

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA RELEASE

After 106 years, HHG Legal Group Charts Bold New Course with Bespoke Career Advancement Models and Employee Ownership

WA's leading multi-award winning medium sized law firm evolves again, revealing unprecedented opportunities for new and emerging leaders while sharing profits with high performers in all teams and incentivising lawyers to move to the regions.

HHG Legal Group [HHG] today announced a significant evolution of its leadership and ownership structure, marking what might be the firm's most progressive move since it opened in Albany in 1919.

As part of executing strategies which the Directors have been working on since 2013, Merrill MacNish has been appointed Chief Executive Officer with immediate effect. MacNish, who has served as Chief Operating Officer for the past two and a half years, has been instrumental in preparing the firm for its next phase of growth and development.

HHG, now with 5 full time offices in cities across WA, has introduced a partnership model alongside an innovative employee share scheme, positioning itself for accelerated growth in the Perth CBD, Joondalup, Albany, Mandurah, and Bunbury.

Four senior lawyers have been elevated to Partner status as part of this strategic restructure of what is an incorporated legal practice: Dr Steven Cohen, Ben Majoe, Matthew Lilly and Riaan Piek. These appointments reflect both the considerable contributions to the firm made by all four team leaders, as well as HHG's commitment to recognising excellence within its ranks.

The brainchild of Executive Chairman and former long-term Managing Director, Simon Creek, HHG's groundbreaking plan for strategic growth, rewarding loyalty, and attracting new talent at the premium end of the Private Client and Business/Government legal services market is multipronged:

- **HHG PPRT:** The 'HHG Peak Performance Rewards Trust'. Perhaps most significantly, HHG has introduced an employee share-of-profit (ESOP) model – the culmination of nearly two years of intensive development by senior management following 12 years of step-by-step foundation laying by the Directors. HHG PPRT will enable a broad cross section of team members to share directly in the firm's future financial success, aligning individual and organisational interests in what may be a first for any solely WA legal firm.

- **HHG PILOT:** The 'HHG Preparing Internal Leaders of Tomorrow' leadership development programme. HHG has partnered with the highly regarded Australian Institute of Management to deliver bespoke leadership training for new and emerging leaders. Recognising common weaknesses in traditional law firm business planning, this targeted initiative ensures the firm will develop strong internal succession planning whilst equipping ambitious high achievers with contemporary leadership and commercial capabilities; the very skills lawyers are not taught at law school.
- **Ongoing Fast-Track and Strategic Promotions:** As well as launching career fast-track opportunities and extra financial incentives for lawyers willing to join the firm's regional offices for fixed terms, HHG has in recent weeks elevated a number of consistent performers across the firm to support Partners and Managing Associates. Notable appointments include:
 - Dianne Caruso – appointed Special Counsel in recognition of her outstanding contributions to family law and family dispute resolution;
 - Craig Fordham – appointed Special Counsel for bringing his considerable commercial acumen and a truly client-focused approach to the litigation team where he specialises in employment law;
 - Emma Catterall – promoted to Senior Associate for consistently excellent client service and advice in the commercial and property law team;
 - Rachel McRae – promoted to Senior Associate for many years of loyal service and outstanding work in family & de facto law.

Earlier in the year, Richard Dewar was made Senior Associate after proving his considerable experience and abilities as a key driver of HHG's fast growing Agribusiness team, James Versteegen was appointed Special Counsel as an emerging leader within the family law team, and Lisa Riley was rewarded with promotion to Senior Associate for her outstanding work in criminal and traffic law.

HHG's bold moves have been made at a pivotal moment for the Western Australian legal sector. Mid-tier firms are navigating fast-changing client expectations, significant increases in overheads, technological disruption, and ever evolving workplace dynamics.

"This evolution represents more than structural change – it's a fundamental shift in how we approach leadership and ownership in a modern legal practice," said Murray Thornhill, Managing Director of HHG Legal Group. "By broadening our management structure and introducing employee ownership, we're creating pathways for talent to flourish whilst ensuring our team shares directly in the success they help create."

HHG's approach demonstrates a clear commitment to remaining competitive, whilst honouring its core values of Excellence, Trust and Care.

Founded in 1919 in Albany, known for most of a century as Hudson Henning & Goodman before experiencing a significant rebirth in 2003 when it was acquired by Simon Creek and Murray Thornhill, the firm became HHG Legal Group when it expanded into Perth in 2006/7. Today's announcement represents the next chapter in the distinguished history of a law firm committed to providing the highest levels of client service, and staff care, across all of WA.

The introduction of a partnership model, combined with profit-sharing arrangements and systematic leadership development positions HHG Legal Group at the forefront of innovative law firm management in Western Australia.

As the legal sector faces a new era of fast-moving change, HHG's strategic planning and vision demonstrate how established firms can adapt whilst prioritising core values, people, and an unshakeable commitment to constant improvement.

ENDS

About HHG Legal Group:

HHG Legal Group is a premium multi-specialty law firm offering a wide range of legal services to clients in metropolitan and regional Western Australia (with offices in Albany, Bunbury, Mandurah, Joondalup and Perth CBD). With a long history of excellence and a team of highly skilled professionals, the firm is committed to delivering high quality legal advice and creative solutions. HHG Legal Group prides itself on its client-centric approach, ensuring personalised and effective legal support, tailored to each client's unique needs.

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