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Appointments of Women to the Judiciary a Cause for Celebration

This year the Women Lawyers' Association of New South Wales (WLA NSW) has sought to bring together lawyers from across the legal profession to address issues that currently affect women in the profession.

This has culminated in the success of WLA NSW's major cocktail function, "Celebrating Women in the Judiciary", held last Thursday, 24 July 2008, to celebrate the appointment of twenty two women to the bench in the two and a half years since WLA NSW last held this function in February 2006.

"There were over 200 people in attendance at the function. This is an encouraging sign of the awareness in the profession that the judicial appointment of women is an issue that the whole profession - men and women - need to work together on," says Lee-May Saw, President of WLA NSW.

WLA NSW is aware that views have recently been expressed about a fear that the increasing number of appointments of women to the bench will deplete the ranks of senior women at the Bar, at partnership, and other senior levels of the profession, excluding the judiciary. While it is important that lawyers across the profession are aware that this is an issue, WLA NSW cannot agree that this is something that the profession should be fearful of.

"In my view, it is a cause for celebration that women are being appointed to the bench in increasing numbers, and it is a cause for celebration that the profession as a whole can now shift some of its focus to addressing the need for a steady progression of quality appointments of women to other senior positions," says Ms Saw.

The speakers at the "Celebrating Women in the Judiciary" cocktails were the Honourable Justice Margaret Beazley AO, of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Court of Appeal, the Honourable Justice Jane Mathews AO, of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and patron of WLA NSW, and Fiona McLeod SC, President of Australian Women Lawyers. All the speakers were in agreement that the occasion was a time for celebration. (*photos below*)

The appointments that were acknowledged at the event were:

- Justice Virginia Bell, of the Supreme Court of NSW, Court of Appeal
- Justice Elizabeth Fullerton, of the Supreme Court of NSW
- Justice Lucy McCallum, of the Supreme Court of NSW
- Justice Judith Ryan, of the Family Court of Australia
- Justice Jayne Jagot, whose appointment to the Federal Court of Australia will commence in September 2008
- Judge Leonie Flannery SC, of the District Court of NSW
- Judge Deborah Sweeney, of the District Court of NSW
- Federal Magistrate Margaret Cassidy, of the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia
- Federal Magistrate Jillian Orchiston, of the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia
- Federal Magistrate Susan Purdon-Sully, of the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia

- Magistrate Mary Jerram, NSW State Coroner and Magistrate of the Local Court of NSW
- Magistrate Gabriel Fleming, of the Local Court of NSW
- Magistrate Michelle Goodwin, of the Local Court of NSW
- Magistrate Sharon Holdsworth, of the Local Court of NSW
- Magistrate Margot Stubbs, of the Local Court of NSW
- Magistrate Alison Viney, of the Local Court of NSW
- Professor Larissa Behrendt, Commissioner, of the Land & Environment Court of NSW
- Megan Davis, Commissioner, of the Land & Environment Court of NSW
- Mary Edmunds, Commissioner, of the Land & Environment Court of NSW
- Judith Fakes, Commissioner, of the Land & Environment Court of NSW
- Rhonda Jacobsen, Commissioner, of the Land & Environment Court of NSW
- Professor Sharon Sullivan, Commissioner, of the Land & Environment Court of NSW

Special guests who were in attendance at the event included the Honourable Justice Susan Crennan AC, of the High Court of Australia, the Honourable Justice Ruth McColl AO, of the Supreme Court of NSW, Court of Appeal, the Honourable Chief Justice Diana Bryant of the Family Court of Australia, his Honour Chief Magistrate John Pascoe AO, of the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia, his Honour Chief Magistrate Graeme Henson, of the Local Court of NSW, the Honourable Justice Garry Downes AM, President, of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, and the Honourable Justice Terry Sheahan AO, Land & Environment Court of NSW.

Photos: Fiona McLeod SC, President of Australian Women Lawyers (TopR) The Honourable Justice Margaret Beazley AO, of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Court of Appeal (TopL) the Honourable Justice Jane Mathews AO, of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and patron of WLA NSW (BottomL) and guests.

