



women lawyers association of the act

## ANNUAL REPORT

### WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INCORPORATED (ABN 31 809 300 503)

#### 1. 2013/14 Financial Year Committee Members

President: Juliet Behrens

Vice President: Christina Lewis

Secretary: Tiffany Long

Treasurer: Tamara Sullivan

Ordinary Committee

Members: Michelle Bennie (26 September 2013- 13 May 2014)

Jill Brajkovich (26 September 2013-19 March 2014)

Jennifer Crawley (26 September 2013-1 July 2014)

Jacquelyn Curtis (7 July 2014-23 September 2014)

Leonie Kennedy (7 July 2014-23 September 2014)

Anne Louise Pham

Nithya Sambasivam

\*Sub-committee Members: Jill Brajkovich (21 August 2014-23 September 2014)

Jacquelyn Curtis (26 September 2013-7 July 2014)

Georgina Gordon (April 2014-23 September 2014)

Kelly Irvine

Claudia McLean

Sally McGuinness

Alexis Rosenberg (April 2014-23 September 2014)

WLA ACT's representative on

Board of AWL: Karen Twigg

\*Note: r.15(2)(e) of our Rules of Association restricts the number of ordinary Committee members to six. However, a number of sub-committees have been formed and any member can participate whether or not they are a member of the Committee proper. Persons listed as sub-committee members are not members of the Committee.

## **2. Principal Activities in 2013/14 Financial Year**

### **2.1 Generally**

The 2013/14 AGM took place on 26 September 2013, at which time a new Committee was elected.

The new Committee benefited very significantly from the work which the previous Committee, under the leadership of Nithya Sambasivam, did developing and documenting Committee processes and policies, and working to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. This previous work left the new Committee free to work on consolidation and new initiatives.

As part of a planning discussion the Committee developed a slogan which captures what the Association aims to do: namely, "Connect, Support, Engage."

The main focus of the Committee's activities this year was on holding events for members, including our very successful Saturday afternoon tea and a mentoring lunch with almost all of the female judicial officers in the ACT.

With the launch of the National Attrition and Re-engagement Study (NARS) report by the Law Council of Australia, we expect that the 2014/5 financial year will involve a significant focus on working to lobby for and assist with the implementation of the recommendations arising from that report. These recommendations will be launched at the AWL Biennial Conference in Adelaide in October 2014. The President, on behalf of WLA ACT co-signed an AWL response to the NARS report, which is available <http://www.australianwomenlawyers.com.au/publications/awl-submission-makes-history/>

The next year or so is a critical time in the campaign to change legal workplaces to make them more family-friendly and flexible. These changes are key to stemming attrition of women and to ensuring their retention and/or re-engagement within the legal profession, and particularly in private law firms. The legal profession and the community cannot afford the great loss of talent which results from the cultural factors identified in the NARS report. WLA ACT looks forward to playing a key role in this campaign.

### **2.2 Policy**

Nithya Sambasivam continued in the role of Chair of the Policy Sub-Committee.

In addition to keeping informed of developments via its representatives on the Board of Australian Women Lawyers and ACT Law Society Council's Equalising Opportunities in the Law Committee, the WLA ACT has continued a policy development focus over the last year.

The following matters were the focus of that policy development:

- Equal pay for equal work;
- Flexible working arrangements;
- Parental leave;
- Harassment and discrimination; and
- Promotion, transfer and training.

Policy development is ongoing. We aim to have template policies which can be used by firms. These are aimed largely at smaller firms which may not currently have policies, or the resources to develop them. We have draft policies on Flexible working arrangements, Harassment, discrimination and bullying, Gender pay equity and Parental leave and have

received feedback from a Human Resources Consultant on those policies. We are now working on finalising the policies with a view to publication on our website.

### 2.3 Events/ initiatives

The WLA held a series of events and initiatives in 2013/4, being:

- Mock Performance Review (30 October 2013);
- The President and Claudia McLean attended the ACT Consultation of the Human Rights Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, in relation to HREOC's National Review on pregnancy discrimination and return to work on 20 November 2013;
- Financial Advice Seminar (21 November 2013);
- Spring Drinks (28 November 2013);
- High Tea (1 March 2014);
- Mentoring lunch with Judicial Officers (2 April 2014);
- Team entry in Mothers' Day Classic (11 May 2013);
- Annual Law Week Dinner, with guest speaker Justice Helen Murrell (14 May 2014);
- Mentor breakfast, with guest speaker Judge Kate Hughes of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (24 July 2014);
- Junior lawyers' pay and conditions survey 2014 (August until 23 September 2014); and
- AGM (23 September 2014).

Our annual Law Week dinner at The Lobby was a particular highlight, with 78 people attending. Chief Justice Helen Murrell spoke on "Women and the Law", and an article about this speech and the night by WLA ACT Treasurer, Tamara Sullivan, was subsequently published in Ethos. A transcript of the Chief Justice's speech can be found on the 'News' page of our website.

In addition, we plan to release the results of the Junior lawyers' pay and conditions survey at an event on 30 October 2013.

The President, Karen Twigg and Tiffany Long will attend the AWL Biennial Conference in Adelaide from 3-5 October.

We intend to see out the year with a Spring Networking Drinks event. We are also planning to establish a Mothers' Group.

### 2.4 Sponsorship of the WLA ACT

On 18 July 2013, the WLA ACT formally launched sponsorship of the organisation by MLC Advice Canberra. MLC Advice Canberra is headed by Mr. Michael Miller. The relationship which underlies this sponsorship has continued to develop, and we hope to continue to work closely with Mr Miller over the coming year. Mr Miller hosted two successful events during the second half of 2013, and has also been a regular attendee, with his wife Roxanne, at a number of our functions. Under the sponsorship agreement WLA ACT receives additional funds from Mr Miller when members engage his services. We plan to do more to publicise this.

Further information about MLC Advice Canberra can be found on the 'Principal Sponsor' page of our website.

The Association received significant financial support for its High Tea event and Mothers' Day Classic from the local firm Baker, Deane and Nutt. The Committee would like to thank partners Bill Baker, Ian Marjason, Charmaine Tunn, Lorraine White, Tanya Nadin and Richard Baker for their generous support which greatly contributed to the success of these events.

In addition, the Association received sponsorship from Gillian Beaumont Legal by way of \$1,000 towards the Gillian Beaumont Legal and Women Lawyer's Association Award. This Award recognises contributions to the aims of the Association, and aims to allow a person who would not otherwise be able to attend to go to the AWL Biennial Conference. The inaugural winner of that Award is Tiffany Long.

## 2.5 Marketing, membership and finance

This financial year the WLA ACT held a concentrated membership drive, with very positive results. The Committee, led by the Marketing, Membership and Finance Subcommittee, was able to double memberships in this financial year. Some of the ACT's most senior women lawyers were directly approached to join, and a number did so. The Committee believes it is important for the Association to increase the number of senior women who are members. The challenge now is to maintain the membership numbers.

The Sub-Committee also organised a banner highlighting our new slogan- "Connect, Support, Engage".

This subcommittee also launched a regular newsletter for WLA ACT members. This includes information on past and upcoming events, a "Meet the Member" section, and any news and information that the Committee wishes to share with its members. This has been received well, and the Committee intends to continue publishing it on a regular basis.

## 2.6 Finance

### **Finance plan**

The committee approved a Finance Plan and Budget for the 2013/14 Financial Year.

### **2013/14 Financial Year Net Profit/Loss**

During the 2013/14 Financial Year the Association made a net profit of \$2,485.38.

This will be discussed in greater detail at the AGM.

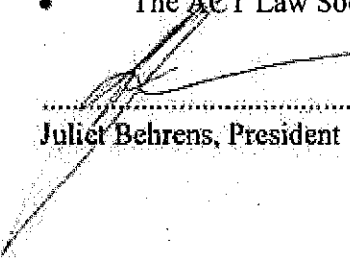
## 2.7 Governance and compliance

We have continued to work with our auditors at Kazar Slaven to improve our compliance with financial and administration reporting obligations for the 2013/2014 financial year. The Committee has continued to implement systematic and predictable governance and compliance procedures within the WLA ACT and received a fully compliant report from the auditors.

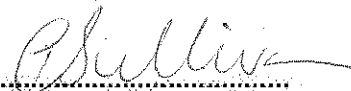
## 3 **Acknowledgements**

The President would like to acknowledge the efforts and contributions of following people over the last year and to thank them personally:

- The Executive- Christina Lewis, Tamara Sullivan and Tiffany Long for their commitment, hard work and support;
- Karen Twigg, for her personal support and friendship, and her work on the Board of AWL;
- Nithya Sambasivam, who, in addition to assisting the transition to the new Committee and her work on the Committee and the Policy Sub-Committee, has worked hard behind the scenes to keep our website updated and to make regular posts to our facebook site;
- The rest of the Committee members and members of our Subcommittees;
- Our principal sponsor MLC Advice Canberra, and Michael Miller;
- Baker Deane and Nutt for generous financial and other support;
- Gillian Beaumont Legal for sponsorship of the Award;
- Kriss Will, who reviewed our policies on a pro bono basis and provided very valuable feedback;
- Our auditors Kazar Slaven;
- The ACT Law Society, and in particular Nicole Karman.



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Juliet Behrens, President



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Tamara Sullivan, Treasurer

