



HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS' PERTH OFFICE CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF MERGER

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News

Herbert Smith Freehills' Perth office today celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the biggest merger of law firms in Western Australia's history - the merger of the Perth office of Freehill Hollingdale & Page, and Parker & Parker on 1 September 1997.

The two local law firms, formed in 1897 and 1868 respectively, had been involved in many of the events which shaped Western Australia's modern history. The 1997 merger was a platform to materially step up their capability and reach - just as, history has shown, Western Australia was doing the same.

Sue Gilchrist, Regional Managing Partner, Australia and Asia, said, "We are proud of this anniversary as it highlights the history and strength of our Perth office, it's long and rich connection to the Western Australian legal and business communities and its innovative and optimistic culture."

"The merger was a significant event in the Perth legal landscape: it created a substantial, world-class local firm, that was able to work with Western Australian companies as they internationalised their operations, as well as work with international companies that were increasingly looking to do business in Western Australia," Ms Gilchrist added.

Herbert Smith Freehills was the first Western Australian law firm to join with an Eastern States counterpart in 1979. The firm formally became part of Australian Freehills in 2000, and then the global partnership Herbert Smith Freehills in 2012.

The Herbert Smith Freehills Perth office remains the largest and most eminent law firm in WA, with lawyers recognised in the local market and beyond as leaders in their field. It continues to work with many of Western Australia's most significant organisations.

Tony Joyner, Perth Managing Partner, commented, “The story of this firm in Perth is the story of Western Australia. We now have a global reach, because that’s where Western Australia plays today. The merger of two of this cities’ great firms 20 years ago was a momentous event; the Perth legal community had never seen anything like it, it was audacious and optimistic, much like Western Australia itself. I was a young partner at the time and history now shows it was a great move, made by some bold leaders, and the profession is better off for it.”

The merger was only one step in the long history of the firm in Perth. The first iteration was established by a young lawyer called Stephen Henry Parker in 1868 who went on to serve as a member of parliament, as Perth mayor and as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Western Australia.

He was the first of many partners of the firm who have gone on to serve the State in various capacities including two as Chief Justice, Sir Francis Burt AC, KCMG and David Malcolm AC, two as President of the Court of Appeal, numerous as judges of the Supreme, Federal and District Courts, one as the Solicitor General, one as the State Solicitor and one as a cabinet minister in the Commonwealth Government.

The firm has also contributed significantly to the legal profession. In the past 30 years, nine of its partners and employees have served as President of the Law Society of Western Australia.

“Next year we will celebrate 150 years at the forefront of the legal profession in Perth, another milestone in a continuing great Western Australian story,” Mr Joyner added.

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Timeline for editors:

- 1868 – Stephen Henry Parker establishes Parker & Parker in Perth
- 1897 – John Nicholson and Harold Hensman establish Nicholson & Hensman
- 1979 – Muir Williams Nicholson forms joint firm with Freehill Hollingdale & Page
- 1997 – Freehill Hollingdale & Page merges with Parker & Parker
- 2000 – Freehill Hollingdale & Page becomes national partnership Freehills
- 2012 – Freehills merges with Herbert Smith to form global partnership Herbert Smith Freehills
- 2015 – Herbert Smith Freehills establishes Alternative Legal Services office in Perth –

understood to be the first of its kind in Australia

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