

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

1. **2014/15 Financial Year Committee Members**

President:	Juliet Behrens
Vice President:	Christina McPherson
Secretary:	Tiffany Long
Treasurer:	Tamara Sullivan
Ordinary Committee Members:	Jacquelyn Curtis
	Georgina Gordon
	Georgina McKay
	Sarah Spottiswood
	Anne Louise Pham
	Kim Back

*Sub-committee Members:	Lauren Gray
	Alissa Johnson
	Angela Liu
	Allison Clark
	Amber Shergis
	Eleanor Hobba

Representative on AWL board:	Juliet Behrens
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*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 / work groups 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 2014/15 Financial Year

2.1 Generally

The 2014/15 Women Lawyers Association of the ACT's (WLA) year was productive with the Executive Committee members from the previous financial year all continuing in their positions, and the benefits of continuity that brings. The 2014/15 AGM took place on 23 September 2014, at which time the Committee was elected.

This year the Committee adopted a focus on the implementation of the National Attrition and Re-engagement Study (NARS) and on ensuring that WLA is as inclusive and accessible for the legal community as possible.

We were proud to host a well-attended event with guest host Fiona McLeod SC, President of the Australian Bar Association and a member of the Law Council of Australia, who spoke about the implementation of NARS.

Over the course of the 2014/2015 year the WLA offered free or significantly discounted tickets to a number of its events for members who would not otherwise be able to attend, including students and members of community legal organisations. Events this was offered for included the Law Week Dinner and (with assistance of Gillian Beaumont Legal) a member's attendance at the biennial conference of Australian Women Lawyers in Adelaide. These offers were popular with our members and appeared to be appreciated. This is an initiative that WLA is likely to continue in the future.

This subsidy was only possible because of the careful financial management from our Treasurer, Tamara Sullivan, our Membership Officer, Georgina McKay, and the Membership, Finance and Marketing sub-committee. Their efforts ensured that we have built up sufficient reserves to subsidise tickets in this way and to keep ticket prices low. Also important has been the continuation of sponsorship to which we refer below.

Membership numbers reached 112 by the end of the financial year. Georgina McKay and the Membership, Finance and Marketing sub-Committee have done fabulous work developing and implementing electronic membership forms and on-line payment methods which have contributed to the increase of membership numbers because of the ease by which this can now be done.

We were delighted that Justice Hilary Penfold and Chief Justice Helen Murrell accepted honorary membership of our Association. They join long-term member and former President, Leonie Kennedy.

We again held our very successful family-friendly Saturday afternoon tea, and a mentoring lunch with almost all of the female judicial officers in the ACT facilitated for us by our Patron Justice Hilary Penfold. These two events are now becoming embedded in our annual calendar. We are also committed to an annual International Women's Day event, and had a mentoring breakfast to celebrate this year.

We have continued to improve our communication with members. Through the efforts of our Membership, Marketing and Finance Committee we published 4 newsletters detailing current affairs of the WLA, upcoming events, and other relevant information. Lauren Gray and Angela Liu have worked to disseminate relevant material on our Facebook page and website. We are working on a new look website, and expect to launch that in the 2015/2016 year.

WLA has continued to develop its relationships with the Council of the Law Society, its Patron and other judicial officers, Australian Women Lawyers, our sponsors and auditors Kazar Slaven. WLA is also keen to develop a closer working relationship with the Women's Legal Centre. We are for the first time this year cooperating with Young Lawyers in relation to our annual survey of pay and conditions.

For the future

We have discussed implementing an awards scheme similar to those in other jurisdictions for female legal officers, and combining it with a showcase event.

We have begun a process of "rebranding" the WLA through marketing and a new online presence.

We hope to put profiles of our Patron and Honorary Members on our website.

2.2 **Policy**

Juliet Behrens chaired 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 has continued a policy development focus over the last year.

The following matters were the focus of that policy development:

- Flexible working arrangements;
- Parental leave and "onboarding";
- Protocol for consultation in relation to judicial appointments.

We expect to have a flexible working arrangements package launched soon, along with stories from some lawyers around town which tell of the importance from both the management and employee perspective of flexible working arrangements.

We have finalised and the Committee has approved a protocol which provides a careful confidential process for developing a list of women who are suitable for and interested in judicial appointments at a range of levels and using that list to respond to requests for consultations in relation to judicial appointments. We expect to commence implementing that process shortly.

For the future

The Policy sub-committee has elected to focus on these issues, but there are draft policies on a number of other gender-related HR issues waiting to be worked on further by future committees. Implementation of the Protocol will need to be bedded down.

The Policy sub-committee will also review the objectives of the WLA in its Constitution to ensure that they adequately reflect current priorities and activities of the Association.

2.3 Events/ initiatives

The WLA held a series of events and initiatives in 2014/5, being:

- 30 October 2014- Launch of our Survey of Junior Lawyers' pay and conditions with guest speaker Lyn McDade;
- 28 February 2015 – Welcome to the New Year High Tea.

- 10 March 2015- International Women's Day mentoring breakfast, with guest speaker Jacqueline Jago from Bloom Coaching.
- 13 May 2015 – Law Week Dinner, with guest speaker Australian of the year Rosie Battie. This event was hosted by the WLA ACT on behalf of the ACT Law Society.
- 24 June 2015- Judicial mentoring lunch at Street Cafe; and
- 29 July 2015- Mentoring breakfast with Rachael Lewis of King Wood Mallesons.

In addition, we plan to release the results of the Junior Lawyers' Pay and Conditions Survey at an event in November.

The President, Karen Twigg and Tiffany Long attended the AWL Biennial Conference in Adelaide from 3-5 October 2014 and the AGM of AWL which followed.

Our annual Law Week dinner at The Lobby was a particular highlight, with the event completely booked out quite early on. We were honoured to have Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, speak to us. Rosie spoke powerfully about the need for change in the legal system to better address the needs of victims of domestic violence. One of her messages was about the importance of women's legal services. Following her talk Noor Blumer rallied the audience to raise significant funds for the Women's Legal Centre, whose new director, Elena Rosenmann, was introduced to the audience. We will need to consider whether we use a larger venue next year. No doubt Rosie was a particular "drawcard" but we believe the event is becoming generally more embedded in the calendar and popular.

For the future

We have been asked to work with the Law Society's Events and Law Week Committee on a family-friendly event for the second half of 2015, and are keen to explore the possibility of an event "My Mummy's a Lawyer" where members bring their children on a tour of the courts, cells, meet a judge and perhaps have afternoon tea in a board room!

Sponsorship of the WLA ACT

In March this year, the WLA ACT and MLC Advice Canberra renewed their sponsorship agreement for a further two years. 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 2014/5, and has also been a regular attendee 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 encourage this.

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

The Association again received significant financial support for its High Tea event and Judicial Mentoring Lunch from the local firm Baker, Deane & 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 was Tiffany Long.

Infinity Legal, thanks to Julia Heinze, sponsored one of the mentoring events for which we are also very grateful.

We were pleased to welcome as a supporter the Women's Law Section of Maurice Blackburn, which sponsored the Law Week Dinner this year.

For the future

We hope to continue all of the arrangements above, and also to explore new relationships and arrangements.

2.4 **Membership, Marketing and Finance**

The Membership, Marketing and Finance sub-committee continued their hard work over the 2014/2015 WLA year. With the huge success of memberships in the preceding year, it was important to retain that membership and continue to grow the WLA's membership. This was successfully done, with an increase of memberships up to 112. As discussed above, the introduction of an electronic membership system played a vital role in this achievement.

Quarterly newsletters for members continued over the 2014/2015 WLA year, with the content expanding. A new initiative undertaken by the sub-committee was to start workshopping a rebranding of the WLA – including its online presence, marketing materials and logo. This is a large task that will continue into the next year.

2.5 **Finance**

Finance plan

The committee approved a Finance Plan and Budget for the 2014/15 Financial Year.

2014/15 Financial Year Net Profit/Loss

During the 2014/15 Financial Year the Association made a net profit of \$4,677.98.

This will be discussed in greater detail at the AGM.

2.6 **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 2014/2015 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.

2.7 **Australian Women Lawyers**

WLA ACT is a constituent body of Australian Women Lawyers (AWL), and individual members of WLA ACT are also members of AWL. We have a member on the board of AWL, and this year it has been Juliet Behrens. AWL organises a biennial conference. The next one will be held in Perth in April 2016. The President of AWL, Amy Challans, has made significant media comment in the last year on issues relevant to the objects of AWL. AWL is supporting the implementation of actions arising from

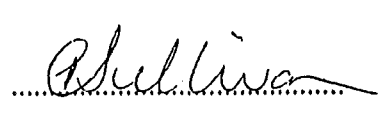
the NARS report, and is also working towards the development of policies on gender-related human resources issues, a gender equity card, and research on wage statistics nationally. It is also working through its constituent bodies to ensure that it is able to provide input into decisions made about judicial appointments. AWL will hold its AGM in Brisbane on 31 October 2015, and Juliet Behrens will attend on behalf of WLA ACT.

3 Acknowledgements

The President would like to acknowledge the efforts and contributions of the following people:

- The Executive- Christina McPherson, Tamara Sullivan and Tiffany Long for their commitment, hard work and support;
- Our membership officer, Georgina McKay;
- 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 support;
- Gillian Beaumont Legal for sponsorship of the Award;
- Infinity Legal for sponsorship of a mentoring event;
- Kriss Will, who reviewed our policies on a pro bono basis and provided very valuable feedback;
- Our auditors Kazar Slaven;
- Our patron and life member Justice Hilary Penfold, and life member Chief Justice Helen Murrell, for their ongoing support and contributions;
- Mathilda Imla for her pro bono work to date on the rebranding;
- Dobinson Davey Clifford Simpson Lawyers for the use of their boardroom and facilities; and
- The ACT Law Society, and in particular Nicole Karman.


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Juliet Behrens, President


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Tamara Sullivan, Treasurer