



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2023-2024

Mr Mark Parton MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS

Asked by Mr Cain MLA on 27 July 2023: Mr Garrisson took on notice the following question:

[Ref: Uncorrected Proof Hansard Transcript 27 July 2023 p 89]

In relation to: Female-owned legal firms on external legal advice panel

MR CAIN: Regarding government legal panels. Are there any majority female owned law firms on the ACT government legal panel?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Garrisson.

THE CHAIR: Your moment to shine.

Mr Garrisson: Peter Garrisson, Solicitor-General. Mr Cain, the panel arrangements for our external legal services, as I think indicated on the last occasion, there are 24 firms covering 26 practice areas. I could not tell you the partnership breakdown of those firms. They do cover a broad range of size of firms from small to medium to, of course, the larger law firm—national law firms as well.

MR CAIN: You do not categorise—pull out to make sure there are some female majority firms in that list?

Mr Garrisson: No, we do not do that as a criteria.

Mr Rattenbury: What we do have, Mr Cain, is that Mr Garrisson will be able to give you some figure on the amount of female counsel that have been engaged which is a clear majority—

MR CAIN: That is not my question though. My question is about who is on the panel and whether there are any female majority firms on that panel. Is that something that you could explore too since there is just such a small number? Take it on notice please.

Mr Garrisson: I will take that on notice, Mr Cain.

SHANE RATTENBURY: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: —

I am advised by the ACT Government Solicitor (**ACTGS**) that the Request for Tender for the provision of legal services on behalf of the Territory did not have as a specific criterion the gender breakdown of firm ownership model. However, that the Standard Conditions of Tender at the time of issuing the documentation included a statement related to affirmative action.

Publicly available information does not readily identify ownership arrangements and/or structure of each firm on the Territory Legal Services Panel.

The ACTGS is not aware of any of the firms on the Territory Legal Service Panel being named by the Workplace Gender Equity Agency as an employer currently not complying with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth).

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2023-2024

Signature:

Date:

By the Attorney-General, Shane Rattenbury MLA

Please insert additional information in to this answer. The Solicitor General presented powerful data at an International Workers Day event regarding the proportion of briefed-out work that goes to female barristers. While this question does not exactly go to that, I believe that data is highly relevant to the intent of the question, and provides a good insight in to the proactive efforts of the GSO to drive gender equality. Shane