

THE AUSTRALIAN

State raises the bar on female silks

CHRIS MERRITT THE AUSTRALIAN DECEMBER 07, 2012 12:00AM

Practising female senior counsel

| State | Practising female silks | % 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) |
| TOTAL | 81 | 9.3% (867 in total) |

Source: Australian Women Lawyers

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NSW has overtaken Victoria as the jurisdiction with the largest cohort of female silks, according to figures compiled by Australian Women Lawyers.

Before the latest round of appointments, Victoria led the nation with 23 female silks, one ahead of NSW. But the inclusion of a large number of women in the latest appointments in NSW has lifted the state's total to 34.

Of the 24 new silks appointed in NSW this year, half are female, compared with two out of 24 the year before.

In Victoria, 20 new silks were appointed this year, and just three were female compared with two out of 15 last year. Just five of the 71 applications for silk in Victoria were from women.

Nationally, female barristers account for just 9.3 per cent of senior counsel at the independent bar.

Australian Women Lawyers president Kate Ashmor said there was a clear need to increase the quality of cases allocated to female barristers in order to showcase their skills.

"But there are also wider systemic problems, such as childcare reform and flexible work, that are common to all professions," Ms Ashmor said.

AWL's figures show that while NSW has the the biggest single cohort of female silks, Victoria still has a higher proportion of silks who are female -- 10.1 per cent compared with 9.4 per cent in NSW.

Queensland, which has the third largest cohort of silks, also has one of the smallest number of female silks -- just six out of a total of 129.

This is less than South Australia, which has a total of 39 silks, eight of whom are female.