

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2016, ISSUE 9

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- WEDNESDAY 23 JUNE
MICHAEL MILLER SEMINAR
- THURSDAY 11 AUGUST
PARTNER FORUM LUNCH
- SEPTEMBER (DATE TBD)
JUDICIAL MENTORING LUNCH
- THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER
ACT WOMEN LAWYERS AWARDS

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

I welcome you to our June newsletter in the glow of the great news that [MLC Advice](#) has offered to double its sponsorship commitment to WLA ACT.



We are obviously thrilled at this generosity and committed to converting it into great events and initiatives for our members going forward. It is heartening to have a sponsor so thoroughly committed to our objectives and we thank Michael Miller and his team for their support.



Catherine McGregor and WLA ACT President Prue Bindon at the 2016 Law Week Dinner

It was lovely to see many of you at the [Law Week Dinner](#) on 18 May. Thank you for coming to hear the fascinating Cate McGregor on her remarkable journey. Cate indicated that she is keen to support our members in the future – including the art of speech writing. If that is of particular interest to you, please let me know and I can take this

forward with Cate. We are grateful for the Law Society allowing us once again to host this important event, and for the assistance of Nicole Karman in particular who organises Law Week in her unflappable fashion. I'd also like to thank our immediate past president, Juliet Behrens, for stepping in to host the event until my late arrival.

Thank you to Katrina Cooper from DFAT for providing a motivating and inspiring discussion at our [mentor breakfast](#) on 10 May. We received fantastic feedback from that event. If you have any ideas for speakers for future mentor breakfasts, please let us know!

We have our [CPD seminar](#) on '[Your Career and Finances](#)' by Michael Miller from MLC Advice coming up this Thursday 23 June. Don't miss this opportunity for some key information about planning your finances – it pays to turn your mind to this!

Do you know an [outstanding woman lawyer](#)? We are in the throes of planning our first ever [Women Lawyers Awards](#) which will be presented at a gala dinner on 3 November at Old Parliament House. Block it out in your diary now! It is time to celebrate our talent. Nominations will open this week and remain open for a few months so you'll have plenty of time to get your nominations in – whether for yourself, a colleague, or your firm or organisation.

Before then, we have some great events to look forward to. I

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am delighted to announce a new mentoring and networking event in August – our **Partner Forum lunch**. At this event, we will have a handful of leading women partners from a range of firms in Canberra meeting over lunch to answer all your questions about the path to partnership. If you aspire to partnership or want to understand what is involved in getting there, don't miss this event! More details will follow soon.

In September, we will hold our always popular **Judicial Mentoring lunch**, this year generously hosted by King & Wood Mallesons. Once again, we expect an impressive show of women judges, magistrates and tribunal members ready to share their experiences, tips and stories on career progression. Thank you to our Patron, Justice Hilary Penfold, for her assistance in arranging this important event.

The end of the financial year is almost upon us and this means that it is time to [renew membership](#). We have decided to offer an **early bird membership** price of \$60 if you register before 30 June 2016 (\$30 for CLC, Legal Aid etc and associate memberships). Registrations after that will pay the normal fee of \$70 (\$40 for CLC, Legal Aid etc and associate memberships). Of course, if you took up our 18 months offer for membership to 30 June 2017 there is nothing for you to do! Otherwise, I encourage you to take advantage of our earlybird price and [get your registrations in](#) over the next few weeks.

Best wishes for the end of financial year home stretch!

Prue Bindon

SIRLY NOT

It's time to retire 'Dear Sirs' – Gender inclusive salutations should now be the norm



It has been 98 years since legislation was passed in NSW that removed formal barriers to women entering the legal profession¹ and 92 years since the first women were admitted to practice in NSW.²

Women lawyers have been practising in the ACT since at least the early 1960s³ and it has been

48 years since the first woman established a law practice in the ACT.⁴

Today, women make up 55% of all practising certificate holders in the ACT.⁵

Despite these statistics, a minority of practitioners in the ACT continue to use 'Dear Sirs' as the standard salutation at the beginning of a legal letter. This occurs even when there are no 'Sirs' at all in the firm or organisation to whom the letter is addressed.

The use of 'Dear Sirs' was developed at a time when partners of law firms were almost invariably male. Its use in today's environment is likely to be interpreted as archaic by clients, as well as the lawyers to whom the correspondence is addressed. Worse, it may contribute to an (erroneous) perception that the legal profession continues to be dominated by men. It may also negatively impact on the reputation of the firm amongst both its clients and peers.

For this reason, lawyers in government, and a majority of private practitioners, no longer use this salutation. WLA ACT en-

1. *Women's Legal Status Act 1918 (NSW)* s 2(d).

2. Sibyl Enid Morrison (barrister) admitted on 2 June 1924; Marie Byles (solicitor) admitted on 4 June 1924 in Joan M O'Brien "The History of Women in the Legal Profession in NSW" (MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1986).

3. The first female entered on the ACT Supreme Court's Register of Practitioners was Elizabeth Barker on 21 December 1970 and the first female entered on the High Court's ACT Register of Practitioners was Betty Ashton on 28 November 1966. However, there is evidence that women practition-

ers admitted elsewhere were practising in the ACT before that date. For example, the Honourable Margaret Reid AO recalls that when she arrived in Canberra from Adelaide and commenced practise here in 1965 there were two other women (Caroline Emerson and Adrienne O'Connor) practising in the ACT: S M W Withycombe, *Ethos and Ethics: A History of the Law Society of the Australian Capital Territory 1933-1993* (Law Society of the Australian Capital Territory, 1993) 69-70.

4. "Romano, Bruna (1942-)" 2009. Trove <http://nla.gov.au/nla.party-740097> (accessed 14 March 2016).

5. Of the 1923 practising certificate holders as at 30 September 2015, 874 were male and 1049 were female: ACT Law Society Membership Report (Council Paper, 19 October 2015).

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courages those practitioners who continue to use it to follow the lead and change their approach.

We provide below some ‘drafting manual’ suggestions for ensuring that salutations respect the inclusive and diverse nature of our profession:

1. Letters should ideally be addressed to the individual lawyer with carriage of the matter. It is notable that courts require that the name of an individual solicitor is provided as the contact point on a Notice of Address for Service. If a practitioner does not know who the individual lawyer responsible for the matter is, it can usually be clarified by a quick telephone call to the firm or organisation. This information should be collected and recorded as a standard aspect of file management.
2. The address line of the letter should include the name of the individual lawyer – ‘Jane Brown’ or ‘John Brown’ – and the salutation should include ‘Dear Ms Brown’ or ‘Dear Mr Brown’ as appropriate. An alternative honorific such as ‘Mrs’, ‘Dr’ or ‘Mx’ should only be used if the lawyer is known to prefer it.⁶

6. In some jurisdictions such as the UK and USA, a gender-neutral honorific, ‘Mx’, is increasingly being used for those who do not, or prefer not to, identify themselves as male or female (e.g. transgender or intersex people). This honorific now appears in the latest editions of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *New Oxford American Dictionary* but not, apparently, in the *Australian Oxford Dictionary*: see “Mx, n.” in Stevenson and Angus (eds) *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford University Press, 2010) http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199571123.001.0001/m_en_gb1001863 (accessed 14 March 2016); “Mx, n.” in Stevenson et al (eds), *New Oxford American Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

3. If the practitioner is on familiar terms with the lawyer, it may be acceptable to use the lawyer’s first name – ‘Dear Jane’ or ‘Dear John’.

4. Where it is not possible to identify the individual lawyer with carriage of the matter (for example, for a first letter before the file has been allocated), some gender-neutral alternatives include:

‘Dear Colleagues’ (although some firms, organisations and clients prefer that this term is not used)

‘Dear Partners/Directors’

‘Dear Lawyers’

‘Dear Practitioners’

5. In some instances, when writing formally to a firm or organisation, it may be acceptable not to use any salutation at all.

Although the continued use of ‘Dear Sirs’ is likely to be occurring simply as convention from years of past practice and without any disrespect intended on the part of practitioners who use it, we think Quintilian makes the point most astutely:

One should aim not at being possible to understand, but at being impossible to misunderstand.

What does your organisation use? We welcome suggestions for any other forms of salutation that respect the diversity of our profession. Please send your suggestions to us at

http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195392883.001.0001/m_en_us1448737 (accessed 14 March 2016).

contact@wlaact.org.au

BLOOM COACHING



Executive Coach and former lawyer Jacqueline Jago, in partnership with WLA ACT, is pleased to offer **free 20-minute coaching sessions exclusively for WLA ACT members** in the month of June. Sessions will be offered between 6-7 pm (6:00 pm, 6:20 pm or 6:40 pm) on Monday evenings (6th, 13th, 20th and 27th June). Sessions are by appointment only (email jacqueline@bloom.guru) and must be made at least three working days prior to the appointment. A maximum of two free sessions applies to any one individual within the period of the offer.

What is coaching?

Coaching is a confidential conversation to help you feel happier and more effective at work. It provides space in the midst of busy-ness to reflect on your own performance and get back in touch with what matters most to you professionally. Common coaching topics for women lawyers include: assertiveness at work, negotiating deadlines, juggling priorities, personal resil-

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ience, and coaching and mentoring staff.

A few words from our Bloom Coaching Scholarship recipient, Angela Lauman

In November 2015 I was fortunate enough to be awarded the inaugural **WLA ACT and Bloom Coaching and Consulting Scholarship** for early-career lawyers. As a result of this scholarship I have been privileged to participate in coaching sessions with Jacqueline Jago, executive coach and principal of Bloom Coaching.

I am not in my second year of practice as a solicitor. I come to law later in my life, having previously worked in government and the community sector. The switch to law has been a steep learning curve in many ways, allowing me to develop a range of new skills, as well as requiring me to draw on existing skills to face new challenges and scenarios. It is exhilarating and scar all at the same time. It had me seeking mentors and support in a way I had not had to do in a long time.

So far I have completed the 'foundation stage' of the coaching program. This has focused on building habits for wellness and strategies to manage anxieties that come with learning new skills and facing new challenges in a career like the law. These sessions have helped me to reflect on my experiences and

challenge myself to think about what I can do to (and what I am already doing) to get the most from myself, and from the situations I find myself in. It has also got me thinking about my professional identity as a lawyer, and what kind of lawyer I want to be.

WLA and Bloom Coaching offered this scholarship as a practical response to the Law Council of Australia's 2014 National Attrition and Re-engagement Study Report (NARS). Many of the issues canvassed in that report in relation to early career women lawyers ring true to my experience since becoming a lawyer. It is a privilege to be able to make space and access support to face these challenges and explore ways to develop personally and achieve your potential. I am very appreciative to WLA and Jacqueline for giving me this fantastic opportunity.

Angela Lauman.

LAW WEEK DINNER

This year the annual Law Week Dinner, hosted by WLA ACT, was held at The Boathouse in Barton. We were delighted to have **Catherine McGregor AM**, 2016 Nominee for Australian of the Year as our guest speaker at the event. We were also delighted to be joined by members of the Judiciary, the Bar, the ACT Law Society and practitioners.

Catherine McGregor-
Keynote speaker



In 2015 Catherine was named as Queenslander of the Year, before becoming a finalist for Australian of the year in 2016 for her work in the LGBTI sphere. This recognition came following an exceptional career in the Australian Army and as a cricket writer and commentator. Catherine is now a high profile advocate for the LGBTI community. Catherine discussed her struggles with mental health and personal identity before coming out as identifying as having gender dysphoria, and identifying as a woman.

Of particular importance to Catherine's personal story was the role which the international cricket community played in accepting her after her decision to come out as transgender. This too was the case in the Army, with Catherine becoming the highest ranking transgender person in the Defence Force.

Catherine's presentation served as a reminder of the importance of championing support and inclusion in our workplaces and

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community. Had Catherine not experienced the level of acceptance and support from those around her, particularly on a professional level, her story may have been catastrophically different.

Catherine's presentation invoked self-reflection about the role which communities and workplaces have to play in ensuring social inclusion and diversity, and the negative mental health consequences which may occur should this support not be offered. As a profession we are, on a regular basis, faced with situations in which we are dealing with vulnerable clients. How often do we stop and think about how we may need to serve and support our colleagues and friends with any mental health issues they may have?

Catherine's bravery was underpinned by her wonderful sense of humour, talent with words and zest for life. WLA ACT thanks her for her presentation and contribution to the LGBTI community.



Our Sponsor

WLA ACT wishes to thank **Maurice Blackburn Lawyers** for their support and sponsorship again this year.

Maurice Blackburn Lawyers have been a much valued sponsor of WLA ACT in the past and the Committee looks forward to working with them in the future.



Our Committee member Kim Back is a member of the Maurice Blackburn Women's Group and has been supported professionally to manage two young children and her career through flexible working conditions and techniques to assist working women.

Kim is an outstanding example of the success of the program and the benefit of employees working with their employers to ensure that they are able to succeed as carers and professionals.

MENTOR BREAKFAST

On 10 May 2016, **Katrina Cooper**, Senior Legal Advisor at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, shared her wisdom to a full house at the Hyatt Hotel.



Katrina generously shared the experiences and insights she has gathered over her time at DFAT. With a passion for law and foreign affairs, Katrina entered DFAT as a graduate and has had a varied career as a diplomat, including postings to Chile, Port Moresby and as Australia's Ambassador to Mexico.

Upon returning to Australia from Mexico, Katrina observed the lack of women in decision-making roles at DFAT. Drawing on her experiences, Katrina became the driving force behind the Women in Leadership initiative, with the intention of creating an environment conducive to women being equally successful in the work place.

Katrina shared her four guiding principles that have assisted her in her career:

- (a) **Do what you love.**
- (b) **Be collegial**, even in a competitive atmosphere. Quot-

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ing Madeleine Albright – ‘there is a special place in hell for women who don’t help other women’.

- (c) **Be confident** in what you are doing. You should be, if you are doing what you love and you are being collegial.
- (d) **Be brave.** Katrina observed that this state of mind is dependent on lining up the other elements.



Katrina Cooper and WLA ACT Committee representatives

Katrina admitted early on in her talk that whilst comfortable with public speaking, she was not used to speaking about herself. Be that as it may, Katrina’s message was inspiring and practical. We are the better for it, and WLA ACT is grateful to Katrina for sharing her life story thus far.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN LAWYERS CONFERENCE

Georgina McKay, recipient of the Gillian Beaumont Legal and WLA ACT Award, attended the Australian Women Law-

yers Conference in Perth with Prue Bindon, President of WLA ACT and Tiffany Long, Secretary of WLA ACT.



WLA ACT Committee members Tiffany Long, Georgina McKay and Prue Bindon at the AWL National Conference

I was honoured to attend the Sixth Australian Women Lawyers Conference in Perth on the weekend of 8 May 2016. The conference was a fantastic, invigorating event that has provided my WLA ACT colleagues and myself with practical approaches to better represent women lawyers in the ACT.

We were welcomed to Perth with a incredibly poignant welcome to country by Ingrid Cumming, a custodian and traditional owner of Whadjuk Nyungar country.

Her Honour Diana Bryant, Chief Justice of the Family Court, provided the keynote presentation on ‘A View From The Top Of The Hill’, which canvassed the achievements of women in the legal profession, and the changes that are still needed.

Other highlights of the conference included a captivating panel on amending the constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, hearing Stephen Smith talk about his experience as Defence Minister

and of how defence dealt with sexual assault, and an overview of current issues in domestic violence.

Hearing updates from women lawyers organisations in other jurisdictions on their efforts to address the National Attrition and Reengagement Survey (NARS) Report was extremely beneficial, and going forward WLA ACT will look to consider:

- how it can be a more inclusive organisation, specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers,
- how WLA ACT can go about offering sponsorship opportunities, and
- how to streamline our processes.

Juliet Behrens, the Immediate Past President of WLA ACT and ACT’s current representative on the AWL committee, gave an overview of WLA ACT’s work, specifically noting our efforts to promote the findings of the NARS Report, judicial register, increased membership numbers, and the success of our first Family Day.

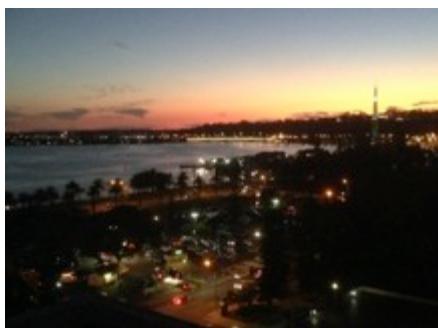


Senator Wong with WLA ACT Committee representatives

Senator Penny Wong delivered a moving keynote address at the

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Gala Dinner on Saturday evening. She talked of women gaining access to the upper echelons of the public service, boardrooms and cabinet rooms, but that equal pay, an idea from the 1970s, is still yet to be achieved. She noted that while we have achieved formal equality, we have not achieved real equality.



Welcome Reception – view from the Perth Federal Court Building

The conference was immensely successful and left myself, and I'm sure all attendees, inspired and energised to do more for women lawyers. I would like to extend my thanks to Gillian Beaumont Legal for sponsoring my attendance at the conference and to WLA ACT for their ongoing support of young women lawyers.

Georgina McKay

MEMBERSHIP 2016-2017

As we come to the end of the financial year we invite you to [renew your WLA ACT membership.](#)

We are pleased to announce an **early bird offer:** for those who

register before 1 July 2016 the cost of an Ordinary Membership will be only \$60, rather than the standard \$70. Similarly, for Ordinary Membership (Legal Aid and Community Legal Centres) and Associate Memberships, the cost will be \$30, rather than \$40

Membership can be [purchased online](#). We note that if your firm or employer would like to purchase membership for its lawyers they can do so [online](#) and will be invoiced.

We hope you have found being a member of WLA ACT valuable and enjoyable. Looking towards the 2016-17 membership year, we welcome your feedback and suggestions as to how WLA ACT can better meet the needs of our members.

We look forward to seeing you all at our upcoming events and throughout the 2016 / 2017 membership year.

MEET A MEMBER – BELINDA MILLER



Why did you join WLA ACT?

I joined the WLA because I wanted to get to meet more female professionals in my field. I think it is a great way to stay engaged with issues affecting us as women in the legal community, and also meet some great new people.

What WLA ACT event are you looking forward to, and why? Or what WLA ACT event have you enjoyed attending this year and why?

I am most looking forward to the mentor breakfasts. As a young career professional, the opportunity to hear from local women with successful careers and meet other people in a similar position is really exciting. While there is a lot to be said for learning from inspiring leaders like Julia Gillard or Dr Fiona Wood, as someone at the beginning of their career, it is also extremely useful to hear from people in a similar position to where you are, with recent experience of the difficulties you face when starting out.

Who is a professional that inspires you and why?

My current boss is someone who really inspires me. She is extremely clever and efficient at her job, gets things done and isn't afraid to make difficult decisions. She works really hard and has been incredibly successful, but also really values work life

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balance and works part time (as does her husband) to care for her child. She has taught me that you don't have to sacrifice your personal life to be a successful professional, and to always be brave in completing your work.

If you could give one piece of advice to your first-year professional self, what would it be?

Having not been a 'professional' for too long, my advice would be to take every opportunity, don't take things too much to heart, never be afraid to ask people for advice, and trust that things will work out alright.

INAUGURAL ACT WOMEN LAWYERS AWARDS

Know an *outstanding woman lawyer*? Nominate now!

WLA ACT is proud to open nominations for the inaugural ACT Women Lawyers Awards 2016. There are many outstanding women lawyers in this jurisdiction and it is important that we recognise and celebrate this talent.

You can nominate yourself or others in the following categories:

1. Woman Lawyer of the Year
2. Firm/Organisation of the Year
3. Woman Lawyer of the Year – Private

4. Woman Lawyer of the Year – Government
5. Woman Lawyer of the Year – Community or Academic
6. Woman Lawyer of the Year – Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander or Culturally & Linguistically Diverse
7. Woman Lawyer of the Year – Early Career

Go to our [awards webpage](#) for all the information you need to nominate.

Winners will be announced at a Gala Dinner on 3 November 2016 at Old Parliament House where we will be delighted to have journalist, author and broadcaster Annabel Crabb as our speaker. Block out your calendar!

*Are you or your organisation interested in being a **partner & sponsor** of this event? Contact us at contact@wlaact.org.au!*

WOMEN IN LEGAL LEADERSHIP NETWORK INSTITUTE

Terri Mottorshead, Convenor at Women in Legal Leadership Network has initiated this Institute in order to support our existing and future women leaders.

The Institute will be an exceptional opportunity for participants and will provide a wonder-

ful addition to any organisation diversity and inclusion program.

The takeaways for participants would likely include:

- Joining a unique opportunity to build connections and share experience with other women lawyer leaders in the Australasian legal community
- Creating and knowing how to implement a customized Leadership Plan
- Making great decisions that support and advance their careers
- Understanding the differences between leaders and managers and why that matters
- Developing individual potential as a leader for “new normal” legal practice
- Identifying and navigating gender politics
- Identifying, understanding and leveraging strengths as a leader
- Building relationships that matter with colleagues, teams and potential sponsors
- Using what is learnt to become a mentor, sponsor and coach to others
- Creating and knowing how to implement customized Relationship/ Business Development Plan

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- Understanding how to personalize their brand, why it matters, and how it influences their impact as a leader
- Knowing how to lead and manage difficult conversations and conflict
- Projecting authentic leadership, confidence and credibility as a trusted business advisor
- Becoming a founding member of a global initiative focused on the advancement of women lawyer leaders.

Information about the Institute is available on a dedicated website: www.wllnet.com.

Registration is open to any women lawyer who has been in a leadership position for at least one year. The participant number is limited (just 35) to encourage experience sharing and maximum access to workshop leaders and coaches.

The early bird registration rate is \$2,995 and that cost is inclusive of GST. Registration covers access to a pre-Institute online questionnaire, all Institute course materials (Thursday – Saturday), all breakfasts and lunches, dinner on Thursday night and cocktails on Friday night. It does not include accommodation, airfares or ground transportation. The early bird discount ends on July 15.

ACT LAW SOCIETY INCLUSION & DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

We are delighted that the ACT Law Society has invited Tamara Sullivan, WLA ACT Vice President, to be a member of the newly constituted Inclusion and Diversity Committee.

Tamara has had a number of years' involvement in the WLA ACT Committee and is ideally placed to provide meaningful input into the work of this important Committee.

Tamara's inclusion reinforces and continues the close relationship that WLA ACT has with the ACT Law Society and we value the Society's ongoing support of our objectives.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST SOUGHT FOR PRESIDENT OF THE ACAT

The ACT Attorney-General has invited expressions of interest from eligible and suitably qualified people for appointment as President of the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal. For further information please go to the relevant [JACS webpage](#).

WLA ACT encourages eligible and qualified women to apply for

the vacancy, and to let us know if you intend to do so at register@wlaact.org.au in order for us to support your application where appropriate.

WLA ACT is committed to doing what it can to increase the numbers of women appointed to the judiciary and quasi-judicial and statutory positions.

We remind members that we maintain a [confidential register](#) of women suitable for judicial and tribunal appointment so that we may take a proactive stance when vacancies become available. Please complete our [online registration form](#) if you would like to be on our confidential register.
