

Media Release

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New legal services chief for Victoria

Victoria has a new leader for its legal regulatory regime.

Ms Fiona McLeay commenced in her dual role as both Victorian Legal Services Commissioner and CEO of the Victorian Legal Services Board in January 2018.

Ms McLeay is the former CEO of the access to justice organisation, Justice Connect, which was established following the merger of the Victorian and NSW offices of the Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH) in 2013.

In a career spanning over 20 years, Ms McLeay has worked in senior roles in both private practice and the not for profit sector. She held the position of Special Counsel in the construction and major projects practice at Clayton Utz in Melbourne before taking on the role of General Counsel with World Vision Australia. In 2010 Ms McLeay moved to PILCH Victoria where she led the merger with the NSW office to create Justice Connect.

Ms McLeay said she was attracted to the Board and Commissioner as an organisation which brings together two issues she is passionate about.

'This unique role combines my strong belief in the importance of the law, and the role of lawyers in upholding the rule of law, with my commitment to social justice', Ms McLeay said.

Ms McLeay has a Bachelor of Laws from the University of NSW. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Criminology, and a Masters of International Law from the University of Melbourne, a Masters of Public Service Law from New York University, and has studied at both the Harvard and Stanford Business Schools.

Additionally Ms McLeay is a Director of The Intrepid Foundation, and Board Chair of Health Justice Australia. She recently completed a five-year term as Deputy Chair of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Advisory Board.

Victorian Legal Services Board Chairperson, Fiona Bennett, welcomed Ms McLeay to her new position.

'Fiona's experience working in private law firms as well as the not for profit sector has given her a unique perspective on professional practice and the needs of consumers of legal services,' Ms Bennett said.

'Those qualities will assist the Board and Commissioner to continue working towards a more cost-effective, pro-active and risk-based regulation model, whilst supporting the profession and protecting the interests of consumers', Ms Bennett said.

Ms McLeay succeeded Michael McGarvie, who occupied the position for eight years before stepping down in late 2017.

The Board and Commissioner are independent statutory authorities, established in December 2005. In July 2015 they became part of the Legal Profession Uniform Law scheme with the legal regulators in New South Wales, meaning that all lawyers and law practices in both Victoria and NSW are governed by the same legislation and regulations – the first step to establishing a nationally-regulated legal profession.

The Commissioner handles complaints about lawyers and law practices, while the Board handles other aspects of regulation such as registration of lawyers, administering external interventions in law firms where required, oversight of lawyers' trust accounts, and the administration of funding to enhance the legal system, legal services and legal education.

Ms McLeay's appointment was announced by the Attorney-General, The Hon. Martin Pakula MP, in September 2017.

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