

CORRS CHAMBERS WESTGARTH

Highlights

- 75% of our internal partner appointments in 2008 were female.
- 40% of our partner appointments in 2008 were female.
- 55% of our senior associates (78) and 64% of our special counsel (14) are female.
- 38% of our Board and 23% of our partners and senior managers are female.
- 68% (17) of our promotions to senior associate in 2008 were female.
- 74% of our workforce (including 29% of men) are now taking advantage of some form of flexible working arrangement or remote working tool.
- 8 partners are working part-time, including 4 male partners, demonstrating the uptake of flexible working arrangements amongst partners.
- Total female legal attrition is lower than total male legal attrition and lower than the industry average.
- Staff satisfaction with our efforts to retain women has increased, according to the latest Corrs internal "Pulse Check" survey.

Corrs Programs to promote the advancement of women in the profession

Corrs has recognised that women do not position themselves for promotion to partnership in the same way as men. In addition, they are often trying to balance personal and career objectives at a critical time in their career.

Corrs initiated a female Talent Pipeline overseen by our Diversity Council and Partner Admission Group, along with a Women Leading Change and coaching program for women with the potential to become a partner at Corrs. Women for whom the next stage of their career would be partnership, or who are senior business services managers, are eligible to attend the training.

The Women Leading Change program is designed to position women to maximise their career potential. It is accompanied by a Gender Awareness program for supervising partners to help them understand gender differences and teach them how to mentor and sponsor women to become partners. Results are monitored.

Women Leading Change program: A comprehensive program designed to help senior women maximise their potential. As part of the most recent program the women participants attended three workshops, led a strategic program to enable them to practice their leadership and strengthen Corrs as an employer of choice for women, and participated in group coaching sessions. The program assists senior women with high potential to develop their leadership capability, strengthens collegiality and resilience, and provides them with tools, strategies and support to maximise success in their careers.

Executive Gender Awareness workshop/ Women Leading Change Supervisor Briefing: Workshops run for supervising partners and managers to support the Women Leading Change program. The workshop provides managers with a greater awareness of gender differences in the workplace and an increased capacity and commitment to coach and support the careers of women.

Flexible work practices: We offer flexible career paths, including international internships, secondments, pro-bono opportunities, in-house special counsel roles, and inter-office and practice group transfers. Flexible work practices are a normal part of our working arrangements. We offer part-time working, job sharing and extended leave, and provide tools to support this such as remote access and 24/7 technical support for all staff as well as BlackBerrys for senior managers, senior associates and partners.

Networking program: Corrs has developed a networking program to support women. It operates at different levels within the business and provides networking opportunities for women in the internal environment, as well as the external business community. Corrs also profiles senior women in our quarterly internal magazine 'One Corrs', in order to provide women with role models. Many of the senior women profiled work part-time and manage career and family commitments.

Executive Coaching: Is available for high potential senior women in the partnership pipeline, as well as other high-potential women, to help support their career development.

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Profiles



Debra Surman

Corporate Communications
Adviser

When my husband's job was unexpectedly transferred to Canberra early this year, I was disappointed as I thought it meant I would have to part company with Corrs as the firm does not have an office there.

My manager, however, was far more upbeat and looked into the possibility of me working remotely from Canberra. One month later here I am, in Canberra, working off my laptop from my new home office.

The support I have received from the firm to make my new work arrangement possible has been astounding. I was provided with all the technology that I needed to set up a home office and with our IT Helpdesk just a phone call away, I've got virtually 24x7 technical support. The Corrs remote access system is fast and operates seamlessly. All in all, I'm working just as efficiently as a telecommuter as I would in an office environment.

The one obvious difference is that I'm not actually in an office, I'm at home. Whilst it may seem like a radical change, it's not when you consider that the 'virtual' office environment is already a part of Corrs working culture. Meetings are a great example. We are a national firm and teleconferencing is a prime way of conducting meetings across offices. When I was in the Brisbane office, most of my meetings were teleconferences, so I am already very familiar with the concept of working closely with people that you may never meet!

From a social perspective, it is quite different working by yourself and not being surrounded by colleagues. This is the where the phone comes in very handy. I have regular catch-ups with all the members of my team across the nation, so that I stay abreast of what's happening around the firm and so that I continue to feel part of the team.

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Amanda Burt

Lawyer, Perth

"When I was looking to start my graduate career, I didn't really expect to be able to work part-time as a graduate in a major law firm – I certainly hadn't heard of it when working at the time as a Judge's Associate.

I decided to float the possibility of working part-time when I spoke with the Corrs HR manager. I was concerned full-time hours with the additional College of Law study would be too demanding as I had three young children. The youngest was one at the time. The HR Manager spoke with the partners who were happy for me to work a three day week for the year. This also satisfied the requirements of the College of Law course.

When I did start at Corrs after deferring for a year to work with as a Judge's Associate, my supervising partners were always proactive in supporting that flexibility. I was set up to work remotely immediately and the partners supported a flexible start each day so that I could assist with the school drop-offs. They also worked with me to accommodate attending important school events, such as a class performance or a sports carnival.

Chris Ryder, who was my supervising partner for part of the year initiated the inclusion of a KPI for flexible working in my PDR (Performance Development Review) so we were both accountable for it. I think that really says something about his commitment and the firm's commitment. It's really great to see flexible working in action and to know that it's more than just a policy!"