

Admission Requirements Proposed Changes

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Proposed changes to admission requirements

Victoria's Attorney-General, Jan Wade, has put forward a 'Legal Profession Admission Requirements discussion paper' ("discussion paper") which proposes radical changes to admission requirements for LLB graduates wishing to practise law in Victoria. According to the Australian Financial Review (May 22, p.26) Jan Wade has proposed that the scheme be adopted nationally but has indicated that it may be adopted in Victoria if rejected by the other states. The discussion paper proposes the abolition of articles and provides for "lawyers to be admitted to legal practice immediately after graduation and require any necessary practical legal training for private practice to be completed within a set time [5 years] after admission." The discussion paper makes a number of recommendations in regard to LLB course structure but the most sweeping changes occur post graduation. The changes include providing a period of 3 years "supervised practice" before which a lawyer would not be able to obtain a full practising certificate. After completing 3 years of supervised practice and provided the Practical Legal Training requirement had been completed, the lawyer would then be entitled to a full practising certificate. The discussion paper also looks at barrister admission requirements and additional requirements for those wishing to become Principals of a firm.

The law student body is likely to be against the proposal as anyone embarking on a career path is unlikely to embrace a proposition that makes it more difficult to practise in a chosen field. However, if the proposed changes would lead to a better trained, more knowledgeable and capable profession then perhaps the changes are in our long term best interests.

It is submitted that for practitioners in a corporate environment the proposed changes would have little practical significance as newly admitted solicitors generally work under the supervision and guidance of their more experienced colleagues. Junior lawyers in smaller firms may get the most benefit from the proposed changes as the additional training may provide the "legal, communication and business skills

needed for practice" and therefore enable practitioners to operate more effectively and confidently in an environment where their skills and experience alone are relied upon.

The full document is available on the internet at: www.afr.com.au/content/980522/verbatim/verbatim1.html.

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Adam Rollnik is a law student at La Trobe University. We encourage other students as well as all young lawyers, to forward any comments they may have in relation to the proposed changes to admission requirements to write in to us and have their say on this fundamental issue.

The Law Institute together with members of the Young Lawyers Executive, is currently working on a proposal in response to the discussion paper and any industry comment/input is appreciated. (Ed.)