



Freehills gets top firm gong

AFTER A REMARKABLE YEAR, IT'S LITTLE WONDER FREEHILLS WAS NAMED AUSTRALIAN LAW FIRM OF THE YEAR

For the third consecutive year, Freehills has been awarded the coveted Harriss Wagner Australian Law Firm of the Year Award. The award, for firms with more than 500 practicing certificates, was one of six that Freehills took home from the Law Awards, capping off an extremely successfully year for the firm.

Freehills' CEO and managing partner Gavin Bell is extremely pleased with Freehills' success.

"The award capped off a remarkable year where Freehills achieved considerable growth in a mature market. A period during which we successfully implemented an array of exciting and innovative programs and initiatives, all focused around people and clients," Bell said.

With firms judged on their market presence, the outcomes they have achieved for clients, innovations and corporate citizenship, Freehills stood out.

The firm has achieved considerable growth in revenue this year and its continued success is highlighted by the invitation to 14 lawyers to join the partnership – the largest number of partners the firm has ever appointed at one time. And since the Law Awards, three further lawyers have been appointed to the partnership.

Freehills has worked on some of the most significant matters and transactions that have shaped Australia's business landscape in the past year including acting for the Seven Network in the landmark C7 litigation under Part IV of the *Trade Practices Act*, and acting for the issuer on both of the largest floats in 2005 – Goodman Fielder and SP Ausnet.

But the firm has also extended its reach overseas.

"If you look at what we've done in the last year we've done major transactions on every continent bar Antarctica. We've done three transactions in Chile and if you'd asked me three or four years ago it would not have been a country where I thought we'd have done a lot of work," Bell said.

Freehills has also implemented a number of innovative programs and initiatives focussed on staff as well as clients.

In July 2005, Freehills began a firm-wide collaborative process to develop a new, shared vision and guiding values to harness what drives them as individuals, as high performing teams, and as a firm. Out of this process emerged Freehills' vision for the future – to be 'best by far'.

"We are doing this by creating an exceptional experience for each other and for our clients and achieving this by living our shared values of fulfilment, teamwork, excellence and commerciality," Bell said.

Client-focussed initiatives include the commerciality program designed to ensure service and advice meets clients' individual business needs. Also, a document redesign initiative to ensure all communication with clients is clear has received exceptionally positive feedback in client forums.

"One of our strengths is our clear dual focus on our clients and our people, a focus which is reflected in our new vision," Bell said.

Freehills also demonstrated its commitment to providing a positive work environment for its employees through leadership, coaching, and mentoring programs, training and skills development programs for all staff – legal and non-legal, and reward and recognition programs.

Other initiatives have been designed to embed a culture of flexibility, and an emergency childcare program is available for parents at Freehills. ■