



United Nations Global Compact Communication on Progress

7 November 2019

**CORRS
CHAMBERS
WESTGARTH**

Statement from our CEO

Corrs Chambers Westgarth works to identify and prevent adverse human rights and environmental impacts, and contribute to a better, more sustainable future.

The UN Global Compact principles on human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption provide a useful framework for responsible business conduct. Corrs is committed to the principles and the broader sustainable development goals (SDGs) and is pleased to be a member of the UN Global Compact. We believe that by respecting human rights, we are able to build a strong culture focussed on developing our people, strengthening relationships with our clients, suppliers and other stakeholders, and contributing to the community in which we work.

We are pleased to provide this report on the progress we have made this year, and recognise we must continue to strengthen our response and enhance our contribution to the SDGs.

This year we appointed a Head of Business and Human Rights. We are developing a human rights policy that will outline our commitment to respect human rights within our workplace and community, and to promote respect for human rights with all our stakeholders.

We have educated our employees on human rights, the UN guiding principles and on issues of modern slavery, encouraged human rights advocates to speak to staff, and continue to support human rights and humanitarian organisations such as Hagar, Human Rights Watch and Oxfam Australia. We are proud of the contribution our pro bono work makes to support the human rights of disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our community and overseas.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is unwavering. Through our policies, initiatives and training programs we seek to promote a supportive, equitable and inclusive workplace culture that facilitates diversity of thought, improved business performance, enhanced service delivery and increased staff engagement.

We have made commitments to minimise our environmental footprint and to become an accredited carbon neutral business in the next reporting period.

In this, our first communications on progress report, we provide further detail on our ongoing commitment to the Global Compact and its guiding principles.



Gavin MacLaren
Senior Partner and Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gavin MacLaren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Human Rights



Corrs Chambers Westgarth's commitment and promotion of human rights is long-standing, ongoing and an intrinsic part of the firm. We believe that by actively working to identify, prevent and mitigate adverse human rights impacts in our own business and with our clients and suppliers, we can contribute to a better, more sustainable future. We pride ourselves on working together with our people, our clients and our communities to promote respect for human rights.

In order to promote respect for human rights Corrs has the following initiatives and programs in place:

Business and Human Rights Practice



Responsible Business Working Group



Pro Bono practice and community engagement



Business and Human Rights Practice

In launching our Business and Human Rights practice in 2019, we put in place the means to promote and support the protection of human rights across the firm, deepen our understanding of our human rights impacts, and strengthen our responses. We know that when we treat people with respect and dignity, and enable them to realise their rights, we are contributing to a strong and engaged community empowered to realise its potential.

The practice provides human rights advice to clients and other stakeholders and promotes a continuous improvement approach through the promotion and implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Efforts by government, investors, and customers to encourage responsible business conduct have led senior executives and directors to focus on the environmental and social impacts of their enterprises. This has brought human rights into sharp focus for many boardrooms in Australia which are increasingly turning to human rights to guide professional and ethical conduct, build corporate culture, and enhance risk management. Corrs is advising clients in these matters and encourages our clients to incorporate human rights considerations into their day to day operations particularly in relation to their responsibilities under the new *Australian Modern Slavery Act* (2018).

Australian Human Rights Institute Advisory Committee

Corrs Head of Business and Human Rights has been appointed to the inaugural advisory committee of the Australian Human Rights Institute, joining a group of eminent Australians who will help guide the research institute for the next three years.

The Institute, which launched in March 2018, is part of a broader University of New South Wales strategy to encourage researchers from various disciplines to work towards breakthroughs for communities around the world that are most in need.

This spirit continues with the Institute's inaugural advisory committee, which features people who have achieved in fields as diverse as business, politics, law, medicine, sport and the arts. The Institute's [research programs](#) and support for human rights defenders will be enriched by the vast experiences of the advisors.

Responsible Business Working Group

This year we established a Responsible Business Working Group (RBWG) to focus on the development and consideration of human rights impacts in our policies and practices, to deepen our existing human rights capacity, and to extend Corrs practice in the implementation of the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The RBWG has overseen the development of human rights online and compulsory training for all new staff, face-to-face training for affected practice groups, professional development training in human rights for our clients, and increasing exposure to human rights issues through a speaking programme profiling expert visitors from Hagar and Human Rights Watch.

The RBWG supports our firm through establishing monitoring and procedures to identify, assess and address any modern slavery in our supply chain. The RBWG is also sponsoring work across the firm to minimise our carbon footprint and move towards being carbon neutral.

Our Pro Bono Practice and Community Engagement

From local schools to global organisations, Corrs has a long and proud history of helping those in need. Assisting, respecting and caring for each other, our clients and our broader communities is a key element of our culture.

In the last financial year Corrs spent more than 20,000 hours at an average of 40 hours per lawyer on pro bono matters, well above the National Aspirational Target set by the National Pro Bono Centre of 35 hours. Corrs' commitment to pro bono service is seen in our legal secondments to public interest referral services and community legal centres

Among our top pro bono clients are bodies or organisations around the country that work for the marginalised and disadvantaged in our community and include:

- [Justice Connect](#)
- [LawRight Inc](#)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-op](#)
- [Street Law Centre WA Incorporated](#)
- [Aboriginal Legal Service of WA Inc](#)
- [Teach for Australia](#)
- [Human Rights Watch](#)
- [Hagar](#)
- [Oxfam](#)
- [Northern Australia Aboriginal Corporation](#)
- [Employment Law Centre](#)
- [The Big Issue](#)

Overseen by a national team of senior partners, our pro bono program is not confined to working for specific groups but the firm also runs free legal clinics for the homeless (Melbourne and Sydney), refugees (Brisbane and Perth) and prisoners (Melbourne).

Corrs people are actively encouraged to support disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups, charities and not-for-profits. We offer the opportunity for our people to do this through pro bono legal work, volunteering and workplace giving, all of which form part of our dedicated Pro Bono & Community program.

In 2018, we published our inaugural Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP). Developed to improve financial inclusion for marginalised people, the FIAP program helps to ensure the millions of vulnerable Australians suffering financial hardship and exclusion receive relief, and are able to navigate their way to full engagement in the social and economic life of their communities.

We are also principal legal partner for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Australia.

Select Corrs pro bono and community engagement in further detail

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Corrs CEO Gavin MacLaren is a member of the Melbourne Committee of Human Rights Watch and Corrs continues to support HRW speakers and launches of their reports.

Corrs provided 'in kind' support and pro bono advice to assist in the establishment of HRW in Australia and we continue to provide pro bono support on an ongoing basis.

Corrs continues to make annual donations and has sponsored its Voices for Justice dinner.

On two occasions in the last year we have hosted Human Rights Watch experts to speak to the staff by national video conference.

Hagar

In order to contribute to the global efforts to eradicate slavery and assist those affected by it, Corrs has supported Hagar Australia, an organisation that seeks to transform those affected by human trafficking, slavery and abuse. A decade-long supporter of Hagar, over the years we have supported a number of initiatives including contributing to the employment costs of a lawyer employed by Hagar in Cambodia, as well as more general pro bono legal advice and sponsorship.

Homes for Homes

Homelessness is a significant problem across Australia with a shortage of 200,000 social and affordable homes and to assist in addressing this issue, Corrs supported local not-for-profit publication *The Big Issue* in the establishment of Home for Homes, an initiative enabling homeowners to donate a tax deductible 0.1 percent of the sale price of their properties to fund social housing projects.

The mechanism works within the framework of existing state laws, is nationally applicable and provides an opt-out option. It is estimated that the Homes for Homes initiative will raise A\$1.8 billion over the next 20 years. Corrs was recognised for its involvement in the Homes for Homes initiative at the 2017 Financial Times Asia Pacific Innovative Lawyers Awards, winning the 'Innovation in Social Responsibility' category.

Financial Inclusion Action Plan for Vulnerable Australians

More than 2.5 million Australians say they have no savings and only one-in-five Australians say they have full control over their finances.

In publishing its [Financial Inclusion Action Plan \(FIAP\)](#) Corrs demonstrates its commitment to improving financial inclusion and enabling people experiencing severe financial vulnerability or distress to improve their lives.

At the time its FIAP was published Corrs was one of only 30 trailblazing organisations including banks, charities, utilities, governments and universities - and one of only two law firms - to have a FIAP in place in the first stage of a special program to ensure the millions of vulnerable Australians suffering financial hardship and exclusion receive relief, and are able to navigate their way to full engagement in the social and economic life of their communities.

The FIAP program is led by Good Shepherd Microfinance, a not-for-profit community organisation, on behalf of the Commonwealth Government in partnership with the Centre for Social Impact and EY.

Migrant Worker International Law Reference Tool

According to a 2015 report from the International Labour Organisation, there are more than 150 million migrant workers around the world. Many migrant workers travel from poor source countries to wealthy destination countries where they are often taken advantage of by unscrupulous employers and employment agents seeking to exploit their circumstances.

Advocates for migrant workers now have access to a powerful new web-app from the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) thanks to its [Migrant Worker International Law Reference Tool](#), developed in partnership with Corrs' Sydney clerks in a special pro bono project.

The new legal tool will allow advocates of vulnerable migrant workers to quickly identify sources of international law relevant to more than 65 migrant worker issues across 19 source and destination countries, making UN standards and mechanisms more accessible and potentially eliminating hours of legal research.

This tool is the product of the second time Corrs' summer clerks partnered with the DTP, an independent NGO, having created a guide on the legal framework for protecting Nepalese migrant workers in 2012.



CORRS' HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENTS

Corrs is committed to:

- Embedding understanding of human rights throughout the firm;
- Sustainable procurement; and
- Preparing a Modern Slavery Statement

The firm is also committed to ongoing training on human rights for staff and clients and the ongoing integration of Responsible Business initiatives throughout the firm. These include our pro bono program, Diversity and Inclusion, human rights, carbon neutrality and commitment to the SDGs.

Labour



As Australia's leading independent law firm we are deeply committed to labour rights established in international instruments and domestic law. We support equal pay, the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. We have a strong program to prevent discrimination of any kind in the workplace.

Corrs has no tolerance for forced, compulsory or child labour, and is actively committed to ensuring there is no modern slavery present in our own supply chain and in the supply chains of our suppliers.

We also recognise that individuals don't fit into neat categories, and no one group within our community is more or less important than another. As a result, our commitment to diversity and inclusion includes gender equality, indigenous inclusion, cultural diversity, LGBTI+ inclusion and flexible working with an extensive program of activity to support this.

A safe, diverse and inclusive workplace enables people to thrive, realise their rights, and to be valued for their contribution. Our Diversity and Inclusion program

focuses on respecting, welcoming, validating, and rewarding individual contributions, while putting in place the policies procedures and practices that enable every individual to develop and contribute to their full potential.

We have a range of industry leading programs, policy and initiatives, including:

- ongoing commitment to gender equality with publicly disclosed targets, tools and training;
- creating and mainstreaming flexible career paths for all Corrs people;
- celebrating and supporting the diverse range of people at Corrs and supporting carers;
- activities focused on wellbeing and being connected with each other and our communities; and
- providing a safe, healthy and supportive workplace.

Achievements over the last year included recognition as: 2018-19 Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation holder; silver Employer status in the 2019 Australian Workplace Equality Index; and 120 of Corrs Lawyers were named in the 2019 Edition of Best Lawyers published in *The Australian Financial Review*.

Gender Equality

Achieving and progressing gender equality is a firm priority. We apply a gender equity assessment to recruitment, talent identification, promotions, pay and leadership succession planning. The firm has set targets for increasing the representation of women in leadership (including partnership) as one component of driving and measuring our progress. Other measures relate to the representation of women in the partnership pipeline, gender pay equity and ensuring equal access to learning and development opportunities.

Corrs' Diversity & Inclusion Policy and gender objectives and targets are underpinned by a gender equality strategy to aid the recruitment, development and retention of talent and promote a supportive, equitable and inclusive workplace culture.

Policies that promote an inclusive workplace include our Diversity & Inclusion Policy, Gender Equality Policy, Respect in our Workplace Policy, Parental Leave Policy (which is inclusive of same sex couples, adoption, and surrogacy and may also extend to foster care), Gender Transitioning Policy, Breastfeeding Policy & facilities and Family Violence Policy.

We offer 18 weeks paid parental leave for employees who are the primary care-giver and three weeks paid parental leave for secondary care-givers. Secondary carers who later become primary carers can access up to the full 18 weeks of paid leave.

In the past 12 months, Corrs also took the industry-leading step of providing paid superannuation contributions for employees during both periods of paid and unpaid parental leave (up to 12 months).

In addition, our carer's support initiative assists our people with caring responsibilities and parental leave transitions – this includes the provision of an external, confidential information and care locator service and we have also piloted vacation care in Melbourne office (with a view to rolling out more broadly).

Gender pay equity is a key driver of gender equality and diversity overall. The firm's remuneration and gender equality strategies include the following commitments:

- To achieve gender pay equity;
- To ensure no gender bias occurs at any point in the remuneration review process;
- To ensure leaders and managers are responsible for gender equitable pay outcomes; and
- To maintain a transparent and rigorous performance assessment process.

An annual remuneration analysis is undertaken to identify and address, as appropriate, any gender pay gap to ensure gender pay equity. Outcomes of gender pay equity analyses are presented annually to the Executive Committee and Board. We also calculate and report on our gender pay gap as per the requirements of the Workplace Gender Equality Act.

Corrs is a WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality for 2018-19 – the thirteenth year Corrs received recognition from the WGEA for its commitment to gender equality.

Areas assessed in order to achieve the citation include leadership, learning and development, gender remuneration gaps, flexible working and other initiatives to support family responsibilities, employee consultation, preventing sex-based harassment and discrimination, and targets for improving gender equality outcomes. Corrs CEO Gavin MacLaren is also a WGEA 'Pay Equity Ambassador'.

Gavin has committed to the Panel Pledge – an initiative led by Chief Executive Women, Women's Leadership Institute Australia and Male Champions of Change – pledging to increase the visibility and contribution of women leaders in public and professional forums. This includes being prepared to call out panel imbalances when they see them including asking who the other panellists/speakers are, and how gender balance will be achieved; as a condition of acceptance, stating the expectation that women will be on the panel and able to participate in a meaningful way; and reserving the right to withdraw should the finalised list be all male.

Gender Diversity Targets and progress

Corrs clearly and publically sets out its Women in Leadership targets, which by 2024, aim to achieve:

- 33% of board to be women;
- 35% of senior management to be women; and
- 35% of the partnership to be women.

On its path to achieving these targets, as at 30 June 2019, 25% of the Corrs Board, 21% Senior Management (partners on Executive Committee and Practice Group Leaders) and 22% of the partnership were women.

Other gender diversity progress includes:

- 50% partnership pipeline and 50% of recruitment shortlists are to be female each year;
- 92% parental leave return rate (FY 2019); and
- At least 50% of our Senior Associates and Special Counsel hires in the last two years were female.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Corrs has begun implementing its new Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which describes our contributions to date and Corrs' new and ongoing commitment to supporting reconciliation. The plan seeks to:

- raise awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievements and contributions;
- increase our people's awareness and understanding of issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to achieve social inclusion and economic independence; and
- help us to deepen our relationships with the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

CareerTrackers

To help us achieve some of the objectives in the RAP we are continuing our association with CareerTrackers, an organisation that matches indigenous university students with employers who can provide opportunities for annual 12-week internships. Corrs sponsors approximately three indigenous CareerTracker interns annually, who each undertake their winter and summer internships with Corrs.

We have also established mechanisms to ensure we provide opportunities to students who identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent to be included in the competitive process for clerkships. These mechanisms have resulted in an increased number of indigenous students being interviewed and more clerkships being offered to indigenous students.

Supply Nation

We are also working to investigate opportunities to increase Supplier Diversity and ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses are given the opportunity to supply goods and services to us. To this end we have joined Supply Nation, an organisation that links indigenous businesses into the supply chains of Australian organisations. We work closely with our major suppliers to ensure they are identifying opportunities to engage with indigenous business in fulfilling their contracts to us.

Inclusion & Accessibility:

We accommodate employees (and prospective employees) with accessibility needs at Corrs offices. Our facilities meet Australian standards for accessibility including accessible bathroom and change room facilities on each floor and evacuation and safety procedures that cater to those who are mobility impaired. Our technology tools and systems are also highly adaptable. Our offices have hearing augmentation loops available and we are able to bring in AUSLAN translators if required for an event or meeting.

LGBTI+ inclusion:

Founded in 2014, the firm's LGBTI+ network is managed by a national LGBTI+ Steering Committee, which consists of volunteers from across the firm. Our Pride@Corrs Network aims to increase and support the inclusion of our LGBTI+ people and enhance our broader engagement with the LGBTI+ community. In 2019 Corrs was named a Silver tier employer in the AWEI.

We support our internal commitments by also providing pro bono legal assistance and we have provided pro bono advice to:

- Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO);
- The Channel, an LGBTIQ philanthropic charity;
- Midsumma Festival;
- SheQu Group Inc, a non-for-profit group seeking to encourage, empower and enable LGBTIQ+ multicultural women; and
- Transgender Victoria.

Corrs has also been engaged to assist the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia with its review of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA), particularly the general exceptions under Part VI of the Act, including religious exceptions.



CORRS' LABOUR COMMITMENTS

Our firm is committed to:

- Setting gender equality targets;
- Collecting data, to ensure we continually measure how effectively we attract, retain and progress diverse talent;
- Educating all staff on the firm's diversity and inclusion policies at the commencement of employment with the firm; and
- Training on Unconscious Bias, Inclusive leadership and flexible working.

Environment



Corrs is dedicated to promoting sustainable environmental practices across our workplaces, and shrinking our environmental footprint by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, championing recycling and discouraging wasteful paper usage.

We support this commitment through: a clear Environment policy - firmly integrated into our business operations and practices; a Supply Chain Management policy, our commitment to recycling and to operating on a carbon-neutral basis; and ensuring our offices buildings have high 'Green Star' ratings.

Corrs also has environmental legal expertise across the firm and our specialist environment and planning team has the years of experience and practical know-how to advise clients on a wide range of environmental issues including native title, heritage, climate change, biodiversity, contamination, pollution, water and renewable energy law.

Environment Policy

In implementing any new procedures, processes or systems, evaluating goods or services provided by suppliers and third parties for consumption in the Corrs Group's operations, or when acquiring an asset, Corrs Group personnel must take account of the environmental impact of the procedure, goods or services provided or assets acquired. This policy 'Environmental Matters' encompasses and operates in conjunction with the Sustainable Supply Chain Management Policy.

All our Australian offices are energy rated 5-star or above by the National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) and the Green Building Council of Australia. They use the latest technology to maximise energy efficiency and sustainability, minimise water usage and improve indoor air quality.

We are a supporter of Earth Hour and World Environment Day, and we require our suppliers to have sustainable, environmentally-friendly business practices.

Corrs also recently joined the Supply Chain Sustainability School which is an online learning forum to help the operators in the property, construction and infrastructure sectors improve their knowledge of broad sustainability issues. We joined as a partner to help develop and extend the environmental, social and economic sustainability competencies of the industry, and to support the day-to-day running of the school.



CORRS' COMMITMENTS TO ENVIRONMENT

Our firm is committed to:

- Achieving carbon neutrality and having this recognised through receiving Australian Government Carbon Neutral Certification.
- Building competencies in the construction, property and infrastructure industries through our support of the Supply Chain Sustainability School.

Anti-Corruption



Corrs is committed to achieving the highest standards of ethical conduct, including honesty, integrity and fairness and to ensuring that it, its lawyers, employees and others who may provide services on its behalf, act in compliance with all applicable laws of the countries in which Corrs operates. This includes compliance with all laws, domestic and international, relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption.

We do this by ensuring we have appropriate policies and training in place. The following policies support our strong anti-corruption stance. Our policies include:

Bribery and Anti-Corruption Policy

The Corrs Group Anti-Bribery and Anti-Corruption Policy introduces a set of anti-bribery and anti-corruption standards which prohibit any Corrs Group Representative from engaging in activities that constitute bribery or corruption. This policy mandates a procedure in relation to incurring and recording expenditure, including retaining invoices and receipts. It also addresses the giving of donations, gifts and hospitality.

Whistle-blower Protection Policy

The Whistle-blower Protection Policy provides an avenue for the firm's people to raise concerns about serious misconduct within the firm without fear of being penalised or otherwise disadvantaged. The whistle-blower protection program created by the policy is an important element in detecting serious misconduct at an early stage and is an important and necessary component in achieving good corporate governance.

Political Donations Policy

From time to time, Corrs may make payments or otherwise engage in activities that could be construed as political gifts or donations. This policy – which applies to partners and employees of Corrs – sets out:

- the types of gifts or donations which Corrs may make;
- the approval required in respect of this expenditure or other activity being incurred or reimbursed; and
- the disclosure obligations of the firm in respect of political donations.

Ethics and Good Lawyering Policy

Ethical practice is central to the firm's values of integrity, excellence, commitment, unity and ingenuity. The policy sets out to ensure that the firm's lawyers adhere to the ethical standards which the courts, the governing bodies which regulate the profession of law and the community at large expect and require lawyers to comply with in the practice of law.

Audit and Compliance Policy

The objectives of the Audit and Compliance Policy are to increase awareness and understanding of the firm's risk management practices, to encourage a culture of willing, good faith and diligent compliance, and to allow partners and staff the opportunity to provide constructive feedback on the day-to-day practical operation of our risk management practices to help ensure they appropriately and sensibly address material practice risks.



CORRS' COMMITMENT TO ANTI-CORRUPTION

Our firm is committed ensuring having the key policies and training in place to ensure we maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct.



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