

Message from the acting CEO and Commissioner, Stephen Bray

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



I have been in the role as acting CEO and Commissioner for almost 5 months now. I've been really impressed by the calibre of the work within the Council and valuable collaboration from stakeholders.

I've now met all of my regulatory counterparts in all Australian jurisdictions. It's great to see the collegiate way in which we work all together to share knowledge and opinions.

In particular, the Council of Regulatory Officers conference in Christchurch was a great way to connect, learn from each other, and get a feel for the issues down the track (more on that conference in the newsletter below!)

The big news this week is the release of the national survey on practical legal training. There has been quite a bit of attention on this issue. I'm very keen to see the results of this to inform the next stage of the discussion on substantive reform, building on the work done by other jurisdictions (including the ongoing review in NSW).

We've also seen some good progress on major priorities for the Council, including in our review of Accreditation Standards for Universities, and continuing work on cost disclosure. In addition to that, the Council and Secretariat have continued work on various Rule amendments – ranging from CPD issues to account for equality and wellbeing, and ongoing work on conduct rules relating to judicial officers who return to practice.

All the best.

S.

National PLT survey launched

The national survey on practical legal training (PLT) is now live and open to legal practitioners in each state and territory, other than New South Wales, to have their say. Independent research agency Urbis developed the survey for the Admissions Committee

and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (LACC). In light of the survey that has already been undertaken in New South Wales, those practitioners are not being asked to complete the survey.

This review responds to concerns that PLT may no longer meet the needs of the modern legal profession. It aims to ensure that PLT equips new lawyers with the skills and values required in today's legal landscape. It will also consider how PLT can be provided in a cost effective way which is achievable for new lawyers and graduates.

The survey is being distributed to legal practitioners in each jurisdiction (other than New South Wales) with help of local regulators and professional associations and is open to legal practitioners who have:

- completed their PLT in the last ten years (including those who have undertaken PLT as supervised legal training or legal traineeships in states where that is available), and/or
- supervised an early career lawyer (i.e. an admitted lawyer during their initial two years of practice during their mandatory supervision period).

Survey responses will help build a picture of the skills and values early career lawyers require, when they can be taught and how delivery of PLT may be improved. The findings will inform the national review of PLT led by the Admissions Committee and the LACC.

The survey will be live until 21 November 2025 and the Committees will consider emerging findings from the research early next year. At this stage, I anticipate that the Committees will undertake further consultation on options for reform in early 2026.

Thank you to those of you who have helped us to distribute the survey.

Admissions Committee appointments

I am pleased to advise there have been two new appointments to the Council's Admissions Committee since our last newsletter:

- Professor Belinda Bennett, Head of School and Dean, School of Law and Justice, The University of Newcastle, from 1 August 2025. Professor Bennett was nominated for membership of the Committee by the Council of Australian Law Deans.
- Ms Rebecca O'Brien, of the Western Australian Bar, from 30 October 2025. Ms O'Brien was nominated for membership of the Committee by the Australian Bar Association.

These appointments follow the resignations of Professor Anita Stuhmcke and His Honour Judge Hollo SC. We congratulate His Honour on his appointment to the District Court.

His Honour Justice Tom Sullivan of the Supreme Court of Queensland and Ms Shirley Southgate of the Australasian Professional Legal Education Community Ltd. have joined the LACC, filling roles left vacant by the resignations of Mr Greg Moroney and Associate Professor Vedna Jivan.

Conference of Regulatory Officers 2025

Earlier this month, two members of the Legal Services Council team attended the Conference of Regulatory Officers in Ōtautahi Christchurch. The theme of the conference was Kaitiakitanga, a te ao Māori concept which encompasses guardianship, protection and conservation.

It was a wonderful opportunity to spend time with colleagues from across Australia and New Zealand and discuss approaches to issues including practitioner wellbeing, investigatory practices, unqualified legal practice, AML/CTF compliance, and the risks and opportunities presented by new technologies.

I was delighted to join a panel discussion on day one focused on rehabilitative penalties and the legal disciplinary process, where I shared insights from the Council's [Consumer Remedies Under the Legal Profession Uniform Law](#) report.

Thank you to the New Zealand Law Society for planning and hosting a fantastic conference, and to all stakeholders who shared their expertise during presentations and discussions across the three days.



Clockwise from top left: CORO 2025 group photo; Panel discussion on restoring wellbeing and competence through rehabilitative penalties featuring Charlotte Walker, New Zealand Law Society, Stephen Bray, Legal Services Council, Alice Duggan, Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner, Professor Kate Diesfeld, Auckland University of Technology, and Professor Lois Surgenor, University of Otago.

Amendment to rule 9 of Barristers' CPD Rules

Following approval by the Standing Committee of Attorneys General, the Legal Services Council made [Legal Profession Uniform Continuing Professional Development \(Barristers\) Amendment \(Mandatory CPD\) Rule 2025](#) (pdf, 137KB) at its September meeting.

The Rule amends the Legal Profession Uniform Continuing Professional Development (Barristers) Rules 2015 to include Equality and Wellbeing as a mandatory CPD category. The Rule was developed by the Australian Bar Association to ensure that the CPD framework for barristers expressly requires training on matters such as discrimination, harassment or wellbeing, given the importance of these issues to professional conduct and culture at the Bar.

Barristers will be obliged to complete at least one point per year in this area. The existing requirement of at least 10 CPD points in a practicing year will be retained.

The Rule will commence on 1 April 2026.

Accreditation standards for Australian law courses

Thank you to those who made submissions to the Admissions Committee and the LACC on proposed revisions to the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses.

The Committees considered the feedback at their joint meeting in September and asked the Secretariat to seek further information and views from stakeholders on aspects of the proposed amendments, for consideration at their next meeting in November.

The Committees hope to provide an update about the progress of this work before the year closes.

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.

The next plenary meeting of the Dialogue will take place in November 2026. Ahead of that meeting, the four working groups established by the Dialogue have continued work, including the Working Group on Qualifications, Recognition and Admission, co-Chaired by the Council's CEO. That Working Group has been looking at ways to improve information sharing about admissions requirements and options between the two jurisdictions, and considered feedback from the Law Society of England and Wales about the experience of

solicitors re-qualifying in Australia.

We continue to work closely with the Law Council of Australia, the other Australian party of the Dialogue, on this work and to coordinate across legal profession regulators and admitting authorities in all states and territories.

Update on the costs disclosure thresholds review

The Legal Services Council has engaged a specialist research agency to conduct user testing of the redesigned standard cost disclosure forms with consumers and lawyers. This testing will commence in November and involve interviews and surveys. Thank you to professional associations for your support in identifying practitioners to participate in the user testing.

We will consider findings from this user research before moving to broader stakeholder consultation on both the redesigned forms and additional recommendations from the [final report](#) arising from the review into costs disclosure thresholds.

Consequential amendment to the Uniform Admission Rules for “Administrative Review Tribunal”

The Legal Services Council has made the Legal Profession Uniform Admission Amendment (Administrative Review Tribunal) Rule 2025 ([link](#)). This Rule is a consequential change to replace the reference to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in Schedule 1 of the Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules 2015 to the Administrative Review Tribunal. This Rule commences on 31 October 2025.

The LACC has resolved to make equivalent changes to the Model Admission Rules and the Prescribed Academic Areas of Knowledge, also effective from 31 October 2025. Updated versions will be published on the Council’s website.

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