Law Council Fears Attack on Independence of Fiji’s Legal Profession

The Law Council has grave concerns about the future independence of the legal profession in Fiji after the Fiji Government today issued a decree removing the Law Society’s power to issue practising certificates.

Decree 16 places the power to issue practising certificates in the hands of the Chief Registrar of the Court – a Government employee.

Law Council President John Corcoran said, “I am concerned that this could be the first step in the Fiji Government’s attempts to control the country’s legal profession by not allowing lawyers who oppose the regime to practise law.”

Mr Corcoran said it was alarming that these measures had not been the subject of consultation with the Fiji Law Society or Fiji’s legal profession.

“Without an independent legal profession, a vital ingredient in upholding the rule of law in Fiji would be missing,” Mr Corcoran said.

He said the Law Council was also appalled at disturbing reports which indicate that the Fiji Government raided the offices of the Fiji Law Society over the weekend, seizing confidential documents in the process.

“The Law Council, in conjunction with the Fiji Law Society, will continue to keep a watchful eye on events to monitor whether the new arrangements result in an attack on the independence of the legal profession in Fiji,” Mr Corcoran concluded.

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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.