

Chief Justice Warren: Some Advice for Women Lawyers

Extracts from the Chief Justice's Speech delivered at the Herbert Smith Freehills/Women Barristers Association Networking Event

At a "networking event" co-sponsored by Herbert Smith Freehills and the Victorian Bar on 19 November 2013 the Chief Justice challenged the stereotype of lawyers briefing "who you know".

She said lawyers have a professional obligation to find the best and most suitable counsel for a client.

The event was a networking occasion to encourage the briefing of more women barristers. Over 90 barristers attended and had the opportunity to provide their resume to lawyers at Herbert Smith Freehills.

The Chief Justice said lawyers must have knowledge of and confidence in the counsel they brief. Often there is a preponderance of male barristers briefed, possibly because they are formally a member of the law firm.

The Chief Justice spoke about things explored in *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg: self doubt, non-self promotion, the imposter syndrome, juggling domestic demands (called the "jungle gym") and sharing emotions.

The Chief Justice encouraged lawyers and barristers to just be themselves and have confidence in their abilities.

The Chief Justice on the night gave three tips:

1. Be focused: the barristers should tell the lawyers who they are and provide their business card. The lawyers should ask "why should I brief you?"
2. Emphasise the relevant: treat the occasion as a professional one and discuss serious matters.
3. Network (or lean in): do not leave the event without an arrangement for at least one coffee date and one lunch date.

The Chief Justice said women are excellent litigators. They are also excellent advocates. Ultimately, advocacy is about persuasion not aggression. The Chief Justice asked the question: do clients always understand that?

The Chief Justice said the occasion was visionary, innovative and involved lateral thinking. The two markets, the lawyers and the barristers, had been brought together to size each other up.