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## **New diploma expanding access to legal studies in Tasmania**

Students across Tasmania will be able to gain a new legal qualification from next year with the launch of the Diploma of Paralegal Practice in Semester One.

Paralegals play an important role in the legal system and, until now, a diploma level qualification has only been available online through an interstate or international provider.

University of Tasmania Dean of Law Professor Michael Stuckey said the new qualification could be studied in Burnie, Launceston and Hobart, or online, and marked a significant step towards more equitable access to legal studies in the State.

“The Law School is committed to improving access to higher education for all Tasmanians,” Professor Stuckey said.

“Until now, students have only been able to do the first year of a Bachelor of Laws in Burnie and Launceston – if they wanted a tertiary qualification, they would have to move to Hobart to complete their studies.

“We want to change that. With this new Diploma of Paralegal Practice, students can complete a year of study and obtain a highly regarded tertiary qualification without having to leave the region. They can also choose to continue their legal studies with a full year’s credit into the Bachelor of Laws.”

Professor Stuckey said improving access to legal studies would support access to justice in regional areas by increasing the number of locally trained professionals.

“The North-West has faced shortages of lawyers in the past and this is a challenge the University has a key role in helping to address. Every region needs equitable access to the professions that support their communities, which is why we deliver medicine and now nursing on the Coast.”

Following the introduction of the new Diploma, the next stage of increasing access to legal studies in Tasmania would be to ensure the full Bachelor of Laws could be studied by students in the North and North-West.

“Having to move to Hobart to finish law is a barrier for budding lawyers in regional and remote areas of Tasmania.

“There are passionate future lawyers out there who, for any number of reasons, can’t move to Hobart to study. Of our current students, only 15% are from the North, 10% are from the North-West and not even 5% are from a remote area.”

“If we want to give more Tasmanians the opportunity to study law, we need to remove barriers to access – that is why we are actively exploring providing students with the option of studying for the Bachelor of Laws online or studying on campus and face-to-face.

“We are absolutely committed to face-to-face teaching and there will be no reduction in our high-quality on campus learning and research activities.”

Applications for the Diploma of Paralegal Practice, commencing in Semester One 2022, are open. More information is available on the [University of Tasmania website](https://utas.edu.au).

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