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| Media ReleaseSTATEMENT FROM THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF VICTORIA |
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**Thursday, 18 October, 2018**

**The following statement is from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria and Chair of the Courts Council, Anne Ferguson, in response to the release of the ‘Wellbeing of the Victorian Bar’ survey.**

All workplaces should be safe and respectful, and our courts are no different.

Robust and vigorous legal debate is common in the courtroom, but judges across all jurisdictions must always be mindful to treat people with respect and dignity.

Bullying, discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated in our courts.

Victorian courts strive to create respectful, welcoming working environments, but we are always on the lookout to see if there is more we can do to ensure the highest standards of judicial conduct.

Equipping judicial officers with the skills they need to deal with the complex work they do in an adversarial environment begins from day one on the Bench.

There are many education programs available to judges around appropriate judicial conduct.

I have been working with the Judicial College to develop a new stand-alone education program, ‘Leading the Justice System: The Court as Workplace’. As part of that, judicial officers have been invited to sessions later this year and early next year to learn more about bullying, judicial conduct and advanced court leadership.

I welcome the ‘Wellbeing of the Victorian Bar’ survey – it provides us with some valuable insights and feedback from barristers about their experience in the courtroom as a workplace.

My aim is to ensure that we maintain the qualities and standards expected of all Victorian judicial officers. In doing this, I look forward to using the results from the survey and liaising closely with the Victorian Bar.

I have developed with the President of the Victorian Bar a written protocol for raising directly with me any concerns about judicial conduct at the Supreme Court.

A protocol has also been developed by the Chief Judge about judicial conduct at the County Court. These protocols are an alternative to the formal process involving the Judicial Commission of Victoria. It will provide a safe mechanism for barristers to raise concerns which might not otherwise see the light of day.

I am optimistic that a similar protocol will be established between me, as Chief Justice, and the President of the Law Institute of Victoria and that these protocols will be expanded to cover all Victorian courts.

Information about the Courts Council can be found here: <https://www.courts.vic.gov.au/about-csv/courts-council>