

President's Annual Report to 2009 Annual General Meeting 18 November 2009

In reflecting upon the functions and events our organisation has held in 2009, this year has very much been a year where we have celebrated and acknowledged the achievement of many outstanding women lawyers.

At the outset of the year, we warmly welcomed the appointment of the Honourable Justice Virginia Bell to the High Court of Australia as the 4th women in the history of the Court to be appointed, and the 3rd to join the current bench. This was soon followed on 20 February 2009 with the Australian Women Lawyers Patron Cocktail Party which celebrated and acknowledged the immense contribution of the Honourable Mary Gaudron QC as patronage of AWL passed to the Honourable Chief Justice Diana Bryant of the Family Court of Australia.

After several months of preparation and planning, the 2009 Women Lawyer Achievement Awards were announced at a gala dinner held at Watersedge on 25 September 2009 attended by over 200 guests. Our distinguished guests included our keynote speaker and winner of the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award – the Honourable Justice Virginia Bell; her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, State Governor of NSW; the Honourable Justice French, Chief Justice of Australia, and our Patron, the Honourable Justice Jane Mathews AO.

As we now head towards the festive season, I look forward to the return of our Christmas Shopping Day on 27 November 2009 and to celebrating the hard work of our committee at our Christmas Cocktails that evening.

Functions and Events

On 25 September 2009, we announced the recipients of our 2009 Women Lawyer Achievement Awards:

Woman Lawyer of the Year in Private Practice: Anny Slater, Slaters Intellectual Property Lawyers;
"In-House" Woman Lawyer of the Year, sponsored by Curwoods Lawyers: Bronwyn Carr, American Express;
Woman Lawyer of the Year in a Community Organisation: Edwina MacDonald, Women's Legal Services NSW;
Woman Lawyer Advocate of the Year: Tina Jowett, Sixth Floor Windeyer Chambers;
"Up and Coming" Woman Lawyer of the Year: Ruth Chalmers, Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service; and
"Highly Commended" special Judging Panel's Award: Maureen Peatman, Partner, Hunt & Hunt.

Our Awards Dinner proved a tremendous success and involved a massive effort in organisation and co-ordination. Sincere thanks goes to our executive officer Kathryn for the immense work involved particularly in the weeks prior to this event. I also thank Committee members who assisted in the organisation of this event: Rebecca Barry, Lee-May Saw, Eirene Garnsey, Kate Blue, Kylie Maxwell, and Leah Sewell.

On 8 December 2008, we launched our Corporate Lunch Series which has been well received by our members. Over the past year, we have hosted 7 corporate lunches featuring prominent guest speakers: the Honourable Michael McHugh AC QC, Lucinda Chan, Ilana Atlas, Nola Watson, Belinda Gibson, Heather Riddout, and Lori Callahan.

Principal Sponsor:



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I wish to acknowledge and thank our corporate member firms who have sponsored lunches throughout our series: TressCox Lawyers, Middleton Lawyers and Clayton Utz Lawyers. Our Corporate Lunch series is now complete for 2009. I also thank Rebecca Barry for organising this initiative as well as our executive officer Kathryn McKenzie for co-coordinating at each lunch. Our corporate lunches will continue in 2010 on a quarterly basis.

In addition to the functions above, WLANSW has continued in 2009 in partnership with the Law Society of NSW to host Work2Suit events on a quarterly basis. We have also partnered with other sponsors such as Diamond Financial Solutions and the Money Club to present seminars as well as rely upon the good will of our members and supporters for forums such as Law as a Career.

We have continued to co-host with the Women's Barristers Forum our bar reader's lunch on 22 May and 22 October together with our "Golden Girls" lunch on 13 November 2009. We have also cross-promoted a multitude of networking events and forums relating to issues relevant to women lawyers or which have provided entertainment to be enjoyed by our members and colleagues.

Our upcoming events and functions include our AGM on 19 November 2009, and our Christmas Stalls and Christmas Cocktails on 27 November 2009.

Sponsorship

As at 27 November 2008, WLANSW was very fortunate to receive sponsorship support and funding from the Law Society of NSW as our Principal Sponsor in 2009. This was gratefully received by WLANSW owing to expiry of our former sponsorship arrangement with NAB which was not renewed.

In the last quarter of 2008, WLANSW introduced a comprehensive sponsorship package seeking to diversify its sponsorship arrangements. This led to Melissa Gilbert and Diamond Financial Solutions coming on board as a platinum sponsor from December 2008 until June 2009.

Our Women Lawyer Achievement Awards received sponsorship support from Curwoods Lawyers in their sponsorship of the "In-House Woman Lawyer of the Year" award. We also received in-kind support from a number of our other sponsors including Susan Holmwood, Sada Skin Care, Avanti Jewellery and Shoal Bay Resort.

Our corporate lunches have also received sponsorship support both from our corporate members and in-kind support in the provision of speakers gifts, again particularly from Susan Holmwood and Sada Skin Care.

Complimentary subscriptions to Lawyers Weekly and Lawyer2B Magazines continue to be available to our members with the ongoing support from publishers LexisNexis.

This sponsorship support has been integral to our organisation in enabling WLANSW to host several events and functions throughout the year.

I express my gratitude to the support of all our sponsors in 2009 and look forward to their continued support in the coming year. As yet, we await the outcome to the Law Society of NSW's decision to renew our funding and hope to report on same in our December enews.

Policy and Media

Over the past year with the particular support and assistance of our Patron Justice Mathews, our policy sub-committee has been working in partnership with ANU towards the development of a research project intended to draw out the career intentions of final year female law students and track those intentions forward into the future. The objective is to ascertain findings that may help women lawyers to be better supported in achieving their career objectives and increasing the number of women holding senior positions in law among solicitors, barristers, and the judiciary. Unfortunately owing to the ill-health of the project's sociologist, the survey instrument was unable to be settled this year. It is anticipated however that a pilot survey instrument will be released in Semester 2 2010. I would like to acknowledge the significant contributions of our Immediate Past President Lee-May Saw who has continued to steer this project forward in 2009.

Related to the research project with the ANU has been the joint consideration between WLANSW and the Ethics Committee of the Law Society of NSW of the tracking of gender in the reporting of ethical issues in

practice by the Law Society of NSW. I thank Kylie Maxwell for her work in this respect, which has resulted in the Law Society of NSW introducing a category of gender in their reporting of ethical complaints.

More recently, on 16 October 2009, our workplace sub-committee made a submission to the Office for Women in respect of its review of the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*. Thanks to Georgina Gowland, Millen Lo, Leigh Liebowitz and Susan Price for their efforts in preparing this submission on behalf of WLANSW.

The achievements of WLANSW in 2009 would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our committee members, our executive officer Kathryn McKenzie or without you as our members in your support of our events.

My particular thanks to our Patron Justice Mathews for her welcomed guidance and support, particularly in respect of our Policy Research Project. I am very grateful to Lee-May Saw for her significant contributions and on-going support as Immediate Past President. I also thank outgoing committee members for their contribution to our organisation and for which for some has spanned several years: Liz Maconachie; Kian Safaei; Kylie Maxwell, Nicola Glover, Melinda Harris, and Leah Sewell.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge and thank Kathryn Mackenzie for her dedication and effort in ensuring our organisation and its events function smoothly and successfully.

I look forward to continuing in the role of President for a further term and working with the incoming committee to continue to represent the interests of women lawyers in NSW in 2010.

Mary Snell
President
WLANSW