



National profile of the profession

KELLIE GRAINGER CEO, Law Society NT

It will come as no surprise to anyone that the Northern Territory legal profession is the smallest by head count of any Australian jurisdiction—we make up just 1% of the Australian profession (excluding barristers) compared to our cousins in the largest jurisdiction, New South Wales, who constitute 43% of the overall number of solicitors in Australia.

This data comes from a collaborative effort by Australian law societies and other regulators¹ who cooperate each two years to compile key statistics about various demographics of the Australian profession. The first profile was released in 2012, and the release this year of the *2018 National Profile of Solicitors* is the 4th such report to be published. The census date for each report is 1 October—so this most recent report contains a snapshot of Australian solicitors as at 1 October 2018. Barristers are not included in this data (hence the title) and for jurisdictions with a fused profession such as the NT it captures the data of practitioners who may practise as a barrister and solicitor, but not those on a barrister-only practising certificate.

The profession as a whole has been growing since 2011—the total number of solicitors stands at 76 303 in 2018, an increase of 33% from 2011. The Territory profession has grown overall in that time too—up by 9% from the first data report to a total of 517 practitioners in 2018.

What are the unique aspects of the make-up of the NT profession? How do we differ from those 'down south'?

The small jurisdictions have led the way in achieving gender balance within the profession. In 2012, the NT and the ACT were the first two jurisdictions to achieve at least 50% female representation in the profession. It was not until 2018 that the same could be said for all other jurisdictions and the Australian profession as a whole. Since 2012 the ratio of female to male practitioners has continued to rise for the NT—with more than 60% of our practitioners now female. This might beg fresh questions about diversity in the profession—particularly once viewed through the prism of age.

The NT has the highest percentage of practitioners aged under 40 (55%), and almost half of those young practitioners are in fact aged under 29. 70% of the NT practitioners under 40 are female. Perhaps this statistic reflects the general numbers of female law graduates outstripping those of their male counterparts. The data also shows that nationally the cohort in the 45 to 49 age bracket is the only one to have parity in gender, below that age group female practitioners outnumber males with the reverse being the case beyond the age of 50.

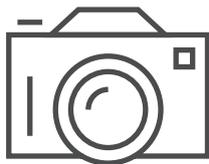
For the NT there is a similar position with our practitioner make-up when analysed on the number of years post-admission—just over one-third of NT practitioners have been admitted for five years or less. The NT has the highest percentage of these junior practitioners for any Australian jurisdiction, although the ACT is very close to this mark as well, and we are well-above the national total which sits at 28%. In the NT, and in fact across Australia, the next largest cohort are those admitted for 15 years or more. The data analysis from 2011 to 2018 confirms that overall we are an aging profession.

The other interesting aspect that sets the NT apart from our interstate colleagues is where most of us work. For most Australian jurisdictions more than 65% of the profession work in private practice, in the NT this represents the workplace for only 35% of our practitioners. Government lawyers also make up a substantial proportion of our practitioners

at 26%. The ACT is the only other jurisdiction with more than 20% of its practitioners in government (unsurprisingly it comes in at a whopping 46%). The NT has by far and away the highest percentage of practitioners in other sectors—legal assistance organisations such as NTLAC, NAAJA and community legal centres are captured in this group. More than a third of NT practitioners work in this sector—no other Australian jurisdiction gets out of single digits for the percentage of their practitioners working in a sector other than private practice, government or in-house counsel.

So if you are interested to read more about the current make-up of the legal profession in the NT and across Australia, or to see the trends that have emerged in the demographics of our profession over the seven years from 2011 to 2018 head to the Society's website and take a look at the *2018 National Profile of Solicitors Report*. ■

1. With a special acknowledgement to the Law Society of New South Wales who took responsibility for the coordination and preparation of the report.



SNAPSHOT OF THE NT PROFESSION

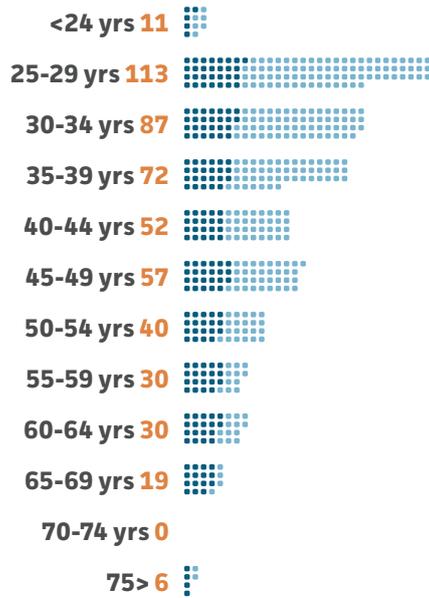


As at 1 October 2018

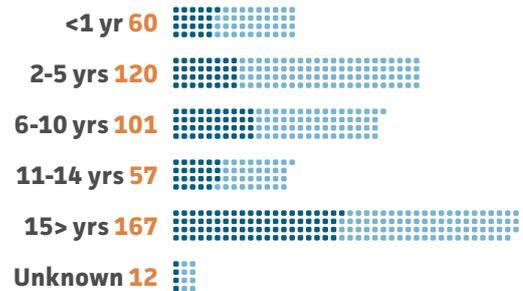
NT legal practitioner gender 2011-18



NT legal practitioner age



NT legal practitioner years since admission



NT legal practitioner employment sector



NT legal practitioner sector location



NT firm partner:employee ratio

