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Snapshot of our legal profession

There has been a 12 per cent jump in the number of practising solicitors across the nation, more solicitors are working later in life and Western Australia has experienced a massive 40 per cent growth in solicitors in the past three years.

These statistics and more are contained in the 2014 National Profile of Solicitors in Australia released in Sydney today on behalf of the Conference of Law Societies.

Law Society of NSW Chief Executive, Michael Tidball, says the report is the second national study of its kind, providing important demographic data about solicitors in all states and territories.

“A similar report first profiled the profession in 2011. Now two sets of data we are able to observe changes in the profession between 2011-2014, including a 22 per cent increase in corporate and 19 per cent increase in government solicitors,” Mr Tidball said.

“For the first time, the report also provides data on solicitors who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander,” he said.

Key findings include:

- As of October 2014, there were 66,211 practising solicitors in Australia – a 12% increase since 2011. NSW has the largest proportion of registered solicitors (41.6%), followed by Victoria (24.5%) and Queensland (15.7%).
- There has been a 300% increase in the number of large law firms (40+ partners), a 22% increase in the number of corporate solicitors and a 19% increase in the number of government solicitors.
- Solicitors are continuing to work later in life - while the average age of solicitors (42 years) has remained the same there has been a 38% increase in the number of solicitors aged over 65 years.
- The gender profile is close to even. 51.5% (34,100) of practising solicitors are male and 48.5% (32,110) are female. Three fifths (60.2%) of all solicitors admitted in the past year are female (+19.3%).

-More-



- Since 2011 the corporate (+21.8%) and government (+18.6%) and private (+19.9%) sectors have grown. There are 12,843 private law firms operating in Australia, a 9% increase since 2011.
- Western Australia experienced the greatest proportional increase in solicitors, a 40% increase since 2011.
- Queensland has a considerably higher proportion of solicitors working in country or rural areas (29.9%) compared to the national average of 12.5%.
- Tasmania has the highest number of city-based solicitors (87.3%) compared to the national average of 53.6%.
- The Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory are the only states or territories where female practitioners outnumber male practitioners.

For the first time ever, statistics on the number of solicitors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) status across Australia have been included in the report.

The 2014 Reports shows that there are 559 ATSI solicitors in Australia, less than one percent (0.8%) of the legal profession.

The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of ATSI solicitors (1.9% of the legal profession) followed by NSW (1.6%), Western Australia (0.7%), Queensland (0.6%) and South Australia (0.3%).

In 2014 there were more female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander solicitors than male (52.1% female, 47.9% male) compared to the profession as a whole (51.5% male, 48.5% female).

The 2014 National Profile of Solicitors in Australia has been commissioned by the Law Society of NSW on behalf of the Conference of Law Societies and can be viewed at: www.lawsociety.com.au/resources/surveysandstatistics

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