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Law Council launches landmark initiative to develop more Indigenous lawyers

The Law Council today released a landmark policy statement which aims to encourage more Indigenous Australians to study and practise law.

The Law Council's Policy Statement on Indigenous Australians and the Legal Profession represents a commitment by Australian lawyers to addressing Indigenous disadvantage and promoting Indigenous participation in the study and practice of law.

Launching the policy statement in Darwin today, Law Council President Glenn Ferguson said this meant working with Indigenous associations, Australian law schools, law practices and the state and territory law societies and bar associations to develop pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into legal practice.

"This is the first policy statement of its kind for the entire legal profession. It recognises that all Australian lawyers can play a part in addressing Indigenous disadvantage," Mr Ferguson said.

The policy statement was developed by the Law Council's Indigenous Legal Issues Committee, which consulted publicly with more than 60 Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders.

"The Law Council already does a great deal to support and encourage Indigenous law students, through initiatives such as the John Koowarta Reconciliation Law Scholarship," Mr Ferguson said.

He also said many law firms in Australia already invested in significant programs to encourage and assist Indigenous law students into practice.

While there are several developing law graduate assistance programs in each jurisdiction conducted by the law societies and bar associations – more needs to be done.

"It is my hope that with concerted effort and partnership, the legal profession and Indigenous bodies can dramatically increase the number of practising Indigenous lawyers toward equal representation within a generation," he said.

The policy statement is available at www.lawcouncil.asn.au

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The Law Council of Australia exists to represent the legal profession at the national level, to speak on behalf of its constituent bodies on national issues, and to promote the administration of justice, access to justice and general improvement of the law.

Media Release