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Legal profession leading change on domestic and family violence

Domestic violence experts from across the country, recently came together to take part in the LCA's National Roundtable on Family Violence: Awareness, Education and Training, to start a new discussion on how the legal profession may re-think our responses to and understanding of Domestic and Family Violence.

Participants included experts from the legal profession, the legal assistance sector including Women's Legal Centres and Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services, and from family violence prevention and victim support organisations, all of whom agreed that there needed to be greater emphasis on identifying and responding to family violence across the whole of the legal profession.

President of the Law Council, Dr Jacoba Brasch QC, said the Law Council convened the roundtable following the findings of several recent inquiries, that called for the legal system to be better equipped to respond to family violence and protect vulnerable individuals.

"This roundtable shows that lawyers are invested in leading the way and changing the thinking around domestic and family violence in our communities," Dr Brasch QC said.

"Clearly, the plague that is domestic and family violence is not diminishing, nor does it does discriminate. It could be any client, any file. Or any person in any workplace."

"There is a very real benefit to the wider community if we, as legal professionals show further leadership in this space and ensure we have the additional skills needed to protect and assist vulnerable clients," Dr Brasch QC said.

"While resourcing of legal assistance services and the justice system remains perhaps the most critical issue and an instrumental part of any response to addressing family violence, there are other factors that the various reports into domestic and family violence and the family law system point to as needing reform," Dr Brasch QC said.

"Participants agreed that problems caused by the differing definitions of domestic and family violence between jurisdictions should be further considered, as well as having wider discussions on the benefits of family violence training across the entire legal profession. It's naive to think family violence is only relevant to family lawyers."

"The Law Council has an important role to play in leading the debate and working with our state and territory counterparts and stakeholders in developing and advocating for potential legislative reforms regarding definitions of domestic and family violence that include agreed core principles, as well as ensuring the legal profession is equipped to deal with issues of family violence," Dr Brasch QC said.

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