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Climate Change Policy to guide legal evolution

Australia's laws, the legal profession, legal education and legal practice must all keep pace with the challenges and opportunities created by climate change.

Releasing the Law Council of Australia's new Climate Change Policy today, President, Dr Jacoba Brasch QC said, "we must ensure the legal implications of climate change are as well understood as the physical risks it presents to all facets of natural and human life and its transition risks and opportunities, such as fundamental shifts in employment.

"The legal implications of climate change are currently being tested in our courts and tribunals, but we need to proactively adapt to be ready for the future."

Climate change is already causing a shift in legal demands, changes in the law, and the emergence of novel, complex questions of law across multiple practice areas.

"Our response must ensure we have a profession armed with the skills and knowledge to meet these changing demands," Dr Brasch said.

"Access to justice must be available to Australians in need. Legal assistance bodies and pro bono services providers will need to be adequately resourced to meet these new demands, particularly as climate change may compound existing disadvantage throughout Australian society as marginalised groups are less able to recover from and adapt to a changing climate.

"The legal profession will have a lead role in advocating for, and assessing, federal and national law and policy reforms responding to climate change. It will look to ensure that Australia's international law obligations - which include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, and environmental and human rights treaties - are fully implemented domestically. Rule of law principles must also be observed, including that the law should promote certainty and clarity in this area.

"In accordance with their professional obligations, individual lawyers will need to be alive to the unfolding legal implications of climate change and its consequences and ready to assist clients on climate change-related matters within their areas of skill and competence.

"Like all Australians, lawyers should also be encouraged to consider what actions they can take to contribute to global efforts to mitigate climate change. This may involve reducing their own carbon footprint and introducing more environmentally sustainable business practices."

The Law Council of Australia's Climate Change Policy is available [here](#).

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The Law Council of Australia is the national voice of the legal profession, promoting justice and the rule of law.