

Women still wary of flexible arrangements

LAW firms may be leading the charge when it comes to offering incentives for women workers, but a new survey has found that female lawyers believe pursuing flexible work arrangements could also damage their careers.

Conducted by the Australian Women Lawyers (AWL) association, a study of 800 female solicitors found that one in two female who make use of flexible policies will be viewed as less serious about their careers.

Legal executive recruitment specialist Alex Correa, says many workers are enduring incredible pressures, long hours and lack of time for relationships in order to boost their careers.

“For legal professionals – juggling the demands of their professional roles and personal lives often leaves little time to plan the next move,” says Correa.

“For many female lawyers, professional advancement opportunities into senior ranks coincide with starting a family. If they do return to work after taking maternity leave, they then have to juggle the pressures of work and demands of having a young family.

“With female lawyers representing 42 per cent of the total number of lawyers admitted in Queensland, and the majority based in Brisbane and the Gold Coast, the problem is serious.”

While firms are implementing innovative parental leave schemes to ease the burden on female lawyers looking to start a family, Correa says the results of the survey presents challenges for the sector.

“Access to the right talent at the right time is critical to an organisation’s success. Skill gaps within a team significantly impacts the livelihood of a business,” she says.

“Firms need to manage their resources and continue to deliver to their clients while their senior talent are on maternity leave. For law firms, the key is to maintain an open dialogue with their key female talent and not be indifferent to their desire to start a family.”