

## **President's Report**

### **Women Lawyers' Association of NSW 2008 Annual General Meeting**

#### 2008 as a year of building connections

We opened the year with our Strategic Planning Meeting on 19 January 2008 which set the Agenda for the year:

- For WLA NSW to be an organisation of lawyers from across the profession working together in the interests of women in the profession
- For WLA NSW to be an organisation that acts with an awareness of the issues faced by its membership.

We have built closer ties with key organisations – the Law Society of NSW, Women Barristers Forum, the Bar Association of NSW, NSW Young Lawyers, Women Lawyers associations in other States and Territories.

We have built closer ties with our membership, particularly our corporate members.

We have expanded our subcommittee structure which has been a major mechanism for us to build closer ties with our members – key subcommittees being the Workplace Practices Subcommittee, Policy, Law Reform and Media Issues Subcommittee, Sponsorship Subcommittee, Functions Subcommittee and Environmental Law Subcommittee.

We have made informed submissions to public inquiries (on the National Employment Standards, Child Protection Services in New South Wales, Judicial Appointments in New South Wales, and the Sex Discrimination Act), and commented regularly in the media on key issues affecting women in the legal profession.

We participated in the Standing Committee of Attorney General's Harmonisation Conference and were a significant voice in putting forward issues impacting on women in the law and women in the community.

It has been our first year with Justice Jane Mathews AO of the Supreme Court of New South Wales as the Patron of our organisation and her patronage has made a real difference to the organisation as a whole, and especially in the introduction of our exciting new research into women in the law project.

## Functions

On average we have had about one function a month, all have been a success in their own right.

Our major function for the year was our "Celebrating Women in the Judiciary" cocktail function on 24 July 2008 with over 200 attendees.

Our Work2Suit network and special interest networking functions (Women in Employment Law and Women in Environmental Law) have evolved to new heights this year – thankyou to the Workplace Practices Subcommittee for their efforts with Work2Suit and the Women in Employment Law forum, thankyou also to Mary Snell, Treasurer, for her significant input into the Women in Environmental Law function.

We made significant contributions to the Australian Women Lawyers Second National Conference held on 13-14 June 2008 in Melbourne – special thanks to Pauline Wright, Vice President, for organising a phenomenal panel of speakers for the Indigenous Women's Forum for the Conference.

## Sponsorship

It is unfortunate to have ended our relationship with our former major sponsors the NAB this year – many thanks to the NAB for their invaluable support over the years, many thanks also to Bronwyn Carr, former Sponsorship and Fundraising Officer, for her unforgettable contribution in maintaining the relationship with the NAB for the last two years.

We have a new comprehensive sponsorship package for which we have Mary Snell, Treasurer, to thank in developing – we have already received positive responses to this package particularly in relation to sponsorship of our Corporate Lunches Series to be launched on Monday, 8 December 2008.

The Law Society Council have just this evening moved a resolution that will result in WLA NSW receiving sponsorship funding of \$20 000 – we are indebted to Pauline Wright, Vice President and Mary Snell, Treasurer on this account.

Diamond Financial Services have also confirmed that they will be taking up Platinum Sponsorship of WLA NSW at \$7 500 plus GST.

This now means that our sponsorship situation is comfortably addressed for the upcoming year.

## Overview

During my time as President of Women Lawyers' for the last two years I have seen a unique time in the history of women in the profession:

- We currently have two women sitting on our High Court bench
- Women are being appointed to the bench in increasing numbers
- Women lawyers hold key senior public roles – we have two outstanding women lawyers as our federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Governor General, and several women lawyers are in senior offices in politics
- More and more women lawyers are being appointed as senior partners within law firms, and to senior in house roles within companies.

I am very privileged to have been able to serve as the President of Women Lawyers' for the past two years and I thank the Committee and the organisation for the enormous trust they have afforded me.

I very much look forward to serving on the Committee for the year to come with the new incoming President at the head of the Committee – she is an excellent choice and one that we can have great confidence in.

We have several members of this year's Committee stepping down who will be sorely missed.

I must specially mention the contributions of Georgina Gowland Co-Secretary and Workplace Practices Subcommittee Chair, Bronwyn Carr Sponsorship Officer, and Tania Evers Committee Member and Policy, Law Reform and Media Issues Subcommittee Chair.

The organisation this year has very much been kept in shape by Kathryn McKenzie, Executive Officer, and I thank her for the enthusiasm and diligence she has displayed throughout this year.

It is a huge comfort to me to be able to say that I leave the organisation in a strong position for the year to come.

Lee-May Saw

President

Women Lawyers' Association of NSW