



Judicial Conference of Australia

**Media release by the President
of the Judicial Conference of Australia
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Poland's judges under serious threat to their independence

Australia's association of judges and magistrates, the Judicial Conference of Australia (JCA), has today expressed deep concerns about developments in Poland affecting the independence of its judges.

Last week Poland's parliament amended the law dealing with the selection of judges, giving politicians full control over the appointment and promotion of judges. The parliament also passed a law which gives the Minister of Justice significant influence over the presidents heading the work of the courts. In the same week Parliament passed another law affecting the Supreme Court. The effect of the legislation is to create vacancies at the top of the judicial hierarchy in Poland. All Supreme Court judges, except those chosen by Minister of Justice, are to be retired.

The JCA's President, Justice Robert Beech-Jones, has said "these changes to the law directly affect the independence of the judiciary in Poland and would appear to violate the Polish Constitution".

The JCA has been told that this attack on the separation of powers has been objected to by Poland's legal professional bodies and even prosecutors' associations. The changes have also condemned by the parliamentary opposition, which has called for mass protests.

Justice Beech-Jones said that the proposed changes are a threat to the rule of law in Poland.

The Judicial Conference of Australia is the professional association of judges and magistrates in Australia.

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The President of the JCA is not available for broadcast or television interviews on this matter.