

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21



WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION_{ACT}



is proud to have built on the success of previous years in 2020/21, albeit with a "COVID overlay". The first half of the financial saw us consolidating our position and growing our strengths with a stable committee. We continue to see excellent initiatives from the subcommittees across the board.

We, along with our members, have experienced many disappointments in 2020/21 as a result of the uncertainty we find ourselves living with. WLA ACT had grand plans to roll events out for the 2020/21 year, providing our members with opportunities to network and hear from leading women in the judiciary, government, private practice and academia, many of which have been cancelled or postponed. Nevertheless, our Events subcommittee introduced new events, some of which were delivered virtually with great success.

We continue to welcome new sponsors as partners on our events. When we recommenced planning our Gala Awards Night, postponed from October 2020, we were heartened by the generous sponsors who approached us, offering their support. Sponsors help us deliver on our commitment to provide low cost events and benefits to members which far exceed the value of their yearly membership fee. Importantly, this has assisted us to forge closer relationships with law firms and boost our profile within the ACT legal community. We look forward to engaging with our members, however we can, in the coming year.

We decided to further extend 2019/20 memberships until 30 June 2021, to ensure members were getting value for their membership in the current environment.

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

The Committee and Sub-committee members continue to give their time and energy to making the WLA ACT what it is. It reflects their ongoing commitment to this community and to their fellow women lawyers, which is inspiring. The WLA ACT Executive is grateful for their support and contributions.

Thank you to all our supporters for making this year possible, and for continuing to lay foundations for the achievements which will follow.

Danielle Mildren

President

Thank you to our Sponsors

Our Major Sponsor



1. Our people

2020/21 Committee Members

President:	Danielle Mildren
Vice President:	Louise Parry
Secretary:	Amanda Gilkes
Treasurer:	Lauren Knobel
Policy Subcommittee Chair:	Harriet Boothman
Events Subcommittee Co-Chairs:	Deborah Mak Jiadi Liang
Communications Subcommittee Co-Chairs:	Emma Letcher-Boldt Annie Schubert
Membership Officer:	Louise Parry
Representative on AWL board:	Kirsty Easdale
Policy Subcommittee Members:	Prue Bindon Claire Daly Danielle Mildren Belinda Miller Jolene Reece Thea Sofatzis
Events Subcommittee Members:	Emma Buckland Katie Haywood Emma Hlubucek Monica Lee Julia Liu Sarah Pain Claire Paton

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION ACT

Jessica Steele

Isla Tobin

Ellie Wallis

Gabrielle Wilson

Communications Subcommittee

Members:

Tiffany Wilken

Stacey Bell

Egypt Meyer

2. Overview of our Year

President: Danielle Mildren

Committee and governance

- 2.1 The Executive Committee was unchanged from the previous year. We have had a busy and productive year, despite the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic and periods of lockdown.
- 2.2 We were grateful for the assistance of our auditor, Hardwickes. WLA ACT received a fully compliant audit report and we are immensely grateful for the assistance of our auditor in working with us.

Mentoring and education

- 2.3 The Committee has continued its strong emphasis on mentoring. We ran our ever-popular Judicial Mentoring event which was booked out very quickly.
- 2.4 We have continued our association with the women law student mentor programs developed by law students at the University of Canberra (Women Lawyers Mentoring Program) and the ANU (Women in Law Organisation) through providing some financial assistance and assisting in recruiting mentors. Many of our members have volunteered their time on these programs as mentors to the women who will become lawyers in the near future. We congratulate the students at both universities who have worked tirelessly to run these programs. Not surprisingly, the pandemic impacted on mentoring opportunities and events.

Raising profiles

- 2.5 It was disappointing that the 2021 Gala Awards Dinner has been postponed to March 2022.
- 2.6 We were delighted that the annual Law Week dinner went ahead. Keynote speaker Bri Lee, freelance writer and author of the award winning memoir *Egg Shell Skull*, spoke about her experience in the legal industry and justice system as an aspiring lawyer, a survivor of sex crime, and now as an advocate for law reform and consent education. We were fortunate to have ACT Victims of Crime Commissioner Heidi Yates close out the evening, and speak about the legal issues facing complainants and survivors of sex crimes in the ACT and the opportunities available for members of the community to contribute to ongoing research and reform in this space. WLA ACT would like to thank Bri and Heidi again for sharing their experiences and insight.
- 2.7 WLA ACT was pleased to work with the ACT Law Courts to present Court Family Day. Justice Loukas-Karlsson opened the event, and attendees were taken on a tour of the Court buildings, including the witness rooms, jury assembly room and the internal glazed oval atrium. Attendees were then able to try on barristers' and judges' horse-hair wigs. We are grateful for the continued support we receive from the Bench.

Policy and advocacy

- 2.8 Our Policy subcommittee has had a particular focus on issues of diversity and representation for women practitioners in the ACT in the last year and in July, conducted a member to survey to gain our members' feedback on how WLA can better address issues for women lawyers in the careers in this space. The Sub-Committee has also continued to work collaboratively with the ACT Law Society's Sexual Harassment Working Group on our jurisdiction's response to this issue in the profession.

Membership

- 2.9 Our member numbers for 2020-2021 remained steady, noting that all memberships for 2019-2020 were extended for 12 months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. WLA ACT continued to offer free student memberships and free memberships for people working at Community Legal Centres and Legal Aid.

3. Our Events

Co-Chairs: Deborah Mak and Jiadi Liang

3.1 The 2020/2021 year saw a number of smaller events due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-related restrictions. We were delighted to be able to put on (albeit with reduced capacity) our Law Week Dinner with Bri Lee and our International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Lunch with Nyadol Nyuon.

3.2 While some events unfortunately had to be cancelled or postponed throughout 2021, we were also pleased to be able to facilitate and host events online, include a virtual "Come to the Bar" with the ACT Bar Association in August and an online yoga and wellbeing session with Liz Hug in September. We are looking forward to continue preparation for our upcoming Awards Gala Dinner in March 2022.

DATE	EVENT	SPONSOR
December 2020	Christmas Drinks	
March 2021	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Lunch at Parlour with Nyadol Nyuon	Hall & Wilcox
April 2021	Paint & Pinot	Neilan Stramandinoli Family Law
May 2021	Law Week Dinner with Bri Lee	Lawyerbank and Blumers Lawyers, partnered with the ACT Law Society
May 2021	Court Family Day, opened by Justice Loukas-Karlsson	Partnered with the ACT Law Society
June - September 2021	WLA Yoga Series with Liz Hug, Elizabeth Carroll and Eveline Kuang	King & Wood Mallesons

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION_{ACT}

DATE	EVENT	SPONSOR
August 2021	Come to the Bar	Partnered with the ACT Bar Association

4. Our Communications

Co-Chairs: Emma Letcher-Boldt and Annie Schubert

- 4.1 The Communications subcommittee has had a very busy financial year, working on numerous developments to enhance and retain our engagement with WLA ACT members. We have continued to update our membership using the WLA ACT website, and our Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts. This has been more important than ever, given that many of our members have found themselves working remotely as a result of COVID-19.
- 4.2 We have taken a step back from quarterly newsletters, hoping to give members a bit of space during these times. We hope to recommence delivering news and blog content from our website to members via our social media platforms.
- 4.4 To support the Communications subcommittee to engage with WLA ACT members and to ensure consistency in our communications, we have created a handbook with key responsibilities and instructions and recorded videos online. This assists our subcommittee members to utilise various communication platforms to connect with and update the WLA membership.
- 4.4 In the coming year, we will look to use our social media presence to deliver exciting and interesting content that is accessible to all members, continue to deliver engaging newsletters and develop content for our website.

5. Our Policy work

Chair: Harriet Boothman

- 5.1 This year our Policy subcommittee has sought to focus on issues of diversity and inclusion affecting women in the ACT Legal Profession. The Subcommittee has successfully worked collaboratively with the Events subcommittee to better ensure that WLA events are representative of its diverse membership in order to reflect this policy goal.
- 5.2 In July 2021, the Policy subcommittee undertook a membership survey seeking feedback on how WLA can better advocate on diversity and inclusion issues, and also sought feedback on the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting women lawyers' careers. The subcommittee intends to use the results to shape its policy goals for 2021-22.
- 5.3 The subcommittee also continues to focus on the issue of addressing sexual harassment in the legal workplace and throughout 2020-21 has maintained WLA representation on the ACT Law Society's sexual harassment working group.

6. Our Membership

Membership Officer: Louise Parry

- 6.1 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WLA ACT extended memberships for 2019-2020 by 12 months to 31 July 2021 to reflect that members had not been provided all the usual benefits of membership during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 6.2 At the date of this report, WLA ACT had 324 members for the 2021-2022 financial year. This is a sizeable decrease from the 623 members we had in 2020-2021. We expect that this is a reflection of the limited ability of WLA ACT to run events and provide networking opportunities for our membership during the 2020-2021 financial year, as well as our members having not had to apply for membership for two years and contact details being out of date.
- 6.3 We anticipate that the membership numbers will increase once WLA ACT is able to run events and the benefit of having a membership becomes apparent to individuals.
- 6.3 We have continued to offer free Associate Memberships for students who are enrolled in a course for a degree in law at a tertiary institution in Australia as well as for Community Legal Centre lawyers and Legal Aid lawyers.
- 6.4 Corporate Membership continues to be popular, as it offers a range of benefits and discounts for entities, and has encouraged a significant number of members over the last few years. For the current 2020-21 membership year, we had 16 law firms or government departments as corporate members. Approximately 367 WLA ACT members held a Corporate Membership in 2020-21.

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION_{ACT}

7. Our Finances Overview

Treasurer: Lauren Knobel

- 7.1 During the 2020/2021 Financial Year the WLA ACT had a net loss of \$5,169.00.
- 7.2 This loss primarily arose from the extension to memberships in the 2019/2020. As a consequence of COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee extended memberships for 12 months to end in June 2021.
- 7.3 The unique circumstances that impacted our financial situation in the 2019/2020 financial year continued into the 2020/2021 financial year. There is hope that postponed events can resume early next year and along with the resumption of membership renewals for the 2021/2022 financial year, we expect our financial position to rebound. Due to financial decisions made this year and in previous years, the WLA ACT is well placed to manage the impact.
- 7.4 Further details will be tabled at the AGM.

8. Acknowledgements

The President acknowledges the efforts and contributions of the following people for their commitment and support:

- The Executive – Louise Parry, Amanda Gilkes and Lauren Knobel.
- Georgina McKay in particular for all of the time she generously gave to WLA during her time as a member, her contribution to numerous subcommittees and her time and commitment to the WLA as Vice-President;
- The rest of the Committee – Fiona Paton, Kirsty Easdale, Rori Moyo, Harriet Boothman, Margot McCabe, Stacey Borg, Lee Usher-Clarke, Jess Ng, Bianca May
- Members of our subcommittees
- Our patron and life member Justice Hilary Penfold, and life member Chief Justice Helen Murrell, for their ongoing support and contributions
- Our principal sponsor Wealth Market (formally MLC Advice Canberra) and its director Michael Miller
- Our event and project sponsors: Clayton Utz, King & Wood Mallesons, MinterEllison, Gillian Beaumont Legal, Maddocks, Blumers Lawyers, Proximity, ANU College of Law, The College of Law, Key Chambers and the ACT Law Society.
- Our auditor, Melissa Deihl, of DFK Everalls
- ACT Bar Association CEO Jo Dean-Ritchie

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION^{ACT}

- The former ACT Law Society President Chris Donohue, former CEO Dianne O'Hara and Communications Officer Nicole Karman
- Justice Hughes who volunteered her time for our International Women's Day evening
- The women judges and tribunal members who volunteered their time for our Judicial Mentoring Lunch.

30 September 2021

Danielle Mildren, President

Louise Parry, Vice President