

# Media Release

20 March 2018

## Female lawyers in Victoria outnumber males for the first time

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When Victorian lawyers renew their practising certificates this month, there will be a significant difference in the profile of the legal profession.

For the first time in Victoria's history, the number of practising female lawyers has exceeded the number of male lawyers. Statistics released by the Victorian Legal Services Board show that in March 2018 there were 10,971 practising female lawyers in the state compared to 10,933 males, making women a majority for the first time.

Board Chairperson, Fiona Bennett, explained that the growth in female lawyers is something the Board had been tracking for some years.

'It has been interesting to watch the gradual shift in demographics away from the traditionally male dominated profession to one where we now have a gender balance – if ever so slightly tilted towards women,' Ms Bennett said.

The Board's statistics show women now dominate the 20-50 age bracket, while men still make up the majority of lawyers 51 years and older. Ms Bennett said the demographic shift was not a recent trend.

'Going back to a decade ago, only 40 per cent of Victoria's lawyers were women, however since then the number of practising female lawyers has grown by 3 per cent annually – double the rate of males,' Ms Bennett said.

'In fact figures from as far back as the late 1990s show the number of women entering the profession being consistently higher than men.'

Female solicitors first outnumbered their male counterparts in Victoria in October 2015, however because of the comparatively low ratio of female to male barristers, the Victorian profession remained majority male.

Ms Bennett said the steady growth in the number of female solicitors meant women now made up 52% of all solicitors, while female barristers have also increased.

'Over the past decade there has been an approximate 2% increase in female barristers in Victoria, so that women now make up 29% of our barristers.'

'Regardless of gender balance, the continuous growth in the number of practising lawyers in Victoria illustrates that we have a very strong legal sector and a thriving job market for lawyers in this state,' Ms Bennett said.

'It undermines suggestions that there are too many law graduates entering the profession, because the data clearly shows more lawyers are being employed every year.'

Victorian lawyers must renew their practising certificate annually, with renewals now open until 30 April.

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