

## WBA Media Release – 2009 Court Appearance Survey

### Untapped talent leaves users of legal services short changed

In May 2009 the gender balance of the Victorian Bar was 78% male and 22% female. However, The Law Council of Australia's 2009 Court Appearance Survey ("Survey") conducted over that period revealed the following:

- Private law firms briefed male barristers in 88% of the matters surveyed & female barristers in only 12% of the matters surveyed.
- Other entities (including the Government, Victoria Legal Aid & the Director of Public Prosecutions) briefed male barristers in 83% of the matters surveyed & female barristers in 17% of the matters surveyed.
- Overall, male barristers were briefed in 87% of the matters surveyed & female barristers in only 13% of the matters surveyed.
- The average appearance time for male barristers was 61% longer than for female barristers.

The Convenor of the Women Barristers Association, Joye Elleray, says:

“This suggests there is a pool of untapped talent in the form of female barristers.

Law firms owe it to their clients to engage excellent advocates. To achieve this law firms need to make fully informed decisions about the pool of barristers possessing the requisite skills. If the law firm doesn't know any female barristers with the requisite skills it ought to make inquiries as to suitable female counsel. This information is readily available through [vicbar.com.au](http://vicbar.com.au).

The Victorian Government requires its panel firms to adopt the Model Briefing Policy and to report on the gender of barrister briefed and the quantum of the brief fee. This is no doubt responsible for the improvement in the statistics for briefing by “Other entities” (i.e. the non private law firms).

The WBA commends the Victorian Government for its requirements that panel firms adopt the Model Briefing Policy and report on gender & brief fee and recommends that the extension of the reporting requirements to non-government work would go some way to seeing that clients are not left short changed in the talent pool.”

Contact Joye Elleray on 9225 6444 or [joyelleray@vicbar.com.au](mailto:joyelleray@vicbar.com.au) or Kim Knights 9640 3234 or [kimknights@melbchambers.com.au](mailto:kimknights@melbchambers.com.au) with any queries.