



NATIONAL JUDICIAL COLLEGE OF AUSTRALIA



Strategic Plan

January 2026 - December 2028

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The staff and judicial volunteers of the NJCA acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past, present and emerging.



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INTRODUCTION

Shaping our Future

We are pleased to present the NJCA Strategic Plan for 2026-2028 (the **Strategic Plan**). Aligned to our vision, the Strategic Plan sets the priorities for the next three years for the NJCA.

With our central role in leading judicial education for an Australian judiciary comes both opportunity and responsibility. Public funds are finite, and we acknowledge the government's responsibility to regulate the use of public funds. As the national educator, delivery of judicial education programs across the country demands efficiency and the wise and virtuous use of resources, guided by the practical end of strengthening public confidence in the Australian judiciary. However, this approach must be balanced by the optimal pursuit of justice outcomes that cannot be treated merely as a market of minimum standards. For this reason, the work of the NJCA remains grounded in the conviction that scarce resources must be strategically directed. This has been the reality for the NJCA since its inception, and it is a reality in which it thrives. The measure of efficiency is justice outcomes that strengthen and enhance the effectiveness of the nation's courts.

Throughout its history, the NJCA has created a legacy of fulfilling its mission to provide all judicial officers with the knowledge and skills to ensure equal access

to justice for all. The NJCA's vision for the future builds upon previous successes – we stand on the shoulders of giants. What sustains the NJCA as the national educator are the motivations and values of the people within the Australian justice system itself. Our judge-led model requires judicial officers who are guided by fairness, accountability, humility and compassion. Involvement in judicial education can foster a deep sense of contribution to something greater than oneself. The NJCA's judicial volunteers play a vital role in strengthening and shaping judicial leaders of tomorrow, ensuring that judicial education not only honours the past but embodies a vital commitment to the future.

The last few years has seen accelerated efforts to pave strong judicial education pathways for all judicial officers and to work with the NJCA Program Advisory Committee and heads of jurisdiction on this important collective endeavour. As the need for harmonisation and nationally consistent judicial education grows, the strategic direction of the NJCA has considered the challenges faced from an operational, educational and financial point of view. Increased demand for judicial education has seen an increase in the number of programs and the Strategic Plan anticipates that this will continue in line with the ongoing and new demands on judicial officers.

"Delivering excellence in judicial education for a future-ready judiciary—empowered by lifelong learning, grounded in the rule of law, and guided by humility, courage, and compassion. Through innovation and collaboration, the NJCA will continue to shape a justice system worthy of public trust and prepared for tomorrow's challenges."

**Chief Justice Lucy McCallum,
NJCA Council Chair**



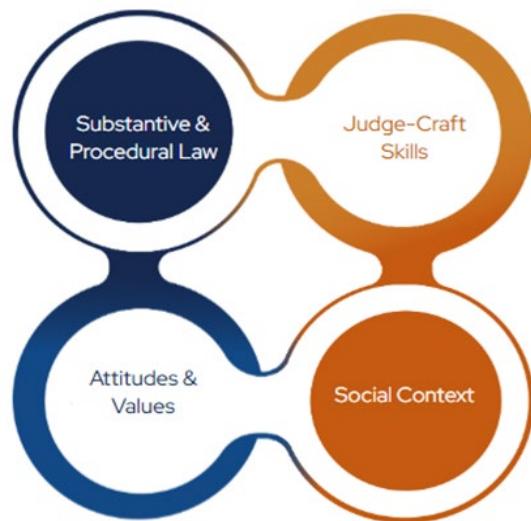
"The judicial officers we work with are dedicated, hard-working and determined not only to master the complexities of the judicial function but to share such mastery with others."

**Karen Gregory,
NJCA Chief Executive
Officer**

THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL EDUCATOR

Fostering cross jurisdictional and trans-jurisdictional world class judicial education

The National Judicial College of Australia (NJCA) overarching aim is to maintain and build upon its prominence as a world leader in judicial education and training. The NJCA is the national leader in judicial education, providing a range of programs for new and existing judicial officers across the country. Since inception over twenty years ago, judges, magistrates and tribunal members have led the design, development and delivery of NJCA programs. The importance of our judge-led judicial education model lies in its ability to foster judicial independence, promote high-quality judicial practice, and ensure accountability by placing the education and professional development of judicial officers in the hands of the judiciary itself. Our model ensures that judicial education aligns with the Australian judiciary's needs and promotes its autonomy from external influence, supports the delivery of a fair and just judicial system, safeguarding the impartial administration of justice and fostering public confidence in the courts.



The Core Judicial Dimensions of Judicial Learning

In the past, judicial education has, appropriately, focused on substantive and procedural law, judge-craft skills and social context awareness. However, over the last decade, there has been a growing acknowledgement for judicial education to place greater emphasis on the exploration of the personal values and attitudes that the individual judicial officer brings to their role.

The National Curriculum for Australian Judicial Officers

To this end, the NJCA developed the National Curriculum for Australian Judicial Officers (the National Curriculum) in 2022. The National Curriculum is underpinned by Four Core Dimensions of Judicial Learning (judge-craft skills, substantive and procedural law, social context, and attitudes and values). Importantly, the National Curriculum is a living and dynamic curriculum; it has been designed to be further developed now and in the future.

Sustainable Goals of Judicial Education



The National Curriculum reflects the commitment of the NCJA Council and NJCA Program Advisory Committee to the five sustainable goals of judicial education and training and the core judicial qualities:

Core Judicial Qualities



PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE THE NJCA

Our Mission

To enhance the capacity and capability of Australia's judiciary through high-quality, nationally coordinated, jurisdictionally relevant judicial education

Vision for the Future

The NJCA will:

- Build on the previous strategic direction of the NJCA
- Ensure programs are contemporary and support and strengthen the capacity of judicial officers to optimise judicial efficiency and productivity
- Respond to increasing judicial diversity, champion inclusivity and individual and collective wellness to enable all judicial officers to flourish in the performance of the judicial function
- Place greater emphasis on targeted social context training, the unpacking of unarticulated and unexamined judicial values and attitudes to strengthen judicial impartiality
- Design, develop and deliver programs within a sustainable judge-led model that supports efficient and effective use of resources

HONOURING OUR PAST

"There has been a cultural change across the Australian judiciary over the past twenty years. The change has allowed judges to see themselves as life-long learners. It has been very much a change for the better."

What has been good for the judges has been good for the public. That remark is not meant to be glib. As John has explained it, "the provision of adequate programs of professional development is important if the judiciary is to remain as a truly independent institution. It is important because the independence of the judiciary is supported by public confidence. That public confidence assumes, and also depends on, a high level of competence from judicial officers."

Chief Justice Stephen Gageler AC, John Doyle Oration, April 2024.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

The Strategic Plan is based upon four strategic pillars, which inform the NJCA's key objectives for 2026 - 2028:

- Sustainable Futures
- Judicial Education Pathways to Empower
- Shared Purpose, Collective Impact
- Amplifying our Voice



1

Sustainable Futures – Strengthening Foundations for Excellence

To ensure long-term impact and resilience, the NJCA will continue to build a future-ready organisation grounded in robust, sustainable infrastructure. As a small but ambitious entity, it is essential that NJCA systems and processes not only support current delivery but also enable future growth and innovation. This means critically examining whether existing systems and workflows are fit for purpose, accessible, and capable of providing actionable insights through data collection.

By enhancing usability, streamlining operations and systems, and developing the necessary staffing skills to support and adapt to a progressive infrastructure, we will be more agile, effective, and future-ready to meet emerging challenges and opportunities

Strategic Objective 1

To strengthen our organisational foundations by developing sustainable, user-friendly systems and processes that support high-quality program delivery, enable evidenced based decision making, and ensure the NJCA is well-positioned for future growth and innovation.

We will achieve this objective by:

Governance and Professional Staff

Maintaining a first-class governance structure and operating model that will continue to provide accountability, transparency and integrity.

The NJCA Council and Program Advisory Committee will continue to work together, meeting on a regular basis, networking and forging stronger connections across courts and jurisdictions.

In 2027, the NJCA will review and update its Constitution, ensuring it is fit for purpose and reflective of our judicial and non-judicial stakeholder needs.

By fielding a superior team of NJCA staff who are multi-skilled, flexible and agile, comprising of judicial education experts, program and event planning professionals, and staff with expertise in communications, finance, information management, and

IT, we will provide a workplace that invests in growth and excellence. Such staff are essential in supporting the delivery of the NJCA's judge-led model.

Conducting a systems review, evaluation and reshaping of current systems and process by end of Autumn 2026.

We will ensure NJCA systems are fit for purpose, integrated, frictionless to facilitate a smooth experience by program participants and readily usable by all staff at the NJCA. The NJCA will ensure the systems and processes in place are the most effective, reflecting its size and mission, but flexible so as make changes where necessary.

This reshaping of systems will be in place by the middle of 2026 to ensure that the NJCA is operating as efficiently as possible, future proofing growth.

A robust program evaluation process that enables valuable data capture to better inform both existing and new program development

The NJCA will continue to harness program participant feedback to access immediate data, complemented by best practice metrics gathering to further develop and enhance our current program delivery and to optimise court user experiences.

Building a Strategic and Sustainable Funding Model

By the end of 2026, the NJCA will have completed a full review of operational funding, grant provision, and program delivery costs to inform a robust, forward-looking financial strategy. This work will draw on insights from stakeholder mapping and communication objectives, as well as the outcomes of ongoing program audits, to ensure funding opportunities are aligned with real-world needs and program impact.

We will actively address gaps, trends, and emerging justice system priorities that demand national judicial education leadership. By doing so, we will strengthen our capacity to respond to societal issues and judicial officer needs within the confines of our resource allocation. This objective also connects closely with stakeholder management ensuring our value proposition articulation is clear and unequivocal.

2

Judicial Education Pathways to Maintain Competence and to Empower

Judicial education is at the heart of our remit. As the judiciary evolves to reflect a more informed, diverse, and dynamic Australian society, our judicial education programs must so too evolve. While the NJCA offer strong foundational education and support for judicial officers early in their careers, we must ensure that this strength extends across the entire judicial officer journey.

With high-quality core programs and resources already in place, we are well-positioned to build upon this foundation. The challenge now is to further refine and expand our judicial learning pathways, enhance judicial leadership support, and remain agile in responding to emerging trends in technology, pedagogy, and developments within the broader judicial landscape.

Strategic Objective 2

To strengthen and expand judicial education pathways that support continuous professional development across the tenure of the judicial career, by building robust, future-focused programs that incorporate leadership development, embrace innovation in learning and technology, and are responsive to the changing needs of the Australian judiciary.

We will achieve this objective through:

Completing a full audit of our existing programs by the end of 2025

An audit of existing programs started in 2025. The NJCA will continue to complete this audit, encompassing program content, cost and locations to ensure we continue to offer best value and world class judicial education that is accessible to all.

Building upon the NJCA's existing Judicial Leadership Programs, ready to be rolled out by the end of 2026

The NJCA has a long tradition of delivering high quality national leadership programs. We will review our current leadership programs and develop a more structured and considered leadership pathway to strengthen and provide ongoing support to judicial officers with leadership responsibilities. We will ensure the leadership programs include sessions on social context and judicial wellbeing.

Continuing, on an ongoing basis, to look for opportunities to develop new programs throughout the life of the Strategic Plan.

The NJCA will continue to develop and deliver bespoke programs for courts and jurisdictions and will actively look for opportunities to do so. We will continue to keep abreast of international and national judicial education research and developments to inform new programs that support the demands of the judicial function, focus on evidenced -based research and meets our stakeholder priorities

The NJCA will work closely with State and Territory courts and other organisations to design, develop and deliver programs for state and plenary conferences, where relevant.

Continuing to develop our stakeholder grant funded programs

Family Violence and the Courts and Managing Sexual Assault Hearings programs continue to be delivered across the country over and above grant funding requirements. The NJCA will continue to develop the second phases of these and other social context awareness programs for face-to-face roll out in 2026. We will complement our in-person judicial education training with on-demand learning resources, harnessing flexible learning, capturing a larger judicial audience and capturing the essential nature of such training.

Continuing to develop the National Curriculum

The NJCA will regularly review and update the National Curriculum to adapt to the changing needs and challenges of the judiciary. We will introduce new programs, such as the Indigenous Justice Program, Accessible Judicial Decisions program, Writing Better Judgments III and an Appellate Judgment Writing Program, and expand upon existing programs such as Oral Decisions.

We will further develop and deploy resources to support the delivery of programs, particularly our faculty building program – *Effective Judicial Presentations and Programming* to upskill not just NJCA judicial presenters but also court-based judicial education committees across the country in the best practice judicial educational.

Finished developing and launch the first suite of online learning Backpacks by the beginning of 2026.

The NJCA will launch the first three on-demand judicial learning resources – Judges Backpacks – *Managing Sexual Assault, The Stoic Judge and the Transition to the Bench* – in 2026. We will support and monitor access to on-demand resources, working in co-ordination with heads of jurisdiction.

Researching and reporting on the need for online learning resources and propose a way forward in this arena for the NJCA throughout 2026.

The NJCA will continue conducting international research into best practice digital and online learning for judicial officers. We will assess in an ongoing process, the need for on-demand resources to complement face-to-face judicial learning programs and increase both the usability and accessibility of judicial education. We will further refine our on-demand judicial learning resource strategy by the end of 2027.

Ensuring judicial wellness is incorporated into all programs in a meaningful and consistent manner on an ongoing basis.

The NJCA will continue to develop and re-evaluate judicial wellbeing sessions for all programs and sessions that are impactful and meaningful and relevant to the pressures of judging.

Continuing to deliver social context programs – strengthening judicial impartiality

By making our voice heard across the country, the NJCA will continue designing and delivering social context awareness programs to promote judicial impartiality, integrity, humility and compassion. Such programs remain deeply connected to our mission.

3

Shared Purpose, Collective Impact – Building Collaborative Partnerships

Delivering world-class judicial educational experiences requires more than strong content—it demands collaboration, insight, and shared purpose. To stay relevant and impactful, the NJCA must connect deeply with both internal and external stakeholders, locally and globally, aligning our efforts to meet the evolving needs of the judiciary. By engaging with our international peers, and state-based statutory bodies, sharing best practices, and fostering strong collaborative partnerships, the NJCA will enhance our programs, demonstrate our value, and secure the financial and in-kind support necessary for long-term sustainability. A culture of collaboration will help us not only to keep pace with change but lead it.

Strategic Objective 3

To strengthen collaboration with stakeholders—internal and external—by building strategic partnerships that enhance judicial education opportunities that respond to contemporary judicial challenges, and support our capacity to grow, innovate, and sustain impact.

We will achieve this objective by:

Continuing to leverage Program Advisory Committee and Council members experience.

NJCA Council and PAC members are fundamental to the good governance and evaluation and evolution of NJCA judicial education. We will continue to maximise the outcomes of bi-annual meetings to include workshops, presentations and structured discussions, based on key objectives within the Strategic Plan.

Strategically engaging with succession planning with internal stakeholders

To ensure long-term sustainability and resilience, the NJCA will engage proactively with internal stakeholders to develop a structured and inclusive succession planning approach—particularly within our judicial volunteer base and heads of jurisdiction. This includes

evaluating the sustainability of the current judge-led model, identifying emerging leaders, and creating pathways for development and progression. By embedding succession planning into our strategic framework, the NJCA aim to future-proof the remit of the national educator, reduce reliance on key individuals, and strengthen our leadership and judicial facilitation and presentation pipeline from within.

Strategic mapping and engagement of external stakeholders.

The NJCA will take a proactive approach to further identifying, understanding, and prioritising key external stakeholders—such as government bodies, Attorneys-General, state and territory jurisdictional and institutional leaders, and academic institutions like the Australian National University, our partner since inception. Rather than focusing solely on communication, this objective centres on building a clear picture of who our stakeholders are, where strategic opportunities lie, and how these relationships can contribute to both our short- and longer-term goals. Through regular evaluation, analysis, and engagement, the NJCA aim to expand our network of potential collaborators and external speakers, feeding valuable insights into our broader communication and strategic planning efforts.

Strengthening collaboration with judicial education, judicial administration and judicial studies providers

The NJCA will continue to build and deepen partnerships with judicial education providers both nationally and internationally, to ensure our programs remain at the forefront of global best practice. Focus will be given to enhanced collaboration, where possible, with the Judicial Commission of New South Wales and the Judicial College of Victoria. Through active collaboration with international organisations, judicial institutions and colleges, centres of excellence and other institutions, as well as participation in roundtables and knowledge exchanges, the NJCA aim to share innovations and benchmark our own approaches, to enhance the quality and impact of our offerings to the Australian judicial officer. This strategic engagement will build upon the NJCA as the national leader in judicial education, and our international standing, continuously evolving to meet emerging needs of the judiciary and in turn, the expectations of the Australian people.

Provide direct and indirect support to international judicial officers

The NJCA will continue to welcome judicial officers from outside Australia as participants at NJCA programs. Through collaboration with the Federal Court of Australia, the Australian National University and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the NJCA will share and contribute to building and strengthening best practice judicial education in Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific.

4

Amplifying Our Voice – Strategic Communication and Marketing

With a strong foundation of experience and deep knowledge of the Australian judicial landscape, the NJCA is well-positioned to take a more strategic and integrated approach to communication and marketing. Our goal is to better align our outreach with the professional needs and career stages of our participants, ensuring our programs remain relevant, visible, and valued.

Building on the connections we have developed through key initiatives – such as vigorous national orientation programs, robust judicial leadership programs and impactful social context awareness programs – we aim to deepen engagement, address the needs of a more diversified judiciary, and enhance awareness of program offerings to strengthen our position as the national educator, a world-class judicial education institution and centre of excellence.

Strategic Objective 4

To refine and strengthen our communication and marketing approach by leveraging our existing market knowledge, strategically engaging with participants across their judicial career lifecycle, and expanding awareness of the NJCA's offerings through timely, coordinated, and audience-responsive outreach.

We will achieve this objective by:

Developing a strategic communications plan that raises the profile of NJCA programs and judicial education pathway offerings through targeted and timely means of communication.

The NJCA will design and implement a communication strategy that delivers relevant, timely, and purposeful updates to both internal and external stakeholders. For internal stakeholders—including judicial volunteers, PAC members, and Council members—this will reinforce transparency, shared purpose, and alignment with purposeful strategic direction. For external stakeholders, such as heads of jurisdiction, communications will highlight forthcoming

programs, key initiatives, opportunities for engagement and collaboration. This structured, consistent approach will ensure NJCA stakeholders remain informed, connected, and supportive of our work, while also strengthening the visibility and credibility of our organisation.

The strategic communication plan will include:

- Concise and timely personalised communications to judicial officers highlighting judicial education pathway options based on bench tenure
- Provide communication to judicial officers by court staff and heads of jurisdiction that delivers key information such as program objectives, program scope and core judicial learning outcomes
- General brand awareness, aimed at enhancing the NJCA's premium brand and corresponding reputation embedded in targeted and personalised communications
- The use of mixed media to engage in thoughtful and relevant communications to our judicial community

The NJCA will continue program development using an evidence-based approach, to ensure a full understanding of our audience needs. Furthermore, we will continue to harness our confluence of interests with state-based institutions and international counterparts to ensure our communications are world class.

