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A shifting culture towards equal opportunity for women in law

There has been a rise in the number of female barristers being briefed on matters over the past three years, according to the latest equal opportunity data released by the Law Council of Australia.

The Law Council's [Equitable Briefing Policy Annual Report 2018-19](#) has found that briefs to female barristers increased by two per cent during the reporting year, with women now receiving 27 per cent of all briefs, on track to surpass the target of 30 per cent before the next reporting period.

Law Council President, Pauline Wright, said that the data reveals a welcome shift in culture.

“The Law Council launched the Equitable Briefing Policy in 2016, with the aim of tracking equal opportunity within the profession. The latest data shows evidence of positive moves within the profession, especially for female junior barristers who are receiving more briefs,” said Ms Wright.

“This allows them to gain more experience to further develop their legal career.”

“It is pleasing to see that we are on track to meet one of the key targets, for women barristers to be briefed in at least 30 per cent of all matters,” said Ms Wright.

Key highlights from the *Equitable Briefing Policy Annual Report 2018-19* include:

- 60 per cent of barristers recommended by senior reporting barristers for new matters were female.
- 62 per cent of barristers recommended by junior reporting barristers for new matters were female.
- Female junior barristers received 32 per cent of total briefs from reporting Briefing Entities (e.g. firms); and
- Briefing fees to junior and senior female barristers, combined, increased from 17 per cent to 20 per cent of all fees.

While the figures are encouraging, Ms Wright says that more work needs to be done to create a fairer environment for female barristers, especially when it comes to equal pay.

“Briefing rates for senior female barristers are still quite low, in comparison to senior male barristers, which may affect the total value of briefing fees for female barristers,” said Ms Wright.

“Despite the amount of fees received by female barristers increasing over the past three years, it is disappointing that the gender pay gap between female barristers and their male counterparts is still significant.”

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The Law Council of Australia is the national voice of the legal profession, promoting justice and the rule of law.