

We have a long history of leading the legal industry in its support of women and their career development. Freehills was the first major Australian law firm to appoint a woman partner in 1978. We were the first firm to establish a Women in Business networking forum in recognition of the pivotal role that strong networks have in ensuring career success. The forum has since grown to over 1000 women from industries as diverse as banking, telecommunications, retail, publishing, government, law and the judiciary, and has inspired the formation of similar groups throughout the legal and other industries across Australia.

In addition to supporting women to create and strengthen business relationships, Freehills has a significant focus on creating a work environment that enables women to be successful and fulfilled. Our 'Women at Freehills' initiatives that support this objective include partner development programs focusing on improving career conversations, challenging mindsets and assumptions about gender; coaching programs; focus groups; setting partner targets; parental support programs; flexible working plans; and regular policy reviews. Making it possible for all people to take on roles that fulfil and challenge them is our key priority, and our strong commitment to achieving this for women is being recognised with recent awards including the EOWA Employer of Choice for Women citation in 2007, 2008; the NSW Law Society Special Award for Flexibility in the Workplace, 2006; ALB Magazine Employer of Choice; a NSW Women Lawyers' Achievement Award (Stephanie Pursley) and as a finalist in the ACCI's Work and Family Awards 2007.

Freehills is proud to be a Foundation Partner for the Serious Women Business conference and to work alongside the other foundation partners towards the common goal of enabling women to contribute to Corporate Australia to the best of their ability.

When speaking about Freehills' decision to become a foundation partner, Rebecca Davies, Chair of the 'Women at Freehills' Steering Committee and Freehills' Board member, said, 'We now know that workplace diversity and business success go hand in hand and that organisations that do not take this seriously do so to their detriment. I am thrilled that Freehills has seized this opportunity to partner with other organisations equally committed to stemming the enormous costs of losing female talent, and look forward to participating in the exciting and inspirational program at the conference later this year.'