

Former AML steering group coordinators launch law and compliance firm

By **Michael Klein** - June 16, 2022



Elisabeth Lees, Katie Pearson and Justine Plenkiewicz.

Elisabeth Lees, the former national coordinator of Cayman’s Anti-Money Laundering Steering Group, and her former deputy, Justine Plenkiewicz, have, together with former Harneys partner Katie Pearson, formed Claritas, a boutique law and regulatory compliance firm.

Claritas specialises in regulatory law and litigation and provides AML compliance services to both Cayman companies and to governments that need to enhance their compliance with the Financial Action Task Force standards.

Lees served as national coordinator of the AML Steering Group from 2019 until January 2022 and advised on all aspects of the regulatory and law enforcement framework. In January 2022 she was awarded a Certificate and Badge of Honour for Legal Services Rendered to the Cayman Islands government.

Attorney General Samuel Bulgin praised Lees’ work as national coordinator in Parliament last week.

Presenting the Office of Public Prosecution’s annual report for 2021, he said, Lees was “instrumental in leading

the charge and assisting us” in addressing most of the deficiencies identified by the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force’s **evaluation of Cayman**’s anti-money laundering framework.

The ODPP’s annual report stated that Lees played a crucial part in the Cayman Islands satisfying the FATF recommendations even while continuing to make significant contributions to the work of the office.

The senior crown counsel “led the ODPP through the CFATF Mutual Evaluation and her template for Immediate Outcome 2 is now used internationally as an example”, the report said.

Lees is a criminal barrister by background, with two decades of court experience, including financial crime and international cooperation.

Plenkiewicz served as deputy national coordinator to the AML Steering Group from 2019 until 2021, where she advised on all aspects of supervision of regulated entities. She is a qualified Canadian lawyer with fifteen years regulatory experience. From 2007 to 2019 she worked at the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority, where she served as head of policy and development.

Pearson is a litigator, who was called to the Bar of the Cayman Islands in 2009. Prior to launching Claritas she was a partner at Harneys. At the new firm, Pearson will provide regulatory and commercial litigation as well as insolvency advice and representation.
