

Friday, 13 November 2020

Law Council congratulates new Family Law Appointments

The Law Council of Australia congratulates Judge Tom Altobelli and Ms Kylie Beckhouse on the announcement of their appointments to the Family Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court respectively.

Law Council President, Pauline Wright, said “the professional excellence demonstrated by Judge Altobelli and Ms Beckhouse make them both highly deserving appointments”.

“Judge Altobelli and Ms Beckhouse have had distinguished careers and are very well regarded and respected by the legal profession,” Ms Wright said.

“We look forward to the contribution we are confident they will each make to the judiciary, to upholding the administration of justice and serving the Australian community in this important area of law.

“The Law Council would welcome further appointments of similarly high calibre to assist both the Federal Circuit Court and Family Court of Australia with their significant and growing workloads and backlogs,” Ms Wright said.

The appointments of Judge Altobelli and Ms Beckhouse are sorely needed at this time and will fill judicial positions left vacant some months ago by retiring judges who had not promptly been replaced. Ms Wright noted that “the Family Court and Federal Circuit Court are each facing backlogs of more than a year’s worth of cases, and additional appointments are urgently needed.”

“These backlogs have been caused by a decade of chronic under-funding and under-resourcing, and delays in replacing judicial officers. This has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic,” Ms Wright said.

The Chief Justice of the Family Court was quoted in the November 2019 issue of *The Proctor*, saying, “an extra judge in every major registry would make a massive difference” to backlogs.¹

“Additional judicial officers are urgently needed to help alleviate some of the pressure these backlogs place on families already facing the stresses associated with this fraught area of law, as well as judges struggling to manage unsafe workloads,” Ms Wright said.

¹ Quoted in Tony Keim, ‘A family (court) affair’, *Proctor* (November 2019 V 39, pg.32)

Contact: Dr Fiona Wade, P. 0403 810 865 E. Fiona.Wade@lawcouncil.asn.au