

## Survey Findings a Positive Boost for Females at the Bar

Female barristers are appearing in Australian courts at the same rate as their male counterparts, according to a Law Council survey released today.

The 2009 Court Appearance Survey, undertaken in May and June by the Law Council and Australian Women Lawyers (AWL), measured the rate at which women barristers and advocates appear in superior courts, the types of matters in which they appear and the amount of time they are spending in court.

Law Council President John Corcoran said the findings in relation to appearance rates were positive and should serve as encouragement for women wishing to join and remain at the Bar.

“Statistically, female barristers Australia-wide are appearing in our courts in the same proportions as they exist in the Bar population – and this is very pleasing,” Mr Corcoran said.

“The Law Council is committed to the principles of equality in the workplace and we are constantly working to ensure equality for female barristers and advocates. The Law Council’s Equitable Briefing Policy encourages law firms, government departments and agencies, and other organisations to adopt an approach that optimises opportunities for women in the law, judiciary and wider community.”

But it wasn’t all positive news. The findings reveal that, on average, female barristers appear for shorter periods than their male counterparts (3.8 hours compared to 2.8 hours). The findings also suggest that entities such as government departments are more likely to give briefs to women barristers than private law firms.

AWL President Olivia Perkiss said, “The industry needs to conduct research and develop policies to not only encourage women to look at joining the Bar, but to make it an attractive, long-term career where they can receive complex, well-paid work and opportunities for promotion”.

“We are working on a strategy to address the findings of this survey, which will focus on further investigation and information gathering, education and promotion of structural and institutional change,” Mr Corcoran concluded.

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