19 December 2008

Dear

Re: WORK-LIFE BALANCE SURVEY – QUEENSLAND LAW SOCIETY

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the Work-Life Balance Survey – your contribution to our research is greatly appreciated. As requested, we are pleased to provide you with an individualised report on your survey results.

A range of measures was used in the survey to assess environmental and personal characteristics, work-life balance indicators, work-life balance, general health, wellbeing and satisfaction. Your scores are presented in the attached report.

We expect to find evidence in this study for the theory that individuals have a range of personal and environmental characteristics that present as demands and supports. Demands may lead to the perception of incompatibility between our work life and non-work life. On the other hand, supports and coping styles and strategies may reduce or buffer perceptions of incompatibility and facilitate work-life balance.

The work-life balance indicators scores reflect the demands and resources in your life and your perceptions of how much incompatibility or facilitation is present. We also expect to find that these scores will be linked to people’s perception of the balance between their work life and non-work life and their self-reported general health and wellbeing.

Please remember that the present report is based on questions of self-perception and this feedback is intended to help you clarify your own view of your particular set of circumstances, to assist you with your own career and professional development (which is a specified topic in the QLS Guide on Continuing and Professional Development).

Please also note that this is informal advice and should not be taken as professional, career or medical advice. However, should you have any concerns about your health and wellbeing, please consult your General Practitioner or health professional to discuss the issues.
If you have any queries with regard to this report or the research project, please do not hesitate to contact Barbara Haddon on (07) 5459 4573 or bhaddon@usc.edu.au. Also, please let us know if you are interested in having your law practice included in a case study analysis of ‘best practice’ processes and procedures in the area of work-life balance.

Finally, we would be grateful if you would promote the survey among your colleagues who are members of the QLS. The higher the participation rate in the survey the more valid will be the findings and the more useful for QLS members.

We wish you well for the future and hope that this report helps you achieve real improvements in your life and career.

Kind regards

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Project Overview

Interest in the complex interplay of work and personal life has increased steadily over the past twenty years, resulting in a rapidly expanding area of research about work-life balance. However, there is still limited understanding of the dynamics of the work-life interaction as experienced by Australians.

The majority of research in the past has focused on incompatibility or negative spill-over from work to non-work life. Much is known about the challenges and the effects of lack of work-life balance; too little is known about how to improve it. The preoccupation with incompatibility and stress has a growing number of work-family researchers calling for attention to the positive side of the work and non-work life interface. The current research intends to answer this call.

The focus of this research is on including the factors that may impede, but also those that may assist men and women to achieve a satisfactory relationship between their work and non-work lives. That is, we are interested in both positive and negative contributing factors together with the overall impact on general health, wellbeing and satisfaction.

Score Interpretation

The current research looks at work-life balance within a resources and demands framework, as reflected in the conceptualisation of work-life balance used for this study:

“Work-life balance is the broad assessment that individual and environmental resources are sufficient to meet demands, evidenced by reduced ‘incompatibility’ and greater ‘facilitation’, such that integration is perceived between work and personal life domains resulting in positive general health, wellbeing, satisfaction and work performance outcomes”.

QLS Continuing and Professional Development

We invite you to reflect on what your survey results mean for your career and personal development which is one of the topics specified in the “Professional Skills Core Area” of the 2008 Guide to Continuing and Professional Development in the Queensland Law Society.

In the final section of this report we provide a framework for you to develop your own action plan to build on the positives and overcome any negatives in relation to your perceived work-life balance.
Your Capacity to Cope

This section deals with the ways you usually cope with stress in your life. Different people deal with things in different ways and there are many ways to try to deal with life’s challenges. The survey provides measures on a range of coping strategies – specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce or minimize stressful events. Generally speaking, effective coping strategies are thought to be better ways to deal with stressful events than ineffective coping strategies:

**Effective Strategies**

**Active coping** is the process of taking steps to try to remove or circumvent a stressor or ameliorate its effects. Active coping includes initiating direct action and increasing one’s efforts and resources by concentrating on doing something about the particular situation.

**Planning** is thinking about how to cope with a stressor. Planning involves coming up with strategies, thinking about what steps to take and how best to handle the problem.

**Acceptance** of a stressor as real is an effective coping strategy in circumstances in which the stressor is something that must be accommodated, as opposed to circumstances in which the stressor can easily be changed.

**Spiritual beliefs** - when a person is under stress, finding comfort in religion or spiritual beliefs may serve as a source of emotional support, as a vehicle for positive reinterpretation and growth or as a tactic for actively coping with a stressor.

**Use of emotional support** involves getting moral support, sympathy or understanding and is an aspect of emotion-focused coping.

**Use of instrumental support** involves seeking advice, assistance or information and is an aspect of problem-focused coping.

**Positive reframing** is another type of emotion-focused coping – coping aimed at managing distress emotions rather than at dealing with the stressor per se. Construing a stressful situation in positive terms should lead a person to continue or resume active, problem-focused coping actions.

**Humor** – the use of humor in the face of stressful situations is an additional emotion-focused coping strategy aimed at managing distress emotions by viewing things in a more favorable light.

**Ineffective Strategies**

**Denial** can be thought of as a refusal to believe that a stressor exists or trying to act as though the stressor is not real. Initially, denial can minimise stress, thereby facilitating coping. However, it is suggested that denying the reality of a situation allows the situation to become more serious thereby making more difficult the coping that must occur.

**Self-distraction or mental disengagement** occurs via a wide variety of activities that distract a person from thinking about the behavioral dimension or goal with which the stressor is interfering.

**Substance use** occurs when individuals turn to alcohol and other drugs as a way of disengaging from a stressor.
**Behavioral disengagement** serves to reduce a person’s effort to deal with a stressor. Behavioral disengagement may entail giving up and a sense of helplessness.

**Venting** of emotions is the tendency to focus on whatever distress or upset one is experiencing and to ventilate those feelings. Such a response may sometimes be functional, however there is reason to suspect that focusing on these emotions (particularly for long periods) can impede adjustment and distract a person from active coping efforts and movement beyond distress.

**Self-blame** involves criticising oneself for responsibility in the situation. Whilst it is functional for a person to understand their contribution to a situation, there is usually a range of other contributing factors that need to be taken into account. Continuous self-blame may reduce confidence and self-esteem which will impact negatively on performance.
The extent to which you use a range of effective and ineffective strategies is presented in the above graphs. The ideal is to make more use of the ‘effective strategies’ (above 50/100) and less use of the ‘ineffective strategies’ (less than 50/100). If your results indicate that your coping strategies are less than this ideal, please consider behavioural changes in the Action Plan at the end of this report.

**Work-Life Balance Indicators**

Work-life balance indicators reflect an individual's perception of the degree of incompatibility and the amount of facilitation present between their work and home life.

**Overall Incompatibility** is defined as a form of inter-role incompatibility in which the demands of work and family are incompatible in some respect so that participation in one role is more difficult because of participation in the other. Work and family demands are generally related to incompatibility.

**Overall Facilitation** is defined as a form of synergy across role domains in which the resources associated with one role enhance or make easier the participation in the other role. Work and family resources are associated with facilitation.

![Work-Life Balance Indicators](image)

Your results in the above graph indicate:

- the extent to which your work life interferes with your family life (**WIF**)
- the extent to which your family life interferes with your work life (**FIW**)
- the average of these is a measure of the **overall incompatibility** between your work and family lives

- the extent to which your work life supports your family life (**WFF**)
- the extent to which your family life supports your work life (**FFW**)
- the average of these is a measure of the **overall facilitation** between your work and family lives

The **work-life balance indicators** scores reflect the demands and resources in your life and your perceptions of how much incompatibility or facilitation is present. Demands may lead to the perception of incompatibility between our work life and non-work life. On the other hand,
supports and coping styles and strategies may reduce or buffer perceptions of incompatibility and facilitate work-life balance. The closer the scores of overall incompatibility and overall facilitation in the above graph, the more likely the resources in your life assist you to deal with the demands.

**Your Work-Life Balance**

The work-life balance measure used for the current study is a cross-validated index reflecting perceptions of the degree of equilibrium, control and synchrony across the work and personal life domains.

*Equilibrium* reflects a focus on maintaining priorities and harmony (e.g., *I feel fulfilled in all aspects of my life*);  

*Control* reflects a focus on organising and scheduling life activities (e.g., *I manage all aspects of my life effectively*); and  

*Synchrony* reflects a focus on multi-tasking and the ability to conduct multiple roles in a complementary fashion (e.g., *My personal life and my work life are complementary*).

![Perceived Work-Life Balance](image)

The above graph illustrates your scores on the three components of work-life balance. Scores above 50/100 indicate a more desirable level of work-life balance.

Research has found that when activities within the work and personal life domains are effectively integrated, individuals have positive attitudes and behave competently in both domains as well as personally, achieving an ultimate sense of inner harmony or life balance. Thus, life balance implies more than just an absence of conflict. In order to achieve balance, a positive integration of the life domains must occur.

Research provides consistent evidence that incompatibility between our working and personal lives is associated with various negative work-related outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction and performance), non-work-related outcomes (e.g., life satisfaction) and stress-related outcomes.
(e.g., well-being). Researchers looking at the positive effects have documented better physical and mental health, family and job satisfaction when our working and personal lives are more compatible with each other. The following measures provide feedback on your perceptions of your own job, career and life satisfaction, general mental health and wellbeing.

**Your Job and Career Satisfaction**

The graph below illustrates your scores on three components of satisfaction:

**Intention to remain in the legal profession** reflects how likely it is that you will continue to work as a professional lawyer.

**Job satisfaction** refers to satisfaction with your current position and reflects a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of your job or work experiences.

**Career satisfaction** refers to satisfaction with the success you feel you have achieved in your legal career up to this point in time.

The higher your scores, the higher your satisfaction with your current job, your career achievements to date and the less likely you are to think about leaving the legal profession. As a general guide, scores between 40/100 and 60/100 are considered average scores on this measure.
Your Personal Wellbeing

The Australian Personal Wellbeing Index is based on average levels of satisfaction with various aspects of personal life. Satisfaction is expressed as a percentage score, where 0% is completely dissatisfied and 100% is completely satisfied. Australians, on average, feel about 75% satisfied with their life. Your score is presented below.


70 or higher:
You are generally happy and satisfied with your life. The average score for Australians is around 75 - in other words Australian adults normally feel about three-quarters satisfied with their lives. We all have a 'set-point' in which our wellbeing tends to sit, and we manage our wellbeing through a combination of resources (such as money & relationships). But it is also normal for some people to score much higher, or lower, than the average.

50 to 69:
Even though your score is lower than the Australian average of 75, you may still feel relatively happy - as everyone is different. We all have a different 'set-point' in which our wellbeing tends to sit. It is hard to pinpoint what the 'normal' range is, however research over the years suggests you could score anywhere between 60-90 and feel happy within yourself. Or, it is possible you might be a bit dissatisfied about one or two of the areas of your life, but generally satisfied with the rest.

49 or lower:
A score in this range is quite low, and can indicate the presence of depression or other mental health issues. See the Section below titled 'Where to Find Help' for links to supports and resources.

Please note: The above index is a general indication only, and should not be considered a recommendation or diagnosis. It is not an indication of any mental health condition neither should it be relied on as a substitute for proper medical or professional advice.
Your Psychological Health

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) was used in this survey to measure your current general psychological health. The GHQ is one of the most common assessments of psychological health used in Australia.

The lower your score on the above measure, the better your current state of general psychological health.

If your score is higher than 40/100, we would encourage you to discuss your symptoms with your medical practitioner, particularly if they currently include:

- losing sleep over worry;
- feelings of being constantly under strain;
- feelings of not being able to overcome your difficulties;
- feelings of being unhappy and depressed;

and particularly if these symptoms have been ongoing.

Please also refer to the section below on ‘Where to Find Help’.
Your Action Plan

We invite you to decide on an action plan so that you can implement specific strategies to build on the positives in this report and overcome any negatives in relation to your work-life balance. Taking some time out to consider your short, medium and long-term goals is often a good place to start – a sheet is provided below to assist with that exercise. In relation to the current survey, we invite you to give particular consideration to your specific demands and supports and any action you may wish to take to take in this regard:

**Strategies to Increase Your Supports**

Please list here specific actions you can take so that *your work life supports your non-work life*:

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Please list here specific actions you can take so that *your non-work life supports your work life*:

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**Strategies to Reduce Your Demands**

Please list here specific actions you can take so that *your work life makes fewer demands on your non-work life*:

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Please list here specific actions you can take so that *your non-work life makes fewer demands on your work life*:

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## action plan

**Your goal** – Please insert the changes or improvements you wish to achieve in the short, medium and/or long term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome/s</th>
<th>Strategies and Action</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Resource Requirements</th>
<th>Monitoring Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change/ improvement to be achieved in the short term</td>
<td>What will be done to achieve the outcomes?</td>
<td>Expected start and completion times</td>
<td>What resources are required to put the strategy into <strong>action</strong>?</td>
<td>How will you know that the strategy has worked? How will you measure this?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Note:** The table structure is designed to capture the outcomes, strategies, timelines, resource requirements, and monitoring procedures for various actions plan components. The specific details can vary depending on the individual's goals and organizational needs.
Where to Find Help

For additional information, advice and resources:

**LawCare:** Confidential counselling for members of the Queensland Law Society. Freecall 1800 177 743.

Further information available online
https://www.qls.com.au/content/lwp/wcm/myconnect/QLS/For+the+Profession/Advice +Network/LawCare+Confidential+Counselling

**LifeLine:** LifeLine's 13 11 14 confidential service is staffed by trained volunteer telephone counsellors 24 hours a day, any day of the week. For further information on counsellors and mental health information in your local area visit www.lifeline.org.au

**Sane Australia:** Call the SANE Helpline on Freecall 1800 18 7263 or see www.sane.org for information and advice on mental health and related issues.

**BeyondBlue:** the national depression initiative, where you can find more information on depression and anxiety, effective treatments and how to help someone:

www.beyondblue.org.au or call the 24-hour information line on 1300 224 636. (Please note Beyond Blue is not a health service or crisis service).

References


