

# Rapid national growth for CBP

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THE 55.3 per cent increase in legal employment at Colin Biggers & Paisley is partly due to last November's merger with Brisbane's Hemming + Hart which completed CBP's east coast network.

But while that deal gave the firm an additional 14 lawyers and six partners, it accounts for just a fraction of CBP's employment surge.

The firm now has 48 more non-partner fee earners than it had this time last year.

Rapid growth, according to Dunstan de Souza, is almost the norm at Colin Biggers & Paisley, which has been on an expansion spree for three years.

In 2012 it merged with Melbourne's Monaghan + Rowell, which was the first move interstate by CBP, which was founded in Sydney 112 years ago.

"If you look at our growth over the past three years it is more amazing than just one year's worth of figures," managing partner Mr de Souza said.

"It probably stands us apart from all but one or two or three law firms in the country."

The firm's 55.3 per cent growth in legal employment compares to the average for mid-tier firms of 4.9 per cent.

Mr de Souza attributed the growth to the completion of the east coast network as well as the strategy of focusing on 10 key practice areas to build expertise without creating unnecessary fixed costs.

"This gave us high levels of specialty and expertise and a high level of collaboration because we have people in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane all doing the same thing — so you get critical mass," he said.

"There is also a lot of upheaval happening in the profession and that has also worked in our favour."

"We are very focused on the people we want to recruit and there are enough people falling out of the other law firms that tick the boxes we need to tick."

The firm has the equivalent of just over 56 full-time partners, which is 28.5 per cent more than last year when it had just under 44. The average growth in partner numbers for mid-tier firms is 6.3 per cent.

Mr de Souza said that when the firm embarked on its strategy of specialising the big national firms were roughly eight times as large as CBP.

He expected that in two years the big firms would be just twice as large as CBP.