

The Australian Legal Profession: A snapshot of Asian Australian diversity in 2015

A report prepared by the Asian Australian Lawyers Association, Inc.

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About the Asian Australian Lawyers Association

The Asian Australian Lawyers Association was formed in 2013 to promote Asian cultural diversity in the Australian legal profession, provide advocacy and support to its members and develop links with Asian legal associations.

Our members hail from more than 10 countries in Asia and, between them, speak more than 20 different Asian languages and dialects. Members come from all walks of the legal community, including students, lawyers and principals from small, medium and large firms, barristers, in-house and government lawyers and members of the judiciary.

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Research leaders

- Barton Wu
- Daniel Nguyen
- Jing Zhu

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- Madhavi Ligam
- Jenny Si
- Hien Doan
- Bonita Tsang
- Yeru Chen
- Jasmin Dhillon
- Yeon Lee
- Therese Montalto
- Nayomi Naranpanawa
- Takako Yoshizawa

Report production

- Sining Wang
- Kylie Chow
- Noubelle Noble

President's message

The Asian Australian Lawyers Association was established as part of the diversity platform that formed a key focus of my term as the President of the Law Institute of Victoria in 2013.

At the launch of the Association, I observed that while the number of Asian Australians coming through our law schools has been increasing for some time, this did not appear to be reflected in the senior echelons of the legal profession in terms of partners of law firms, members of the Bar or the judiciary.



To date, this perspective has largely been anecdotal because the data maintained by our professional associations and the regulators does not include details of lawyers' cultural backgrounds.

I am pleased to launch this research, conducted by our committee with the support of many volunteers. While I acknowledge at the outset that the research is basic because public information regarding lawyers' cultural backgrounds is limited, our research tends to support: (1) the anecdotal views previously expressed; (2) the desirability of conducting more detailed research; and (3) the need for greater discussion and consideration of the issue by the legal profession.

I hope this is the start of a constructive dialogue for the legal profession in Australia.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RT' with a flourish.

Reynah Tang
President

reynah.tang@jws.com.au
0417 586 511

Sponsor's message

Baker & McKenzie lawyers are citizens of 55 countries and speak more than 75 languages, from Farsi and French to Japanese and Javanese. With offices in 47 countries, diversity has been part of our foundation from the very beginning.

The firm is proud to support The Asian Australian Lawyers Association (AALA) catering to the growing number of Asian Australian lawyers in the legal profession, as well as other lawyers with an interest in Asia. We strongly support AALA's goal in the promotion and facilitation of Asian cultural diversity in the senior ranks of the legal profession.

Anne-Marie Allgrove

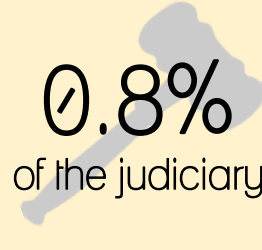
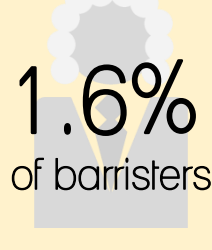
Chair of the Australian Diversity & Flexibility Steering Group
Baker & McKenzie

The Australian Legal Profession

A Snapshot of Asian Australian Diversity in 2015



Asian Australians account for...



*Statistics from Diversity Council Australia, 2014

There are promising signs in some law firms...

% of Asian partners in large firms (>40 partners)

Average: 3.2%

Highest: 8.2% (Johnson Winter Slattery)

% of Asian partners in medium firms (10-40 partners)

Average: 2.7%

Highest: 20.0% (Lavan Legal)

...but there's no room for complacency

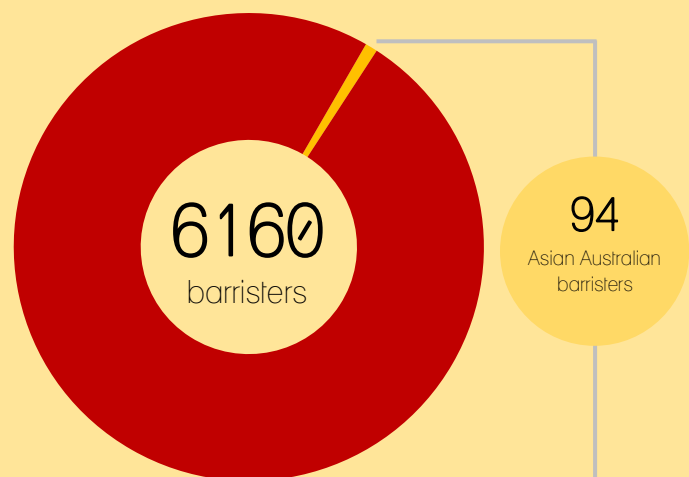


Large firms with no Asian Australian Partners

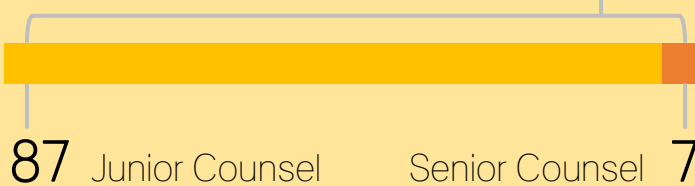


Medium firms with no Asian Australian Partners

The bar is yet to tap into Asian Australian talent in a meaningful way...



and progression is a concern...



...resulting in a judiciary that is not reflecting our community



Research methodology and limitations

- The research was necessarily based on publicly available information on the websites of firms, the various bars and courts around Australia. It is hoped that more detailed and accurate information regarding the cultural backgrounds of the legal profession can be obtained through a subsequent survey of the legal profession, as well as those studying law.
- Asian Australians were identified based on family names and/or information where available. A broad and inclusive approach was taken to identifying who is from an “Asian” background, including those hailing from North, South and South East Asia.
- The primary research was carried out between December 2014 and February 2015, with the analysis reviewed by the research leaders in March 2015.
- For international firms, only Australian based partners have been included.
- The data does not include tribunals and in-house, government and academic lawyers due to the limited public information available.
- Due to the limitations of the research methodology and the information which is publicly available, it is possible that:
 - some lawyers from an Asian Australian heritage have not been identified, particularly those of mixed heritage; and
 - some lawyers identified as coming from an Asian Australian heritage are actually from a different cultural background, eg. “Lee” is a common family name in Asia and in many Western countries,

so the information provided in this report should be used with care.

Detailed findings – Firms

By jurisdiction

	No of firms#	Asian Australian Partners	Total Partners	%
International	16	45	1,397	3.22
National*	48	66	2,243	2.94
Other firms:@				
Queensland	8	4	104	3.85
WA	2	5	36	13.89
Tasmania	1	0	14	0
ACT	0	0	0	0
NT	0	0	0	0
NSW	10	2	131	1.53
Victoria	7	1	102	0.98
SA	5	2	73	2.74
Total	97	125	4,100	3.05

> 10 Partners *Offices in two or more jurisdictions @Office in single jurisdiction

By size

	No of firms	Asian Australian Partners	Total Partners	%
> 40 Partners	31	93	2,902	3.20
10-40 Partners	66	32	1,198	2.67
Total	97	125	4,100	3.05

Detailed findings – Bar

By jurisdiction

	Asian Australian Barristers	Total Barristers	%
Queensland	20	1,255	1.59
WA	5	202	2.48
Tasmania	0	36	0
ACT	0	70	0
NT	1	49	2.04
NSW	26	2,266	1.15
Victoria	40	1,977	2.02
SA	2	206	0.97
Total	94	6,061	1.55

By rank

	Asian Australian Barristers	Total Barristers	%
Junior Counsel	87	5,097	1.71
Senior Counsel/ Queen's Counsel	7 [#]	964	0.73
Total	94	6,061	1.55

[#] NSW (3), WA (2), SA(2).

Detailed findings – Judiciary

By jurisdiction

	Asian Australian Judges	Total Judges	%
Federal	1	154	0.65
Queensland	1	171	0.58
WA*	0	56	0
Tasmania	0	21	0
ACT	0	12	0
NT	0	20	0
NSW	1	276	0.36
Victoria#	4	232	1.72
SA	1	115	0.87
Total	8	1,057	0.76

By level

	Asian Australian Judges	Total Judges	%
Magistrates*	4	410	0.98
County/District/Specialist@	1	295	0.34
High/Federal/Supreme#/Family	3	352	0.85
Total	8	1,057	0.76

* No data available for WA

@ For example, Industrial Court

Includes Reserve and Associate Justices