Law Council OF AUSTRALIA

Media Statement

MS# 1415 **4 December 2014**

Timor Leste

The following statement can be attributed to Mr Michael Colbran QC, President, Law Council of Australia:

- The Law Council of Australia is deeply concerned by the decision of Timor Leste's National Parliament, in a closed session, to terminate the contracts of all international judges, prosecutors, defenders and other international advisors working in the judicial system.
- The Law Council understands that this resolution was followed by Government action to revoke the visas of international judges, prosecutors and legal officers after the resolution was rejected by the President of the Court of Appeal as invalid.
- These actions raise serious concerns about judicial independence in the country.
- While not commenting on the underlying reasons for the actions taken by the Timor Leste Government, the Law Council considers the apparent lack of due process represents a direct affront to fundamental principles underpinning the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law.
- The existence of an independent, impartial and competent judiciary is an essential component of the rule of law. This extends to ensuring the term of office of judges, their independence and their personal security, are adequately protected.
- The Law Council has a strong interest in promoting and upholding the rule of law and supporting the independence of the legal profession, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.
- The Australian legal profession, through the Law Council, stands ready to assist the legal profession in Timor Leste to develop a strong and resilient judicial system that is underpinned by independence and adheres to the principles of the due administration of justice and the rule of law.

Vanessa Kleinschmidt, Director, Government and Corporate Affairs
P. 02 6246 3716 // M. 0408 014 110
E. vanessa.kleinschmidt@lawcouncil.asn.au // www.lawcouncil.asn.au