

**Michael Harmer**  
**Chairman**  
**Harmers Workplace Lawyers**

Michael is the Chairman and Senior Team Leader of the firm, and has 35 years' experience in workplace relations. During this time he has provided legal and strategic advice in a number of major enterprise bargaining and change management initiatives and has built up extensive experience and expertise in all of the firm's practice areas. This has included the conduct of some of the leading cases in Australia on sex discrimination and sexual harassment.



In 1996 Michael established Harmers Workplace Lawyers which is currently one of the largest stand alone workplace relations practices in Australia with offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The firm won the 2017 Lawyers Weekly Australian Law Awards "Workplace Relations & Employment Team of the Year"; the 2017 Australasian Law Awards for "Employment Law Specialist Firm of the Year" and the 2017 Human Resources Director Magazine's HR Service Provider Awards "Gold Medal for Employment Law". The firm has also received a number of people management awards, including: the 2017 Lawyers Weekly "Boutique Diversity Firm of the Year"; and previously, the Euromoney "Best Firm in Sydney for Women in Business Law"; a "Workplace Excellence" Award from the Victorian government; an Award for "Innovative Contribution to HR" from the Australian Institute of Management ([AIM](#)); the Australian Human Resources Institute Award for "Excellence in People Management"; and has been ranked as high as the number 4 business in the country in the Work/Life Initiative in Australian Industry survey.

Michael Harmer has featured as a "Leading Australian Employment Lawyer" in both Chambers Global and the Asia Pacific Legal 500 for over a decade. He won the 2018 Lawyers Weekly "Workplace Relations Partner of the Year"; was ranked the 2017 & 2018 Asia Law Profiles "Market-Leading Lawyer" for Australian Labour & Employment Law; and won the ACQ Law Awards 2017, 2018 & 2019 "Australia – Labour Lawyer of the Year". Michael also previously featured in the Australasian Legal Business "HOT 40" List (a former annual showcase of Australian and NZ top private practice lawyers). The firm joined L&E Global in 2011, a rapidly growing international alliance of premier labour and employment law firms, representing employers in North America, Latin America, Europe and the Asia Pacific Region. This provides Michael's corporate clients with a global network of over 1500+ lawyers. It also provides one point of contact, with one billing rate range for multi-jurisdictional international cases. In recent years,

Chambers Global has ranked L&E Global an “Elite” Global Law Firm Network” in 2018 and in the “Band 1 Global – Wide Employment Law Network” category for 2013 – 2017. L&E Global also won The Lawyer European Awards 2016 for “Global Network of the Year”.

Michael’s background includes managing a major industrial law practice as a partner in one of Australia’s largest law firms and previously having been:

- Research Officer to Presidential members of the then Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (undertaking legal, economic and arbitral research and advice work initially for Sir John Moore and later Mr Justice Madderly);
- Solicitor for the New South Wales Department of Industrial Relations (advice and prosecution work in industrial relations, employment and occupational health and safety);
- Industrial Officer for a private sector employer (oil industry); and
- Research Officer for one of Australia’s largest unions.

Michael has extensive advocacy and negotiation experience in relevant Federal and State Tribunals. His practice places special emphasis on the preventive law approach in assisting clients in the informed management of a range of human rights, OH&S and employment issues. Michael is also recognised for his specialist advice concerning the employment of senior executives.

Michael is the President of the Australian Institute of Employment Rights (AIER), a tripartite organisation independent of government or any particular interest group. Its membership and governance structures include representation from employers, employees, academics and lawyers who have an interest in promoting positive workplace relationships in the public interest. The firm continues to be a major supporter of the work of the AIER.

In excess of 25% of the firm’s profits in its first 20 years of operation have been contributed to the promotion of human rights and justice internationally – including support for a number of schools, hospitals and community services in Africa and indigenous Australia. This has involved a particular focus on the promotion of the rights of women.

According to the 2007/2008 Asia Pacific Legal 500 Survey: “Chairman Michael Harmer is well respected by clients and peers alike and receives the highest accolades”.