

# Federal Election

Call to Parties

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Queensland Law Society is the peak professional membership body for Queensland solicitors. We advocate for good law and support good lawyers in our State. We represent, assist and promote Queensland's legal professionals, increase community understanding of the law and help protect the rights of individuals.

Queensland Law Society calls on Queensland Federal parliamentarians to respond clearly and unequivocally to the following priority issues for the local legal profession.

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## Making justice more accessible

The Australian Government is dedicated to making the Federal justice system more accessible. This means ensuring Australians receive appropriate advice and assistance, no matter how they enter the justice system.

### **Queensland Law Society calls for a commitment to:**

1. Immediately restore \$5 million in funding to Legal Aid Queensland for lawyer-assisted dispute resolution in the family law jurisdiction.
2. Restore equality between the State and Commonwealth shares of funding for Legal Aid Queensland by 2017-18.
3. Not proceed with planned reduction of funding to Queensland Community Legal Centres in 2017-18 under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services and implement a consistent and reliable funding model for this invaluable sector.
4. Investigate allocating money seized from proceeds of crime actions as an ongoing funding source for legal assistance services.

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## Resolving family law disputes in a timely way

A critical element of the Federal justice system is ensuring Australians have timely access to the courts to resolve their disputes. In Queensland a lack of trial judges delays family law matters and means all too often justice delayed is justice denied.

### **Queensland Law Society calls for a commitment to:**

5. Implement a protocol to fill judicial vacancies in the Federal courts within a month of a judge retiring.
6. Relieve delays in family law disputes by appointing two more Family Court trial judges in Queensland and appointing an additional three Federal Circuit Court judges throughout the State.
7. Consider appointing judicial registrars to each place a Federal Circuit Court judge resides.

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## Assist Queensland businesses, including law firms

Queensland law firms advise Queensland business and are Queensland businesses themselves. Focusing regulation and reducing both red-tape and financial pressure on business in Queensland is much needed in difficult economic conditions.

### **Queensland Law Society calls for a commitment to:**

8. Not lower the entry threshold to the Federal workers' compensation scheme, which would reduce benefits for injured workers and make premiums higher and more volatile for small business in the Queensland WorkCover scheme.
9. Work toward consistent regulation of credit products and unify e-disclosure across the National Credit Code, the Corporations Act and the E-payments Code.
10. Investigate codifying regulation of credit-repair agencies and introducing a structured framework for dispute resolution.
11. Identify leading areas of innovation in Queensland for focused incentives and promote the value of professional advice in facilitating innovation.
12. Review the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to achieve a balanced, clear and effective issues-focused environmental assessment and approvals framework.

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## Develop our region and our profession

Law is the language of trade and a strong legal profession is a foundation stone of the rule of law locally and throughout our region. The Queensland legal profession has a role to play in developing strong legal infrastructure in the Pacific.

### **Queensland Law Society calls for a commitment to:**

13. Investigate promoting the Federal Court as a hub for arbitration of international disputes with Brisbane as the centre for dispute resolution in the Pacific and surrounding region.

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## Equal treatment before the law

A key principle of the rule of law is that the law should be applied to all people equally. Queensland is presently alone in treating 17 year olds as adults in the criminal justice system. This can lead to inconsistent treatment of those charged with Federal offences.

### **Queensland Law Society calls for a commitment to:**

14. Investigate methods of ensuring 17 year olds accused of Federal offences in Queensland receive equal treatment as children with interstate accused.

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## Engaging the not-for-profit sector

The not-for-profit and charitable sector is extensive and contributes significantly to the public good. Effective and focused regulation can enhance that public benefit.

### **Queensland Law Society calls for a commitment to:**

15. Take to COAG a single national fundraising regulation framework for charities and not-for-profit entities, to be administered by the ACNC. (Currently an Australian charity that wishes to raise funds online needs to consider obtaining licences from every State and Territory regulator before it does so.)