

# MEDIA RELEASE

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AUSTRALIAN  
WOMEN  
LAWYERS

### After 2012 Appointments, Only 9.3% of Australia's Silks Are Female

Fifty years after Dame Roma Mitchell's appointment as Australia's first female silk in 1962, Australian Women Lawyers (AWL) welcomes the appointment of 17 women as Senior Counsel this year, although less than 10% of currently practising silks in Australia are female.

#### 2012 Senior Counsel Appointments

State	Number of Women Appointed	Total Number of Appointments
NSW	12	26
Vic	3	20
Qld	1	3
SA	1	5
WA	0	2
Tas	0	1
NT	0	1
ACT	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>59</b>

This takes the total current number of practising female Senior Counsel in Australia to 81:

#### Practising Female Senior Counsel in Australia

State	Number of Practising Female Senior Counsel	% of all Practising Senior Counsel at the Independent Bar
NSW	34	9.4% (363 in total)
Vic	26	10.1% (258 in total)
Qld	6	4.6% (129 in total)
SA	8	20.5% (39 in total)
WA	2	6.4% (31 in total)
Tas	1	7.1% (14 in total)
NT	3	30% (10 in total)
ACT	1	4.3% (23 in total)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>9.3% (867 in total)</b>

\*Note: a handful of silks are listed on multiple State and Territory bar directories.

It has undoubtedly been a breakthrough year for female silks in New South Wales, with women comprising 12/26 appointments. This is compared with 2/24 in 2011 and 4/20 in 2010. In Victoria, 3/20 appointments were women, compared with 2/15 in 2011 and 3/15 in 2010. However, only five of the 71 applications for silk in Victoria were received from women, suggesting more women need to be encouraged and assisted to apply.

AWL understands that the criteria for senior counsel appointments in some smaller jurisdictions, such as Tasmania, heavily relies on appearances by women in the Supreme Courts. This arguably disadvantages women barristers who may not practise in criminal law, or who instead appear regularly in State tribunals and Commonwealth courts. AWL encourages all jurisdictions to ensure that the appointment of Senior Counsel is informed by wide consultation and consideration of diverse practice areas.