

PRESS RELEASE — EMBARGOED UNTIL 6PM WEDNESDAY 24 OCTOBER 2018

WLANSW's latest analysis, to be launched on Wednesday night 24 October 2018, shows that in the last WGEA reporting year:

1. There were only 6 out of 68 reporting firms that had a female CEO.
2. No firm has 50% female partners, with the highest being 44%, and the average sitting at 24%. Progress in this measure has stalled, moving from an average of 23.3% in 2012, which is not surprising given there are still partner admission cohorts where no women are being promoted.
3. Of partners, 33% of female partners work part-time compared to just 3% of male partners.
4. Men are not using parental leave to any great extent, despite firms offering paid leave, and men are not taking up formal part-time work arrangements.
5. In many cases firms had not completed any of the key steps to address any gender pay gap in their organisations. 14 of the 68 firms had not done any remuneration analysis, and only 18 of the 68 had reported their pay metrics to their Board.

WLANSW calls on the legal profession to improve the advancement of women in the profession by committing to a number of concrete measures. WLANSW Acting President Larissa Andelman says :

"The legal profession, particularly law firms, are not taking the steps required to advance women into senior roles, and many are clinging to an outdated and very traditional partnership model where full-time work and a long hours culture are preventing women, and men who don't want to work that way, from making it to the top. This needs to change in order to unlock the true potential of all lawyers.

Firms that adopt the WLANSW recommendations will be taking positive steps to achieve a more gender balanced firm with equal opportunities for all. In 2018, when we are celebrating 100 years since women were first permitted to practice as lawyers in New South Wales due to the passage of the Women's Legal Status Act, 1918, let's not wait another 100 years until women and men share the benefits of working in this wonderful profession."

The WLANSW's top 5 recommendations are:

1. Firms should set targets for admission to partnership, based on a 40/40/20 model, with 40% of any new admissions in any year being male, 40% female, and the remaining 20% varying depending on the candidate pool. If firms are unable to meet this in any one year, (say due to a merger with another firm) then a 3 year rolling average should be adopted.
2. All legal firms should undertake an annual gender pay analysis of employees and partners and take concrete steps to address any gaps found.
3. The results of that analysis should be reported to the board and partnership group, with progress tracked, and at a minimum, any like-for-like gaps eliminated, and analysis taken to understand the causes of those gaps developing.
4. Firms should publicly disclose their remuneration in quartile bands, like the UK model for pay disclosure requires.

5. Firms should adopt targets for men taking up parental leave and flexible work arrangements and develop strategies to actively encourage all employees and partners to share caring responsibilities.

BEST FIRMS FOR WOMEN

There are firms that are doing this well already. While no rating system is perfect, and the challenge for the legal profession is that it is difficult to compare firms when some are structured as partnerships and some are incorporated entities, with no visibility into their ownership structures through the WGEA reporting, WLANSW has identified good performers.

The WLANSW analysis ranks those firms that are partnerships, and assesses them on the following criteria:

1. Having a female partnership percentage higher than the industry average
2. Being an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality in 2016 as assessed by the WGEA
3. Having adopted the Law Council's National Model Gender Equitable Briefing Policy
4. Having taken tangible action to address pay equity in their organisations across the 9 key steps identified by WLANSW.

All of the following firms were 2016 Employers of Choice for Gender Equality and have adopted the Law Council's National Model Gender Equitable Briefing Policy.

The Gold firms are these:

- **Norton Rose Fulbright Australia**, with a female partnership ratio of 41%, and having undertaken 9 of the 9 pay equity actions that WLANSW considers will drive change.
- **Corrs Chambers Westgarth** – 30% female partnership ratio, and having undertaken 8 of the 9 gender pay actions
- **Gilbert & Tobin** – a consistently strong performer in this area, with 30% female partnership ratio, and having undertaken 8 of the 9 gender pay actions

The Silver firms:

- **Maddocks**, with 33 % female partner ratio, and having undertaken 7 of the 9 pay actions
- **Ashurst** with 27% female partner ratio and having undertaken 6 of the 9 pay actions
- **Allens** with 25% female partnership and having undertaken 7 of the 9 pay actions

The Bronze firms

- **Minter Ellison SA/NT** – 35% female partnership and having undertaken 3 of the 9 gender pay actions

- **King and Mallesons** with a 26% female partner ratio and having undertaken 6 of the 9 pay actions

Other incorporated practices are also doing well, but the lack of transparency into their ownership structures means no comparison can be performed. **Dentons Australia Pty Limited** deserves a highly commended for its actions on pay equity, as does **DLA Piper**, and **Russell Kennedy**.

WLANSW congratulates these firms for the progress they are making, and encourages them to continue to push for progress on gender equality.

BACKGROUND

The Women Lawyer's Association of NSW is the peak professional body representing women lawyers in NSW. We have been committed to improving the status and working conditions of women lawyers since 1952. Today we have a diverse membership of 9000 ranging from female pioneers of the legal profession, senior legal leaders and the emerging next generation.

In 2012, Women Lawyers Association New South Wales (WLANSW) published its first comparison of law firms based on publicly available data. At that time, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) had not been formed, and the information what was available was patchy and incomplete. 6 years on we have access to much more WGEA data, and sadly the results show that progress for women in law firms is painfully slow.

The legal profession has seen increasing feminisation, with women now comprising just over fifty percent of the solicitors in practice, yet there is still a lack of balance and representation at the top of law firms, in those who lead them, and those who own them.

CONTACT DETAILS

Larissa Andelman 0408424687 andelman@153phillip.com.au

Susan Price 0402 311 024 susan@susanpricelegal.com.au