

Legal Reform Department

The Legal Reform Department is one of four legal departments falling under the Ministry of Justice.

The mission of the Legal Reform Department is to keep under review the law applicable in Jamaica with a view to its systematic reform, to meet the changing needs of the Jamaican society, and to assist in the implementation of law reform proposals in accordance with Government policy.

In keeping with its mission, the functions of the Legal Reform Department are as follows:

to examine and review the current state of Jamaican law and its historical background to determine the need for law reform in particular areas of law selected from time to time;

to carry out comparative studies of law and law reform proposals in other jurisdictions with a view to determining what law reform proposals should be adopted in Jamaica;

to present where appropriate, whether acting on its own or through law reform committees, proposals for law reform in pursuance of its mission;

to analyse and advise on suggestions for law reform made by members of the judiciary, attorneys-at-law in private practice or other interested persons or bodies;

to participate in negotiations for, and the formulation of multilateral and bilateral treaties, and in discussion on and formulation of Commonwealth Schemes or other arrangements as well as the formulation of model Commonwealth legislation which have a law reform objective;

to carry out certain vital stages of the process of implementation of law reform proposals and of treaties, schemes and arrangements, including –
the preparation of, and analysis and coordination of comments on, Cabinet Submissions proposing the enactment of legislation;

the analysis and examination of, and provision of comments on law reform Bills;

attendance, in an advisory capacity, at meetings of Legislation Committee meetings,

Select Committees of Parliament and at other meetings relating to law reform Bills;

the preparation of briefs for the presentation to Parliament of law reform Bills;

the provision of advice and comments on issues raised by Parliamentarian, attorneys-at-law in private practice or other interested persons or bodies in relation to Bills tabled in Parliament or submitted to Committees of Parliament; and when required, attendance, in an advisory capacity, at Parliamentary debates on law reform Bills.

to advise the Ministry with responsibility for law reform and other ministries on matters submitted to it from time to time;

to participate in the work of semi-permanent or ad hoc law reform committees;
to liaise with CARICOM, Commonwealth or other law reform agencies or with other jurisdictions, to provide them, on request, information, advice and material on Jamaican law and law reform in Jamaica;

to attend and participate in meetings, workshops, seminars and conferences on law or related topics held locally or abroad;

to address interested bodies or groups on law reform proposals;
to assist in the preparation of periodic programmes of law reform for ministerial approval;

in general to deliver legal professional services with a view to the achievement of the mission of the Legal Reform Department.

The functions of the Legal Reform Department are carried out by a small team of Attorneys-at-Law led by the Director of Legal Reform and a support administrative/secretarial staff.

Some of the matters in which the Legal Reform Department is currently involved are –

The amendment of the Domestic Violence Act to enhance its effectiveness;
The enactment of a new Maintenance Act;
The enactment of legislation on Terrorism;
The review of the law relating to Limitations of Actions;
The repeal of obsolete legislation;
The amendment of the Constitution of Jamaica to introduce a new Charter of Rights;
The enactment of legislation to implement to provide for the equitable division of property between spouses upon the breakdown of their relationship (The Family Property (Rights of Spouses) Act);
The amendment of the Finger Prints to enhance the investigative capability of law enforcement agencies;
The amendment of the Coroners Act to streamline coroner's procedures and establish guidelines for attendance at post mortem examinations.

Contact Information

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