

Patron, the Honourable Acting Justice Jane Mathews AO

February 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: CAREER INTENTIONS SURVEY

The Career Intentions Survey is an initiative of the Women Lawyers' Association of NSW Inc. (WLANSW) Career Intentions Survey Subcommittee.

We write to inform you and your organisation about the WLANSW Career Intentions Survey project and request that you consider supporting this research.

This project involves longitudinal research which seeks to track and analyse the career paths and decisions of both female and male lawyers in New South Wales from their final semester of university.

The last set of comprehensive research on women in the legal profession in New South Wales culminated in the 1995 Keys Young report commissioned by the Ministry for the Status and Advancement of Women. The Career Intentions Survey project is consistent with the recommendation in this report for:

a more detailed survey of women barristers, including an investigation of why so few women lawyers consider a career at the Bar.¹

It also mirrors the recommendation in the Law Society of New South Wales' 2002 *After Ada* report that the Law Society:

enhance ... [its] research program to include studies of the career paths of women, case studies of best practice and career intentions of young solicitors, and gather data from employers about flexible work options in the legal workplace.²

Longitudinal research in the form of the Career Intentions Survey has the potential to track the career paths of women and men who end up in senior positions in the legal profession, and explain statistics in relation to senior appointments in the profession. In this manner, it could be said that the Career Intentions Survey addresses the recommendation in the 2011 *Thought Leadership* report that the Law Society:

investigate commissioning further research on the gender breakdown of senior legal appointments across all segments.³

The survey project has the capacity to gather data which will be highly significant to issues such as the retention rate of lawyers, staff management and planning, provision of services by organisations such as the Bar Association of

¹ Keys Young, *Research on Gender Bias and Women Working in the Legal System*, 6 March 1995, at 104.

² The Law Society of New South Wales, *After Ada: A New Precedent for Women in Law*, 29 October 2002, at 31.

³ The Law Society of New South Wales, *Thought Leadership 2011: Advancement of Women in the Profession*, 1 December 2011, at 24.

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New South Wales and Law Society of New South Wales to their members, and the future demography of the legal profession.

Pilot testing for the survey was conducted in August to November during Semester 2 2012. The summary report of findings from the pilot is available online at <http://www.womenlawyersnsw.org.au/content/career-intentions-survey-0>.

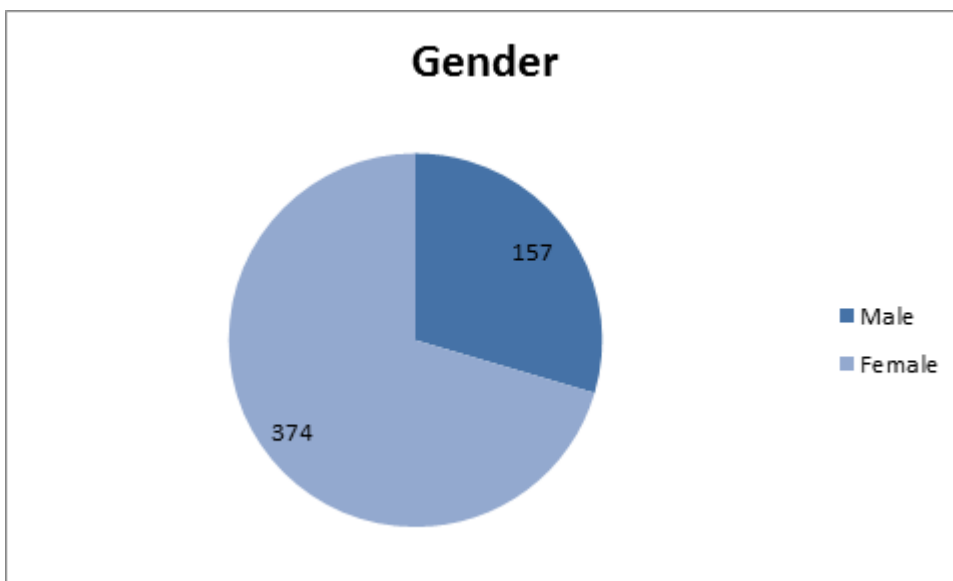
34 percent of participants from the pilot identified an “interest in the law” as a principal reason for their decision to study law, with 25 percent of participants indicating that an “interest in social justice / wanting to help people / make a difference” was a principal influence on their decision to undertake a law degree.

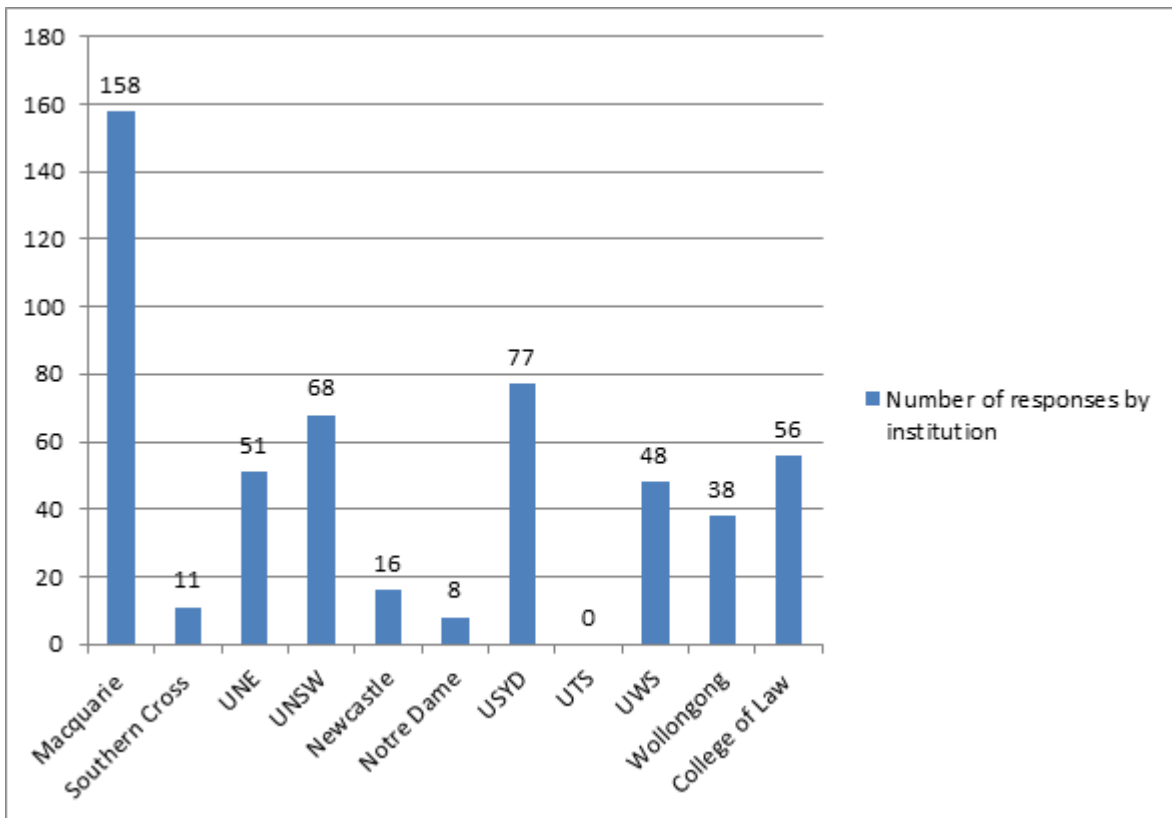
66 percent of student respondents from the pilot propose to practise as a lawyer, while 7 percent do not propose to practise as a lawyer, and 27 percent were undecided. Of those intending to practise as a lawyer, 57 percent said their long term ambition was to practise as a solicitor, 31 percent to practise as a barrister, and 11 percent were “not sure yet” about the capacity in which they eventually propose to practise. 42 percent propose to practise in government employment, 28 percent as an in house lawyer, 21 percent at a community-based legal service, and 11 percent in some “other” form of employment.

The top three areas of practice in which participants in the pilot would like to specialise are corporate and commercial law (39 percent), criminal law (38 percent) and family law (23 percent).

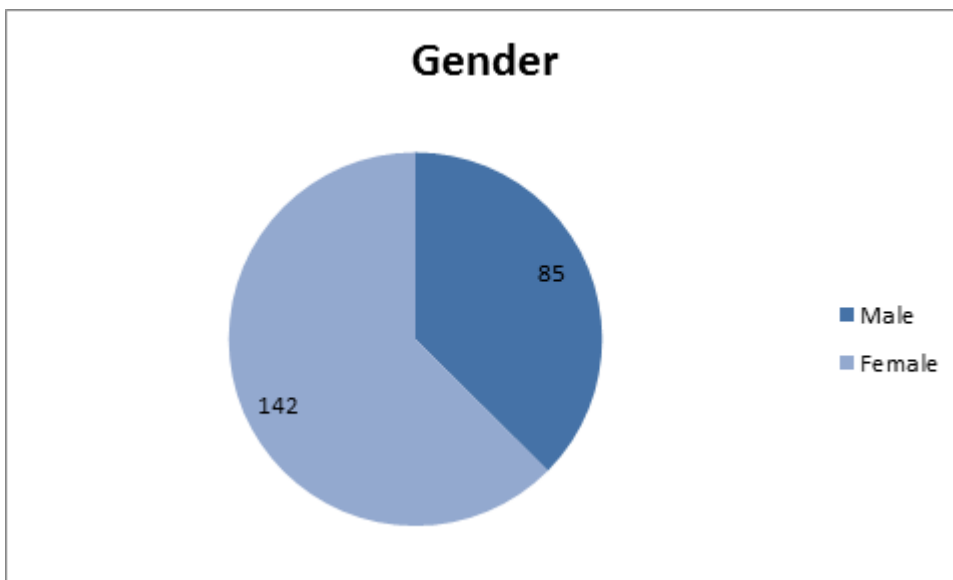
In May 2013 during Semester 1 and September 2013 during Semester 2, the survey was released in final form to students at all law schools in New South Wales in their final semester of a law qualification, and to students at the College of Law.

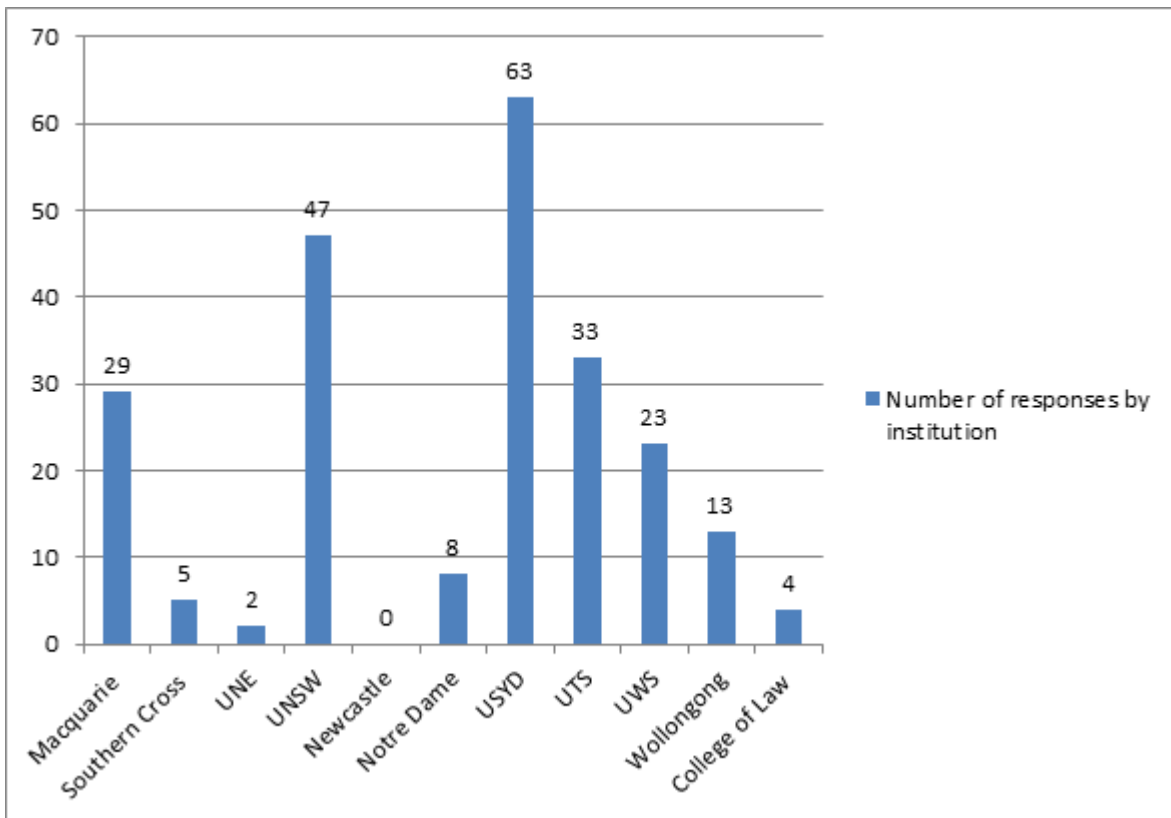
A total of 531 responses to the survey were received for the Semester 1 2013 phase. The breakdown of these responses by gender and university or college is shown below.





A total of 227 responses to the survey were received for the Semester 2 2013 phase. The breakdown of these responses by gender and university or college is shown below.





It is envisaged that the same survey will be distributed to all graduating students in Semesters 1 and 2 in 2014, and Semester 1 in 2015. This will amount to a total of approximately 4500 students who will receive the online questionnaire from Semester 1 2014 to Semester 1 2015. It is also intended that follow-up surveys will be distributed after the initial surveys, which will be designed to track the actual career paths of the participants in the initial surveys.

The survey instrument has been developed in online format. The quality of the online instrument and analysis and reporting of data collected is dependent on contributions by way of support and sponsorship from organisations prepared to partner with us for this project.

Sponsorship of the Career Intentions Survey offers organisations the opportunity to promote their products, services and corporate image directly to WLANSW members and the wider legal community, while at the same time supporting a significant initiative.

Enclosed is the Sponsorship Proposal for the Career Intentions Survey project. The Sponsorship Proposal document is only intended as a guide and the Subcommittee is open to discussions about sponsorship or support at a level outside those set out in the Sponsorship Proposal document if such an arrangement would better suit the requirements of your organisation.

We thank you for your consideration of this request for support.

Please contact Lee-May Saw, Chair of the Career Intentions Survey Subcommittee, on 02 9229 7357 or saw@fjc.net.au, if you have any questions or require any further information in relation to this request.

Yours faithfully,

The Honourable Acting Justice Jane Mathews AO
Patron