

Tuesday, 12 February 2019

Law Council applauds Family Court appointments

The Law Council welcomes the appointment by Attorney-General Christian Porter of two new judges to the Family Court of Australia.

Justice Jillian Williams and the Justice Louise Henderson have both been elevated to the Family Court from their former positions on the bench of Federal Circuit Court of Australia.

“One of the Family Court’s most distinct features is that only those, who by reason of training, experience and personality are suited to deal with family law cases, are appointed as its Judges,” said Law Council President, Arthur Moses SC.

“Both Justice Williams and Justice Henderson worked as barristers specialising in family law before appointment to the judiciary. Their specialist expertise and first-hand experience as practising family lawyers will be an asset to the Court and to the community.

“The Law Council has long called for greater investment in the Family Court, including timely, specialist judicial appointments, to enable the Court to discharge its responsibilities.

“We thank the Attorney-General for listening to and acting on the concerns of the profession, the courts and the community.”

The Family Court hears the most complex and difficult family law matters in Australia, yet for more than a decade its work has been under-funded and under-resourced by successive governments.

This continues to have devastating impacts on Australian families in need of the Court’s assistance, including significant delays and associated costs.

Maintaining a properly resourced Family Court is critical to the administration of justice and to promote the best outcomes for Australian families. The Law Council remains strongly opposed to the proposed merger of the Federal Circuit and Family courts.

The Law Council also calls on the Government to ensure new judges are promptly appointed, in consultation with the community and the legal profession, to fill the positions vacated in the Federal Circuit Court.

“The Federal Circuit Court is already facing a crippling workload of family, migration and industrial relations matters. Delays in filling judicial vacancies directly contribute to delays in hearing cases and court backlogs,” Mr Moses said.

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