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PRESS RELEASE

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LAW SOCIETY RELEASES FIRST EVER REPORT ADDRESSING GENDER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN SINGAPORE LEGAL PROFESSION

The Law Society of Singapore announces the release of *Levelling the Playing Field*, its inaugural report on the state of gender diversity and inclusion within the Singapore legal profession (the “Report”).

A culmination of more than two years of data gathering by the Women in Practice (“WIP”) Committee, the Report addresses the experiences of female practitioners across the junior, middle and senior categories, and the challenges they face in building and sustaining their careers.

The data gathering encompassed a survey of more than 500 female members of the Singapore legal profession, as well as a series of roundtable sessions with participation from (i) female lawyers across all seniority levels; (ii) managing partners, hiring managers, and recruiting partners (both male and female); and (iii) male lawyers.

Besides setting out a number of findings based on the data gathered, the Report also contains the WIP Committee’s recommendations on how the profession can - and indeed should - make improvements in the following key areas:

- mentorship and sponsorship;
- flexible work arrangements;
- training and awareness of unconscious bias; and
- addressing sexual harassment and bullying.

Gregory Vijayendran SC, President of the Law Society, said: “*The accelerated growth and momentum of an idea-turned-taskforce-turned-committee demonstrates a growing self-belief in our women lawyer-leaders. Simran Toor and Felicia Tan, both Council Members and Co-Chairpersons of the WIP Committee, are among the vanguard of this new revolution and evolution of cutting-edge thought on relevant issues affecting our women lawyers in practice. The big picture question is how to optimally harness the talent, and better protect, our estimated 46% of female legal professionals. Levelling the Playing Field is a thoughtful, thorough, nuanced and balanced report that provides some insights that may lead us to answer that question. Fundamentally, employers (male and female) must recognize that this is not a gender issue but a talent management one.*”

WIP Committee Co-Chairperson, Simran Toor, says: *“More can be done for women lawyers in Singapore, at all levels of seniority and experience. While the data did not reveal any prevalent problems with harassment or bullying, which is encouraging, it did reveal that unconscious bias remains a deeply rooted issue within the legal practice. There are still strong misperceptions that an equal playing field is available to both genders, that progression is purely a function of merit, and that the larger number of male lawyers at senior levels is due to independent choice-making by female lawyers to leave the profession, rather than any form of unconscious bias or inequality.”*

Felicia Tan, Co-Chairperson of the WIP Committee, adds: *“There is also a lack of understanding on how diversity in the workplace and embracing flexible working arrangements could translate to commercial benefit; with many still believing that diversity initiatives are rooted only in altruism or inconsistent with the ideals of meritocracy. This pandemic has also shown how flexible working arrangements need not undercut productivity. We hope that the contents of this Report will raise awareness of the issues amongst members of the legal profession, so that the Singapore legal profession can attract and retain the best talent, both male and female.”*

An electronic copy of the Report can be downloaded at <https://tinyurl.com/yy5afxvg>.

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ABOUT THE LAW SOCIETY

Established in 1967, the Law Society of Singapore is a body established under the Legal Profession Act. It carries out various statutory functions prescribed under the Legal Profession Act, including maintaining and improving the standards of conduct and learning of the legal profession in Singapore, the facilitation of the acquisition of legal knowledge by members of the legal profession, and protecting and assisting the public in all matters ancillary or incidental to the law.

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