



**GIS MARKETING &
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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Legal Aid Director Appointed

A senior associate at a local law firm and a legal aid attorney since 2004, Ms Stacy Parke started work as the newly appointed Legal Aid Director at Judicial Administration on Monday, 7 August 2017.

Currently housed in the second floor of Kirk House, Ms Parke will be responsible for developing, administering and managing the newly established Legal Aid Office as a full-fledged unit under the Legal Aid Law, 2015.

Chief Justice Hon. Anthony Smellie welcomed Ms Parke's appointment, noting that she is an experienced practitioner, especially on the crucially important family side and "will doubtless bring to bear a pragmatic but fair and balanced approach to the administration of legal aid, in keeping with the new regime of the 2015 Law".

He also noted the importance of the primary decision making functions now being reposed in the Director exercising an administrative and quasi-judicial role instead of in the Judges of the Grand Court, while appeals from the Director's decisions may be made to the Judges. This aspect of the new regime, he observed, will help to streamline the functions and make the process more transparent.

He urges the legal aid practitioners "to support the Director in the carrying out her important functions to ensure that our jurisdiction continues to provide a fair and effective legal aid programme".

Judicial Administrator, Mrs. Suzanne Bothwell commented, "I am pleased to have Ms. Parke join Judicial Administration as the First Director of Legal Aid. As her former colleague at the Bar, I can say that Ms. Parke has a very strong local litigation background and a solid reputation amongst her peers, and the local community which she has served for some 15 years as a legal practitioner."

Ms. Parke was the successful candidate from among five local persons shortlisted for the new position.

Mrs. Bothwell also commented on the role that Ms Parke will be playing. She said: “Her existing familiarity with the Legal Aid system and wide scope of litigation expertise will allow her to apply the Legal Aid Law as intended.” This calls for “balancing genuine need for the dispensation of legal aid funds, where it is in the public interest to do so”.

On the other hand, Ms Parke will also have “to carefully assess, monitor and safeguard expenditure of the fund, which will include providing the Legal Aid Office with a real opportunity to implement the appropriate means testing that the law envisages,” she noted.

In addition, the new Director will also play another important role involving local law students. Mrs. Bothwell stated, “I am happy that with this new appointment, steps can now be taken for Judicial Administration under the leadership of the Legal Aid Director to commence work to establish a Legal Aid Clinic.”

The aim is to provide greater access to justice for citizens as well as, by the provision of free advice through a volunteer clinic, allow law students to gain practical experience and the opportunity to shadow actual legal aid cases with local legal aid attorneys.

“We look forward to working with existing volunteer stakeholders, the Truman Bodden Law School and the local bar to achieve these goals,” she emphasised.

Mrs. Bothwell added, “The Legal Aid Office will now continue to operate out of the main Court House but in 2018 will move to its new home at Town Centre, adjacent to the Court House.”

She concluded: “I wish to thank Acting Legal Aid Director Ms Nova Hall and Ms Elizabeth Webb and Ms Kimberly Dixon of Judicial Administration for managing the transition to the new legal aid scheme since its coming into force in October 2016.”

About Ms Stacy Parke: First called to the Bar in Trinidad and Tobago in 1998, since November 2003, Ms Parke concentrated on civil and family litigation in the Cayman Islands at the firm Brooks and Brooks.

A graduate of Hugh Wooding Law School, Trinidad (Legal Education Certificate) and the University of the West Indies, Barbados (Bachelor of Laws – LLB Hons), Ms Parke also has certificates from Baruch College (Business Management) and William Mitchell College of Law (Certificate in Mediation and Negotiation Skills). She also worked in the Legal Department of the Ministry of National Security in Trinidad for three years.

She is an active member in the Cayman Islands community, holding executive positions in service organisations including Big Brothers Big Sisters as deputy chair and the Rotary Club of Grand Cayman Sunrise as the current Vice President.

In addition, Ms Parke has volunteered for the past 10 years at the Legal Befrienders Clinic conducted by the Family Resource Centre and has been on the active roster of Legal Aid Attorneys since 2004.

Commenting on her new assignment, Ms. Parke said, “I am very excited and genuinely looking forward to the new challenges the job will bring. I am equally delighted that I will be working alongside students of TBLS as we establish a full-fledged Legal Aid Clinic where the clinic can facilitate the provision of free legal advice provided by volunteer attorneys, and for law students to gain valuable practical experience in legal advocacy.”

(GIS)

Photo caption: *Photo by Bina Mani, GIS*

Newly appointed Legal Aid Director for the Cayman Islands, Ms Stacy Parke

For the official Cayman Islands Government web portal, www.gov.ky:

Web title: Legal Aid Director Appointed

Web blurb: Litigation and legal aid attorney Ms Stacy Parke has taken office as the court system’s Legal Aid Director.

