

Media Release

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Online system removes red tape for lawyers

Victorian lawyers are dealing with less administrative red tape thanks to an online tool developed by the state's legal regulator.

The Victorian Legal Services Board's 'LSB Online' web application allows practitioners to instantly renew their annual practising certificates, change their personal details and complete a range of other transactions, all of which were manual processes only a few years ago.

Board Chairperson, Fiona Bennett, said the application was initially developed to make life easier for lawyers to renew their annual practising certificates by saving time and reducing mistakes and incomplete applications.

'The Board wanted to give lawyers a faster way to renew their registration without having to complete a four-page form and then mail it off to be manually entered weeks later', Ms Bennett said.

'The system has been remarkably well received by the profession,' Ms Bennett said.

The 2016 practising certificate renewal cycle has shown just how useful LSB Online has been for Victorian lawyers. The Board's renewal statistics reveal over 18,000 of Victoria's 20,300 practitioners submitted their registration renewal within the recent five-week renewal period, equating to 89% of the profession and almost 900 more lawyers than last year.

'We have seen a steady increase in on-time renewals each year, which tells us that the online system is making it easier for practitioners come renewal time,' Ms Bennett said.

Board CEO, Michael McGarvie, credited the success of the system to its ease of use and the time that it saved lawyers in completing their renewal.

'The average time it takes to complete a renewal online is around ten minutes,' Mr McGarvie said.

'The system automatically pre-populates a practitioner's details which eliminates the need for the user to enter their own details from scratch. All they need to do is check that the information is current, amend or add information as necessary and make their declarations. They can even pay for their renewal immediately using BPAY', Mr McGarvie said.

'LSB Online will not accept an incomplete application, so the lawyer knows that when they hit the submit button they have not missed anything', Mr McGarvie said.

'We have built a system that plays to the strengths of the profession it serves'.

Since its introduction LSB Online has been expanded to include applications for first practising certificates by new lawyers, a range of online payments, transfers of funds between statutory deposit accounts and trust accounts, and reporting for the annual trust account auditing process.

Ms Bennett said the Board saw its role as extending beyond the traditional functions of monitoring and enforcing professional standards, and included proactively seeking ways to help lawyers meet their regulatory obligations.

'The Board understands the difficulties lawyers have in everyday legal practice, especially those encountered by sole practitioners and small firms across the state,' Ms Bennett said.

'We continue to work on ways to reduce both red tape and the obstacles lawyers face in practice to help make the job of lawyering less burdensome', Ms Bennett said.

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