

Freehills

- Freehills is active in the community and provide mentoring and support to disadvantaged groups.
- The LEAPS program — Law Firms Encouraging and Assisting Promising Students – is currently in its second year. Freehills people have mentored more than twenty year nine students from Macquarie Fields High School each year. Care is taken to ensure that equal numbers of young women and young men are invited into the program.
- There is a work experience program for lawyers with a disability - for the past two years, Freehills has been a key participant in “Stepping into Law”, a unique work experience program for fourth and fifth year law students with a disability. The program provides a positive learning experience for students, whilst fostering the legal profession’s understanding of the skills and abilities of people with a disability through the provision of four weeks work experience at Freehills. Women with disabilities are encouraged to participate.
- Shopfront Youth Legal Centre - a joint project between Freehills, Mission Australia and The Salvation Army was established in 1993 in Darlinghurst, Sydney. The Shopfront provides pro-active and preventative legal services to homeless and disadvantaged young women and men in the inner city area. Freehills’ work in this area was recognised by the International Financial Law Review in 2006 when they were awarded Pro Bono Law Firm of the Year. Clients of the Shopfront are aged 25 and under. They are mainly homeless and many have a variety of other problems such as intellectual disability, mental illness, drug dependency, limited literacy and a history of abuse.
 - While every effort is made to schedule training on days and at times that are suitable for everyone, this is not always possible. Freehills pays for any additional childcare costs that may be incurred as a result of changes to work schedules, to allow greater access to training for their flexible workforce.
 - Two formal mentoring programs have been implemented to support Freehills high potential female partners.
 - In a recent industry comparison involving 16 top and mid-tier law firms, Freehills had, at 13%, the highest percentage of female special counsel and the highest percentage of women lawyers working flexibly. The industry norm for female lawyers working flexibly is 10.9% (Urbis Keys Young, 2005).
 - In recognition of the firm’s achievements and commitment to continuing to improve its flexible work practices, Freehills received a ‘Special Award for Flexibility in the Workplace’ from the Law Society of New South Wales (NSW) for its initiatives in flexible work practices (October 2006).
 - Flexible work Practices - all requests for flexible work arrangements are considered. Freehills not only has staff working flexibly for family reasons, but also enables staff to pursue personal interests in the form of music, charity work, writing and elite sports.
 - The Freehills Parenting Network provides opportunities nationally for parents and other interested parties to hear from industry experts on a range of topics that relate to work and family life. These lunch forums also provide networking opportunities for parents across the firm. The most recent event was called ‘Raising an Optimistic Child’. It was presented Dr. Bob Murray and Alicia Fortinberry, internationally recognised experts in relationships, parenting and leadership. Freehills’ 2007 Parenting Newtwork Program will include topics such as supporting teenagers and bullying prevention strategies for young children.

- Through its benefits program, Freehills offers a broad range of employee benefits which include;
 - Discounted financial services through anz@work
 - Membership of the AdvantEdge corporate benefits program
 - Staff discount on Australian Chamber Orchestra tickets
 - Car leasing and car procurement program
 - Subsidised Corporate gym memberships
 - Employee Assistance Program
 - Social Clubs in each office
 - Group Life Insurance
 - Salary Packaging opportunities
 - Salary Continuance Insurance
 - Subsidised Health & Wellbeing Program
 - Freehills Day - one extra day's leave per calendar year
 - Access to health benefits schemes
 - Travel Insurance
 - Payment of Professional memberships and practising fees
 - Study leave and financial assistance
- The Freehills National Corporate Mums Program was piloted in Sydney in 2005 and rolled out nationally in 2006. It consists of 6 forums run over a number of months and is designed to build internal networks, share experiences, and develop skills and knowledge to assist in maximising the value of the time that is devoted to career as well as the time devoted to family.
- The In-Home Emergency Childcare program was developed in collaboration with professional childcare providers. The service is designed to give our people access to emergency child-care options. The service complements existing child-care arrangements and offers solutions for a range of circumstances.
- In December 2006, each of the Freehills offices was to host a "Kids at work" day. The aim was to give staff with families the opportunity to show their children where they work and to have some interactive, family fun in the offices. This is another way that Freehills feels they can acknowledge the family unit.
- Freehills is a strong supporter of Taskforce on Care Costs (TOCC) and has actively participated in this working group since TOCC's inception in 2003. The aim was to investigate the financial cost of care and the cost to society through its impact on workforce participation. TOCC promotes economic reforms to carer assistance policy within a framework of financial sustainability, equity and choice. The final TOCC report was delivered in October 2006.
- Freehills hosted a round table discussion with a number of our competitors in the legal field. The purpose was to be open with each other about the problems they are all facing and to share ideas and policies with each other. The general feeling of the group was that it may be easier to change the legal industry collectively, rather than attempt to promote change in isolation.
- Senior executives at Freehills drive an inclusive culture through their ongoing participation as members of the Women at Freehills Steering Committee. The goals of this committee - to increase the retention of our talented female lawyers in roles that meet their expectations, and to increase the proportion

of women in the partnership – are an integral part of the Freehills Strategic Plan.

The foundations that prompted the formation of the steering committee were laid in 2003 when our CEO and executive specifically focused their attention on the women lawyers in our organisation. They were determined to increase organisational focus on the careers and retention of women lawyers to ensure the firm could meet its objectives, both now and into the future, to attract and retain “best people”.

The partners also agreed at that time that anchoring the Women at Freehills program within the partnership and at the executive level within the firm would be integral to its success. And so, in November 2004, the Women at Freehills Steering Committee was established to guide and support the Women at Freehills program. This steering committee consists of 12 senior partners (women and men, including the CEO), who represent a variety of views and are key influencers within our organisation, and 2 Human Resource / Organisational Development professionals. The CEO also assigned a dedicated Project Team from the Organisational Development area of HR to manage the projects that would be required to meet these objectives.