

## **Blake Dawson – Employer of Choice for Women Citation 2009 – EO Initiatives**

### **1. Diversity Plan**

- Implemented a Diversity Plan, as part of the firm's People Development Strategy.
- Key objectives of the Diversity Plan:
  - Improve retention and transition to Partnership of high performing female Senior Associates;
  - Increase awareness and understanding amongst Partners and staff of diversity/gender as critical component of business success and the range of programs and initiatives in place which build our workplace culture;
  - Increase Partner/Manager skill in developing and managing Flexible Work arrangements and development of support available to assist flexible workers optimise their performance;
  - Build our external reputation as a diversity/gender thought leader in the legal profession and broader business community.
- The People Development Strategy (and therefore the Diversity Plan) are integrated with the firm's overall Strategic Plan.

### **2. Flexible Work "Broker"**

- Introduced new role of Flexible Work "Broker" in the People Development Team.
- The Flexible Work Broker provides:
  - a single reservoir of learning and experience, to provide tailored guidance and advice to partners, staff and local office People Development teams on all matters relating to flexible work arrangements and to ensure greater consistency across the firm
  - centralised support to ensure the firm improves its application of the Flexible Work Options Principles, Policy and Procedure.

### **3. Flexible Work Register**

- Developed a new "Flexible Work Register" to provide detailed information and reporting on all flexible work arrangements within the firm.
- The register includes information on regular work from home arrangements, job share arrangements, the duration of a flexible work arrangements (including start, finish and review dates), the details of a particular arrangement where the arrangement is non-standard and the reasons for a particular arrangement being implemented or amended.

### **4. Flexible Work Training**

- Training on Flexible Work Arrangements for Partners, Legal Staff, secretaries and support service managers across the firm.
- The purpose of the training is:
  - to increase awareness and understanding of the firm's Flexible Work Options Principles, Policy and Procedures and to improve their application across the firm

- to improve the understanding of all partners and staff (both those with and those without flexible work arrangements) about the importance and value of such arrangements and the role they play as managers, colleagues and team members to flexible workers.

#### 5. **Mentoring Programs for Women**

- Support and develop women's initiatives and mentoring programs in each of the firm's Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane offices.
- These programs:
  - support and encourage women to reach their full potential
  - provide a forum for individual and group mentoring,
  - provide a means for the groups to host events to raise money for significant women's organisations and host functions with interesting and inspiring keynote speakers who are female role models from both within and outside the firm, eg in late October 2007 the Sydney Women's Mentoring Group hosted its first annual Pink Ribbon breakfast to raise money for breast cancer research and in September 2008, a fund raiser for the Rape Crisis Centre in New South Wales

#### 6. **On Ramping Project**

- Currently piloting an "On Ramping Project", directed at improving retention and transition back to work of employees following periods of parental leave.
- The program includes consistent firm wide processes, information resources and initiatives which support partners, legal and support staff nationally as they depart for and return from parental leave, including:
  - an improved "Keeping in Touch" program;
  - return to work resources and toolkits;
  - better planning for staff and partners returning from parental leave, including a tailored parental leave/return to work plan prepared in consultation with their Team Leader and Practice Leader and which will reflect the Group 3 Year Business Plan.

#### 7. **Chairman's Lunch**

- Hosted a Chairman's Lunch in late November 2008 for key client representatives, the media and representatives of EOWA.
- The lunch, jointly hosted by our Chairman and Managing Partner, recognised the firm's 8 consecutive Employer of Choice for Women citations and other achievements in this area, and, more importantly, to promote the firm as a thought leader in the advancement of women and promotion of diversity in the legal profession and the broader business community.
- Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Commissioner Responsible for Age Discrimination gave the keynote address on her observations both as a former partner of the firm and in her first 12 months as Sex Discrimination Commissioner.

#### 8. **ARC Leadership Research**

- The firm is participating in the Leadership Research Project being conducted by the Coaching Psychology Unit of the University of Sydney School of Psychology.

- The project is a three year research and training project funded primarily by a grant from the Australian Research Council (ARC).
- The objectives of the project are to:
  - Enhance engagement and retention, productivity and satisfaction in high stress workplaces by developing tailored leadership skills and methods
  - Develop a framework and tools which will help identify and develop leaders and staff
  - Assess the impact of coaching over and above training on performance and results.

Results will be measured at individual, team and firm level by a combination of interviews, engagement survey scores, retention rates, exit analyses and productivity measures.

#### 9. **Senior Associate Conference**

- Hosted the second (internal) Senior Associate Conference in October 2008.
- All of the firm's Senior Associates are invited to attend the conference and special arrangements are provided to support senior associates with child care responsibilities including onsite childcare, babysitting and kids club and reimbursement for out of pocket childcare expenses.
- The Senior Associates Conference provides a valuable opportunity for the firm's senior associates to network with their colleagues from their own and interstate offices, to hear from the leadership of the firm (including the newly appointment Managing Partner and Deputy Managing Partner), contribute thoughts and ideas to the future of Blake Dawson and to develop their own careers within the firm.

#### 10. **Parental Leave**

In September 2007 the Board approved, and the firm subsequently implemented, the following amendments to the firm's Parental Leave Policy:

- Increased paid parental leave payments, made to the primary caregiver, regardless of gender (within the first 52 weeks). Specifically, staff with 1-3 years of service are entitled to 6 weeks paid parental leave, and staff with more than 3 years of service are entitled to 12 weeks paid parental leave.
- Staff may apply for an additional period of up to 12 months unpaid parental leave (giving staff a total maximum period of 24 months parental leave), with the second 12 month period, or part-thereof, subject to approval.