

Victorian Gender Equitable Briefing Policy

1. Policy Background

- (a) The Victorian Government is committed to addressing economic inequity for Victorian women, including achieving gender equity for women in the legal profession.
- (b) The Victorian Government enacted the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Vic) with purposes that included, requiring the public sector to:
 - (i) take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality; and
 - (ii) promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services.
- (c) Further, in response to the Inquiry into Economic Equity for Victorian Women, the Victorian Government gave support in principle to improve gender equity in professional services suppliers to the Victorian Government.
- (d) The Victorian Government acknowledges the National Model Gender Equitable Briefing Policy issued by the Law Council of Australia (reviewed in June 2022) which the Victorian Government has previously endorsed and required adherence to by legal service providers to Victorian agencies under the Legal Services Panel contract.
- (e) The Victorian Government considers that promoting equitable briefing in Victoria has a range of benefits, including:
 - (i) broadening the pool of skilled and experienced barristers that Agencies can brief to;
 - (ii) aligning with the Victorian Government Social Procurement Framework to drive greater diversity and representation and commitment to improve gender equity in professional services;
 - (iii) leveraging a greater breadth of perspectives and experiences to represent government interests;
 - (iv) acknowledging the historic underrepresentation of women in the legal profession, supporting the career development and progression of women in the profession, the pay gap and improving the availability of senior women role models to mentor future generations, and
 - (v) better-reflecting community expectations of fairness and representation.

2. Policy Obligations

Accordingly, the Victorian Government requires service provider's appointed to the Panel to:

- (a) make all reasonable endeavours to brief or select women barristers with relevant seniority and expertise, experience or interest in the relevant practice area;
- (b) brief or select senior women barristers for at least 50% of all briefs and at least 50% of the value of all brief fees paid to senior barristers;

- (c) brief or select junior women barristers for at least 50% of all briefs and at least 50% of the value of all brief fees paid to junior barristers; and

report 6 monthly under compliance with this policy (including for any Existing Matters) in accordance with the Service Level Agreement.