Media Release

Law Council
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National Family Law Conference: Bold conversations and groundbreaking ideas

More than 1,400 family lawyers have gathered in Hobart this week for the National Family Law Conference, sharing ideas for strengthening Australia's family law system.

"This conference is the largest regularly held legal professional development event in the Southern Hemisphere, and this year's attendance is a record. That says a great deal about how seriously this part of our profession takes its responsibility," Law Council of Australia President, Tania Wolff said.

"When families are in crisis, the family law system is often where they turn. The ideas and debate here this week are about making sure that system is safe and fair, and that it works for the people who need it."

The Conference is convened by the Law Council's Family Law Section under the 2026 theme Landscapes of Thought.

Yesterday morning's State of the Nation panel brought together the Attorney-General, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP; the Chief Justice of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, the Hon William Alstergren AO; the Hon Justice Richard O'Brien of the Family Court of Western Australia; Commissioner Micaela Cronin of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission; and Nicky Davies, Chair of National Legal Aid's Family Law, Dispute Resolution and Child Support working groups.

The Law Council welcomed the Attorney-General's acknowledgment of the extraordinary work of the profession in this complex and challenging area of law, her overview of progress since the Government's reforms focused on family safety and the best interests of the child, and her recognition that law reform and workforce issues must be addressed together.

"We were particularly pleased to hear the Attorney-General recognise the critical work of the legal assistance sector, including Independent Children's Lawyers, and acknowledge that pressures remain despite earlier investment," Ms Wolff said.

Chief Justice Alstergren and Justice O'Brien outlined the work of the courts, a reminder that the most complex and high-risk parenting disputes come before judges, and of the difficult task judges and court staff perform every day. Commissioner Cronin stressed the importance of hearing the voices of people with lived experience, alongside rigorous evidence and data to inform future solutions.

Over the coming days, the Conference will examine some of the most pressing issues in family law, including the impact of legislative reform, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, family violence, complex financial and parenting disputes, developments in neuroscience, and practitioner wellbeing. It concludes on Friday.

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