

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5825

Hickie, Marea

Occupation Lawyer, Solicitor

Summary

A partner in the law firm Hunt and Hunt, Marea Hickie brought a successful and landmark discrimination case against the law firm. In 1998 in the case of *Hickie v Hunt and Hunt*, Ms Hickie alleged that the law firm Hunt and Hunt discriminated against her on the ground of sex. Ms Hickie was made a contract partner after being with the firm for seven years. At the time of being made a contract partner she was pregnant. She commenced maternity leave and later returned to work on a part-time basis. A couple of months after her return to work, Hunt and Hunt decided not to renew her contract. She was informed of the decision and on the same day she left the firm. Ms Hickie alleged discrimination in the way she was treated by the firm. The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission found that there had been "indirect sex discrimination" within the meaning of s5(2) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth). The discrimination occurred because Ms Hickie was required to work full-time as a necessary condition to maintain her position in the firm. This requirement was a condition that disadvantaged or was likely to disadvantage women and it was not reasonable in the circumstances. Ms Hickie was awarded compensation of \$95,000. This case was important in establishing precedent in the area of sex discrimination. It typifies the discrimination that women lawyers face as they attempt to balance work life and family responsibilities.

Published resources

Resource Section

Law, Kerwin, Hollie and Rubenstein, Kim, 2014,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0624b.htm>

Site Exhibition

Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers>

Author Details

Larissa Halonkin

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