



**Australian
Women Lawyers**

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Statement on Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession

Australian Women Lawyers Ltd. (AWL) has long campaigned against Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession. The Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia today released a statement on the issue of sexual harassment.¹

AWL knows that Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession is rife. There is plenty of data collected over the decades to support this, beyond the vast amount of anecdotal evidence, including:

- International Bar Association (IBA) Report released on 15 May 2019 '*Us Too? Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession*'²;
- Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2020)³;
- Law Council of Australia's National Attrition and Re-Engagement Study (NARS) Report 2014⁴;
- And many other surveys and reports, in particular by our constituent Women Lawyers and Barristers Associations across the country.

Despite the prevalence of sexual harassment in our profession most women never come forward publicly about their experiences or make complaints to employers, professional bodies or police. For those who do complain often it is their career that is derailed rather than that of the alleged perpetrator. AWL recognises that it is a brave act to go public about profoundly distressing experiences.

In 2019 AWL produced a paper tabling recommendations to the profession entitled: Seven Strategies for Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession.⁵ This Paper is attached. **We call on the profession to implement these recommendations.** We also call on the Federal Government to act swiftly on the recommendations of the Respect@Work National Inquiry Report.

All media enquiries should be directed to Adrienne Morton, President, Australian Women Lawyers
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¹ <https://cdn.hcourt.gov.au/assets/news/Statement%20by%20Chief%20Justice%20Susan%20Kiefel%20AC.pdf>

² <https://www.ibanet.org/bullying-and-sexual-harassment.aspx>

³ https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/respectwork-sexual-harassment-national-inquiry-report-2020?mc_cid=1065707e3c&mc_eid=%5bUNIQID%5d&_ga=2.145821876.1213196366.1592703751-155318562.1555743376 See especially pp230, 258 – 259,306, and 728-730 relevant to the legal profession

⁴ <https://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/docs/a8bae9a1-9830-e711-80d2-005056be66b1/NARS%20Report.pdf>

⁵ <https://australianwomenlawyers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Seven-Strategies-for-addressing-Sexual-Harassment-in-the-Legal-Profession-AWL-9-July-2019.pdf>