

## More Drama Ahead for a Country Practice, According to Lawyer Survey

A Law Council study released today has confirmed that problems in recruiting and retaining lawyers in rural, regional and remote areas is negatively impacting on the ability of country people to access legal services in their communities.

Law Council President John Corcoran said, "The findings of the survey are significant. Over 40 per cent of principals surveyed nationally indicated that their practice currently does not have enough lawyers to service their client base."

"Not only do the survey results suggest that there is a shortage of lawyers at present, it is likely that this situation will dramatically deteriorate. The survey results indicated that a large number of legal practitioners, many of whom are sole practitioners, will retire in the next five to 10 years. Alarming, 42 per cent of the legal practitioners surveyed do not intend to practise law in five years' time," Mr Corcoran said.

The Rural, Regional and Remote Areas Lawyers survey was coordinated by a national working group with the assistance of law societies in each state and the Northern Territory, and sought to obtain information from country lawyers about the current and future needs of their practices.

Co-Chair of the Working Group and current Law Institute of Victoria President, Danny Barlow, who is also a practising regional lawyer, said, "The survey results show that country practitioners undertake a significant amount of legal aid and pro bono work. They provide country people with access to legal aid and work tirelessly for the less privileged within their communities."

Mr Corcoran said the predicted shortage of lawyers would see a genuine crisis for people who live in these communities. "Unless we address current and future lawyer shortages, there will be a dramatic impact on access to justice throughout regional Australia," Mr Corcoran concluded.

For a copy of the study, visit <http://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/initiatives/rrr.cfm>

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