

**EMBARGO ON EXCEL SPREAD SHEET ATTACHED AND THIS MEDIA RELEASE UNTIL 6 PM ON THURSDAY 13 OCTOBER**  
**WLANSW 2016 Law Firm Comparison data launch – 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 6 pm at Ashurst Sydney**

The Women Lawyers' Association of NSW Inc. (WLANSW) has compiled law firm comparison data in 2013 and 2015. The introduction of more comprehensive reporting requirements to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) has meant that there is more information publicly available about a wider range of law firms, the gender composition of their workforces, and their diversity and inclusion practices. In 2016 we have looked at publicly available information to compare law firms on a range of measures. The data set is not comprehensive, as it does not capture all firms, and not all have to report to the WGEA due to their size, but the analysis of the available information paints a picture of a profession that is moving slowly towards gender equality, with some work still to be done.

We are excited about our partnership with the University of Wollongong Legal Intersections Research Centre who are conducting a pilot project which involves building on the law firm comparison data by interviewing lawyers from managing partners to junior lawyers and investigating current best practices. Professor Nan Seuffert will be speaking at the function on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

In particular:

- It is pleasing to see that the numbers are moving mostly in the right direction, with many firms improving their female partner percentage from previous years.
- Those who aren't fall into 2 categories - those who were already above the female partner average in past years, and have slipped slightly, and those who have fallen further behind.
- The proportion of female senior associates is high, in many cases more than 50%. The challenge is in converting that to partner numbers, particularly equity partners, and creating career frameworks that are not necessarily linear, but genuinely value different levels of contribution and seniority. Hopefully we will see that cohort move through the system in the coming years.
- Having the WGEA data on equity partner numbers, and the gender split within that group, is really valuable, and drives much greater transparency.
- When we ranked on both partner and equity partner, (which we could do for the second time this year) we can see the stand-out firms who have 25% or more female equity partners are Gilbert + Tobin, Hall & Wilcox, King & Wood Mallesons, Corrs Chambers Westgarth and TressCox.
- The stand out firms with female partner percentages of over 30% are TressCox, Squire Patton Boggs, Lander & Rogers, Griffith Hack, Maddocks, Gilbert + Tobin, Holding Redlich and Seafarsh Shaw.
- The firms most improved from 2015 female partners in both total partner and equity partner categories are Henry Davis York, Dibbs Barker, King & Wood Mallesons, DLA Piper and Ashurst.
- The measurement is against NSW Law Society *average female partner percentage* of 23.7% (excluding sole practitioners) - which still has some way to go to reflect the *average of women in the profession as a whole*, which is currently sitting at 48.5%. We would expect to see the female partner percentage increase to closer to the profession average, and more firms meet the average female partner percentage for equity as well as all partners.
- Also good to see for the first time, the percentage of partners working flexibly. With focus on initiatives like "all roles flex" it will be interesting to see if these numbers increase over time. The challenge is to redesign the work model and recognise that flexibility is a mainstream issue and not a benefit only available for employees with caring responsibilities.
- It is encouraging to see the number of men taking parental leave, as gender equality is more than just women in partnership roles, but also includes men in non-traditional roles, and sharing the caring work. These figures are still very low and is an important indicator that despite there being policies in place that allow men to take parental leave, they are not being accessed because of the culture in the law firm and in the law profession more generally.
- While the majority of firms have undertaken a gender pay analysis, the WGEA gender pay gap for the legal profession is at a high 34% overall.

Having access to a wider range of data has been an important step to gaining a better sense of what is happening across the legal profession for the advancement of women in law firms.

Transparency around equity partnership composition is another important achievement, with another frontier being partner remuneration. While there is no requirement to disclose individual pay to the WGEA at present, this could be an area of attention in the future, as an organisational wide pay gap analysis cannot really be comprehensive if individual cohorts cannot be examined. Professional bodies like the Law Society of New South Wales and the Law Council, and some law firms have been taking action on gender equality, and that action is starting to pay off. The challenge is to keep going, and bring the rest of the profession along too.

*Any of the words in this media release can be attributed to Larissa Andelman, Chair of the Workplace Practices Sub-Committee.*