CARROLL & O'DEA LAWYERS
When it matters

Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Effective date: 26 May 2021

Why diversity matters

Everyone deserves to be respected and treated fairly.

People from minorities are more likely to be subjected to violence, discrimination and marginalisation. Entrenched barriers often limit access to opportunities, services and support, creating a cycle of disadvantage. Being inclusive breaks down these barriers. It makes society safer and fairer for us all.

Our history and values

For more than 120 years, Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers has been there for people when it matters. We stand up to protect our clients' rights and challenge the systems which contribute to inequality.

Encouraging diversity helps us make an important difference to our clients, our people and our community through a positive and supportive environment. It is central to our values of care, collaboration and community.

Our commitment

Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers is committed to promoting diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity.

Our firm creates a supportive culture which empowers our people to be their best authentic selves and values diversity of people, culture and thought. We ensure our clients, people and everyone we work with feel safe and are treated with respect, care and dignity.

Our diversity, inclusion and accessibility principles

We recognise that diversity is multi-faceted. Our approach is guided by the following principles:

- We respect people's individual needs, preferences and experiences
- We embrace diversity and welcome differences of background, race, culture, gender, thought and opinion
- We ask people what they need rather than make assumptions
- We protect people's confidentiality without silencing their rights to speak out

As part of our commitment to diversity and inclusion, we will take steps to:

- Contribute to greater diversity and inclusion in our own firm, the legal industry and the community
- Examine our processes and documents to remove inadvertent bias

- Become a more diverse firm, including recruiting, developing and promoting diverse talent
- Help improve access to legal advice for vulnerable or marginalised people
- Encourage greater diversity, inclusion and accessibility across our supply chain
- Be vocal supporters of diversity and challenge discrimination whenever we encounter it
- Support organisations which promote these principles

Our firm embraces diversity

Diversity benefits everybody. It helps improve understanding, solve challenges, create opportunities and enhance wellbeing across society. We achieve more by working together.

We are proud of the diversity across our firm, from people beginning their careers to the highest levels of leadership. Our people come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Their experience enhances our personal service and helps us to develop trusted relationships with people from all walks of life.

Zero tolerance for unacceptable behaviour

We have zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation. It is unacceptable to treat people unfairly based on their:

- Gender or gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Culture, race or nationality
- Disability or medical conditions
- Neurodiversity
- Family, parental or relationship status
- Pregnancy or caring responsibilities
- Religion or faith
- Age or physical appearance
- Socio-economic background
- Education, lifestyle or personal interests

We encourage our people, suppliers, clients or members of the community to speak up if they see behaviour which concerns them. We will take prompt action to investigate any reported misconduct, address breaches, and implement appropriate improvements. Consequences may include disciplinary action, formal warnings or dismissal.

Our experience

We listen to our clients, understand their concerns, and are dedicated to advocating for their best interests.

Our lawyers are respected for their professionalism, determination and empathy. We solve clients' challenges whether they involve complex legal issues, geographic boundaries or language barriers.

We are privileged to represent a wide range of clients and help protect their rights and interests. The firm has acted in thousands of successful claims, including:

- Obtaining financial settlements and formal apologies for members of the Stolen Generations
- Applications by asylum seekers for refugee status
- Protecting the rights and choices of people with disabilities
- Securing compensation for life-changing physical and psychological injuries
- Upholding the rights of workers to fair treatment and safe treatment
- People in vulnerable circumstances, such as being at risk of elder abuse, homelessness, loss of employment, or deportation

Our diversity, inclusion and accessibility practices

Including everyone

- Our Diversity group includes members from across the firm who meet regularly to consider initiatives and progress across the firm
- We provide support, systems and tools to accommodate people's needs, maintain their wellbeing and help them meet their full potential
- Across the firm, we participate in events that honour our multicultural heritage and celebrate important cultural and religious dates
- Our regular lunchtime speaker event series addresses issues relating to fairness and inclusion

Governance and compliance

- We provide training to help our people understand their rights and obligations, learn how to be more inclusive, and identify bias
- Our employee handbook includes detailed information on the types of behaviour which are unacceptable, what to do if people see or experience this, and how we respond
- Our process to investigate complaints respects people who have experienced inappropriate behaviour and is sensitive to their individual needs

Contributing to the community

- We have set goals to increase our work with community and member-based organisations, as well as targets for our donations, volunteering and pro bono services. This includes supporting lawyers at every level of the firm to provide pro bono services every year.

- Our firm supports a range of organisations which improve accessibility and inclusion and help people experiencing marginalisation. These include the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the Asylum Seekers Centre, The Shed at Mount Druitt, Inala, Carrie's Place, The Happy Boxes Project and through local community legal centres.