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New program to bring more lawyers to the bush

The Law Council of Australia has today launched the Digital Treechange initiative to increase the recruitment of lawyers in rural, regional and remote (RRR) Australia.

The Digital Treechange initiative seeks to attract more lawyers to practice outside CBDs by enabling them to 'trial' rural practice from their home.

"Now more than ever, Australians have embraced the idea of working remotely," Law Council of Australia President, Dr Jacoba Brasch QC said.

"The Digital Treechange initiative is designed to bring together job candidates and rural firms seeking staff by utilising technology.

"Aside from an on-location visit during the trial, the candidate works remotely during their probation. This lets them check they like the work, the people they would be working with, and learn about the community, before they have to make the major commitment of packing up their entire lives and moving somewhere new.

"At the end of the trial period, both the candidate and their potential employer can make a fully-informed decision, with the view that the candidate will then relocate to the RRR area.

"We hope the security blanket created by this initiative encourages more lawyers to apply for jobs outside our cities and stay in RRR communities.

"The Digital Treechange is not a one-size fits all solution. It is flexible enough that participating legal workplaces can shape it to suit them, but also offers candidates a consistency of quality and delivery through carefully formulated set standards in the Terms and Conditions.

"Access to justice is an inalienable right for all Australians, yet availability of legal services varies across the country. Where someone lives, our postcode, may impact on a person's ability to access justice."

Addressing this issue is a priority for the Law Council of Australia and last year it developed and released the Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Lawyers and Communities National Strategic Plan.

"Twenty nine per cent of our population live outside major cities, but only about 10 per cent of solicitors are practising in a country or rural area. That's around 8,300 lawyers for seven million people," Dr Brasch said.

"Shortages of lawyers in RRR areas have resulted in residents being denied legal representation at critical moments in their lives. This could vary from something as simple as seeking legal advice, needing help with a will, through to requiring representation in a family, civil, or criminal matter."

Media Release



Limited private practitioner services in rural, regional and remote communities also impacts the availability of pro bono and volunteer assistance.

Recruitment, retention and succession of lawyers in rural, regional and remote areas is vital to ensuring access to justice.

“I encourage employers and lawyers to explore the Digital Treechange program via the Law Council’s [RRR Law webpage](#), help us improve Australians’ access to lawyers in rural, remote and regional areas, and, ultimately, improve access to justice,” Dr Brasch said.

A video of today’s Digital Treechange launch event in Cairns 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.