

**CHARTER FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION**

GUIDELINES

Women Lawyers' Association
South Australia Inc



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These Guidelines provide some examples of practices designed to help law practices fulfil the Charter commitments in respect of women in the profession. The WLASA recognises that not all of the examples provided will be suitable for implementation by all law practices.

Demonstrating leadership by implementing diversity and inclusion principles in the legal profession and removing gender bias and discrimination in the legal workplace

- Developing, documenting and implementing policies which support equality of employment opportunities, the fair and equitable assessment of talent in the organisation and expressly prohibit harassment and discrimination;
- Identifying and addressing any barriers to the implementation of the organisation's policies on equality of employment opportunities;
- Facilitating customised, unconscious bias training for all staff;
- Ensuring that work allocation and promotion decisions are not impacted by unconscious bias;
- Ensuring that all solicitors receive fair access to practice areas that command higher fees and enhance the resulting fee earning capacity of individuals;
- Ensuring fair and equitable access to work on major projects or high profile matters and opportunities to attend client functions;
- Monitoring the allocation of work to ensure fair and equitable access to work that provides opportunities for developing professional skills and competencies;
- Regularly reviewing the areas of practice of solicitors to ensure fair and equitable access to career moves and development opportunities;
- Analysing fixed and variable remuneration data for work of equal value according to gender and full-time/part-time status, considering differentiating factors such as seniority, time in role and performance rankings, and reporting the outcomes to senior leadership;
- Regularly reviewing policies, procedures and educational materials relating to equality, harassment and discrimination;
- Regularly measuring and reporting to senior leadership on the impact of the initiatives on the organisation's business e.g. client and employee retention, profitability and overall efficiency;
- Ensuring that all employees receive fair opportunities to participate in training and development;
- Developing and implementing a written grievance handling procedure, which is clear and fair;
- Distributing relevant policies and procedures to all people in the organisation.

Driving change in the legal profession by developing a culture that supports the retention of women legal practitioners and recognises their value in senior roles

- Creating opportunities for recognition and status;
- Examining leadership selection criteria and structure to ensure fair opportunities;
- Reviewing senior leadership teams for gender balance and consideration of adopting targets for representation at senior levels;
- Considering corporate membership or supporting individual lawyers' membership of the Law Society of SA, the WLASA, or other equivalent industry bodies that promote the advancement of women in the profession;
- Where appropriate for the size of the employer, applying for recognition as an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality as determined by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency;

Implementing recruitment and promotion strategies that include gender diversity as an important consideration, including ensuring equal pay for legal graduates within the same organisation regardless of gender

- Ensuring that female and male employees receive equal pay for equivalent performance in similar roles, both at recruitment and at promotional points during their progression within the organisation;
- Conducting salary reviews fairly, impartially and on a regular basis;
- Including those on any form of flexible working arrangement, part-timers and those on sick leave or any form of extended leave such as parental leave in salary reviews;
- Ensuring that those who are responsible for promotion, for example partnership evaluation committees, are familiar with and understand the organisation's diversity and inclusion policies and promotion criteria;
- Ensuring that to the extent possible committees or panels established to decide promotion applications consist of people from diverse backgrounds;
- Reviewing policies to ensure that opportunities for promotion are not linked to requirements that may be indirectly discriminatory against those with carer's responsibilities;
- Avoiding promotion criteria which are linked solely to financial performance where that may indirectly disadvantage those on any form of flexible work arrangement;
- Ensuring that all employees receive fair opportunities to access employment benefits;
- Linking remuneration and employment benefits to objective performance measures;
- Including a diversity advocate in critical decision making meetings to ensure that bias is identified early in the decision making process.

Promoting and supporting mentoring and sponsorship of women in the legal profession

- Regularly monitoring mentoring, coaching and sponsorship opportunities for effectiveness, including providing confidential access to another staff member if there are difficulties with a mentoring or other relationship;
- Establishing internal mentoring, coaching and sponsorship programs, and facilitating participation in external programs.

Encouraging and supporting flexible work practices in the legal profession to assist men and women to better balance professional and other commitments

- Developing and implementing policies and practices concerning flexible work practices including reduced schedules, family leave and carer's responsibilities and monitoring their implementation;
- Considering requests for part-time work and flexible work, including work from home and job-share on an individual basis across all positions, levels and departments/divisions;
- Role modelling of flexible work arrangements by senior leadership;
- Making leave without pay available to staff who need to care for family members or dependents, not just children;
- Considering additional leave for employees when they have been working long hours on particular projects;
- Allowing, where possible, for an employee's need to deliver and collect children from childcare facilities at specified hours, or other regular carer's responsibilities, such as collecting dependents from medical appointment;

- Allowing employees and partners to take career breaks for family reasons, study or pursuit of other interests and facilitating their return to work;
- Encouraging work hours and practices that enable all employees to fully contribute and do not disadvantage those working flexibly;
- Facilitating the use of technology to enable flexible working for everyone;
- Supporting female employees to return to work with young babies, for example by the use of flexible working hours or the provision of private facilities (other than a toilet) to either feed or express;
- Supporting working parents through a range of measures that could include paid parental leave, flexible working options on return, a graduated return to financial targets, informal networking groups for new parents, access to information about childcare options and the ability to purchase additional annual leave;
- Providing training to managers on managing staff with flexible working arrangements;
- Conducting exit interviews with all employees leaving the firm to determine whether difficulties in balancing work and life commitments have been contributing factors and ensuring that any response provided by the candidate will not impact negatively on the content of any reference provided by the firm.

Equitable Briefing

- Adhering to equitable briefing policies as per the Guidelines of the Equitable Briefing Policy of the Law Council of Australia.