

Australia – United Kingdom Legal Services Regulatory Dialogue

Inaugural Plenary Meeting - March 2024

Communiqué

Participants from Australia and the United Kingdom (**UK**) met for the inaugural meeting of the Legal Services Regulatory Dialogue on 5 and 6 March 2024.

The Legal Services Regulatory Dialogue, which was established under Article 10.8 of the *Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the A-UKFTA)*, is a mechanism through which representatives of the legal sector in both Australia and the UK can come together to consider regulatory issues relevant to trade in legal services.

Australia was represented by the Law Council of Australia, Legal Services Council, the Legal Services Council's Admissions Committee and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee. The UK was represented by the Law Society of England and Wales, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, the General Council of the Bar of England and Wales, the Bar Standards Board, the Law Society of Scotland, the Faculty of Advocates, the Law Society of Northern Ireland and the General Council of the Bar of Northern Ireland.

Participants situated the Dialogue within the A-UKFTA and broader developments relating to trade in legal services, and expressed the ambition of participants in relation to the Dialogue.

Pursuant to the objectives of the Dialogue, Australian and UK participants held productive discussions in relation to:

- Matters affecting the re-qualification of lawyers of one country seeking admission to practise in the other country;
- The types of business structures through which lawyers and enterprises of one country may establish and supply legal services in the other, including limited liability partnerships, incorporated legal practices, and multi-disciplinary partnerships; and
- Sharing information and knowledge on other regulatory matters, including on licensing and standards, recognition of professional qualifications, and on wider matters affecting the trade in legal services between the jurisdictions.

In particular, the participants agreed to establish four thematic working groups to advance the objectives of the Dialogue:

- A **Working Group on Qualifications, Recognition and Admission** to consider requirements, pathways and approaches to admission to the legal profession and practice of law in Australia and the UK;
- A **Working Group on Business Structures and Issues**, to consider the availability of business structures, as well as other issues for those conducting legal business across Australia and the UK;
- A **Working Group on Barrister Cooperation** to consider issues relating to barristers' practice, including the requirements for admission and practice which are specific to barristers and advocates; and
- A **Working Group on Regulatory Cooperation** to consider other regulatory matters, including opportunities to reduce regulatory friction, and give particular consideration to emerging issues relating to legal technology and artificial intelligence.

Participants agreed that each working group will be led by Co-Chairs from Australia and from the UK. The Dialogue participants will nominate representatives to the working groups which will convene between April and August 2024, and develop material for consideration by the plenary at its next meeting in September 2024.

Participants agreed to provide a report to the Professional Services Working Group established under the A-UKFTA on the progress of objectives of the Dialogue and any agreed recommendations by 31 January 2025.

20 March 2024