

Anthony McGrath SC, 'Gender equitable briefing at the bar'

the GEB Policy to collect and report the data required for reporting. Once approved by Bar Council, this template will be made available to members of the bar to enable barristers who have adopted the GEB Policy to comply more easily with their reporting obligations.

The Bar Association has adopted the GEB Policy and will in the course of the next six months review its briefing practices and how it collects relevant data.

If you require more information about the GEB Policy and its implementation at the NSW Bar, or if you have ideas on its implementation or would like to be involved, please contact Ms Ting Lim, policy lawyer, at the NSW Bar Association.

Endnotes

1. [http://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/lawcouncil/index.php/current-issues/equitable-briefing-GEB Policy](http://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/lawcouncil/index.php/current-issues/equitable-briefing-GEB%20Policy)
2. <http://www.nswbar.asn.au/the-bar-association/statistics>

Four readers share their experiences starting out at the bar

Greg Antipas and Ingrid King of the New Barristers Committee recently caught up with Linton Teoh, Danielle Woods, Glenn Fredericks and Uche Okereke-Fisher about their experiences starting out at the bar. All of them were from the same intake, but had very different backgrounds. They were each asked the same series of questions and their responses below provide an insight into the diversity and similarity in how readers are finding their first year at the bar.



Glenn Fredericks

What did you do before coming to the bar?

I was an in-house lawyer at the Commonwealth Bank of Australia specialising in employment law, but also leading the major disputes team (among other things). Prior to joining the bank, I was a partner at Freehills (as it then was) in the Employee Relations

Group. Before Freehills, I had been an industrial officer with the NSW Nurses Association.

Has your reading year so far been what you had expected?

I didn't know what to expect, but the experience has been good. I've received work from where I never would have expected it, including many more new relationships with solicitors rather than just re-kindling older relationships (which has also been important). I had done quite a bit of advocacy work prior to going in-house. I'd enjoyed that and have continued to enjoy it. I enjoyed the Bar Practice Course, but would have like more time on my feet, and fewer lectures.

Where does your work mainly come from?

Some of my work has come through chambers. I've have also been fortunate to have had referrals and recommendations from more senior barristers. I've had a lot of cups of coffee, and would not underestimate the power of a cup of coffee.

What have you found to be the biggest change since coming to the bar?

The uncertainty of income takes some getting used to. I like being my own boss, and being in charge of my own destiny. I've spent a lot of time outside my comfort zone, but I am learning all the time and enjoying it.

What would you say to others considering coming to the bar?

I'd recommend giving it a go. You need to be prepared to back yourself – and know that the experience will make you a better lawyer. Even if it doesn't work out, you'll be a better litigator and have insights in how to handle Counsel. As far as finances are concerned, I recommend having enough cash to live for six months. Cash flow will be a real problem, and if you don't have a cushion you will put real pressure on yourself.

'Four readers share their experiences starting out at the bar'



Uche Okereke-Fisher

What did you do before coming to the bar?

I was the senior corporate counsel for Salesforce.com. I had also been a Wall Street trader.

Has your reading year so far been what you had expected?

I found the Bar Practice Course quite daunting – and during it I felt very alone. I did not have court experience and was obviously the one with the least experience in court. Having said that, I really learnt a lot from all of the speakers – I would have paid to listen to the speakers.

Where does your work mainly come from?

When I arrived in chambers, I told everyone that I was eager to help. I would say 'I have a wig, I have a car, and I can go'. I did a lot of work for barristers on my floor, both mentions and running cases when the original barrister was not available. I also sent letters of introduction. I'm a registered migration agent and have also found that to be a significant source of work.

What have you found to be the biggest change since coming to the bar?

I've been really grateful for the support from my tutors – I didn't know any barristers when I came to the bar! My outlook has changed from being in the corporate world. In corporate life, appearances really mattered. At the bar, I've had to be 'out there' getting work. I'm not so concerned about what I am wearing or the bag that I am carrying. I work harder than I did in the corporate world, but with greater flexibility.

What would you say to others considering coming to the bar?

If you are thinking of coming to the bar, you need to know why you want to do it. For me, it was the intellectual stimulation of being a barrister. I'd warn you that there are much easier ways to earn a buck! You need to look at yourself as a business as well as a professional and be resourceful, ready, willing and able. I'd recommend a six month 'cushion' for your expenses.



Linton Teoh

What did you do before coming to the bar?

I was working as a practice manager at a medical practice.

Has your reading year so far been what you had expected?

For the most part, yes. Having come to the bar in the way I did, I knew that I had a steep climb. Fortunately, I have been lucky enough to have been supported by my tutors, members of my floor and even other barristers not on my floor, not only in providing me

advice and guidance, but also getting me involved in matters. While I knew about the open door policy at the bar, what I had not expected was the extent very senior members of the profession are willing to go out of their way to help the most junior of barristers. That has been a pleasant surprise.

Where does your work mainly come from?

I suspect that my experience is not unusual. Initially, a lot of my work came from my tutors or other members of the floor, either as being a junior to them, doing devilling for them, or their

'Four readers share their experiences starting out at the bar'

referring work to me. Through those introductions and being in court more frequently, solicitors have gotten to know me and are starting to brief me directly.

What have you found to be the biggest change since coming to the bar?

I think the biggest change has been to

my lifestyle. Personally, it has been a big change in career which has brought with it new pressures. I have tried to balance that out by taking up new social activities and hobbies, like bushwalking.

What would you say to others considering coming to the bar?

I think for most, uncertainty is part and parcel of one's early years at the

bar. I think it is desirable to have a mid-term plan, perhaps a five-year plan. 'With whom would I like to read?' and 'Where will I spend my reader's year?' should be only the very first questions you ask yourself. Even if you alter your plan, having a plan ensures you are least partially prepared for the uncertainties and have a general idea of where you are going.



Danielle Woods

What did you do before coming to the bar?

I worked as a litigation and insolvency consultant to Australian Pharmaceutical Industries Limited. Prior to that I was a senior associate in the Dispute Resolutions team at Minter Ellison.

Has your reading year so far been what you had expected?

Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that my Readers year (completed in September 2016) offered very varied and new challenges as I had expected (and hoped for). No, in the sense that, not knowing (and still not knowing) where my work was going to come from, I was pleasantly surprised to find how busy my first year was. I had kept my expectations pretty low on that front. It has been more fun than I expected – it is never dull.

Where does your work mainly come from?

Most of my work has come from my floor (Ground Floor Wentworth) and my tutors. The members of the Ground Floor have been extremely supportive during my readers year with work, guidance and introductions to their solicitors etc.

What have you found to be the biggest change since coming to the bar?

The administration entailed with being a sole trader. Being able to take all of January off, no questions asked, was a nice change.

What would you say to others considering coming to the bar?

It's not an easy career option. You've got to love the work and be prepared for the unexpected directions it takes you. It certainly helps if you have a partner/spouse that has a regular income or some 'nest egg' that takes some of the financial pressure off in the early days so you can focus on learning and developing skills by watching others, volunteering etc, which can only provide good foundations going forward.