

## Law Council adopts Equitable Briefing Policy

The Law Council of Australia has launched a landmark new [Equitable Briefing Policy](#) aimed at improving the briefing of women barristers across the country.

The policy includes, for the first time, interim and long term targets with the ultimate aim of briefing women in at least 30 per cent of all matters and paying 30 per cent of the value of all brief fees by 2020.

The policy is intended to drive cultural change within the legal profession, support the progression and retention of women barristers, and address the significant pay gap and underrepresentation of women in the superior courts.

Law Council of Australia President-elect, Fiona McLeod SC, noted the new policy was the result of significant consultation and reflected a common commitment by the profession and clients to brief barristers for their skill and expertise.

“This new policy reflects a genuine commitment by the profession to address inequality in briefing practices that have resulted in relatively low appearance rates and the persistent significant disparity in fees,” Ms McLeod said.

“We want women barristers to be considered based on their skill, experience, expertise, and interest. But for that to happen we need to promote a cultural shift, and that means encouraging participants to seek out women barristers appropriate for the relevant matter.

“Currently we have a situation in which women are graduating from Australian law schools in significantly larger numbers than their male counterparts, yet they make up a low percentage of barristers, spend fewer hours in court, and get paid less in fees.

“If we want our best and brightest law graduates to be attracted to a career as a barrister, we need to start showing young women such a career is possible.”

Law Council of Australia, President Stuart Clark AM, noted that while the targets in the briefing policy were non-mandatory, the Law Council would be aiming to encourage cultural change by publishing the names of those who have adopted the policy.

“The support by the leaders of the various Bar Associations and Law Societies is very encouraging, but it’s obviously only the start. We have moved beyond simply acknowledging the problem and are now all working together to begin to address it,” Mr Clark said.

“I am confident that given the very real intent to improve the situation that exists both within and without the legal profession, the [Equitable Briefing Policy](#) can provide the structure for real and meaningful change.”

The policy will be rolled out across the country in a series of events, and government and corporate in-house counsel will be invited to sign on.

The *National Model Gender Equitable Briefing Policy* can be viewed [here](#).

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