

Acknowledgements

- Good morning, everyone.
- Thank you, Ms Harris and Mr Bhojani, for your kind welcome.
- I would like to add my acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation.
- I too pay my respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people joining us today.
- I acknowledge:
 - the Honourable Robert French AC, former Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia;
 - members of the Legal Services Council and the Admissions Committee;
 - representatives of all regulatory bodies and peak bodies from all Uniform Law jurisdictions; and
 - representatives of the legal profession peak bodies and regulators from other jurisdictions who are joining us here in Perth and online.
- I welcome all delegates attending in Perth and those participating remotely.

Introduction

- I am very pleased to be here this morning on behalf of the Attorney General, the Honourable Dr Tony Buti MLA.
- The Attorney General sends his apologies that other commitments prevent him from joining you today, and his best wishes for a productive and engaging conference.
- It is a privilege to welcome you to Perth on his behalf.
- I thank the Legal Services Council and everyone involved in organising and delivering today's program.
- On behalf of the Attorney General, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Stephen Bray on his formal appointment as the CEO of the Legal Services Council and Commissioner for Uniform Legal Services Regulation.
- Mr Bray has served in both roles in an acting capacity since June 2025, and this appointment recognises the leadership and contribution you have already made to the work of the Legal Services Council and the Uniform Law Scheme. Congratulations Stephen.
- This conference brings together people from across the legal profession - practitioners, regulators, admissions authorities, professional associations, and peak bodies.

- It also brings together representatives from the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety, the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and the WA Department of Justice.
- Those representatives continue to provide policy advice, facilitate legislative reform and progress all Uniform Law matters across the three participating jurisdictions.
- That breadth of representation reflects an essential feature of the Uniform Law framework.
- Its effective operation depends upon continued cooperation and support among the people and institutions responsible for administering, applying and working within it.
- Today provides an important opportunity to exchange practical experience, consider emerging challenges and strengthen the relationships that support the Scheme.

Main points

Western Australia – four years in the Scheme

- This month marks just over four years since Western Australia joined the Legal Profession Uniform Law Scheme on 1 July 2022.
- It is therefore timely to reflect on WA's journey into the Scheme and our experience as a participating jurisdiction.
- I acknowledge and thank the former Attorney General, the Honourable John Quigley, for his leadership in pursuing WA's participation in the Uniform Law Scheme.
- WA's entry was the culmination of several years of policy and legislative development work, supported by close intergovernmental cooperation among the three participating States.
- Before commencement, WA participated in the work of the Legal Services Council and the Admissions Committee through observer arrangements.
- Those arrangements allowed Western Australian perspectives to be understood and considered before the State formally adopted the Scheme.
- WA's entry increased the proportion of Australian legal practitioners covered by the Uniform Law from about 68 per cent to 75 per cent.
- Four years on, one of the lessons from our participation is that uniformity does not mean rigidity.
- A strong uniform framework provides consistency and certainty, while also remaining capable of responding to changes in the legal, regulatory and professional environment.
- It must also be able to respond proportionately – whether the issue requires a minor correction or a more substantial change.
- Two recent Uniform Rule amendments demonstrate that capacity.

Legal Profession Uniform Admission Amendment (Administrative Review Tribunal) Rule 2025

- The first was a targeted and consequential amendment to the Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules, to update a legislative reference to the newly established Administrative Rule Tribunal.
- The amendment itself was straightforward: it replaced the name of the former Tribunal with the name of its successor.
- But the change was important in ensuring that the Admission Rules continued to reflect the current legal and institutional landscape.
- The Legal Services Council consulted the Chief Justices and admitting authorities of the participating jurisdictions.
- All stakeholders either supported the amendment or raised no concerns.
- Because the amendment was minor and non-material, it was progressed without public consultation, while still giving the authorities responsible for admission an opportunity to consider it. The Standing Committee of Attorneys-General provided their support to proceed.
- This was a proportionate response: the necessary expertise was brought together, the relevant authorities were consulted and a consequential change was progressed efficiently.

AML/CTF Act

- The second example was more substantial and time-critical.
- The Commonwealth's tranche two reforms to the *Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006* commenced on 1 July 2026, just over three weeks ago.
- Those reforms raised important questions about the interaction between solicitors' statutory obligations and their existing professional and ethical duties.
- These included obligations concerning customer due diligence, suspicious matter reporting and tipping-off prohibitions, and professional duties relating to confidentiality, loyalty and acting in a client's best interests.
- In response, the Law Council of Australia developed draft amendments to the Legal Profession Uniform Law Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules 2015 and the Legal Profession Uniform Legal Practice (Solicitors) Rules 2015.
- The Law Council undertook consultation, including with professional and regulatory stakeholders.
- The Legal Services Council, the Law Council and the participating jurisdictions then worked within a compressed timeframe to finalise, make and publish the amendments.
- This allowed the amended rules to commence alongside the Commonwealth reforms and provided greater certainty to the legal profession as the new obligations took effect.
- This was not simply a technical response to legislative change and required careful consideration of the practical and ethical questions faced by legal

practitioners, and of how the professional rules should operate alongside new obligations brought by the Commonwealth. OFFICIAL

What the examples demonstrate

- These two examples differ considerably in scale.
- One involved a targeted, consequential amendment.
- The other required a substantive response to major Commonwealth reforms affecting the day-to-day obligations of legal practitioners.
- But both demonstrate the same underlying strength of the Uniform Law Scheme.
- Through the Scheme, jurisdictions, regulators, admitting authorities, professional bodies and practitioners are able to work together to:
 - identify an issue;
 - draw on the appropriate expertise;
 - develop a proportionate response; and
 - implement that response consistently across participating jurisdictions.
- The effectiveness of the Scheme therefore depends on more than having uniform legislation.
- It depends on the quality of the relationships among the institutions and people responsible for making the Scheme work.
- WA's experience over the past four years has demonstrated the value of being part of that shared framework.
- It enables WA to contribute its own perspectives and experience, while benefiting from the combined expertise of the other participating jurisdictions, the Legal Services Council, regulators, admissions authorities and the profession.

Future reform to the Uniform Law

- Like any regulatory framework, the Uniform Law Scheme must reflect on lessons learned and improve over time, to meet the needs of the legal profession, local regulators and the community.
- I understand that there is significant work underway for the forward planning for important legislative reform of the Scheme, which is essential to ensure it remains responsive.
- I would like to acknowledge the important planning being done by the Legal Services Council and the three justice departments to continually improve the framework and the related processes for effecting legislative change.
- The next phase of the Uniform Law Scheme will continue to depend on careful policy work, constructive engagement and strong cooperative relationships between participating jurisdictions that have supported success of the Scheme to date.

Concluding remarks

- Four years after Western Australia joined the Uniform Law Scheme, the benefits are becoming increasingly tangible.

- The Scheme provides a consistent regulatory foundation across participating jurisdictions.
- At the same time, it has demonstrated it can adapt when the legal and regulatory environment changes.
- Importantly, uniformity does not require the removal of all local responsibility.
- The Uniform Law preserves a significant degree of local involvement and independence through the designation of local regulatory authorities.
- The challenge is therefore to maintain an appropriate balance: achieving consistency where it produces genuine benefits, while recognising the role of local institutions and the circumstances of individual jurisdictions.
- Today's program reflects many of the issues that will shape the Scheme's next phase—from artificial intelligence and changing patterns of complaints, to regulatory boundaries, professional supervision and the Legal Services Council's future strategic priorities.
- I encourage you to use today's discussions to:
 - share experience openly;
 - test assumptions;
 - consider different regulatory and professional perspectives; and
 - identify opportunities for effective and proportionate improvement.
- The longer-term aspiration of a more nationally consistent framework remains compelling. I encourage other jurisdictions who have not yet decided to join to consider the benefits of being part of the Uniform Law Scheme.
- The Standing Committee of the Attorneys-General will continue to monitor the Scheme to ensure it continues to be an effective regulatory regime and fulfills its objectives as set out in the legislation.
- On behalf of Western Australia's Attorney General, the Hon. Dr Tony Buti MLA, and the Western Australian Government, I thank the Legal Services Council for convening this conference.
- I again welcome all delegates to Perth and wish you a productive and engaging day.
- It is now my pleasure to officially open the 2026 Uniform Law Conference.
- Thank you.