



HIGH COURT OF AUSTRALIA

SUPPLEMENTARY HR POLICY– CHAMBERS STAFF

This policy is additional to the workplace policies issued by the Chief Executive and Principal Registrar (CE&PR) which apply to all staff of the Court including Chambers staff.

Background

The role of each member of Chambers staff is an important one in supporting the Justice for whom they work and in supporting the work of the Court as the apex court in our judicial system. It is also a unique opportunity for those starting out in their careers to see the work of the Court at first hand and to enrich their understanding of the law, the work of the Court and the judicial process. For many Associates and Research Officers, in particular, their time at the Court results in mentors and friendships that last throughout their careers.

Harassment, discrimination and workplace bullying

The Justices of the High Court are committed to providing a workplace that is free of inappropriate behaviour, harassment, bullying and discrimination.

In particular the Justices are committed to Chambers being workplaces that are free of behaviour that is offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening. The workplace should also be free of sexual harassment which can cover a range of unwelcome behaviour such as jokes or comments of a sexual nature and unwelcome physical contact, to subtle or explicit requests for sexual favours.

This commitment extends beyond the day to day work in Chambers to all other work-related activities including travel and social events involving Justices and Court staff.

Justices and Chambers staff will have the opportunity to meet informally or socially in Canberra, while on circuit, or in a Justice's local registry.

These are useful opportunities for staff and Justices to get to know each other and to provide advice about career, study options and the like.

Chambers staff should not, however, feel under any obligation to participate in any occasions that do not relate directly to the work of the Justices or to be in any social or informal situation in which they would feel uncomfortable. Chambers staff are also free to choose the extent or manner in which they participate in social functions.

While Chambers staff will be expected to travel with, and accompany, Justices while undertaking official travel and functions related to their office, this expectation does not extend to sharing private transport arrangements with Justices on other occasions.

Confidentiality

While Chambers staff are expected to observe strict confidentiality obligations around work related to cases before the Court, that confidentiality does not extend to work place issues that a member of staff may have in relation to other Chambers staff or a Justice.

Raising concerns or complaints

Chambers staff who have a concern or complaints about workplace matters arising in Chambers with other Associates, Executive Assistants or any of the Justices, have a number of avenues open to them.

In particular Chambers staff should always feel free to raise any concerns they have with the Justice in whose Chambers they work.

Where the workplace issue involves matters between staff members other Court policies may be applicable and appropriate to resolve the issue.

There may be some matters where staff may feel uncomfortable approaching the Justice or may want to discuss an issue informally in the first instance. In these circumstances Chambers staff may like to talk informally [and privately] with the Senior Registrar, Carolyn Rogers. Chambers staff may also at any time raise any workplace issue with the CEPR, Philippa Lynch.

Where a member of Chambers staff is concerned about workplace issues or has a complaint involving a Justice and the staff member is uncomfortable raising it directly, for any reason, with the Justice, the staff member may discuss the matter with the Senior Registrar or the CEPR.

The staff member can also raise the matter with the Chief Justice either directly or through the Senior Registrar or the CEPR. Chambers staff can ask the Senior Registrar or the CEPR to arrange a meeting with the Chief Justice without indicating to the Senior Registrar or the CEPR the reasons for the meeting.

The Senior Registrar, the CEPR and the Chief Justice will take such steps as may be appropriate, or available, to them to resolve the matter including by raising the matter with the Justice concerned or, in the case of matters raised initially with the Senior Registrar and CEPR, raising the matter with the Chief Justice.

Each of the Justices of the Court emphasises that Chambers Staff should feel able to raise matters involving a Justice with the Senior Registrar, CEPR or Chief Justice without risk of any adverse repercussions. In doing so, Chambers staff should be assured that they will be appropriately supported.

Chief Justice

Justice Bell

Justice Gageler

Justice Keane

Justice Nettle

Justice Gordon

Justice Edelman