

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2016, ISSUE 8

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

FAMILY DAY & HIGH TEA

WORKING MOTHERS' PROGRAM

GILLIAN BEAUMONT LEGAL & WLA ACT AWARD

'WORKING FLEXIBLY'

MEET A MEMBER

UPCOMING WLA EVENTS

FRIDAY 11 MARCH
5.30PM BOOK LAUNCH

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

What a great start to 2016 it has been. We have had a number of new members join since January. I am particularly pleased to say that this has boosted our representation from the government sector, larger firms, and senior women. There were particular areas of focus for us in our efforts to make sure our membership base covers the breadth and depth of talented women lawyers in this jurisdiction. A very warm welcome to all our new members.



Our first event of 2016 was our wonderful Family Day and High Tea on Saturday 20 February. This event proved to be among our most popular so far, which belies the notion that weekend events are not well attended. It was heartening to see the confidence of your children donning wigs and robes and I dare say there may be many counsel – nay *judges* – in the making among them. Chief Justice Murrell, as always, hit the mark with her words of welcome, reminding us of the importance of the job we do and encour-

aging our families to be patient with us. Among the Chief Justice's many useful pieces of advice for our families was along these lines: 'It's not a good idea to pick a fight with us when we get home tired after a long day... especially not given that we are professional arguers'. I have taken the liberty of sharing this little piece of wisdom with my partner and children. See page 3 for our detailed write-up of this event.

On the policy front, I am pleased to say that the ACT Law Society and ACT Bar Association agreed to support us in our communication to the ACT Supreme Court, ACT Magistrates Court and the ACAT regarding sitting hours and family responsibilities. The crux of the communication was to request the courts and ACAT to confirm that regard may be had to the family responsibilities of practitioners (and parties) when proposing to extend sitting times. Unexpected changes in sitting times can be particularly problematic for those with carer's responsibilities who cannot make alternative arrangements on short notice. We also requested that school holiday periods might be a factor (obviously, among many others) to which regard is had when setting hearing dates. We will keep you updated on any responses we receive.

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

The ACT Attorney-General reached out to us recently on the round of expressions of interest for the upcoming appointments to the ACT Supreme Court and ACT Magistrates Court. We are delighted to have been able to express support to the Attorney-General for an application submitted by one of the women on our Register of women suitable for judicial and tribunal appointment.

Looking ahead, it is shaping up to be a busy year. Our next event takes place in just over a week and is the book launch of *Whispers from the Bush – The Workplace Sexual Harassment of Australian Rural Women* by Dr Skye Saunders. We are privileged to share in this event with Legal Aid ACT and the ACT Women's Legal Centre and are looking forward to hearing guest speakers Melinda Tankard Reist (Women & Girls' Advocate), Belinda Barnard (ACT Human Rights Commission) and of course Dr Saunders. We hope to see you there and please invite your friends and colleagues. See page 5 for more details.

On 8-10 April the Australian Women Lawyers 2016 National Conference will take place in Perth and I am thoroughly excited to attend this peak event. Our AWL representative (and former WLA ACT President) Juliet Behrens will

also attend and speak in a panel session around what we have done in the ACT in response to findings of the National Attrition and Re-engagement Study report published in 2014. This will be an important discussion and I trust we will return from the Conference with fresh ideas. There is a terrific line-up of speakers including Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash and Rosalind Croucher AM. Registration is still open so I encourage you to give serious consideration to attending or to sending someone from your organisation to attend. Can I also remind you that our Gillian Beaumont Legal and WLA ACT Award (which covers the cost for a member to attend the Conference) is open for application until midnight tonight. There is still time, don't miss out! See page 4 for more details.

We have formed a new Subcommittee – the Awards Dinner Subcommittee – to commence planning for the WLA ACT Inaugural Awards Gala Dinner. This will be a night to mark the achievements of the many talented women lawyers in the ACT, and the organisations and firms who support them. It is, we believe, long overdue that we celebrate local talent. We have set aside early November for this event but will endeavour to provide a generous amount of time for nominations. Stay tuned!

Before that, of course, we have the Law Week Dinner on 18 May for which we have recently secured, once again, the generous sponsorship of Maurice Blackburn Women's Legal Network. We are very grateful for their continued support of this event. I hope to announce very soon the guest speaker and I recommend buying your tickets early!

Finally, I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to the tireless WLA ACT Committee for which there has been a great deal to do over the past few months. Your genuine enthusiasm to volunteer your precious time to WLA ACT is much appreciated.

Best wishes to all our members for International Women's Day.

Prue Bindon, President.

OUR MAJOR SPONSOR



Thank you to our major sponsor, Michael Miller and his team at MLC Advice, for ongoing support of our goals. Stay tuned for a members-only event to be held at MLC Advice later this year.

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

FAMILY DAY & HIGH TEA

Have your kids ever struggled to understand exactly what you do when you go to work everyday? Has American TV skewed the understanding of what an Australian court room actually looks like? Or perhaps you haven't stepped into court since the day of your admission?! To remedy this, WLA ACT, in cooperation with the ACT Supreme Court, hosted a new family day event on Saturday 20 February, where parents could take their kids to see for themselves what mummy and daddy actually do!

The doors of the ACT Supreme Court were opened on a Saturday morning for kids to come through and take a good look. This was an exciting event with the kids being able to explore the court room and with many a photograph



opportunity.

Everyone was able to see the court from a judge's perspective by taking a seat behind the bench, see what the cells look like, and even try on the wigs and gowns barristers wear.

We were lucky enough to have Chief Justice Murrell address the group and talk about the stresses that parents often deal with when going to work in the courtrooms. Some of the important messages the Chief Justice delivered was to "give your parent a hug" after their long day, and to never argue with a professional arguer!

The day was a huge success with over 100 parents and children coming along to have a look. Many parents then took their families along to the WLA's High Tea at Parlour Room for some down time and food after a busy morning. This was a great opportunity for families to socialise and unwind over some delicious cakes and tea.

WLA ACT would like to extend thanks to everyone who made this day possible, including the ACT Law Society, the Court Staff who gave up their Saturday morning to provide security at the courts, Baker Deane and Nutt Lawyers for generously sponsoring this event, as well as Chief Justice

Murrell and Justice Penfold who helped bring this idea to life.

Take a look at more of the fantastic photos captured at the end of the newsletter.



WORKING MUM?

If so, you may be interested in the Working Mothers' Program offered by 'How Do You Do It'. The Program assists working mothers with strategies to help them more easily balance their roles so that they are more productive, confident and satisfied in both work and family areas. The Program requires a minimum number of participants (10-12 people) which may mean it is not feasible for an individual firm to offer to its staff. We are currently undertaking a survey of members interested in the Program to assess the feasibility of running it for our membership base. Discuss it with your employer / organisation and [click here](#) to complete the survey.

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

GILLIAN BEAUMONT LEGAL & WLA ACT AWARD



GILLIAN
BEAUMONT | legal

We are delighted once again to offer the [Gillian Beaumont Legal & WLA ACT Award](#) for one of our members to attend the Australian Women Lawyers Biennial National Conference. Thank you to Gillian Beaumont Legal for its generous support. Applications close midnight on Friday 4 March 2016 – there is still time to submit your application!

The Award consists of -

- Registration at the Conference in Perth on 8-10 April 2016.
- \$1,000 towards travel and accommodation costs enabling attendance at the Conference.

The [Conference](#) is the peak conference for female practitioners, leaders and senior professional across the Australian legal sector to form new relationships, discuss ideas and learn from industry leaders.

Applications are submitted to contact@wlaact.org.au by Friday 4 March 2016 and must satisfy the following requirements:

1. You must be a current member (2015/16 Financial Year) of WLA ACT.
 2. You must submit a statement of 1,000-1,500 words (longer statements will not be considered) addressing as relevant-
 - a) Your contribution to the aims of the WLA ACT (see ['about us'](#) on our website)
 - b) The likely benefits to you of attending the Conference
 - c) The need for support (your personal financial circumstances do not need to be disclosed, but it would be relevant, for example, whether or not your employer would fund you to attend, whether or not you are in the early years of your career, whether or not you work for an NGO/community service).
 3. You must provide a brief (one page) CV, including date of admission (if relevant) and work history.
 4. You must provide a letter of endorsement from your employer (if relevant) to the effect that they support your application and approve your attendance.
 5. You must commit to preparing a 1,000-2,000 word written piece about the Conference within 30 days of your return, for publication as WLA ACT sees fit.
- The Award winner will be selected by Gillian Beaumont Legal and will be notified by WLA ACT on Friday 18 March 2016.

YOUR STORIES: WORKING FLEXIBLY

In our last issue we shared our first 'working flexibly' story in conversation with Heidi Yates, Head of General Practice at Legal Aid ACT. The working flexibly stories are designed to continue the conversation and sharing of practical experiences amongst lawyers who use flexible working arrangements. Written policies are important, but sharing our experiences helps to ensure that those policies have life, can be reflected upon, and improved.

In this issue, Kim Back of Maurice Blackburn Lawyers (and WLA Committee member) shares her flexible working experiences. Kim is a mother of two young boys and has been a passionate supporter of flexible working arrangements both within the Committee and as a member of the Maurice Blackburn Women's Legal Network.



WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

Why do you view flexible working arrangements as important?

It is unsurprising that with the increase in female graduates there has been a push for more flexible working arrangements within the legal sector. We no longer define ourselves or our success by our professional achievements alone, but by being able to succeed and enjoy many facets of life including having a family, travelling, hobbies and the like. Innovative employers recognise that they need to provide genuine flexible working arrangements in order to attract and retain staff or risk being left behind.

What have your flexible working experiences been, and how important has this been in being available for your family and career?

I am a mum of two young boys and have been lucky enough to have the support of my employer. With my first son, I was able to take 12 months leave with the assistance of 16 weeks paid parental leave. When I returned to work I was able to negotiate a flexible working arrangement which included working 4 days per week. I was then able to take a further 8 months paid parental leave with my second son. The flexibility offered by my employer has really enabled me to con-

tinue to grow professionally as well as enjoy a family.

How would you like to see the Legal Industry be more accommodating for practitioners with families and caring responsibilities?

The flexibility which has been offered to me from my employer has enabled me to continue to contribute to the community as a lawyer, something which I am passionate about. It would be ideal to see the conditions which I have enjoyed become standard across all firms and departments, both for men and women. In this day and age there is no 'one size fits all' approach to family and caring responsibilities. Caring roles may be by the mother, father or another family member or friend. The ideal would be for these roles to be recognized and accepted, particularly for fathers. I am optimistic that we will continue to see a shift in our societies view on this in the coming years.

LAUNCH OF *WHISPERS FROM THE BUSH*

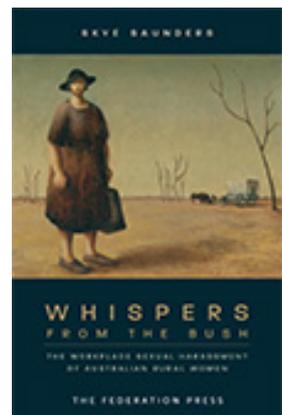
At 5.30pm on Friday 11 March 2016 at Legal Aid ACT, WLA ACT, in conjunction with the Women's Legal Centre and Legal Aid ACT, has the pleasure of inviting you to the book launch of *Whispers from the Bush: The Workplace Sexual*

*Harassment of Australian Rural Women*¹, by Dr Skye Saunders.

Dr Skye Saunders is an academic at the Australian National University (ANU). Prior to joining the ANU, Skye worked as a Canberra-based solicitor in the area of Employment Relations and Discrimination Law where she developed a particular interest in sexual harassment matters. Skye is an advocate for issues of gender and the law, particularly in the complex context of remote Australian communities.

Guest speakers will include Melinda Tankard Reist (Women & Girls' Advocate) and Belinda Barnard (ACT Human Rights Commission) together with Dr Saunders.

This is a free event open to all our members, and their friends and colleagues. Please RSVP by going to: www.trybooking.com/KNSP (drinks and nibbles provided).



WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

MEET A MEMBER – EILEEN WEBB



Eileen Webb is our newest member of the Committee. Eileen brings to the Committee a sense of enthusiasm and dedication and the team is looking forward to working with her this year. Eileen has been generous enough to share her thoughts on the legal profession in the ACT.

Why did you join WLA?

I first joined the WLA because I liked the concept of women in the legal profession joining forces to offer support, exchange experiences and learned wisdoms, and share cake. The concept of high tea should not be underestimated. Seriously.

More recently I had the opportunity to join the Committee and I jumped on board for two reasons. Firstly - and I appreciate this may sound bonkers - in recent years I have taken

to setting a theme for the year ahead, and the theme for 2016 is involvement. Jumping into situations, events, social situations and locations that I wouldn't ordinarily. So far my theme has me signed up for guitar lessons despite my demonstrative lack of rhythm, taking a hot air balloon ride in blatant disregard of my lack of enthusiasm for heights, speed dating Europe (London, Bath, Paris and Sweden in 2 ½ weeks), aaaaaand joining the WLA Committee. Secondly, it has been slowly dawning on me that expecting equality isn't enough; if you want something to happen you need to be a positive agent for change. So here I am.

What WLA event are you looking forward to, and why?

I'm looking forward to the book launch of Dr Skye Saunder's book, *Whispers from the Bush: The Workplace Sexual Harassment of Australian Rural Women*. I think this book will offer a fascinating (and horrifying) insight into the conditions female employees in a rural setting have been subject to, and how our legal system has responded to either protect or hinder these women. Melinda Tankard Reist (Women & Girls Advocate) and Belinda Barnard (Deputy ACT Discrimination Commissioner) are the guest speakers for the launch; I'm

pretty keen to hear what they have to say on the subject. On a separate and shallow note, I've got high hopes that I can persuade Dr Saunders to sign my copy and then in 20 years' time I can sell my autographed first edition for a bajillion dollars.

Who is a professional that inspires you and why?

That's a tough one. I admire a lot of people for a lot of reasons. I think I'm going to have to identify a class of professionals rather than a specific person. I am in constant awe of working mothers. I'll be honest, at least 50% of the time I find it a challenge to turn up to work in a dry cleaned suit and stockings without holes in them and then get home at a reasonable hour to feed my cat. My obligations end at that point. Working mothers NEVER STOP. The decisions never end. The obligations never end. The requirement to be a functioning human being who can juggle work and parenting commitments is relentless. Every time one of the mothers in my office describes their day to me, my jaw figuratively drops. I think it takes bravery, persistence, resilience and fantastic time management skills to navigate through the day, and those are skills I admire greatly.

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

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

Don't be afraid to fail. Don't be afraid to get it wrong. You are going to do both of those things anyway, so take the leap and soak up the lessons that come from stumbling. That's a piece of advice I continue to give myself today! As you get further along in the legal profession you gather more knowledge and skills, but if you are doing it right, the learning never ends.

STUDENT PRIZE WINNERS

WLA ACT sponsors prizes for top-achieving female law students at the Australian National University College of Law and the University of Canberra School of Law & Justice.

Congratulations to our 2015 prize winners: Naomi Wootton at the Australian National University and Brooke West at the University of Canberra. We wish you every success in your future careers.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

We were sad to farewell our former Committee Member, Georgina Gordon, just before Christmas as she headed to pursue new opportunities in

Sydney. We wish her all the best for her new adventures. We welcome our new Committee member, Eileen Webb, who has joined us in 2016. We look forward to working with her this year!

POSITION VACANT! SOCIAL MEDIA OFFICER

WLA ACT invites interested members to apply for the sub-committee position of 'Social Media Officer'. The Social Media Officer will be responsible for updating and maintaining WLA ACT's Facebook page, website and other social media. This role will give you the opportunity to work with other members on the Committee and broaden your professional networks.

If you are interested, we would love to hear from you. Please email us at contact@wlaact.org.au

REGISTER OF WOMEN SUITABLE FOR JUDICIAL APPOINTMENT

A reminder that a Sub-Committee of WLA ACT maintains a confidential register for eligible women who work in the ACT (and region) who are suitable for judicial or tribunal appointment.

The purpose of the Register is to enable WLA (ACT) to respond promptly and effectively to a request from government or other relevant organisations (including the ACT Law Society and Australian Women Lawyers) for nominations for judicial or tribunal appointments.

If you wish to express an interest in being included on the confidential Register we invite you to [click here](#) and complete our online Confidential Expression of Interest Form. The Form can also be accessed from our website: <http://www.wlaact.org.au/join-our-register/>



GENDER EQUITY INSIGHTS

Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, in collaboration with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, has released a new report - *Gender Equity Insights 2016: Inside Australia's Gender Pay Gap* demonstrating that amongst top tier

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

managers in Australian organisations, men are paid on average \$100,000 per year more than women.

The report also reveals for the first time a measurable link between increased gender diversity on governing boards and lower pay gaps for managers.

The report makes for interesting reading. [Click here](#) to download a copy of the report or go to the WGEA website: <https://www.wgea.gov.au>

EVENTS CALENDAR

WLA has the pleasure of announcing our upcoming events for 2016. Stay tuned for more details of these (and other) events:

- 11 March 2016 – Book launch: 'Whispers from the Bush' by Dr Skye Saunders, in conjunction with the Women's Legal Centre and Legal Aid ACT.
- April – Mentor breakfast
- 18 May 2016 – Law Week Dinner
- July – Judicial mentoring lunch
- August - Junior Lawyers Pay and Conditions Survey
- September – WLA ACT Annual General Meeting
- September – Launch of Junior Lawyers Pay and

Conditions Survey October- Spring Drinks

- November – Inaugural WLA ACT Awards Dinner

FAMILY DAY & HIGH TEA PHOTOS



WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

FAMILY DAY & HIGH
TEA

SATURDAY 20
FEBRUARY 2016

