

President's Report

Women Lawyers' Association of NSW

2007 Annual General Meeting

30 November 2007

2007 as a year of consolidation

2007 has been a year of consolidation for WLA NSW. This has occurred through consolidation of our identity as an organisation and our membership.

As President I have focused on promoting Women Lawyers' as a unique professional legal organisation. We are an organisation about the position of women lawyers in the profession. There is no other professional legal organisation in NSW like us. This is because no other professional legal organisation represents as broad a cross section of the profession as we do. We have among our membership: members of the Judiciary; barristers; solicitors; academics; students; policy and law reform lawyers; lawyers in government departments; lawyers in community legal centres; lawyers in large and small private firms; in house lawyers; lawyers on maternity leave; and retired lawyers.

2007 was our first year operating under a new Constitution, adopted at last year's AGM.

We introduced a new logo, a new membership form and new categories of membership.

We also introduced a new package for regional lawyers interested in setting up Regional Chapters of our organisation.

Notably, we have a new Patron of our organisation, the Honourable Justice Jane Mathews AO.

Functions

To date we have had twelve functions this year, all of which have been a success.

Our major function for the year was our Women Lawyers Achievement Awards Dinner held on 19 October with Locus as major event sponsors contributing \$8 000 towards the budget for the Dinner. This was the third series of Awards made in the history of our organisation.

The Dinner and the Launch of the Awards, run earlier in the year in Law Week, marked the launch of our Awards as what we want to be a continued program. The Dinner and Launch also marked the 55th year of our organisation.

The Dinner was a huge success with a great turn out of 213 people and ran at a profit. I cannot thank the Awards Subcommittee enough for all their hard work throughout this year in organising the Awards Dinner.

This year was very much a year of “firsts” and “inaugurals” among our functions. We had our: Inaugural Golden Girls Lunch; first Women in Environmental Law Networking function; first Women in Sole Practice and Small Firms Networking function; and the launch of the new Work2Suit network and joint forums with the Law Society of NSW.

This year was also a year with a very significant function marking in a way the end of an era for WLA NSW. I function I refer to is the Female Bar Reader’s Room Wake, held on 17 August 2007, and fortuitously in the same week that the appointment of a second woman to our current High Court bench was announced.

Thankyou to Louise Byrne, Tania Evers and Jenny Baxter for the amazing job they did in investigating the issue of the Bar Reader’s Room, organising the

Wake, and negotiating with the Board of Frederick Jordan Chambers for the outstanding fees on the Room to be waived.

Thankyou also to Liz Maconachie, our Functions Officer of Functions Officers for her contribution throughout this year and through the many years that she has served on the committee. Liz is stepping down from the committee, and will be a great loss to the committee and the organisation.

Sponsorship

2007 has been a year of consolidation and growth in our relationship with our Sponsors.

On 28 June 2007, we held a very successful and effective "Tips for Buying and Selling Property" seminar. This was well attended, and the perfect balance between giving our sponsors a platform to engage with our members while providing our members with something of interest and utility. Congratulations to Bronwyn Carr, Sponsorship and Fundraising Officer for her work in coming up with the concept for the seminar and organising the seminar.

It is very pleasing to hear that the NAB has continued its major sponsorship of \$20 000 including GST for 2007-2008.

Our relationship with Locus has grown this year. As has our relationship with our non-financial sponsors: Vive magazine; Chilli Marketing Solutions; and Lawyers Weekly.

We are all indebted to Bronwyn Carr, Sponsorship and Fundraising Officer, for the astounding energy and enthusiasm she has put into this role on top of coming back from maternity leave and moving to her new in house role at American Express.

Overall

Our profile and relationships with other organisations particularly the Law Society has strengthened this year.

We have continued to be approached for comments by the press and to be published in the press.

We have had an extremely strong and constructive committee this year.

I thank the committee members who are stepping down from the committee this year for their contribution this year. In particular I thank Louise Byrne, outgoing Immediate Past President, Shauna Jarrett, outgoing Vice President, and Liz Maconachie, outgoing Functions Officer, whose contributions have been for several years running. They will be a big loss to the committee and to WLA NSW.

No President's Report would be complete without acknowledging the enormous difference that our Executive Officer, Kathryn McKenzie, has made throughout this year. We would not have achieved what we have this year without her.

Treasurer's Report

We did not quite make the massive \$21 461 profit we did the previous financial year. We made a profit of \$2 199 in the last financial year.

I note though that this is a positive thing. It is a sign that we are doing something with our money and giving something back to our members, while still making a profit.

The two major differences between our position for the last financial year and the previous one, were our income from Membership and Functions.

We were down nearly \$9 000 in Membership income compared to the last financial year.

We were down a slightly over \$22 000 in income from Functions compared to the last financial year.

I note that we ran more functions for free or at a marginal profit in the last financial year than the previous one, and again that this is a reflection of our efforts to give something back to our members.

That said, our Cash in Bank at the End of the last financial year was \$34 292 and very similar to that of the previous financial. We were less than \$200 under the figure for the previous year.

The main message I have for the incoming Treasurer echoes that of my report last year – we need to expand upon our options for sponsorship and fundraising.

Lee-May Saw

President

Women Lawyers' Association of NSW