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President's Note

I am delighted to welcome our new Committee for 2014/5, who were appointed at our AGM on 23 September. The new Committee is the perfect combination of "old hands" and "new blood." I am staying on as President, Christina Lewis as Vice-President, Tamara Sullivan as Treasurer, and Tiffany Long as Secretary. Jacquelyn Curtis and Anne-Louise Pham continue as general Committee members, and we welcome new Committee members Kim Back, Georgina Gordon, Georgina McKay and Sarah Spottiswood. It is great to see a number of government lawyers in our midst! In addition, Averil Foster, Lauren Gray and Angela Li are joining our sub-committees.

WLA (ACT) owes a great debt to Nithya Sambasivam, former President, who stayed on as a general Committee member and Chair of the Policy Sub-Committee last year and who decided not to stand again this year. Her diligence, enthusiasm and commitment are legendary and her work has contributed very significantly to the success of WLA (ACT).

We are delighted that Chief Justice Helen Murrell and our

long-standing patron, Justice Hilary Penfold, accepted our invitation to become Honorary Members of the Association, a process which was finalised at the AGM.

I attended the Australian Women Lawyers' Association (AWL) biennial conference in Adelaide on 3-5 October. All members of WLA (ACT) are automatically members of AWL, and each association nominates a representative to the Board of AWL. It was an excellent event, not least because of the friendly, supportive dynamic between attendees. Our Gillian Beaumont Legal and Women Lawyers' Association Award winner, Tiffany Long, reports about this Conference later in the newsletter.

It was great to hear from two of the ACT's most senior and respected lawyers, Janean Richards and Noor Blumer, in the panel session on 'How to face the challenges of practising in the current legal culture.' As usual Noor asked lots of interesting and entertaining questions!

AWL held its AGM on the last day of the conference. I am pleased that Amy Challen is staying on as President of AWL. I am now the ACT's representative on the Board of AWL as our previous

representative, Karen Twigg, has decided to step aside. Karen made an excellent contribution on the Board of AWL, and is clearly respected and liked by those who worked with her on the Board. Her work ensured that WLA (ACT) continues to be held in high regard by those on the Board of AWL.

This will be an important year for AWL and for Women Lawyers' Associations across the country as we work to respond to the Law Council's National Attrition and Re-engagement Study (NARS) report. WLA (ACT) is planning to hold a NARS forum either later this year or earlier next year. Our Policy Sub-Committee is working on this issue and plans to release some human resources policies on gender-related issues within the next 6 months. As Amy Challen has said (words to the effect)- if we don't do something about this loss of talent now, when will we?

Juliet Behrens

Junior Lawyers' Pay and Conditions Survey: The results are in!

This year, the WLA conducted its third annual Junior Lawyers' Pay and Conditions Survey. The purpose of the survey was to find out the basic pay and conditions of junior lawyers, that is lawyers with five or fewer years of post-admission experience.

The ACT is a small jurisdiction and information as to pay and conditions is often unavailable in the public sphere, making it difficult for junior lawyers to find an independent benchmark from which to negotiate their entitlements.

This year we had 66 respondents participate in the anonymous online survey, including six males and two respondents who identify as 'other gender'.

The survey aims at collating information on not only the income of junior lawyers, but also asks participants to provide their thoughts on what influences pay increases, whether they felt comfortable asking their employer for flexible working arrangements, their knowledge on parental leave schemes and their overall satisfaction of the legal profession.

The survey results, which will be published on our website later this week, shows that just under half of participants work more than 46 hours a week, with approximately 80% of the respondents stating they felt that they were expected by their employer to work overtime.

When participants were asked whether they were generally satisfied with the legal profession, one participant responded that whilst they were satisfied (personally) they knew many lawyers who were expected to work very long hours and their salaries were not commensurate to their hard work.

The average wage for respondents with less than 1 year post admission experience is \$60,450.72 with the average increasing to \$69,362.25 by years 1-2. The smallest average wage increase is between years 1-2 and 2-3 with around a \$3,500 increase.

By far the largest disparity of pay came in year's 3-4 of post admission experience, with the average being \$85,952.28 which included a range of more than \$50,000.00 – the lowest reported income being \$51,780, much lower than the average for a 0-1 post admission experience lawyer, and the highest paid respondent in this group receiving \$115,000.

When responding to what they thought most influenced pay increases, respondents agreed that merit played a role however responses also included influences of "gender, likeability, perceived value, likelihood to leave or complain".

More than half of the respondents stated that they did not know whether their employer offered more paid parental leave than required by law. Some of the comments provided showed employers providing 12-16 week full paid parental leave. Two comments provided showed that employers require this entitlement to be paid back if they leave the firm, or do not return for more than two weeks.

The WLA ACT will be using the data collected to assist their work on their own policies, but also to further advertise and advocate for women following the results of the NARS report. If you want to learn more, please keep an eye out on our upcoming events, or contact us on contact@wlaact.org.au.

Tamara Sullivan

Fifth National Australian Women Lawyers Conference

I was fortunate enough to attend the Fifth National Australian Women Lawyers Conference in Adelaide on the weekend of 4 October 2014. The weekend was a rewarding and thought provoking experience with a dynamic and inspirational group of women.

One of the highlights of this weekend was the presentation by former Victorian Police Commissioner Christine Nixon. Ms Nixon's presentation was an exploration of the lessons and challenges which she has faced throughout her often controversial professional life. After a career as a police officer spanning decades Ms Nixon entered the police force as one of only a handful of women in the NSW Police Force at the time and rose to be the highest ranked police officer in Victoria. The message for female lawyers which was taken away from this presentation was to always push boundaries and to question and evaluate things both inside and out of your control.



There were many other keynote speakers throughout the weekend, however a highlight for me was Fiona McLeod SC who discussed gender inequality within the law and the need for women to build up and encourage one another. This presentation was thought provoking and inspiring and made everyone present consider their roles in contributing to the progress of other women.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the gala dinner at the Adelaide Oval. We were fortunate to have Rabia Siddique as the keynote speaker for this event who discussed her inspiring experience taking on the British Army to receive the same recognition as her male colleagues in negotiating a hostage situation.

Overall the conference was a successful and engaging weekend with a group of inspiring women. I would like to thank Gillian Beaumont Legal for sponsoring me to attend this conference on behalf of the ACT Women Lawyers Association.

Tiffany Long

Meet a Member – Julia Heinze, Infinity Legal



1. Why did you join the Association?

I think that it is very important to surround yourself with other women in the same industry to build positive networks and support systems. I joined the association to be able to support other women and act on my belief that gender equality within the law is important for both men and women.

2. What WLA initiative/event are you looking forward to, and why? Or alternatively, what WLA event have you enjoyed attending this year and why?

I am looking forward to the Survey Launch Event on 30 October 2014 which my firm Infinity Legal has been fortunate enough to sponsor.

I believe that the annual Pay and Conditions Survey done by WLA ACT is a very important initiative to help young lawyers, both women and men recognise their value. I also encourage my staff to attend as many WLA ACT events as possible to be able to meet other likeminded people and form supportive networks throughout the wider legal community.

3. Who are your favourite heroines - fictional and real life, and why? Or alternatively, who is a professional that you look up to/ inspires you and why? (This doesn't have to be legal).

Whilst not a comment on her political views, for me Julia Gillard is an example of a female lawyer who achieved great success. Julia Gillard is an inspiring example of what intelligence, hard work and a passion for your chosen career can have.

I think that all female lawyers can use our first female Prime Minister as a great example of a woman leading the way.

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

“That it will get easier.” Entering the legal industry as a graduate is daunting and you become very aware of how much you didn't learn at law school. However, as you gain experience everything becomes easier and you will feel comfortable. Law really is a rewarding career, despite the often long hours and hard work and I enjoy mentoring young lawyers throughout their first few years of practice.

If you would like to participate in our ‘Meet a Member’ feature, please email us at contact@wlaact.org.au.

Invitation to Launch- ‘Scholarship for Women Practising at the ACT Bar’

Proudly sponsored by MLC Advice Canberra

We wanted to draw your attention to the ACT Bar Association's event to launch a scholarship for women practising at the ACT Bar, which has the aim of strengthening the representation and facilitating the retention of female barristers at the ACT Bar.

If you are interested in finding out more about this scholarship, we encourage you to contact the ACT Bar at ceo@actbar.com.au.

Launch of the WLA ACT Junior Pay and Conditions Survey Report

On Thursday 30 October, the Women Lawyers Association hosted a free event to launch the results of its third annual Junior Pay and Conditions Survey.

At the event guests were able to hear from Lyn McDade on her experiences starting out in the law. Ms McDade shared many great anecdotes along with providing guests with some important tips.

The event was a great success with many members and their colleagues in attendance.

WLA President Juliet Behrens presented some of the results from the 2014 Survey (*see the above article for more information*) and spoke to the final report being a reminder of gender issues still being relevant today in the legal profession.

The WLA Committee would like to thank Infinity Legal for their generous sponsorship for the event, Street Theatre Café for their venue, Lyn McDade for her engaging presentation, and all members and guests who came along.

If you would like to see a copy of the report, please head to our website.

Tamara Sullivan



Special Guest: Lyn McDade



Sponsors: Infinity Legal



WLA President Juliet Behrens addressing guests