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## Press Release: Gender Appearance Results Point to Need for Research, Sponsorship and Funding Towards Career Intentions

The results of the Law Council of Australia's 2009 Gender Appearance Survey confirm the disappointing disparity between the appearances of women and men before New South Wales courts; a chronic discrepancy that the Women Lawyers' Association of New South Wales (WLA NSW) have long been aware of.

Currently only 6 per cent of Senior Counsel or Queen's Counsel, and 18 per cent of barristers overall, in New South Wales are women. The Gender Appearance Survey results reveal that male SCs and QCs appeared in 91 per cent, and female SCs and QCs appeared in 9 percent, of court matters during the surveyed period. Male junior counsel appeared in 80 per cent, and female junior counsel appeared in 20 per cent, of matters during the surveyed period. The average appearance time of male barristers was 4.3 hours, and the average appearance time for female barristers was 3.9 hours.

"Claims that the overall findings for New South Wales suggest that there is no significant difference between survey appearance rates and the actual Bar populations of both male and female barristers in this state, while perhaps true, provide a false sense of security," says Lee-May Saw, Immediate Past President and Chair of Research & Policy for WLA NSW.

"In an era where women have been graduating from New South Wales university law schools in numbers equal to or greater than men for more than a decade, it is simply not good enough that the figures for appearances before courts in this state continue to dominantly and significantly favour men," says Ms Saw.

"Why is it that the numbers for women graduating from university law schools are not being reflected in the numbers for appearances before our courts? What can be done about this obvious difference, which clearly shows the overwhelming majority of fees earned for litigation work in New South Wales continues to line the pockets of men?" asks Ms Saw.

WLA NSW commends the Law Council of Australia on its attempts to ensure that quality and reliable data is available on court appearances, but remains concerned about the lack of research, sponsorship and funding being dedicated to identifying and monitoring the progression of women in the legal profession, and the factors that affect their career choices in the law.

WLA NSW is partnering with the Australian National University (ANU) in implementing a survey of final year law students which will track the progress and career decisions of law graduates in New South Wales and the ACT. Some of the issues the survey will address are why women are refraining from commencing careers at the Bar, and why on going to the Bar, women are not necessarily staying there.

Anyone who is interested in contributing sponsorship and funding towards the WLA NSW and ANU survey of final year law students, including sponsorship and funding that will support the survey in being implemented nationally, should contact Lee-May Saw, Immediate Past President and Chair of Research & Policy for WLA NSW, at [imsaw@idx.com.au](mailto:imsaw@idx.com.au) or on 0417 693 239.

For further information and enquiries about this press release generally, please contact Lee-May Saw, Immediate Past President and Chair of Research & Policy for WLA NSW, at [imsaw@idx.com.au](mailto:imsaw@idx.com.au) or on 0417 693 239.

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