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# United Nations Global Compact

Communication on Progress

2020

[corrs.com.au](https://corrs.com.au)

**CORRS  
CHAMBERS  
WESTGARTH**



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## CEO statement

2020 was an extraordinarily challenging year for everyone.

In Australia, more than 19 million hectares of forest were destroyed by fire over the summer period, and shortly after, the COVID-19 pandemic began.

These events have been extremely difficult on a professional and personal level for many of our people, our clients and the communities in which we operate. We have sought to play a constructive role in the response to these challenges through a range of measures and initiatives.


Through this period, Corrs remained committed to advancing the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact (UNGC) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We have for the first time been accredited as a carbon neutral business providing carbon neutral services. We have tracked our carbon emissions, and are developing strategies to reduce our carbon footprint. Where this is not possible, we have purchased carbon offsets to reach our goal.

We have significantly strengthened our procurement and supply chain policies and management to identify, assess and address risks of modern slavery in our supply chains. We have also produced our first Modern Slavery Statement in compliance with the Australian Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth).

Our policies, initiatives and training continue to promote and strengthen a supportive, equitable and inclusive workplace culture that facilitates diversity of thought, improved business performance and enhanced staff engagement. We continue to participate in UNGC events in Australia and abroad and, along with over 1000 others, I signed the UNGC Statement from Business Leaders for Renewed Global Cooperation, reaffirming our commitment to the United Nations in the spirit of global cooperation essential for a sustainable future.

I hope you enjoy our second Communication on Progress.



**Gavin MacLaren**

Senior Partner and CEO  
Corrs Chambers Westgarth



Throughout this report, we indicate where our work incorporates the UN Global Compact's 10 Principles and contributes to the advancement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## UN Global Compact 10 Principles



### Human rights

- Principle 1:** Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights
- Principle 2:** Businesses should make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses



### Labour

- Principle 3:** Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining
- Principle 4:** Businesses should uphold the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour
- Principle 5:** Businesses should uphold the effective abolition of child labour
- Principle 6:** Businesses should uphold elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation



### Environment

- Principle 7:** Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges
- Principle 8:** Businesses should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility
- Principle 9:** Businesses should encourage the development and diffusion of environmental friendly technologies



### Anti-corruption

- Principle 10:** Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery

## UN Sustainable Development Goals



# 2020

## Key Highlights

### Ethical conduct

Maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct through key policies and training



### Anti-corruption

### Human rights

Embedding understanding of human rights throughout the firm through training and the ongoing integration of responsible business initiatives



### Human rights

### Sustainable procurement

Ensuring sustainable procurement and supply chain practices



### Human rights

### Modern slavery

Enhancing our ability to assess and address risks of modern slavery in our supply chain and operations and publishing our first Modern Slavery Statement



### Human rights

### Gender equality

Setting gender equality targets and continuing to make progress towards increasing the representation of women in leadership positions (including partnership)



### Labour

### Diverse talent

Collecting data to continually measure how effectively we attract, retain and progress diverse talent



### Labour

### Carbon neutrality

Achieving carbon neutrality and receiving Australian Government Carbon Neutral Certification



### Environment

### Diversity and inclusion policies

Educating all staff on the firm's diversity and inclusion policies at the commencement of employment at the firm



### Labour

### Diversity and inclusion training

Facilitating ongoing unconscious bias, inclusive leadership and flexible working training



### Labour

### Sustainability

Building competencies in the construction, property and infrastructure industries through our support of the Supply Chain Sustainability School



### Environment



# 01

## People

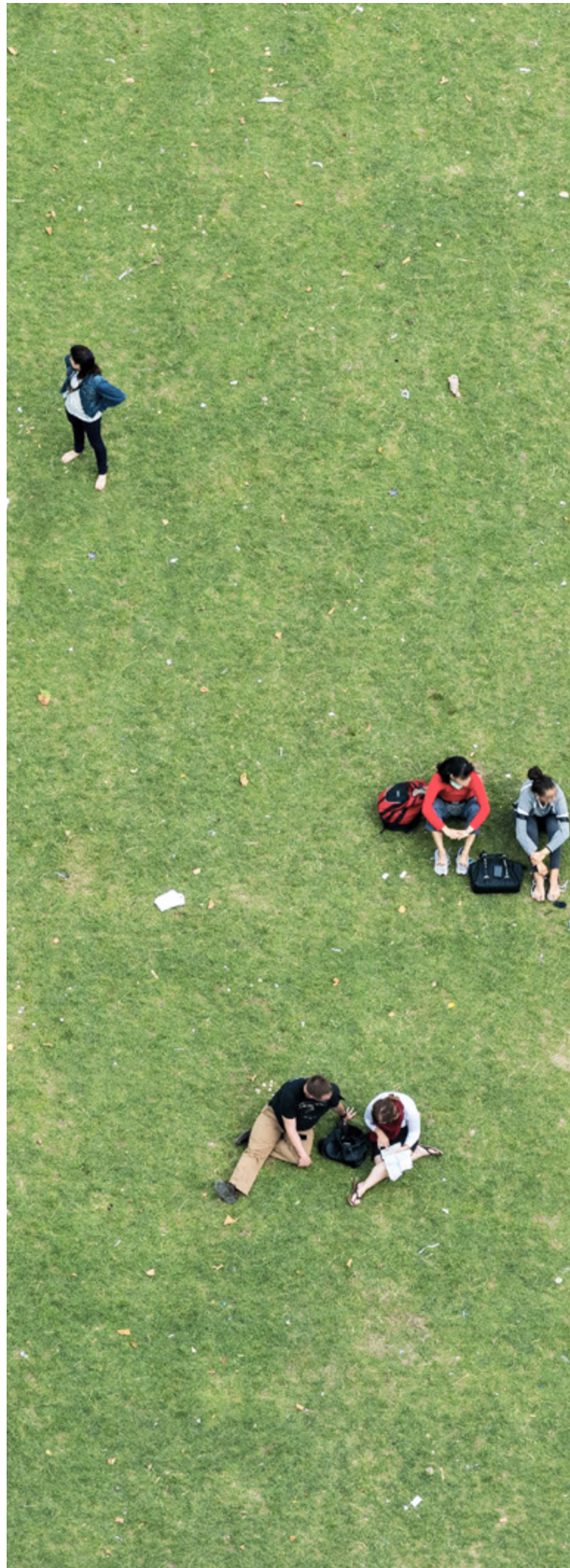
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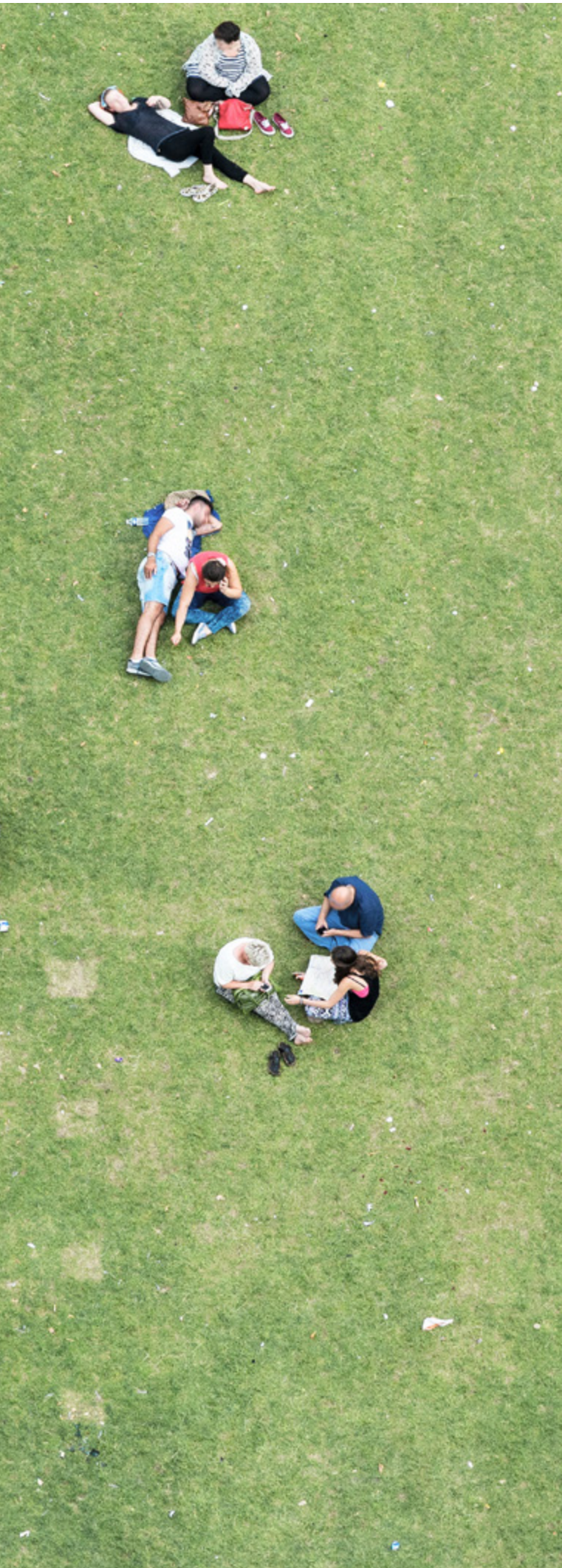
Human rights | Principles 1-2



Labour | Principles 3-6







Our supportive and inclusive culture – which is built on excellence, collaboration, commitment and respect – sustains our diverse, engaged and high performing team.

These values guide how we partner with clients and allow us to attract the best people, help them realise their potential and build positive and engaged teams. It is important to us that we provide our people with exceptional opportunities to perform challenging and rewarding work and achieve personal and professional growth at every stage of their careers.

We offer high-quality professional development programs to equip our people with the skills they need to succeed, and market-leading benefits to reward their contributions to our success.

Our values, diverse and inclusive culture, flexibility and wellbeing programs empower our people within the firm, and within the communities in which we live and work. They also align with and contribute to the 2030 sustainable development agenda as we strive to attain gender equality, decent work, good health and wellbeing and reduced inequalities.

## 2020 Financial Times Innovative Lawyers Awards Asia-Pacific

Corrs was recognised in the 2020 Financial Times Innovative Lawyers Awards Asia-Pacific as follows:

- Ranked #1 – Innovative practice of law
- Ranked #2 – Most innovative law firm in Asia-Pacific
- Named as an Innovative Leader – Corrs CEO, Gavin MacLaren

Corrs was shortlisted more than any other firm across all categories in Asia-Pacific.

## Human rights

Our commitment to and promotion of human rights is a long-standing, ongoing and intrinsic part of the firm.

After launching our Business and Human Rights practice in 2019, we enhanced training programs for our employees on human rights and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). Established in 2019, our Responsible Business Working Group (RBWG) continues to oversee the development of compulsory online human rights training for all new staff, face-to-face training for practice groups and professional development training in human rights for our clients.<sup>1</sup>

In 2020, we expanded our program to include both engagement and education initiatives, such as extensive internal training on business and human rights, modern slavery and responsible business. We have provided this training to practice groups across the firm, run targeted ethical procurement training to our business services teams, and hosted various client and public human rights events.

### Corrs and Human Rights Watch

We have a long-standing relationship with Human Rights Watch (HRW). Our CEO Gavin MacLaren is a member of HRW's Melbourne Committee, and we continue to support HRW by hosting HRW speakers and events, providing in-kind support and pro bono advice and donations.

In celebration of Human Rights Day 2019, we hosted a breakfast event for HRW, at which a panel of experts discussed the question 'What responsibility do businesses have in upholding human rights?'



### Corrs Business and Human Rights Speaker Series

Our Business and Human Rights Speaker Series has increased exposure of our staff, clients and the broader community to a range of human rights issues. This is a useful platform for prominent national and international human rights experts to generate informed debate on contemporary and emerging human rights issues.

Some of the initiatives undertaken as part of the series over the past year include:

- Hosting a consultation with business on the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (Cth) in collaboration with the Australian Border Force.
- Holding a roundtable in conjunction with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) for clients and industry leaders, addressing artificial intelligence, technology and human rights.
- Hosting an event in collaboration with the Global Business Initiative on Human Rights, where its UK-based director and leading expert on business and human rights Catie Shavin discussed what companies need from lawyers to support their efforts to manage human rights challenges and comply with regulatory requirements.
- Hosting Indonesian expert and former journalist Andreas Harsono for a discussion with staff about human rights concerns and challenges in Indonesia for both business and human rights defenders.

<sup>1</sup> See Section 4 – Governance for further details of our work with clients and suppliers.



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At Corrs, we are committed to respecting human rights. Every day we work with our staff, our community and our clients to fulfil this commitment.

Dr Phoebe Wynn-Pope  
Head of Business and Human Rights

## Diversity and inclusion

We embrace and celebrate diversity in all its forms and are committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive and safe workplace.

Building an inclusive culture that is vocal, clear and consistent about open acceptance is a key priority at Corrs. We want our people to feel comfortable to contribute their perspectives, ideas and talents, identify opportunities and challenge the status quo.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Council (**D&I Council**) meets regularly to oversee the implementation and advancement of the firm's diversity and inclusion objectives, with regular reporting and updates provided to the firm's Executive Committee and Board.

The D&I Council is comprised of partners from across the firm, a Partner – Diversity and Inclusion (who chairs the D&I Council and is a member of the firm's Executive Committee) and a Diversity and Inclusion Manager. A number of national steering committees and local working groups are also in

place for different diversity streams to help identify and advance new initiatives.

Partnering with other major law firms across Australia, we continue to participate in the Managing Partners' Diversity Forum to strengthen and promote diversity internally and across the broader legal profession. In 2017, we signed a cultural diversity commitment with members of the forum to improve cultural diversity in leadership.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is woven through all aspects of the firm – from recruitment, to wellbeing and people development strategies, to our initiatives with clients – and includes a range of gender equality, LGBTIQ+ inclusion, cultural diversity, reconciliation and flexibility programs, policies and initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

### Corrs named a Diversity Council of Australia Inclusive Employer 2019-2020

We continue to participate in the Diversity Council of Australia's (**DCA**) biennial Inclusion@Work index survey, which measures diversity and inclusion experiences across our workforce and compares findings to a DCA Member Leading Practice Benchmark and a National Index Benchmark.

We are proud to have been named a DCA Inclusive Employer for 2019-2020, in recognition of our commitment and active approach to fostering a diverse, inclusive and supporting workplace environment. Our results exceeded the National Index Benchmark on all six measures: awareness, engagement, inclusive organisational climate, inclusive leadership, inclusive team and/or exclusion.



### Equitable Briefing Policy

Corrs is a signatory to the Law Council of Australia's Equitable Briefing Policy, which is intended to drive cultural change within the legal profession, support the progression and retention of women barristers and address the significant pay gap and underrepresentation of women in the superior courts.

In the last reporting period, Corrs' proportion of overall female briefs has increased to 26% (up from 23%), and total fees invoiced to Corrs by female barristers represent 24% of total fees (up from 19%). This is a major step for the firm and the legal profession towards the goal of improving the briefing of women barristers across the country.

<sup>2</sup> More information is available in our [2020 Diversity and Inclusion Progress report](#).





## Women in leadership

	2019	2020
33% of board to be women	25%	25%
35% of senior managers to be women*	21%	27%
35% of the partnership to be women	22%	24%
Overall women in the firm**	65.2%	64.6%
Parental leave return rate	92%	95%

\* Includes representation of women on the firm's executive committee and in practice group leader roles.

\*\* Includes partners and staff.

As we continue to make progress towards achieving our targets for increasing the representation of women in leadership positions (including partnership), our key policies and programs include:

- offering market-leading parental leave entitlements for all carers regardless of gender, including payment of superannuation contributions during paid and unpaid parental leave and support during the transition to and from parental leave;
- offering senior female lawyers executive coaching, mentoring and networking opportunities;
- providing school holiday care programs for working parents;
- undertaking analysis and acting to address equity in pay;
- offering professional development opportunities and promotion; and
- unconscious bias awareness training.

Corrs continues to be recognised as an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (**WGEA**), and our CEO Gavin MacLaren continues to be a WGEA Pay Equity Ambassador.



5

minutes with

## David Anthony

Special Counsel and National Chair of Pride@Corrs



David is a special counsel in Corrs' litigation and arbitration teams, and has chaired the Pride@Corrs network since 2015. In 2020, David was recognised as an outstanding LGBTI+ leader in Deloitte Australia, Google and EnergyAustralia's Outstanding 50 LGBTI+ Leaders 2020 report.

Founded in 2014, our Pride@Corrs network is managed by a national LGBTIQ+ steering committee, consisting of volunteers from across the firm. There are approximately 175 members of the network and membership is open to all partners and staff, regardless of whether they are a member of the LGBTIQ+ community or an ally.

Corrs is also a proud member of Pride in Diversity (PID), Australia's leading organisation for the promotion of LGBTIQ+ equality and inclusion in the workplace, and was recognised by PID as an Australian Workplace Equality Index Silver Employer in 2019.

### What are the key strategic objectives of Pride@Corrs?

**David:** Our key strategic objectives are to:

1. Provide a safe space within Corrs for the LGBTIQ+ community and its allies so that everyone feels empowered to be their full self.
2. Facilitate Corrs' engagement with the LGBTIQ+ community, including our clients, pro bono partners and the broader community.

### What is the Pride@Corrs network most proud of achieving over the last 12 months?

**David:** As an active network, we have much to be proud of. Some particular highlights over the last 12 months have been:

- holding LGBTIQ+ inclusion awareness training and interactive ally sessions virtually for staff and partners, to help them gain a better understanding and awareness of why LGBTIQ+ workplace inclusion is important, the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ employees and the LGBTIQ+ community more broadly, and to learn how each of us can help create a more inclusive work culture;
- our continued gold partner sponsorship of Midsumma, Victoria's premier LGBTIQ+ arts and cultural festival, including hosting a marquee at the headline Carnival event (alongside Google and Equality Australia) and participating in the 25th anniversary of Midsumma Pride march;
- providing continued pro bono advice and support for GiveOut, SheQu, Transgender Victoria, the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations and others;
- partnering with eBay Australia to host our second Pride Film Festival; and
- hosting an Out for Australia panel event on 'gender diversity and the law' to coincide with Trans Remembrance Day, with a particular focus on legalities surrounding transitions.

### What are you doing to make sure everyone feels included at Corrs?

**David:** Everyone should be able to work in an environment that is respectful and positive. At Corrs, we acknowledge that not everyone who is LGBTIQ+ wants to be out and that's okay. We have confidential materials available on our firm intranet, and also have 'confidential contacts' in every office that people can reach out to if they have questions or want to talk.

Through LGBTIQ+ inclusion awareness training and interactive ally sessions, we also encourage everyone at Corrs to take simple actions to be supportive allies, including:

- listening to your colleagues and being open minded;
- not making assumptions; and
- only using words like 'gay' or 'queer' in a positive context.

### What is one small action we can all take to support diversity and inclusion?

**David:** Acknowledge and be aware of your own unconscious bias, and work hard to be mindful of the diversity around you.



## Corrs celebrates LGBTIQ+ days of significance

Over the past year, Corrs and the Pride@Corrs network recognised and celebrated numerous community events and days of significance, including the 2020 Midsumma Festival (which Corrs continued its gold sponsorship of in 2020), International Pronouns Day and Wear It Purple Day among others.

2020  
Midsumma Festival



International  
Pronouns Day



Wear It  
Purple Day



“

The firm's success relies on attracting and retaining talented people – of all genders – with diverse ideas, backgrounds and experiences, and providing a supportive culture that enables them to contribute fully and to thrive. My commitment and the firm's commitment to diversity is essential to a healthy firm.

Gavin MacLaren  
Senior Partner and CEO







## Reconciliation

Our [2018-2020 Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#) has provided a clear roadmap for the firm to continue its reconciliation support efforts, including bold new goals and progression of existing activities.

The RAP has assisted in strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, businesses and individuals in all Australian states where Corrs operates, evidenced by our:

- continued participation in both the CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program (an Indigenous employment pathway) and an internal Catering Indigenous Work Placement Program in our Perth office;
- performing of pro bono legal work for a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities;<sup>3</sup>
- establishment of an indigenous scholarship with Melbourne Law School (University of Melbourne); and
- our increased procurement spend with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.

Corrs is also a member of Supply Nation, an organisation that facilitates opportunities for Indigenous businesses to be integrated into the supply chain of Australian organisations.

### National Reconciliation Week 2020

In 2019, Corrs declared support for the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) and its call for the establishment of a First Nations voice in the Constitution.

In 2020, our continued commitment to the Uluru Statement of the Heart saw the firm host a national virtual National Reconciliation Week event at which guest speaker Professor Megan Davis (Vice-Chancellor Indigenous, University of New South Wales), shared the importance of the Statement and its appeal for Voice, Treaty and Truth.



Artwork © Joyleen Reid Napangarti  
 Language: Ngaanyatjarra/Luritja  
 Community: Tjukurla WA  
*Women's Tingari* 2016  
 Indigenous Arts Management by Dreamtime Art

<sup>3</sup> Refer to Section 2 – Community for further details about our pro bono support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities.

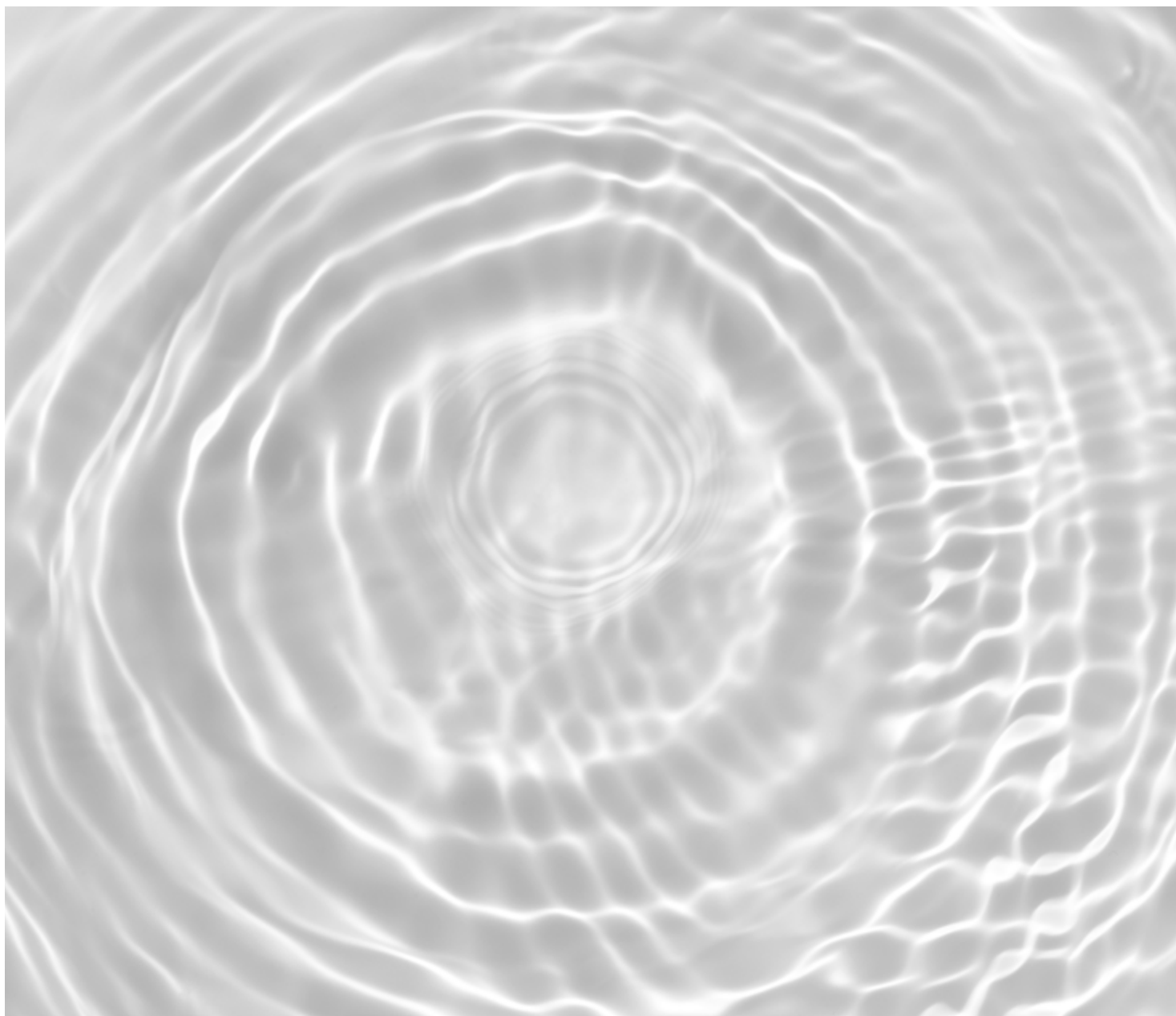
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## Health and wellbeing

We are committed to providing a work environment that is safe and without risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of our people, clients and visitors to our workplace.

We offer a holistic wellbeing program, which includes a Wellbeing Hub and Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Our Wellbeing Hub is a central online space that provides access to a range of materials relating to physical and psychological health, financial support, carers support and personal and professional development. Our EAP provides our people with free access to independent professional, evidence-based counselling and positive psychology coaching.





5

minutes with

## Helen Calladine

People and Performance and National Health and Wellbeing Manager



### What special initiatives / changes in approach to health and wellbeing promotion did COVID-19 prompt at Corrs?

**Helen:** COVID-19 has had a significant impact on how our people live and work. In light of the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, we have placed a strong focus on wellbeing in particular, concentrating on combining COVID risk management, extending our programs and increasing flexibility and communication across the firm.

The pandemic has served as a reminder of just how important it is to have programs in place that adequately support staff and cater to individual needs.

Like many organisations, we transitioned to working from home arrangements in March of 2020. This transition was made possible due to our existing approach to flexible working and existing technology systems, which enabled our people to hit the ground running working remotely in a short period of time. We have continued flexible working training for people managers, and our team-based approach to flexibility allows for open and candid conversations and ensures everyone is clear on individual, business and client needs, assisting in effective and successful implementation.

We also expanded our Wellbeing Hub to include additional measures to support our people, such as advice on working from home safely, mental health support, online learning and increased

communication and engagement to keep our teams informed and connected. Also – recognising that quite a number of people would be required to juggle both work and caring responsibilities during the pandemic – we introduced bespoke initiatives to support working parents, including offering our national in-house school holiday program (run in partnership with KidsCo) virtually, a first among Australian law firms.

### Can you tell us a little about Corrs' partnerships with The Resilience Project and Assure programs?

**Helen:** Shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we partnered with The Resilience Project to implement a ten week mental health awareness and resilience-building program for staff. The Resilience Project delivers emotionally engaging programs and provides evidence-based, practical wellbeing strategies to build resilience.

The program focuses on the key resilience pillars of Gratitude, Empathy and Mindfulness, also touching on other wellbeing factors including emotional literacy, exercise, social connection and living with purpose. It has been really well received across the firm.

Through our partnership with our EAP provider, Assure programs, we also conducted virtual workshops on mental health awareness and sessions on 'Strategies for maintaining wellbeing and thriving while working remotely', which covered:

- brain and stress response during times of uncertainty;
- how to understand biases, responses, decision-making and behaviours;
- the psychological effects of social distancing; and
- strategies for looking after mental health.

# Responsible business

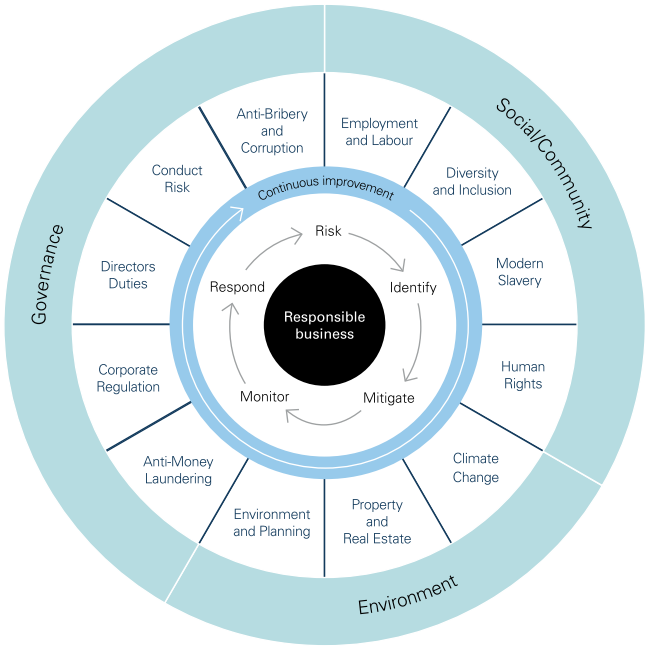
While ensuring Corrs is itself a responsible business providing safe and inclusive workplaces for our people, we are also committed to ensuring our clients get the very best advice in relation to human rights, good employment practices, the environment and good governance.

We believe an integrated approach to governance, social and environmental decision-making helps businesses to exceed stakeholder expectations, preserve and build on their corporate reputation and promote long-term value. This has good outcomes for the realisation of the rights of workers and communities in which these businesses seek to flourish.

The Corrs [Responsible Business microsite](#) was launched in early 2020, and provides clients and the broader business community access to insights on various topics across four key areas:

- 1. Corporate governance and ESG.
- 2. Sustainable finance and investment.
- 3. Business and human rights.
- 4. Sustainability and climate change.

Earlier this year, along with more than 1,000 other Chief Executive Officers from companies in over 100 countries, our CEO Gavin MacLaren signed the UN Statement from Business Leaders for Renewed Cooperation on behalf of Corrs, reaffirming our shared commitment to inclusive multilateralism and to upholding and realising the UNGC 10 Principles and achieving the SDGs.



01

## Governance

A strong business purpose, values and clear principles embedded in corporate policies and practice.

Promotes a culture of compliance and creates a clear picture of risk for business.

02

## Environment

An understanding of the impact of the environment and climate on business (and the impact of business on same).

Prepares business for future challenges and opportunities.

03

## Social and Community

Consideration of the social and community impacts of business operations and supply chain.

Ensures businesses meet and exceed stakeholder expectations.



## Spotlight on



## Responsible business insights

In collaboration with various academic institutions, we explored a number of emerging issues in responsible business through our thought leadership in 2020:

- *An unexpected opportunity for corporate peacebuilding* was co-authored by Dr Jonathan Kolieb (Senior Lecturer, Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University) and Dr Phoebe Wynn-Pope (Corrs' Head of Business and Human Rights), and explored the opportunities for Australian corporates to strengthen their responsible business conduct in conflict-affected areas.
- Corrs' head of environment and planning Louise Camenzuli and partner Christine Covington wrote *Maintaining an ESG focus in times of crisis*, a piece that explored how COVID-19 has presented an opportunity for companies to assess their ESG standing, implement and expand their ESG policies and take action to improve their resilience to future crises.
- In *Why aligning anti-corruption and human rights approaches makes good business sense*, Corrs partner Abigail Gill and Dr Phoebe Wynn-Pope considered the significant advantages of harmonising approaches to ESG risks, in particular integrity and human rights risks, with common touchpoints.



“

At a time when corporate engagement in setting human rights standards is more important than ever, Corrs deserves to be recognised for its outstanding commitment.

Scientia Professor Louise Chappell  
Director of the Australian Human Rights Institute



# 02

## Community

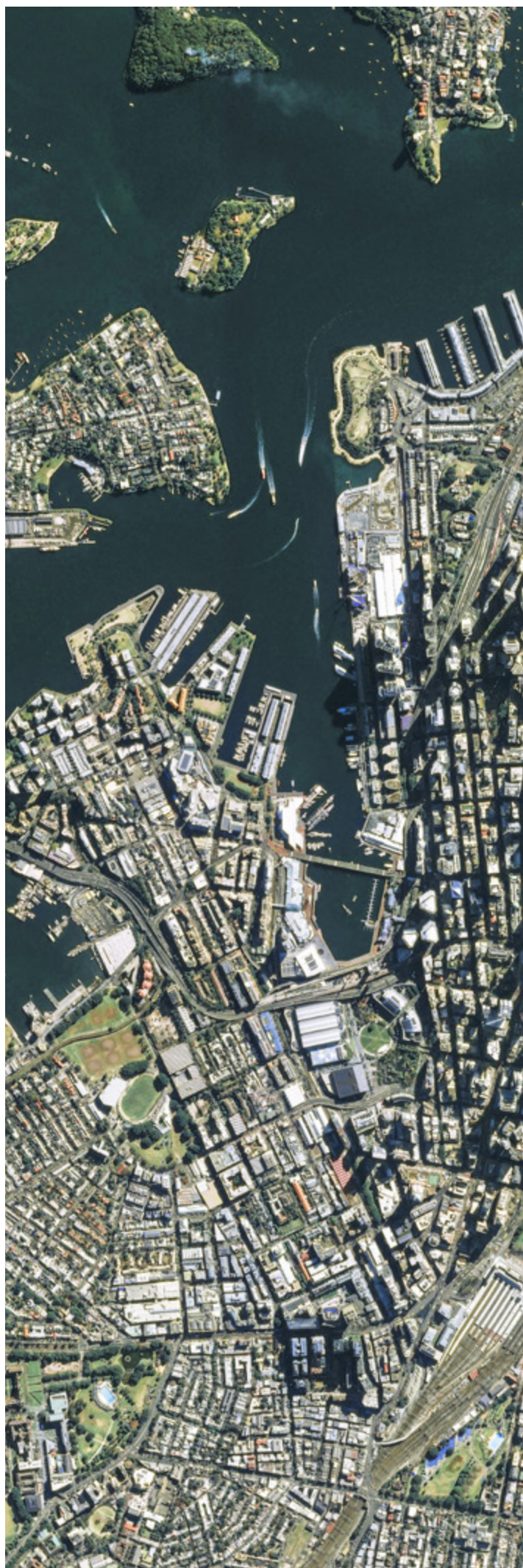
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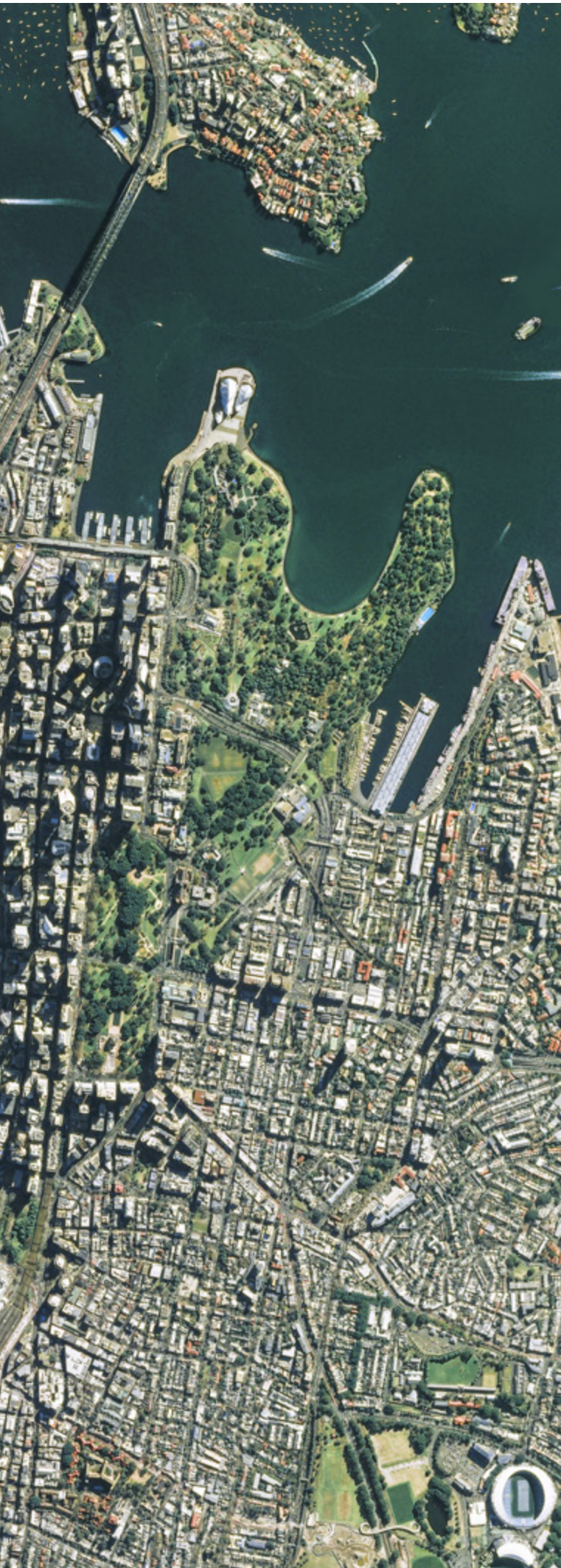
Human rights | Principles 1-2



Environment | Principles 7-9







From local schools to global organisations, we have a long and proud history of helping those in need.

Our people are committed, and actively encouraged, to support disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups, charities and not-for-profit organisations through pro bono legal work, volunteering and workplace giving, all of which form part of our dedicated pro bono and community program.

Our pro bono and community program is demonstrative of the way in which our firm continues to support the UN Global Compact Principles through our commitment to enhancing access to justice, strengthening civil society and building a sustainable future for all.

#### 2020 WA Attorney General's Community Service Law Awards

The WA Attorney General's Community Service Law Awards recognise the work of those who have made an outstanding pro bono contribution to the benefit of the Western Australian community. In 2020, Corrs was named the inaugural winner of the Legal Firm Award.

Corrs' Perth office has a long-standing commitment to community work and providing pro bono services to Western Australian organisations, including the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA, Law Access and the Employment Law Centre.

Corrs Perth pro bono partner Spencer Flay said of the award:

*"As a society and a profession we all benefit from the rule of law, the strength of which depends on access to justice for all. Corrs is delighted to be recognised for our contribution towards ensuring access to justice for some of the most marginalised in our community."*





Image used with permission of Yokai Healing Our Spirit

# 2020

## Pro Bono Highlights



169

number of individuals helped



19,229

total pro bono hours  
firmwide over the  
last 12 months

7%

of total firm pro bono work for  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
legal services and organisations

### Secondments supporting NFPs/legal services



6

organisations



10

secondments



2,206

hours

Aboriginal Legal Service of WA Inc

Employment Law Centre

LawRight

Oxfam

Seniors Rights Services Limited

Street Law Centre WA Incorporated

**Note:** Working from home during COVID-19 increased our ability to offer pro bono secondments.





## Spotlight on Justice Connect

Over the 2019/20 financial year, Corrs Melbourne lawyers and assistants involved in the Homeless Law program provided significant and valuable support to those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness.



**4,745**  
hours



**85**  
Corrs Melbourne lawyers  
and assistants



**65**  
matters worked on for Justice  
Connect over the past 12 months

“

I will always remain thankful to you...for your extraordinary work and dedication. My family and I are forever in your debt.

Justice Connect client

This assistance was particularly appreciated in light of the challenges due to COVID-19, such as understanding the temporary COVID legislation, taking meetings remotely and attending VCAT via telephone.

“

On behalf of Justice Connect, I would like to thank Corrs Chambers Westgarth for continuing to work in partnership with Justice Connect over the last financial year, one of the most challenging on record. Your work enables us to deliver high-impact interventions to increase access to legal support and achieve social justice.

# Pro bono

In 2020, we appointed a new head of pro bono to work closely with our state pro bono partners to ensure a consistent national approach which appropriately balances our support for community legal clinics, major pro bono matters and our contribution to the community more generally.


Our pro bono program is underpinned by three pillars:



Pillar 1:  
Enhancing access to justice



Pillar 2:  
Strengthening civil society



Pillar 3:  
Building a sustainable future






## Pillar 1 Enhancing access to justice

The promise made in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that ‘all are equal before the law and entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law’ is foundational to our democratic freedoms and way of life.

Our role in providing access to justice for our community is one way we acknowledge and contribute to the recognition of the ‘inherent dignity and of the equal inalienable rights of all members of the human family [which] is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.’

The Australian Council of Social Service estimates that there are over three million people in Australia – including three quarters of a million children – living in poverty. This amounts to 13.6% of our society, or one in eight Australians. For these people and many others who are unable to access legal services and assistance, we enhance access to justice through the provision of pro bono legal services and representation.

We continue to support ongoing individual pro bono matters as appropriate, sourced via our legal clinic work, and through other referral channels (partners, community partner organisations, the board and staff).

<p><b>Brisbane</b></p> <p>In association with LawRight, our Brisbane office runs the Refugee Civil Law Clinic at Multicultural Australia, which provides free legal advice and assistance to refugees, humanitarian entrants, asylum seekers and temporary protection visa holders. We also participate in LawRight’s Self Representation Service, providing free advice and assistance to self-represented parties in civil jurisdictions.</p>	
<p><b>Melbourne</b></p> <p>Our Melbourne office runs a Homeless Law Clinic at VACRO. Our Workplace Relations Team provides assistance through the WestJustice Employment Law Service and the Fair Work Commission Workplace Advice Service, and our work with Justice Connect sees our people helping people facing disadvantage who are ineligible for legal aid and cannot afford a lawyer.</p>	
<p><b>Perth</b></p> <p>In Perth, Corrs provides legal representation, support services and secondees through our work with the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, the Employment Law Centre and the Street Law Centre.</p>	
<p><b>Sydney</b></p> <p>Our work with Justice Connect and the Homeless Persons Legal Clinics we run in Newtown and Bondi Beach in Sydney enables us to help people facing disadvantage who are ineligible for legal aid and cannot afford a lawyer.</p>	
<p><b>Papua New Guinea</b></p> <p>Our PNG office assisted the Port Moresby Nature Park, a not-for-profit wildlife park, with some complex legal challenges regarding funds raised through GoFundMe to cover the welfare costs associated with animals in the face of a significant drop in income due to COVID-19.</p>	



## Pillar 2

### Strengthening civil society

The role of civil society is strong and powerful in Australia. While government support services are under pressure, civil society organisations often fill the breach and assist the most vulnerable in our communities, defend the rights of people and the environment and strengthen the bonds that hold society together.

We believe there is immense value in ensuring that civil society and not-for-profit organisations are strengthened and enabled to fulfil their role in our community, and we work to support them with their legal challenges. Our community committees also support many different organisations through social and fundraising events.

#### Case study – Oxfam Australia secondment

Colin Tan, a senior associate in our tax team, recently completed a secondment with Oxfam Australia and shared a snapshot of his experience:

*“My secondment as legal counsel to Oxfam Australia has been rewarding and enjoyable. It has broadened my perspective on the myriad considerations, risks and stakeholders that in-house legal counsel need to manage beyond the legal technicalities that we are already used to dealing with.*

*The legal team at Oxfam provides legal advice that informs the quality of management decision-making as well as the organisation’s compliance with a range of legislative and regulatory regimes, including charities, corporate and taxation law and the governance standards of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).*

*The Oxfam legal team is also part of an international network of lawyers which deals with legal issues affecting the global Oxfam confederation as a whole. Major matters that I have advised on include:*

- *Oxfam’s eligibility for the JobKeeper scheme in the context of a major corporate reorganisation;*
- *major procurement projects;*
- *the cancellation of the Trailwalker events due to COVID-19; and*
- *collaborations with other NGOs and volunteer bodies.*

*Corrs is a major provider of pro bono legal services to Oxfam Australia, and I am proud to have been able to contribute to that effort during a challenging period for most major international development NGOs.”*

#### Corrs pro bono work – 2020 snapshot

We are actively involved in providing pro bono legal assistance to a number of community organisations. Organisations we have supported over the last 12 months include:

- [The Australian Federation of HIV/AIDS Organisations](#), the national peak body for HIV/AIDS organisations in Australia, across a number of matters including blood donations laws, mandatory drug testing law proposals, the proposed Religious Discrimination Bill and various other corporate governance matters.
- [Hagar Australia](#), an international organisation committed to transforming survivors of severe human rights abuse and modern day slavery. Corrs has formed a partnership with Hagar, whose philosophy is: “We do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to restore a broken life”. This includes the recovery, empowerment and reintegration of women and children who have suffered human rights abuses. In particular, Hagar serves women and children who are victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- [Ethnic LGBT+](#), an organisation that supports ethnic members of the LGBTIQ+ community with its incorporation and compliance with various Queensland and Commonwealth laws around fundraising.
- [Oxfam Australia](#), an independent, not-for-profit community-based aid and development organisation, works with people and communities to find practical, innovative ways for people to lift themselves out of poverty and thrive. Corrs is a major partner of Oxfam Australia.
- [Out Leadership](#), a global organisation which encourages networking and support amongst the LGBTIQ+ business community, with Australian trade mark issues. In 2020, Corrs became the first Australian law firm to partner with Out Leadership.

## Pillar 3

### Building a sustainable future

In the last 12 months, Australia has seen an unprecedented bushfire season, the COVID-19 pandemic has swept across the globe, and the world has seen uprising against social injustice and racial inequality.

These challenges have underscored pre-existing vulnerabilities – the climate crisis, inequality and the erosion of trust in our democratic institutions and society are some of the most fundamental challenges of our time.

The 'Building a sustainable future' pillar of our pro bono program actively develops strategies and seeks opportunities to use our skills and experience to help alleviate and address these challenges, in particular through:

- **Reducing inequality by respecting human rights.** This includes a focus on those who suffer particular vulnerabilities and challenges, and a strong emphasis on indigenous issues.

#### Case study – Yokai Healing Our Spirit

Our Perth team has recently commenced work for a new pro bono client – the West Australian Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation, trading as [Yokai Healing Our Spirit \(Yokai\)](#).

Yokai is an Indigenous corporation which supports individuals and families in Western Australia adversely affected by policies and practices of separating Aboriginal peoples from their families, communities, countries and cultures.

In early September 2020, following a referral from Curtin University, a Corrs team led by partner Spencer Flay prepared a pro bono advice (together with a template consent form and a draft copyright license agreement) on privacy and intellectual property issues relating to Yokai's Virtual Reality Project. The Virtual Reality Project will use a virtual environment format to present stories of Stolen Generation survivors from the Mogumber Mission (near the Moore River, 135 kilometres north of Perth), in order to raise awareness and educate individuals about Stolen Generation experiences.

Yokai has since instructed Corrs to assist with the potential establishment of a community legal center and funeral fund or trust, both of which would greatly assist Yokai's members.



Image used with permission of Yokai Healing Our Spirit

- **Supporting environmental sustainability.** Climate change, biodiversity, land and energy are critical issues for the future and we actively seek opportunities to support a sustainable future.

#### Case study – Dignity in the Built Environment project

Over the past year, our environment and planning team has been involved in preparing a series of white papers for the [Dignity in the Built Environment](#) project.

This international program was founded in 2019 by the Institute for Human Rights and Business, the Australian Human Rights Institute at the University of New South Wales, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights.

The purpose of the program is to protect and promote human rights and shape decision-making by the key players in each stage of the built environment lifecycle. The stages include land acquisition, planning and finance through to design, construction and use, and re-development.

Corrs special counsel Kirsty Davis, who led our involvement in the project, was [interviewed](#) by Laura Melrose of the Australian Human Rights Institute.

- **Strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law.** We seek out pro bono opportunities and support causes that promote the public interest in good governance, democracy, transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

### Case study – public interest – Harold Thomas

Mr Harold Thomas, an artist and Luritja man, is the owner of the copyright in the Australian Aboriginal flag as an artistic work, which he designed in 1971. Since the beginning of 2020, Corrs' intellectual property (IP) team, together with Colin Golvan AM QC, have been acting on a pro bono basis for Mr Thomas in a high profile matter involving the Aboriginal flag.

Since its creation, the Aboriginal flag has come to be a hugely powerful unifying symbol for Aboriginal Australians. After its design, it was taken to the east coast of Australia where it was promoted and eventually recognised as the official flag of Australia's First Peoples. In 1995 the flag was proclaimed a national flag under the Commonwealth Flags Act, and was brought to the international stage when athlete Cathy Freeman draped herself in the flag during her victory lap after winning the 200m final at the 1994 Commonwealth Games. In 1997, Colin Golvan AM QC acted for Mr Thomas in the case of *Thomas v Brown and Tennant*, where the Federal Court declared Mr Thomas the owner of the copyright in the Aboriginal flag.

The present matter is high profile, and has become the subject of a recent Select Senate Committee, in which numerous witnesses from various stakeholder backgrounds were called to publicly answer questions on topics including:

- negotiated outcomes involving assignment of copyright to the Commonwealth;
- compulsory acquisition of the copyright in the flag; and
- mechanisms for management of the flag to protect its role and integrity into the future.

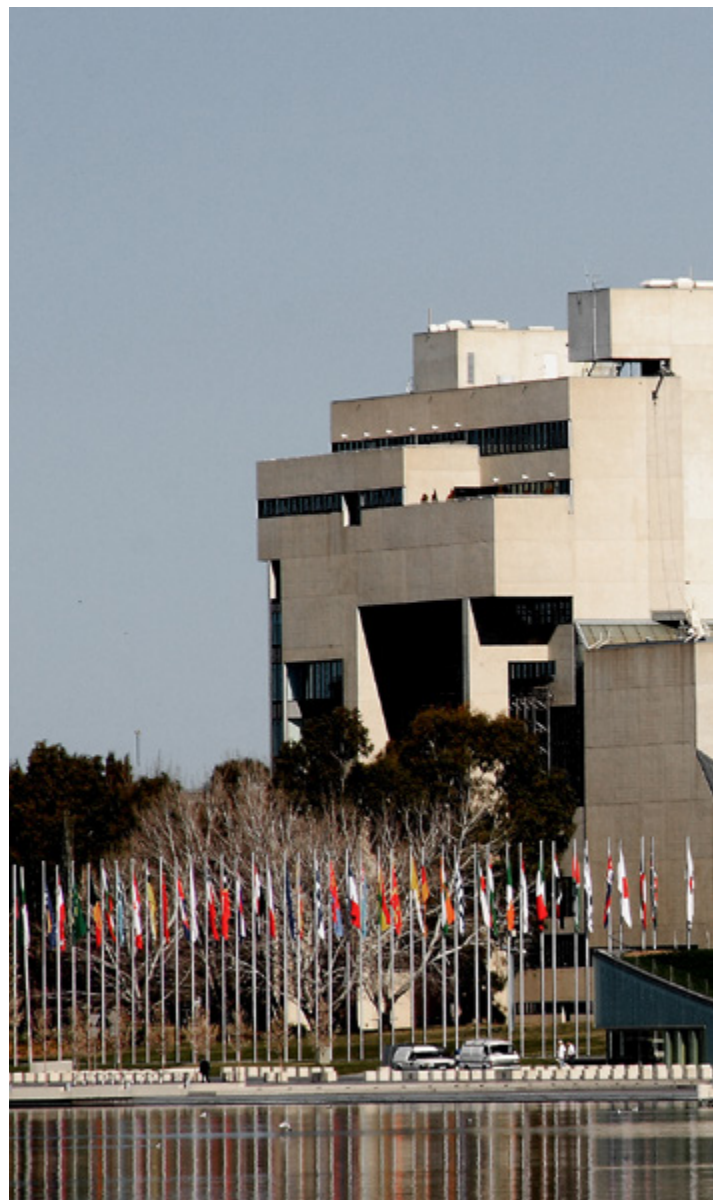
The matter is politically and culturally sensitive and has attracted much press coverage. This matter represents a significant pro bono commitment by the firm which aligns with our commitment to our stated RAP objectives, including Respect, Relationships and Opportunities. It is testament to the calibre of Corrs' IP team to attract a matter of such national importance and complexity, which is being widely discussed amongst IP practitioners and academics and the broader Australian community.

### Case study – public interest – Landmark 'Palace Letters' case

Corrs assisted Professor Jenny Hocking on her successful High Court case to obtain access to the 'Palace Letters', the correspondence between the then Governor General Sir John Kerr and Queen Elizabeth concerning the dismissal of the Whitlam Government in 1975. The High Court delivered its landmark decision on 29 May 2020.

Corrs lead partner on the matter James Whittaker reflects on the significance of access to the letters:

*"This was an important public law case. Access to the correspondence will likely provide critical insight to the inner workings of the decision by the Governor General to dismiss the government. It has been a long, hard battle which we have been engaged in since 2016."*





# 03

## Sustainability

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Environment | Principles 7-9







Sustainability necessitates a focus on both the environment and climate change.

As the environment impacts on people and communities, and good corporate governance minimises the risks of adverse impacts, environmental, social and governance (ESG) challenges and opportunities are interlinked.

Aligning with our Responsible Business and Human Rights practice, our sustainability program addresses the manner in which environmental considerations are integrated into our business operations and practices.



## Environmental sustainability

We are committed 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 advance this commitment by:

- integrating our Environmental Policy and Ethical Sourcing Policy into our business operations and practices;
- being carbon neutral;
- ensuring 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;
- using the latest technology to maximise energy efficiency and sustainability, minimise water usage and improve indoor air quality;
- supporting Earth Hour and World Environment Day;
- requiring our suppliers to have sustainable, environmentally-friendly business practices; and
- reporting annually to the [Australian Legal Sector Alliance](#) on our sustainability performance.

The increasing complexity of environment and planning related regulation poses a great challenge for organisations across all sectors. Our specialist environment and planning team continue to advise clients on a wide range of environmental issues including native title, heritage, climate change, biodiversity, contamination, pollution, water and renewable energy.

But sustainability goes further than mere compliance – it requires organisations to adopt a holistic approach to environmental challenges, and constantly consider the impacts of the environment on the organisation itself. This is demanded not only by the law, but by the society in which organisations operate as the frequency of climate-related litigation increases.

### Corrs appears on Global Compact Network Australia podcast

In May 2020, Corrs litigation partner Andrew Korbel appeared on an episode of the Global Compact Network Australia's *The Pressures Report* podcast, where he discussed the issue 'Do businesses need to be concerned about climate litigation?' with Head of Programmes Corinne Schoch.

### Corrs and the Supply Chain Sustainability School

Our partnership with the [Supply Chain Sustainability School](#) continues to develop and extend the environmental, social and economic instability competencies of the construction, property and infrastructure industries.

Together with the Supply Chain Sustainability School, we hosted an online workshop for smaller entities who supply to Modern Slavery Act reporting entities.

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Achieving carbon neutrality has been a priority for the firm. We have paid close attention to our environmental footprint and will continue to work to reduce our emissions as much as possible across many areas of our business.

Gavin MacLaren  
Senior Partner and CEO







## Carbon neutrality

Corrs is certified as carbon neutral by [Climate Active](#), a government-backed initiative that supports and guides businesses as they account for and reduce carbon emissions.

As well as taking steps to reduce our environmental footprint, Corrs has purchased carbon credits to offset its emissions. A carbon credit is just that – a credit or certificate for greenhouse emissions reduced or removed from the atmosphere through certified projects going on around the globe. Many support communities, and all bring employment within a green economy.

Two such projects Corrs supports are:

### The Improved Kitchen Regimes project – Helping Rwandan families save their health and the environment one cook stove at a time

Clean cooking is considered to be one of the most difficult development challenges.

In Rwanda, firewood accounts for at least 85% of energy consumption and is the primary cooking fuel for 98% of rural households. Through the Improved Kitchen Regimes project, Corrs has contributed to providing households with energy efficient cook stoves that require substantially less fuel – an estimated 71% reduction in traditional biomass fuel annually.

Critically for these communities, the cook stoves result in a better quality of life and improved health.



### The Rajasthan Wind Power project – Financing clean energy in India

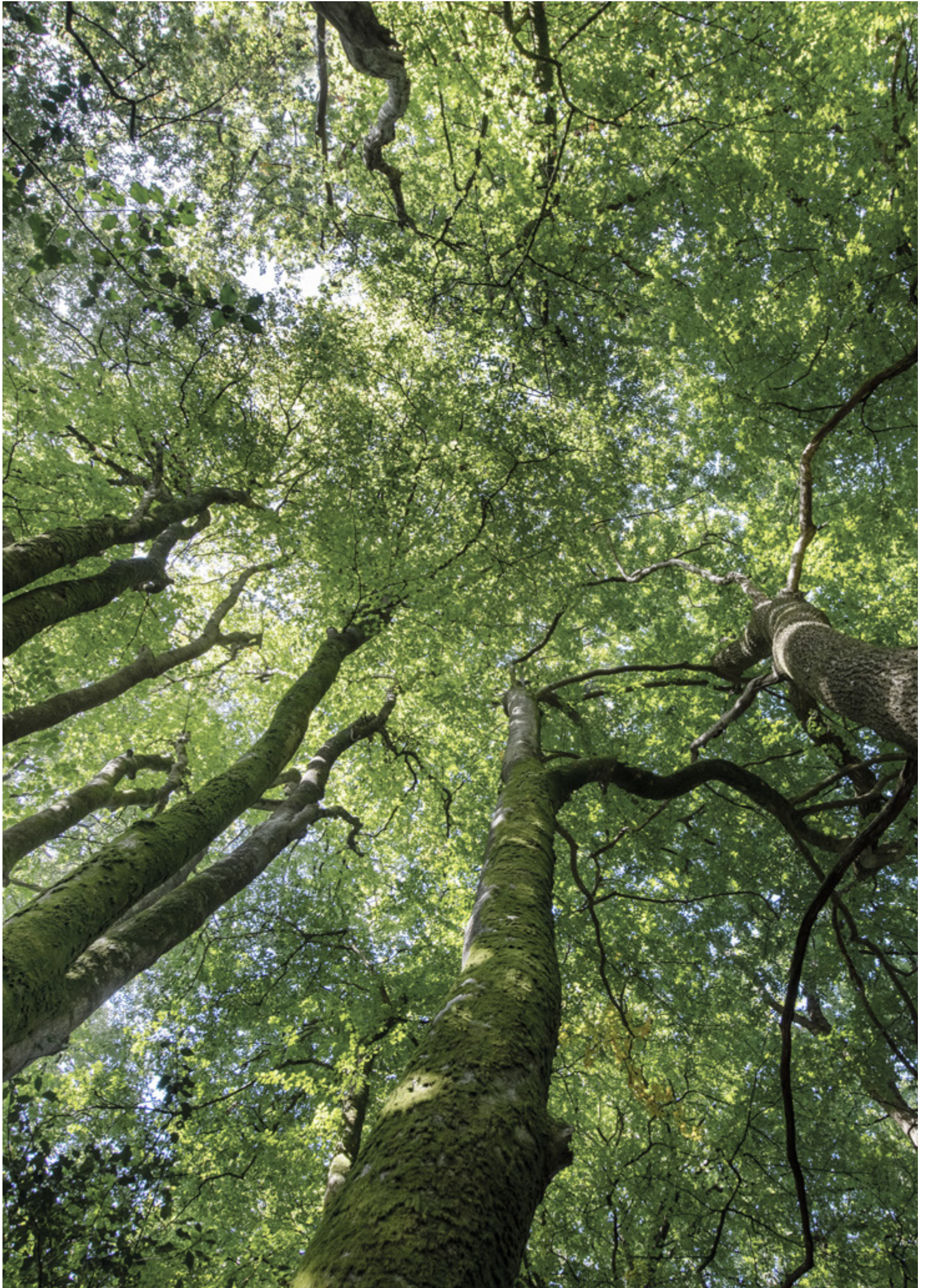
Corrs is contributing to providing benefits for local villages and communities in the Indian state of Rajasthan through a wind power project that supplies clean energy.

This project has played an important role in reducing CO2 emissions by generating 45 GWh of clean electricity annually – the equivalent of powering 10,500 households every year.

The project also contributes to the economic growth of the area by providing permanent employment opportunities for local communities.









# 04

## Governance

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Anti-corruption | Principle 10



8 DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



10 REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES







In all the work we do, we are committed to achieving the highest standards of ethical conduct.

We take active steps to ensure that our people, and any who may provide services on our behalf, comply with all applicable laws of the countries in which we operate and conduct business ethically and responsibly.

This includes complying with all laws, both domestic and international, relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. We work to identify, prevent and mitigate adverse environmental, climate, social and human rights risks in our own business and with our clients so we can contribute to a better, more resilient and sustainable future.

We pride ourselves on working together with our people, our clients and our communities to promote human rights, well beyond regulatory compliance.

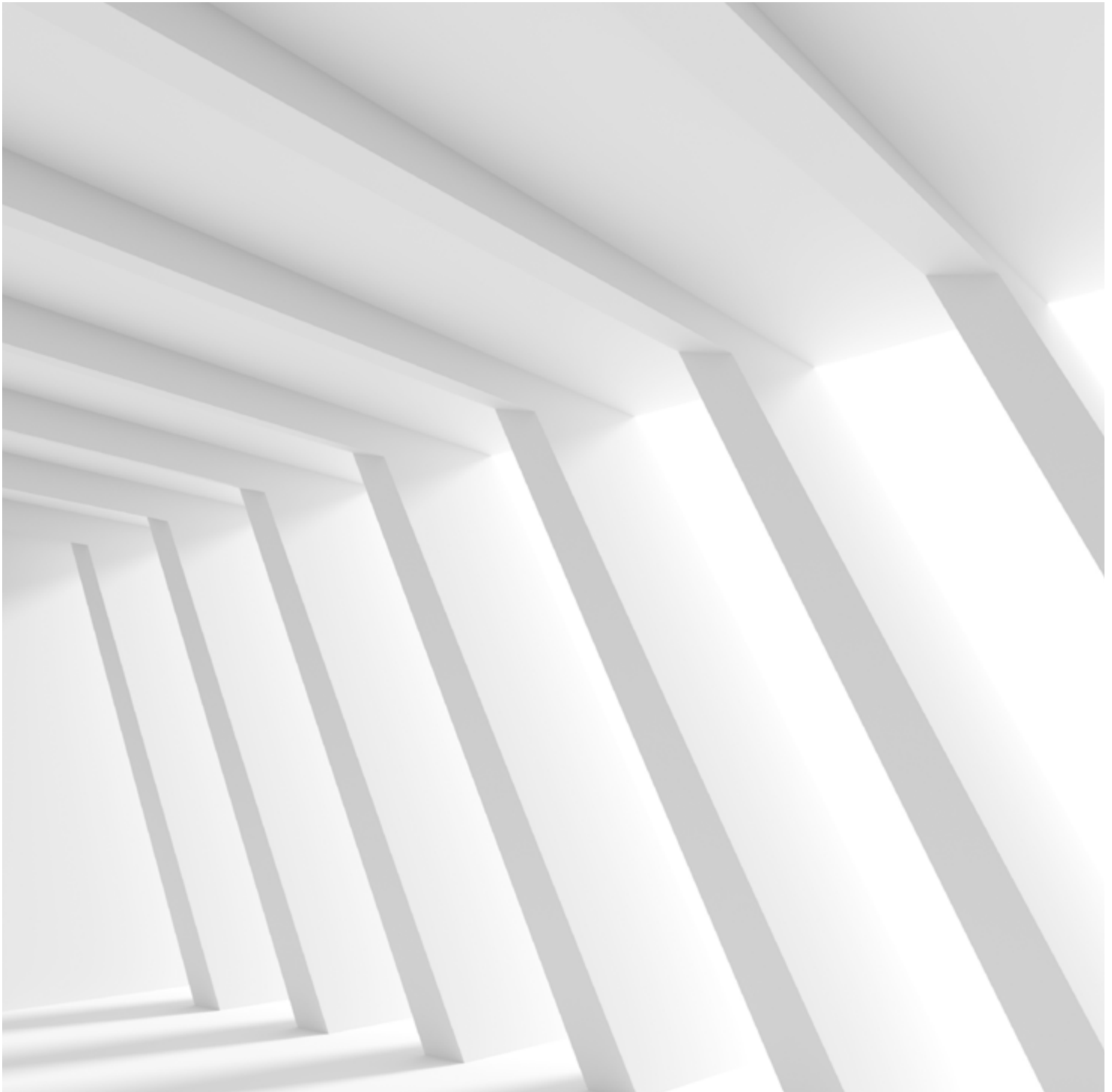


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## Corporate governance and leadership

The Board of the Corrs Chambers Westgarth partnership is responsible for the firm's governance structure, review of the firm's strategic direction and other key issues impacting on the business.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee is a committee of the Board and plays a central role in the risk management of the Corrs Group.



5

minutes with

## Kirsten de Bomford

### General Counsel



### How do we ensure the highest levels of integrity across the firm?

**Kirsten:** Corrs ensures the highest standards of integrity through its policies, training, people and governance structure, and by fostering integrity in the firm's culture.

We have an Ethics and Good Lawyering Policy and conduct regular training on ethics. The firm has an Ethics and Conflicts Partner as well as an Ethics and Conflicts Committee who are all senior partners of the firm with the role of providing guidance on ethical questions.

Our cross-functional Responsible Business Working Group also ensures integrity is part of the day-to-day operations of the firm, and Corrs' dedicated Head of Business and Human Rights Dr Phoebe Wynn-Pope ensures that the firm adopts high standards regarding human rights and modern slavery.

The firm's governance structure (including the Risk and Legal Excellence team) also plays an important role in ensuring that integrity is embedded in the firm's culture and appropriate policies, procedures, standards and expectations are in place and followed.

### What policies / procedures do we have in place that help ensure good governance?

**Kirsten:** We have a comprehensive range of policies to help ensure good governance, including:

- an Anti-Bribery and Anti-Corruption Policy;
- Contracts Policies;
- an Environmental Policy;
- an Ethical Sourcing Policy (including Supplier Minimum Standards);
- a Political Donations Policy; and
- a Securities Trading Policy.

The firm conducts training for staff about its policies and issues information bulletins reminding staff of their importance.

### Is it possible for staff to confidentially report any concerns? How do they do that? What process do we have in place?

**Kirsten:** Staff at Corrs are encouraged to first raise their concerns with their immediate supervisor through normal reporting channels. However, where there is a need for confidentially, the firm's Whistleblower Protection Policy provides an avenue for our people to raise concerns about serious misconduct within the firm without fear of being penalised or otherwise disadvantaged.

Where staff believe it is appropriate to bypass normal reporting channels, they can raise their concerns with a Whistleblower Contact Officer in their office who will assist them through the process. After a discussion with the officer, the staff member can make a formal report regarding the conduct. The officer will then refer the report to the firm's General Counsel for investigation.

### Do we work with others to help fight corruption and bribery? If so, how?

**Kirsten:** We have extensive experience advising a range of multinationals, ASX-listed companies and not-for-profit organisations in relation to compliance with anti-bribery and anti-corruption standards and assisting clients to navigate issues when they arise. We manage clients' internal investigations, regulatory investigations and prosecutorial actions, and provide bespoke risk assessment and management solutions which reflect our clients' risk profiles.

We also provide legal services to a range of government departments and agencies assisting the fight against corruption and bribery. These include the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) at a Federal level, as well as the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in New South Wales and the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner in Victoria. We have also acted in a wide range of State and Federal Government inquiries, investigations and Royal Commissions.



## Ethical sourcing and modern slavery

We pride ourselves on working together with our people, our clients and our communities to promote and respect human rights.

Since last year's CoP report, our Responsible Business Working Group (**RBWG**) continues to focus on the development and consideration of human rights impacts in our policies and practices. It also supports the firm through establishing monitoring and procedures to identify, assess and address any modern slavery in our supply chain.

We have revised our Ethical Sourcing Policy and Supplier Minimum Standards and embedded these policies through extensive training with our business services team nationally. In 2019, Corrs undertook a comprehensive strategy to assess, address and mitigate the risk of modern slavery in our operations and supply chain. Through the RBWG, we mapped our supply chain, categorised and assessed suppliers, and identified risks using our Modern Slavery Risk Matrix.

The Risk Matrix assesses suppliers against four key modern slavery risk factors:

1. Products and services.
2. Sectors and industries.
3. Certain geographic risks as indicated by the Global Slavery Risk Index.
4. Identification of suppliers whose business and labour practices may be associated with higher risks of modern slavery.

Having identified all suppliers by category and location, the results of the risk assessment led to three areas of focus for our modern slavery program:

1. Facilities (including cleaning, car parking, security and other services).
2. Marketing and merchandise (including promotional goods and branded stationery).
3. Technology and hardware.

We engaged with suppliers in these categories to gain a deeper knowledge of our supply chain risks as part of a coordinated due diligence process. This engagement took the form of a high level supplier questionnaire that was distributed to suppliers in these categories. At the same time, we have established governance and management structures to ensure we can continue to improve in future years. We have developed an Ethical Sourcing Policy and a set of Supplier Minimum Standards which were circulated to higher risk suppliers to understand whether, and how, those suppliers could live up to Corrs' standards on human rights, labour and diversity and inclusion issues.

We also took the lessons from our risk assessment and supplier engagement and used them to educate and inform our people, including business services team members, about modern slavery and where modern slavery risks lie in our supply chain. This training will ensure that our procurement and contracting processes are even more responsive to modern slavery risks in future.

### Modern Slavery Statement

In 2020, we produced our first [Modern Slavery Statement](#) in compliance with the Australian Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth).



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## Looking ahead

Corrs' commitment to its people, community, sustainability and good governance – the key elements that contribute to the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact – endures.

We continue to build our understanding and knowledge of the world of human rights through a diverse speaker series inviting a range of guests aligned with our human rights and diversity goals, and through our reconciliation action plan.

We focus on gender equality and ensure policies and processes are in place to support diversity in the workplace, and look for occasions to celebrate and promote our strong, welcoming and cohesive culture. We continuously seek to identify, assess and address any risks of modern slavery in our supply chain and operations, and will undertake training with our people and clients to promote internal and external commitment to the elimination of modern slavery from global supply chains.

Participation is a key element of success, and we will increase our pro bono contribution and participation in our community engagement activities. As we strengthen our strategy, we will explore means of measuring our impact and our broader contribution.

We are proud to be a carbon neutral business and offer carbon neutral services to our clients. But our commitment goes deeper – we have established a 'Green Team', who are continuously looking for new strategies to reduce our carbon footprint. As we obtain carbon offsets for the emissions we are not yet able to avoid, we will also commit to engage in programs with sustainable benefits.

This Communication on Progress provides an overview of the work we are doing to fulfil our commitment to imagine, inspire and together, build a better world.

If you have any questions about our approach or this report, please contact Dr Phoebe Wynn-Pope, Head of Human Rights and Head of Pro Bono at [phoebe.wynn-pope@corrs.com.au](mailto:phoebe.wynn-pope@corrs.com.au)





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