

27 January 2025

Our ref: KB:MC

Dr James Popple
Chief Executive Officer
Law Council of Australia
Level 1, MODE3
24 Lonsdale Street
Braddon ACT 2612
By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr Popple

2026–27 Pre-Budget Submission Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback for inclusion in the Law Council's 2026–27 Pre-Budget submission.

Queensland Law Society (QLS) strongly supports the Law Council's call for:

1. Increased resourcing for the legal assistance sector including to:
 - support increased rates for private practitioners undertaking legal aid work; and
 - implement the outstanding recommendations of the Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership Final Report.

Additionally, there is a need for increased specific funding for the family law cross-examination scheme pursuant to section 102NA *Family Law Act 1975*.

2. The establishment of a HELP debt relief scheme for legal practitioners who reside and work in eligible rural, regional and remote (RRR) areas, to incentivise the recruitment and retention of qualified lawyers in underserviced RRR areas.

Regional lawyers are the backbone of their communities. When legal advice is not accessible, people are denied justice. This happens when the few local lawyers are overwhelmed, cannot take legal assistance referrals because rates are too low, or are conflicted out-such as when the only firm in town represents the accused and cannot assist the victim.

QLS calls for funding for a graduate solicitor program (at both the state and federal level) providing financial support for legal practices to recruit and retain early career lawyers (up to 5 years post-admission experience) to practice in RRR areas.

3. Improved resourcing of federal courts and tribunals. This must include:
 - Funding for requisite judicial officers and members, as well as registrars and other registry staff.
 - Particularly in regional locations where infrastructure is lacking:
 - Safe entry and exit points and meeting rooms for victims and families. It may also be necessary to provide for security personnel if the infrastructure is insufficient.

- Improvement to video-conferencing facilities and digital platforms to better facilitate online hearings. This should encompass resources for education and training for judicial officers, associates and other court staff.
- Resources to address the backlog of matters in the Administrative Review Tribunal noting the high numbers of outstanding NDIS and visa matters. This must include appointing members with appropriate experience to determine matters, and ensuring members are then allocated to the matters for which they have this requisite expertise and experience.

4. The establishment and adequate resourcing of a Federal Judicial Commission.

As to the Law Council's call for adequate resourcing for federal agencies and organisations, QLS supports increased funding for:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission;
- The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

to deal with increased demands on their services.

Finally, QLS would be pleased if the Law Council's submission could include requests for:

- Specific funding for independent disability advocacy to monitor the implementation of reforms recommended by the Disability Royal Commission, and report to government, with a view to ensuring rights are protected and reform is co-designed and informed by those with disability and lived experience.
- Funding to support completion of health professional reports necessary for people seeking access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Medicare benefits cannot be claimed for this. The inability to obtain medical reports and/or reports from allied health providers to undertake functional capacity assessments acts as a significant barrier to people being accepted as NDIS participants and can deter those who would otherwise have an entitlement from lodging an appeal to the Administrative Review Tribunal.
- Long-term and sustainable funding to meet the needs of all people with disability, including First Nations people with disability, people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability living in rural and remote areas, and LGBTIQA+SB people with disability.

If you have any queries regarding the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact our Legal Policy team via policy@qls.com.au or by phone on [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully

Peter Jolly

President