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Stronger justice, safer democracy and defence of the rule of law

An independent legal profession underpins the economic, political and social foundations of Australia.

“Across the country, Law Week is being celebrated,” Law Council of Australia President, Tania Wolff said. “This is an opportunity to honour the significant contribution made by the legal profession.

“Without an independent legal profession, the core elements that define Australian democracy face the risk of compromise or even collapse.”

An independent legal profession is vital to uphold the rule of law, protect human rights, and ensure fair, impartial justice by enabling lawyers to represent clients—including those opposing the government or unpopular causes—without fear of reprisal, interference, or pressure from external interests.

Our independent judiciary – the third arm of government, along with Parliament and the Executive – depends in turn on an independent and thriving legal profession. Both serve the administration of justice.

“This independence helps maintain confidence that legal decisions and advice are based on law and facts, not political influence or popular demand.

“As the independence of the legal profession and judiciary is increasingly being undermined around the world; it is more important than ever that we vigorously defend it here in Australia.

“Changes to our laws and deeply worrying safety-net funding gaps to help Australians most desperately in need are tearing holes in the fabric of this independence and the rule of law.”

The legal profession also contributes to Australian society in a myriad of other ways.

“Coincidentally, it is also National Volunteer week and lawyers are prolific volunteers,” Ms Wolff said. “From working with local not-for-profits and community organisations to volunteering their services in the wake of major disasters, lawyers step up to help.

“The number of pro bono hours provided each year by our profession continues to grow. In 2024-25, Australian lawyers provided 781,596 hours of pro bono work. This is an extraordinary contribution. We are unaware of any other profession which works for free to this extent.

“Private practitioners are also central to the ongoing delivery of legal assistance services in this country.

“Lawyers help people experiencing disadvantage including young people and children, older Australians, people with disability, asylum seekers, people who are homeless, victim-survivors of family violence and First Nations people.

“And they often do so at great personal and financial cost to themselves and their practice because they believe in access to justice for all.

“The direct employment and economic benefits provided by the legal profession are immense,” Ms Wolff said. “Over 135,000 Australians are employed within the legal sector, and the total market size of the legal services sector is estimated to be approximately \$33.6 billion.”

This stimulates our economy and assists local communities through payment of taxes and rates; commercial leases and investment; and lawyers, paralegals and administrative staff salaries help support families, pay mortgages or rent, and buy goods and services from other Australian businesses.

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