

This approach reflects the Society's position that effective reform is not a binary choice between change and stasis, but a matter of getting the *right* changes in the *right order*.

### Proposals QLS supports

The Society supports reforms that directly address the quality and consistency issues in PLT delivery identified by the consultation evidence and that strengthen assurance of competence at the point of admission, without introducing new risks for clients or inequities for graduates.

Importantly, they respond to the delivery-level shortcomings and variability highlighted by the review without weakening the role PLT plays in the legal education continuum.

They include:

- **Proposal 6: Ensuring rigorous assessment in PLT**

  The Society strongly supports strengthening assessment standards to ensure PLT completion genuinely signals minimum competence. This includes performance-based assessment, clear and validated criteria, limits on resubmission, and national moderation across providers.

- **Proposals 8 and 9: Update workplace experience standards and develop guidance for supervisors**

  The Society supports clearer, more structured standards for workplace experience and practical guidance for supervisors. These measures respond directly to survey findings by clarifying expectations and reducing uncertainty when certifying competence.

- **Proposal 10: Reviewing and enhancing training available to supervisors of early career lawyers**

  The Society supports improving access to supervisor training, delivered through existing CPD frameworks, to enhance the quality of supervision without creating disincentives to employ or supervise graduates.

### Proposals QLS opposes in their current form

The Society supports the *direction* of the following reforms but considers that they cannot be supported without further design work, sequencing and safeguards before they are implemented to achieve the objectives of these reforms. These include:

- **Proposal 1: Embedding practical skills development within the law degree**

  The Society supports the principle that practical skills should be progressively developed from undergraduate study through to admission.

  However, as noted earlier, this reform must be accompanied by appropriate resourcing, nationally consistent assessment standards, and clear articulation of how skills taught in law degrees connect to PLT and post-admission learning.

- **Proposal 2: Reviewing and updating PLT competency or skills frameworks**

  The Society supports reviewing existing competency standards, subject to key safeguards to ensure that changes strengthen—rather than weaken—professional formation and public protection. Such a review must include the following elements:

  - Any replacement framework must be properly mapped across the continuum to demonstrate alignment between proposed competencies, undergraduate legal education, PLT, and post-admission development.
  - Development of valid and reliable mechanisms to assess competence against the new standards.
  - Completion of foundational design work (including mapping and assessment design) prior to adopting the framework.
  - Retention of minimum competence assurance to ensure that reduced prescriptiveness will not undermine consistent, verifiable competence at admission.

  With these principles in mind, the Society suggests an enhanced re-framing of the task-based approach reflected in the current Appendix F to the consultation material.

  Many of the activities reflected in Appendix F can be understood as observable manifestations of underlying professional capability. However, a task-based framework does not adequately capture the contextual judgement, reasoning, and relational competence required to perform those activities and others effectively in practice.

  We have therefore proposed a reorganisation of those skills as set out in in our **Appendix C** to this submission and would be pleased to engage further upon that topic.

- **Proposal 5: In-person delivery of PLT, subject to appropriate geographic access provisions**

  The Society supports in-person instruction as a core feature of professional formation, as both the national survey evidence and the Tasmanian experience demonstrate materially stronger outcomes where PLT is delivered face-to-face and by practitioners.

  However, mandatory in-person delivery creates genuine barriers for graduates in regional, rural, and remote Queensland. This is a significant public interest issue as it directly affects the distribution of legal services in those communities. We have included in our **Appendix B** to this submission an overview of the spatial demography of Queensland and the solicitors' branch of the legal profession. This indicates that there are significant challenges in the Queensland context of a disparate population and geography.

  The Society therefore supports this proposal subject to explicit recognition of geographic remoteness as a qualifying basis for asynchronous online delivery, a requirement for PLT providers to offer in-person programs in major regional centres; and the development of a nationally consistent framework defining what constitutes an exception.

- **Proposal 11: Allowing limited recognition of prior workplace experience during the law degree**

  The Society supports acknowledging prior experience where it demonstrably meets learning outcomes, but not as a substitute for the entire minimum requirement. Experience must be appropriately timed, sufficiently recent, and authentically mapped to competencies to preserve the cumulative nature of professional formation and avoid entrenching inequities of access.

- **Proposal 12: Requiring PLT providers to assist students in sourcing workplace experience**

  The Society supports the intent of improving access and equity but notes that effectiveness will depend on the specificity of provider obligations. Clear minimum standards are necessary to ensure this reform delivers substantive assistance rather than formal compliance.

  In each case, the Society's position reflects the need for careful design to ensure that reforms strengthen, rather than dilute, assurance of competence at admission.

**Proposals that cannot be supported in the current context**

The Society considers that the following proposals, as currently framed, cannot be supported in the current context. This is not a rejection of reform objectives, but a reflection of the regulatory risks associated with premature structural change in the proposal as advanced.

These proposals include:

- **Proposal 3: Reducing PLT to four weeks**

  The Society recognises the objective of this proposal: to ensure that PLT is focused, relevant, and better aligned with the realities of early practice.

  However, the Society is not persuaded that a four-week PLT program can provide the level of assured competence required at the point of admission. While the evidence demonstrates dissatisfaction with current delivery, it does not establish that a reduction in the formation period would produce better results.

  The proposal also depends on several interrelated reforms, including effective skills integration in law degrees, robust post-admission training, and consistently high-quality workplace supervision, all operating as intended. If any element underperforms, a four-week PLT risks leaving newly admitted lawyers inadequately prepared, transferring risk from the system to clients and supervisors.

  For these reasons, the Society considers this proposal premature. Until there is evidence that a significantly shorter PLT can deliver equivalent or stronger protective outcomes, the Society does not support reducing PLT to four weeks.

- **Proposal 4: Removing the graduate diploma requirement and TEQSA oversight**

  The Society recognises the objective of increasing flexibility in PLT delivery and reducing unnecessary regulatory burden.

  However, removing the Graduate Diploma requirement and TEQSA oversight risks weakening established, independent quality assurance at a critical point in professional formation, which admitting authorities are not resourced to replace.

  In practical terms, this proposal replaces a well-understood standards-based quality framework with an untested alternative, without demonstrating that public protection will be strengthened or that costs for graduates will meaningfully decrease. The removal of diploma status may also reduce access to FEE-HELP, shifting cost rather than alleviating it.

  Structural change is premature without demonstrated equivalence or improvement and should be preceded by piloting or the development of a nationally agreed alternative oversight framework.

- **Proposal 7: Retaining fifteen days as the minimum workplace experience requirement**

The Society recognises the objective of maintaining a minimum workplace experience requirement as a practical component of PLT. However, the Society is not persuaded that fifteen days represents an adequate or evidence-based minimum for the learning outcomes workplace experience is designed to achieve.

The essential factor in determining placement length is how long it will take to develop the competencies that placement is meant to produce (Cooper, Orrell and Bowden, 2010; Billett, 2012), and no such assessment has been undertaken.

The Society is also concerned that retaining a minimum of fifteen days' work experience while simultaneously reducing PLT coursework to four weeks produces the lowest total pre-admission formation quantum in the history of the current system. No comparable regulated profession operates on this basis.

For these reasons, the Society considers that the minimum workplace experience requirement should be <u>increased</u>, not retained, consistent with the survey evidence and with the Society's broader concern that the reform package reduces rather than strengthens pre-admission formation.

- **Proposals 13 and 15: Post-admission legal training**

  The Society supports recognition that professional competence continues to develop after admission and that structured post-admission training forms part of a lifelong learning continuum.

  However, the proposed PALT model assumes levels of workplace supervision and training capacity that the evidence suggests are not consistently available, particularly in small and regional practices, creating risk for both practitioners and clients.

  Reliance on limited training hours and post-admission assessment risks blurring the role of admission by permitting practice before core competence is fully established. Post-admission training should extend and consolidate competence, not compensate for reduced pre-admission formation.

  There is a legitimate discussion to be had about post admission legal training in the context of enhancing professional competence rather than as a substitute for competence at admission.

- **Proposal 16: Additional practice restrictions for lawyers undertaking PALT**

  The Society recognises that practice restrictions are proposed as a safeguard to manage risk during post-admission training and acknowledges the intent to protect clients.

  However, admitting a lawyer to practice while imposing contingent restrictions based on outstanding competence assessment raises conceptual and practical concerns. Admission is a threshold act that signals qualification; qualifications that remain conditional undermine clarity for clients and employers and complicate regulatory enforcement.

  In busy practice environments, particularly in small firms, restricted lawyers may nevertheless be required to undertake tasks beyond their preparedness, creating precisely the risk the restrictions are intended to mitigate. The proposal may also disproportionately impact regional areas where firms are likely to be smaller and less able to accommodate and supervise a restricted practitioner.

  The Society considers that any restrictions regime requires detailed co-design with regulators and the profession before adoption and that competence-based assessment with career-limiting consequences is more appropriately located pre-admission rather than post-admission.

- **Proposal 22: Implementation timing**

  Reform of this scope affects universities, providers, regulators, employers and students. Effective implementation requires time, planning, and resourcing.

  As stated earlier, the Society's position is that reform of this magnitude should proceed deliberately, guided by evidence, informed by educational theory, and attentive to the realities of legal practice across all jurisdictions.

The Society does not believe this can be effectively achieved under the proposed 2028 implementation timeline as it does not allow sufficient time for curriculum redesign, assessment validation, piloting or statewide delivery planning, particularly in Queensland's regional and remote contexts.

Universities, providers and regulators operate within fixed governance and resourcing cycles, and the consultation material itself acknowledges that key design elements remain undeveloped. Proceeding to national implementation before these matters are resolved creates unnecessary system risk.

At a practical level, depending on the final reform adopted, the practising profession may also need to introduce significant changes within their businesses, including supervisors undertaking further CPD, and implementing training programs within their firms for their newly admitted solicitors.

A phased approach which properly accounts for the time required to complete the activities outlined above would reduce implementation risk and better protect students and clients during transition.

### Cost, equity and regional access

The Society supports efforts to reduce unnecessary barriers to entry and recognises that cost and accessibility are legitimate concerns for graduates.

However, several proposals risk shifting costs rather than reducing them, from FEE-HELP-supported coursework to unfunded post-admission obligations, employers, or regulators, without full modelling of system-wide impact. Regional and rural practitioners and graduates may be disproportionately affected.

These matters are further canvassed in our demographic material in our **Appendix B** to this submission. For proposals that may inadvertently negatively impact equity and geographic access, the Society submits that further discussion, piloting and re-sequencing reform is the prudent regulatory course.

Taken together, the proposals the Society supports are those that improve quality, consistency and supervision within the existing continuum. The proposals that raise concern are those that compress or relocate formation stages before evidence, design and implementation readiness are established.

### Conclusion

The Queensland Law Society supports meaningful reform to the legal education continuum where it strengthens professional formation, enhances competence at admission, and upholds the fundamental objective of public protection. We support national reform that is considered and well directed toward addressing the issues that have been raised through the various survey and feedback processes on the current legal education continuum.

However, the current reform package risks moving beyond targeted improvement into premature structural change. The evidence does not support the conclusion that PLT, as a stage in professional formation, is inherently unfit for purpose. Rather, the weight of the evidence points to variability in delivery and assessment as the primary drivers of dissatisfaction. Effective reform must be grounded in a clear and properly evidenced diagnosis of the problem.

The Society does not support reforms that reduce the duration of PLT, shift formative learning into the post-admission environment, or remove established quality assurance mechanisms, as this risks diminishing the assurance of competence at the point of admission. In doing so, they transfer risk from the system to clients, employers, and the profession, at a critical stage in a lawyer's development.

The Society strongly supports those reforms that lift the quality and consistency of PLT delivery, strengthen assessment, and improve workplace supervision. It also supports, in principle, a more integrated approach to skills development across the educational continuum.

However, more complex structural reforms require careful design, sequencing, piloting, and genuine national consultation to ensure they achieve their intended outcomes without unintended consequences.

Reform should not be framed as a choice between change and the status quo. The priority must be getting the right reforms, in the right sequence, grounded in evidence and focused on maintaining public confidence.

QLS urges a measured, staged approach that supports the formation of competent, ethical, practice-ready lawyers while ensuring any structural change demonstrably improves outcomes for the profession and the community. We wish to be a part of achieving that objective.

We would be pleased to discuss this submission and to be included in further consultation as a part of this important work.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Peter Jolly
**President**

## Appendix A - Suggested alternatives and next steps

The Society's concerns about the proposed reforms are not an argument for the status quo. Consistent with the Society's position that reform must be sequenced and directed to strengthening competence at the point of admission, QLS proposes an alternative model for the legal education continuum. This model is designed to address the capability gaps identified in the consultation material while maintaining the integrity of admission and avoiding the risks associated with premature structural disruption.

### A restructured legal education continuum

The Society considers that the appropriate question is not whether components of the current pathway should be reduced or relocated, but how the continuum should be restructured to ensure competence is progressively developed, tested, and reinforced across stages.

Under this model, the continuum would comprise:

- Undergraduate legal education: foundational legal knowledge, with embedded and assessed practice capabilities appropriate for the undergraduate stage as determined by: mapped sequencing across the academic and PLT stages, due consideration of the capacity of all law schools to provide this learning at the standard required, and a reconsideration of the length of the undergraduate law degree before further loading the curriculum.
- A substantive, structured PLT stage of sufficient duration which must be provided as an immersive capstone experience or simulated professional learning environment – not further standard coursework - designed to integrate knowledge, skills, and professional judgement in a protected learning environment prior to admission supported by a structure that goes beyond the specification of tasks (see table in Appendix C below).
- A reconceptualisation of workplace experience as a purposeful and intentionally structured continuous engagement with legal work, not as a separate requirement, but integrated into the continuum, with proximity to actual matters sufficient to develop judgement and contextual reasoning and structured supervision frameworks, including training and support for supervisors, and assessed not by whether a minimum number of days has been completed, but whether required learning outcomes have been achieved.
- A defined supervised practice period post-admission: designed to consolidate and extend capability established at admission - not to substitute for it - supported by structured supervision, clear learning expectations, and ongoing professional learning directed to the practitioner's specific practice context. It is not a substitute for pre-admission formation, nor a mechanism for remediating gaps that adequate PLT should have addressed.

The Society's position is that pre-admission formation should be strengthened in depth and quality, not reduced in duration.

This model retains PLT as a distinct and necessary stage in building sufficient competence prior to admission. Admission must remain a clear threshold act where competence is demonstrated before it, not assessed after it, and post-admission requirements are directed to extension and development, not to remediation of foundational capability that adequate pre-admission formation should have assured.

### Diverse pathways

The Society is supportive of retaining and expanding the availability of Supervised Workplace Training both from an equity and access perspective. Diverse qualification pathways recognise the varied circumstances, prior experience, learning styles, and career trajectories of law graduates. A one-size-fits-all model does not reflect the reality of the cohort the profession seeks to serve. Some graduates enter PLT with substantial pre-admission legal experience, including extended employment in legal practice settings, while others rely on PLT as their first meaningful exposure to legal work. A well-designed framework should be capable of recognising prior experience where it demonstrably meets defined learning outcomes, while ensuring that all graduates undertake sufficient structured workplace learning to achieve minimum competence. This requires an approach that is both flexible and standards-based, preserving equity of access while maintaining consistent assurance of competence at the point of admission.

## Sequencing, piloting, and implementation

Consistent with the principles outlined earlier in this submission, the Society considers that the pre-cursor to any reform should be proceeded by the sequenced mapping of professional knowledge and capabilities across the continuum, design of rigorous assessment approaches, and the development of a structured supervision framework.

It is the minimum required to ensure that structural reform is informed by validated design and demonstrated outcomes, and that the institutions, practitioners, and students who will be required to implement it have adequate time and support to do so well.

Before any structural reform is mandated, QLS suggests that LACC and the relevant admitting authorities should establish a collaborative implementation support function (similar to what is happening in higher education to equip the sector to deal with assessment in the age of Generative AI) that brings together PLT providers, law schools, and the profession, to develop a shared understanding of the teaching of professional capabilities, disseminate good practice in assessment design and simulated learning environments, and build sector capacity before compliance is required. This approach recognises that significant educational change requires sector readiness, not just regulatory mandate, and that the quality of implementation depends on institutions understanding not just what is required but how to deliver it well.

## Appendix B - Spatial Demography in Queensland

The spatial demography of the Queensland legal profession is affected by distinct and unique factors that are critical to implementing any successful change. These factors relate to:

- Geography
- Demographics
- Economics.

Any reform initiative must take into account these factors to be successful in this jurisdiction, as they can constrain or facilitate effective delivery of services and programs.

### Geography

Queensland is a vast state with a truly disparate population. Distances and the location of population centres mean that a centralised model for service delivery is highly problematic. By way of example, the distance between Brisbane and Cairns is 1694 km, while the distance between Brisbane and Melbourne is 1776km. The most northernly solicitor resides in Weipa, 2486 km from Brisbane.

### Demographics

The Queensland population is more decentralised than in any other jurisdiction with a significant population residing outside the main population centre of South East Queensland.

ABS 2024 figures demonstrate that 1,671,151 people live outside of the South East corner of Queensland, compared to 3,912,682 people in the main population centre. For our purposes we have assumed that 'SEQ' is composed of all population from Coolangatta to Noosa and west to the Lockyer Valley.

Outside of SEQ, population is distributed widely across the geography of the State:

| Regions | Population |
|---|---:|
| Cairns | 269,399 |
| Central Queensland | 241,735 |
| Darling Downs - Maranoa | 133,617 |
| Mackay - Isaac - Whitsunday | 192,302 |
| Queensland - Outback | 82,427 |
| Toowoomba | 173,649 |
| Townsville | 247,234 |
| Wide Bay | 330,788 |
| **Grand Total** | **1,671,151** |

The spatial demography of the solicitors' branch of the profession broadly matches the population of the State, with the highest concentration of solicitors in the South East corner and a significant cohort residing outside of SEQ.

| South-East QLD Regions | Practitioners in South-East QLD |
|---|---:|
| Brisbane - East [SA4] | 147 |
| Brisbane - Inner City [SA4] | 8,909 |
| Brisbane - North [SA4] | 251 |
| Brisbane - South [SA4] | 422 |
| Brisbane - West [SA4] | 295 |
| Gold Coast [SA4] | 1,447 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Ipswich [SA4] | 235 |
| Logan - Beaudesert [SA4] | 192 |
| Moreton Bay - North [SA4] | 116 |
| Moreton Bay - South [SA4] | 91 |
| Sunshine Coast [SA4] | 545 |
| **Grand Total** | **12,650** |

| Outside of South-East QLD Regions | Practitioners outside South-East QLD |
|---|---|
| Cairns [SA4] | 329 |
| Darling Downs - Maranoa [SA4] | 68 |
| Fitzroy [SA4] | 176 |
| Interstate [SA4] | 599 |
| Mackay [SA4] | 130 |
| Virtual Practice / NULL | 115 |
| Overseas [SA4] | 430 |
| Queensland - Outback [SA4] | 30 |
| Queensland (Uncategorised) [SA4] | 2 |
| Toowoomba [SA4] | 279 |
| Townsville [SA4] | 349 |
| Wide Bay [SA4] | 176 |
| **Grand Total** | **2,683** |

Similarly with population, the Queensland legal profession is disparate with significant regional and remote cohorts of practitioners. This necessitates distributed and flexible means of program delivery across the geography and demography of Queensland.

### Economics

The Queensland solicitors' branch of the profession is composed of approximately 2853 restricted practising certificate holders and 12,424 unrestricted practising certificate holders. The restricted cohort generally represents employees under supervised practice conditions. This cohort is not isolated to private law practices and is found across all organisation types:

| Organisation Types | Count of Practitioners PC Supervision |
|---|---|
| Community Legal Service | 157 |
| Corporate Employer (inhouse) | 195 |
| Educational Institute | 4 |
| Government (Agency, Commission, Local Govt) | 50 |
| Government Department | 189 |
| Incorporated Legal Practice | 1235 |
| Law Firm Partnership | 647 |
| Law Society | 4 |
| Legal Aid Commission | 75 |
| Multi-Disciplinary Practice | 206 |
| ATSILS & Representing Corporation | 10 |
| Sole Principal Firm | 81 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Grand Total** | **2853** |

While private practice remains a cornerstone of the private legal profession in Queensland it is no longer the sole pathway into a legal career. Accordingly legal education reforms need to consider the broader scope of supervised practice alternatives.

Moreover, the economics of the private practice Queensland legal profession weigh heavily upon the likely success and nature of any reform initiative. Presently many private practice law firms do employ supervised employees, however there is a significant cohort of firms that do not. Anecdotal evidence suggests the cohort of firms who choose not to engage supervised legal practitioners is growing and is founded in the economics and job readiness of those newly admitted practitioners.

| Private Practice Law Firms | Count of Firms | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Law Practices with one or more restricted PC holders | 796 | 53.7% |
| Law Practices with no restricted PC holders | 686 | 46.3% |

These figures can be broken down by private law firm type and indicate that law firm partnerships and sole principal firms are, in the majority, choosing not to employee restricted employee legal practitioners:

| Row Labels | Law Practices with restricted employees | Law Practices without restricted employees |
|---|---|---|
| Incorporated Legal Practice | 617 | 455 |
| Law Firm Partnerships | 102 | 137 |
| Multi-Disciplinary Practice | 11 | 2 |
| Sole Principal Firm | 66 | 92 |
| **Grand Total** | **796** | **686** |

These figures indicate that while the landscape for reform of formative legal education is receptive, there are structural issues which need to be properly considered and addressed in any model for reform, if the initiative is to be successful in the Queensland context.

## Appendix C - An alternative to Consultation Paper Appendix F

The Society considers that the task-based approach reflected in Consultation Paper Appendix F could be strengthened to better reflect the realities of competent legal practice. While many of the identified activities are useful as observable indicators of performance, a task-based framework alone does not adequately capture the contextual judgement, reasoning, and relational competence required to perform those activities effectively in practice.

The Queensland Law Society therefore proposes a reorganisation of those skills into a structure that reflects how they are actually deployed in practice, shifting reform from *"Can the graduate perform task X?"* to *"Can the graduate exercise judgement and perform effectively in context?"*.

Under this approach, the Society proposes a structure comprising five integrated and interdependent domains, recognising that competent legal practice requires the simultaneous application of knowledge, judgement, execution, and relational capability in context. Importantly, this approach does not discard the activities currently reflected in Appendix F. Rather, it situates them within a structure that more accurately reflects the way those activities are performed in practice and provides a stronger foundation for the design, delivery, and assessment of professional formation across the legal education continuum.

| Illustrative tasks drawn from Appendix F | Limitations of a task-based approach | Capability Domain | Explanation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Identify legal issues; interpret instructions; recognise ethical considerations; understand client objectives | Performing these tasks well assumes the practitioner already knows what matters in any given situation. Often in practice, context influences what is required to make that determination. | **Contextual discernment**: the ability to understand what matters in a legal situation, including identifying relevant issues, risks, and priorities | This domain makes explicit the capability that determines which issues, risks, facts, and contextual considerations are relevant. It is the precondition for performing the listed tasks competently. |
| Advise clients; negotiate outcomes; select legal pathways | The framework lists the activity but does not address the reasoning that underpins it. There is no mechanism for assessing whether the practitioner can evaluate options and make defensible decisions under uncertainty. | **Professional judgement**: the ability to evaluate options and make defensible decisions under conditions of uncertainty | This domain captures the evaluative process: weighing alternatives, assessing legal and practical risk, and making decisions where there is no single correct answer. |
| Legal research; draft documents; prepare advice; advocacy; file management | Performing these tasks well includes the standard of execution required i.e. whether the graduate can execute them accurately, efficiently, and in a manner aligned to the purpose and strategy of the matter. | **Practice execution**: the ability to translate judgement into effective legal work | This domain emphasises that competence lies not merely in completing tasks but in executing them in a manner that serves the client and the matter |

| Illustrative tasks drawn from Appendix F | Limitations of a task-based approach | Capability Domain | Explanation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Communication; client interaction; working with diverse clients | The framework treats these as discrete skills rather than as an integrated capability required to manage client expectations, respond to supervision, and navigate workplace structures and pressures. | **Relational navigation**: the ability to operate effectively with clients, supervisors, and within organisational systems | This domain reflects the reality of practice, including managing competing demands, determining what is expected, responding to feedback, collaborating with colleagues and clients, and navigating workplace constraints. |
| Professional responsibility; ethical conduct | The framework addresses conduct obligations but the broader self-regulatory capability required to function sustainably in practice, including managing workload, responding to uncertainty, and developing professional identity over time remains implicit. | **Self-regulation and development**: the ability to manage oneself as a professional, reflect on performance, and continue developing capability over time | This domain addresses the capability that underpins long-term professional functioning, not merely compliance with conduct rules at a point in time. |