

7 August 2026

Our ref: [KS:MC]

Dr James Popple
Chief Executive Officer
Law Council of Australia
Level 1, MODE 3
24 Lonsdale Street
Braddon ACT 2612

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr Popple

Developing the next generation of lawyers in an age of AI

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the training and development of early career lawyers. The Queensland Law Society (QLS) appreciates being consulted on this important initiative.

We note that input is intended to assist the Law Council and its Young Lawyers Committee to consider these issues and welcome the opportunity to contribute to these discussions.

This response has been informed by members of several of our policy committees and our AI in legal practice – legal education advisory group.

Preliminary feedback in response to the issues raised in the Law Council's memorandum is set out below.

Issue 1: The increasing use of AI tools by junior lawyers may impact the development of their foundational legal skills, including drafting, critical thinking, and attention to detail.

1A) Is the growing reliance on AI tools for drafting, legal research, and correspondence undermining the development of essential legal skills for early career lawyers? If so, how may this be impacting professional growth opportunities?

The Society acknowledges concerns that the increased use of AI tools may undermine junior lawyers' drafting, critical thinking and attention to detail. However, if AI tools are to continue to be used and are expected to be used in legal practice, we suggest the focus should be directed to reviewing and refining what is meant by "foundational legal skills". The starting point is to identify the skills lawyers will realistically need in response to the growing use of AI by practitioners, parties (their legal representatives) and clients.

QLS suggests consideration be given to which skills should be preserved, modified or created. Lawyers will still require the discipline (and professional competency) not to over-rely on AI to generate low-quality content in high volumes. They will also need the ability to validate AI output,

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particularly by not becoming complacent, but by questioning, challenging and identifying any assumptions or discrepancies in AI outputs.

In respect of professional growth, as firms' expectations that staff use AI are likely to grow, attention must also be directed to the skill sets that cannot be replaced by technology such as commercial acumen, strategy, ethical judgement, problem solving and building and maintaining professional trust and relationships.

1B) Are we likely to see delayed competency development, particularly when today's early career lawyers move into more senior roles where they are expected to supervise, review, and provide substantive feedback on junior work?

AI may create spare capacity for junior lawyers by reducing the time spent drafting from scratch or proofreading documents. However, without time spent engaging in the tasks traditionally assigned to junior lawyers, there may be fewer opportunities for them to develop and mature their legal thinking and judgement.

Efficiencies created by leveraging AI tools should be used effectively and deliberately for early career development, whether through off-the-tools training programs, structured supervision or proactive mentoring to support management and leadership skills. Incidental learning may shift towards more deliberate, structured training.

There should be collaborative opportunities to support small, regional and remote and legal assistance providers to enable this to occur, where time and resources can be an additional barrier.

1C) How can legal practices balance the efficiency and quality benefits of AI with the imperative to foster advanced legal capability in early career lawyers?

Lawyers have a duty to utilise available tools that benefit their clients. To balance the efficiency of AI with the need to foster legal capability in early career lawyers, future training programs should focus on core competency development (which will inevitably shift) —as identified in sub-question 1A.

This also means increasing and reshaping in-person supervision and mentoring by senior lawyers of junior lawyers at the planning and assessment phases, to discuss and understand the critical thinking, analysis and judgement applied to using AI in practice.

The importance of supervision in legal practice was underscored by a decision of the English and Wales High Court in *Anthony Malcolm Cork & Anor v Mark Smith*.¹ This may require minimum supervision standards in a firm setting and could be supported by funded supervisor time for SMEs and legal assistance bodies and shared graduate rotations, especially in regional areas.

Issue 2: Balancing the use of AI with legal training

2A) While there is broad agreement that junior lawyers should be taught to use AI tools effectively, how can this be achieved without compromising the development of core legal skills?

University graduates should be able to demonstrate both independent legal competence without AI and competent professional use of AI. These capabilities should include prompt skills, source verification and identifying limitations, confidentiality, data governance and security, error detection,

¹ [2026] EWHC 1199 (Ch).

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costing, and professional responsibility. For example, in the context of using AI, understanding processes and data governance must occur before automation.

These competencies should be assessed as part of accreditation requirements, rather than treated as an elective or optional skill and could encompass a competency record across university, PLT and supervised practice to ensure core skills are obtained and developed.

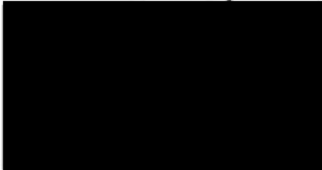
2B) How can legal practices and supervisors navigate the tension between embracing technological efficiency and maintaining the depth and quality of traditional legal training?

As noted above, 'traditional' apprenticeship models of legal training will need to be adapted and evolve to meet the future requirements of the profession.

To help junior lawyers use AI tools effectively, we must accept that expectations of core legal skills change over time. While some core skills may no longer be required (or at least be required in the same way), what is needed for lawyers to meet their duties of competence and due diligence will change or be newly created (including for example understanding which tools are appropriate for which use cases and for which clients). The profession should not preserve inefficient tasks solely for training purposes.

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