

## Law Council launches 'to-do' list for incoming Government

The Law Council of Australia today launched its [2016 Federal Election Policy Platform](#), which outlines its priorities for a newly-elected Federal Government.

The platform sets out the key areas for improvement of the law and legal policy, which will benefit the Australian community and promote the national interest, including the need to:

- End Australia's legal aid funding crisis;
- Convene a national summit to address the chronic shortage of legal professionals working in rural, regional, and remote communities;
- Amend proposed counter-terrorism laws so they are consistent with rule of law principles;
- Provide adequate funding for federal courts and tribunals;
- Identify and implement measures designed to reduce domestic and family violence;
- Work towards abolishing mandatory sentencing laws across the board; and
- Establish 'justice targets' under the Closing the Gap Framework to reduce rates of Indigenous imprisonment.

Law Council of Australia President Stuart Clark AM said it was vital for the legal profession to speak up and actively promote justice and rule of law principles with government.

"For over eighty years, the Law Council has promoted the administration of justice, access to justice, and general improvement of the law," Mr Clark said.

"It is the responsibility of the legal profession to take part in the political process and to use our collective knowledge and expertise to advise the government of the day. This is not a case of promoting high-minded idealism. Rather, we believe that the recommendations we have outlined in this platform are politically practical and achievable.

"Boosting funding to legal aid, for example, aligns with the recommendations of the Productivity Commission, which found an increase would actually save the taxpayer money. A reform that ended the current funding crisis in legal aid could easily be made and justified.

"Establishing 'justice targets' to reduce our catastrophically high levels of Indigenous incarceration is achievable through COAG. Likewise, we now have evidence showing that mandatory sentencing drives up incarceration and recidivism, while doing nothing to reduce crime overall. Its abolition is certainly a goal that could be pursued by a responsible government with a fresh mandate.

"Amending counter-terrorism laws is not a matter of going easy on suspected terrorists, but rather ensuring that the rule of law principles we cherish are not eroded in the process.

"With respect to the scourge of family violence, we are concerned existing family violence support services are inadequate to provide a comprehensive and holistic response for victims.

"Proper funding of our court system is long overdue; and our rural, regional, and remote communities deserve proper access to justice.

"We will be pursuing these goals persistently and persuasively this year and beyond."

The Law Council is also writing to all major parties to seek their policy responses.

*The 2016 Federal Election Policy Platform is attached and can also be accessed [here](#).*

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