Media Release

Law Council
OF AUSTRALIA

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New report highlights Australian trade in legal services priorities in Southeast Asia

The Law Council of Australia has released a report analysing market access barriers and priorities for Australian lawyers and firms operating in Southeast Asia.

“As the Government advances its review of free trade agreements across the region, the legal profession has a vital stake in ensuring Australian lawyers can meet demand for integrated cross-border legal services,” Law Council of Australia President, Tania Wolff said. “This report provides a clear roadmap for government and the profession to work together to open doors for Australian lawyers in Southeast Asia.”

The report, prepared by Norton Rose Fulbright, draws on the Law Council’s longstanding engagement on trade in legal services and market access policy and identifies the key jurisdictions of importance to the profession, reflecting consultation and feedback with Australian lawyers working across Southeast Asia.

“Australian businesses that seek to expand into or operate in the region rely on Australian lawyers to navigate challenging and evolving business, legal and regulatory obligations,” Ms Wolff said.

“The Government’s *Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040* highlights that fast economic growth rates, rising trade and investment and the development of a range of industries in Southeast Asia are all contributing to demand in professional services.

“The report identifies Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines as jurisdictions of particular interest to the Australian legal profession given their respective economic profiles and varying degrees of liberalisation.

"Barriers identified in different jurisdictions include onerous administrative and registration requirements, ratios and caps that limit the number of foreign lawyers, residency and citizenship requirements, and restrictions on moving between firms.

“This report analyses the extent to which Australian lawyers can currently provide legal services in each jurisdiction—whether remotely, on a fly-in, fly-out basis, or through establishing a commercial presence—and sets out priorities for both government and the legal sector to advocate for improved conditions for Australian lawyers and legal businesses in the region.”

The report has been produced with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade Southeast Asia Free Trade Agreements Modernisation Grant Program, as part of the Government’s review of Free Trade Agreements in the region.

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