

Friday, 22 March 2019

Law Council backs appointment of Townsville judge following long vacancy

The Law Council of Australia has welcomed the appointment of Guy Andrew as a full-time judge of the Federal Circuit Court in Townsville, after serious concerns were raised that the position had been vacant for over a month.

The community of Townsville had been left without a full-time Federal Circuit Court judge after Judge Middleton, who had been assigned to the region, was asked by the Chief Judge to assist the Brisbane and Cairns registries, and ceased to sit in Townsville on 8 February 2019.

Law Council President, Arthur Moses SC, said the appointment of Mr Andrew will provide immediate relief to litigants and thanked the Federal Attorney-General for responding to concerns raised on behalf of the community.

“Townsville should not have been left judgeless for a single day, let alone a month,” Mr Moses said.

“But we do need to pay credit to the Attorney-General for remedying this situation following strong public concern and representations from the Law Council. The people of Townsville need immediate support as they continue to recover from the recent devastating floods.

“Mr Andrew is an excellent choice and he will serve the community of Townsville well. His impressive career, which includes an extensive period of practice with Legal Aid Queensland, makes him eminently well qualified for the role. We have no doubt Mr Andrew will hit the ground running and get the wheels of justice turning again in Far North Queensland.”

Mr Moses restated the importance of ensuring there are sufficient judges available to sit in rural, regional and remote Australia.

“Regional areas must receive greater priority when it comes to judicial resourcing, as demonstrated by the Law Council’s [Justice Project final report](#). All Australians deserve equal access to justice regardless of where they live,” Mr Moses said.

“For this reason, the Law Council strongly supports the Federal Opposition’s strong commitment, announced today, to maintain a full-time local Federal Circuit Judge in Townsville.”

The Law Council also welcomed the appointment of Ms Penelope Kari to the Adelaide registry of the Federal Circuit Court, and the appointments of Judge Christine Mead and Judge Norah Hartnett to the Family Court of Australia, as well as the appointment of the Hon Justice Peter Tree to the Appeal Division of the Family Court of Australia.

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