



**Victorian
Women
Lawyers**



WOMEN KEEPING IN TOUCH

VWL E-NEWSLETTER

JULY 2011

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A WORD FROM THE CONVENOR

Dear Members,

As we reach the half-way point of 2011, it's a convenient time to reflect on what a productive year it has already been for Victorian Women Lawyers, and what an enormous smorgasbord of events we have in store for members during the remainder of the year.

So far in 2011 VWL has:

- > Co-hosted events with the Law Institute of Victoria, Women on Boards, the Australian Corporate Lawyers Association, Women in Finance (Vic) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office, the Women Barristers Association and the Geelong Law Association;
- > Welcomed 131 pairs into this year's Law Student Mentoring Program (see the event report for the launch function later in this edition of WKIT);
- > Via our Law Reform Committee, made submissions to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into the Australian Law Reform Commission, and the Commonwealth's Consolidation of Anti-Discrimination Legislation;
- > Exceeded 700 members, smashing all previous membership records;
- > Launched our own [Facebook page](#) which now has 200 members and counting; and
- > Reaffirmed our commitment, in everything we do, to representing the interests of Victorian female legal practitioners and advocating for justice for all women.

Coming up in 2011 we will:

- > Co-host events with Lawyers for Animals, the Women's Legal Service and the Young Lawyers Section of the Law Institute of Victoria;
- > Present brand new events about lawyers and faith, women migrants, pathways to partnership and networking for government lawyers;
- > Host highly anticipated annual events including the Members and Guests' Evening, Coming to the Bar, the Sexual Assault Forum, the White Ribbon Day Luncheon and of course our Annual General Meeting and Christmas Party; and
- > Celebrate our fifteenth birthday with a sensational event for members at the Melbourne Museum.

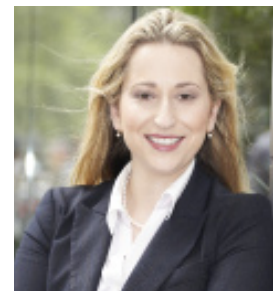
VWL truly has something to offer every member! Hopefully you are now inspired to quickly [renew your membership](#) (if you haven't already) to enjoy exclusive member-only events and networking opportunities. Members who haven't renewed will soon be removed from our membership and mailing databases.

Sincerely,

Kate

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Kate Ashmor
2011 Convenor



Maddocks

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straight talking

CLAYTON UTZ

MinterEllison

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UPCOMINGEVENTS

Warrnambool CPD/CLE Event and Networking Dinner, 22 July

VWL, in conjunction with the Women Barristers Association, invites all women lawyers and law students based in the Warrnambool and surrounding areas to a special CPD/CLE event in Warrnambool on 22 July at 5:30pm.

Deakin University will host the presentation of two CPD units on Ethics and Professional Skills, to be followed by a local networking dinner.

[Click here](#) for more details including how to register.

Members and Guests' Evening, 10 August

If you enjoyed last year's Members and Guests' Evening, hold onto your boots as this year as we're going to knock your socks off! The Melbourne underworld has saved the date and surprises are guaranteed. Join us for a fabulous night of comic entertainment, great food and a complimentary drink, but only if you dare... There are also some amazing door prizes to be won!

The Members and Guests' Evening is an informal get-together to chat, network and learn more about Victorian Women Lawyers – its achievements, goals and the role you might play in its future. We encourage all members to bring along a couple of friends in which case it's free for you all to attend. We look forward to seeing you! Please [click here](#) for further details. RSVP by 31 July.

EVENTREPORTS

Law Student Mentoring Program Launch 22 June

Dozens of mentors and students met for the first time on Wednesday 22 June at the launch of VWL's 2011 Law Student Mentoring Program.

Middletons graciously hosted the event and the Hon Justice Marcia Neave AO once again this year encouraged attendees to make the most of their mentoring experiences and to value the opportunity to learn from each other. Two pairs from the 2010 Program, barrister Christine Melis and Monash University student Katerina Patras, and Department of Justice Civil Policy Lawyer Melanie Hodge and Melbourne University student Bethany Wellington, shared inspiring insights into their own experiences.

This year, 131 pairs are participating in the Law Student Mentoring Program, which aims to connect female law students with female legal practitioners, in order to provide students with valuable insights into life as a female lawyer. All five Victorian law schools are represented among the student participants and mentors of all ages are drawn from private practice firms, as well as the government and corporate sectors. Many barristers also participate as mentors. More than 300 pairs have now completed the Program since its inception four years ago, with some former students now becoming mentors!

VWL gratefully acknowledges Her Honour Justice Neave's ongoing support of the Program. We also thank Middletons for their generous assistance with the Launch and the Women Barristers Association for encouraging the participation of women barristers as mentors. And, of course, a very big thank you to all the VWL members who participated in the Program this year.

Photos from the launch function can be viewed on [VWL's Facebook page](#).



(L-R) Suzanne Kirton (Convenor, Women Barristers Association), The Hon Justice Marcia Neave AO and Kate Ashmor (Convenor, Victorian Women Lawyers)

COMMITTEEREPORTS

Women Migrants Legal Information Project Committee

The Women Migrants Legal Information Project (“WMLIP”) is an initiative of the Victorian Women Lawyers, which aims to make legal information more accessible to migrant women, in particular in emerging migrant groups.

Through a series of broadcasts on community radio stations, WMLIP hopes to provide legal information to migrant women on a number of topics including consumer law, workplace law, family law, domestic violence, migration law and the legal system generally.

We are seeking expressions of interest from female practitioners who speak languages from the following communities:

Priority Group 1 (Emerging migrant communities)	Priority Group 2 (More established migrant communities)
Afghan	Lebanese
Assyrian/Chaldean	Turkish
Burmese (Chin and Karen)	Bosnian
Eritrean	Chinese
Ethiopian	
Iranian	
Iraqi	
Somali	
Sudanese	

The legal content will be pre-scripted and read in the language of the radio station’s listenership. The broadcast may also involve some form of dialogue between the lawyer and the radio station host (e.g. in relation to the difficulties migrants face accessing legal assistance).

If you may be interested in assisting please contact Committee Co-Chairs [Samantha Perussich](#) or [Philippa Darlow](#) by 22 July.

MEMBER UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Every month, WKIT will feature a profile of one of our members as well as a lawyer from one of our sponsor firms. This way, we will introduce you to a broad spectrum of female lawyers who are proud to be associated with VWL.

This month we profile **Shelley Lipe, Manager, Complaints and Investigations, [Legal Services Commissioner](#)**:



I became a lawyer because... I was heavily influenced by the mood and the anthem of Helen Reddy's, **'I am Woman'** namely:

'If I have to I can do anything, I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman ... until I make my brother understand.'

I had a burning ambition to live that mantra and the passion still burns within me after almost 30 years in the law.

I am really proud of... the wonderful opportunities I had throughout my legal career including stints in major law firms in London and Hong Kong and particularly attaining my first partnership in a city law firm - truly highlights of my career.

You can have it all... by a ring of confidence (I must have been influenced by that Colgate ad too!) and hard work.

I am extremely grateful for... the persistence and courage of women suffragettes and pioneering women in the law, who paved the way for me and all aspiring female lawyers to not only get a look into the legal profession, but to excel at the highest echelons across the profession in law firms, the bar, the judiciary and government.

A key mentor who influenced my career is... a managing partner (yes a male) in a city law firm who actively supported my pursuit of partnership. A fan of Helen Reddy's?

If I wasn't a lawyer... I would be a journalist ... I like an argument, (the litigation lawyer in me) and words.

Before I started at my present position... I lived my dreams of working overseas in major law firms in London and in Hong Kong.

The best advice I ever received was... as a woman that you could do anything you wanted ... it certainly set up a lifetime challenge in so many facets of life ... thanks Helen!

One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in is... setting up and heading a litigation unit at the Legal Services Commissioner (with a team of very dedicated women lawyers) to specialise in professional misconduct cases at VCAT, appeals to the Supreme Court and the High Court. We are moving at quite a pace to clear backlogs and expedite more recent cases of aberrant lawyers in the legal industry, some of which are repeat offenders and engage in unacceptable conduct.

Outside of the law I enjoy... I love driving my Porsche ... my dream car of many years (yes another dream) ... alas I have to wait for the weekends to do so...hoping to hit the race track some time soon and taking on 'my brothers'.

SPONSOR UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

This month we profile **Dr Justi Roseman, Special Counsel, Corporate** at [Blake Dawson](#).



I became a lawyer because... I graduated during the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s. At that point there were not too many graduate economist jobs going, so I thought I'd apply for an articulated clerkship (having never intended to become a lawyer). Consequently I call myself an accidental lawyer. I intended to finish my PhD in economics while working in the law and then go back to economics and find a job at an NGO or university. Twelve years on, I have the PhD but am still working as a lawyer, having found a specialty that utilises both the legal and economics parts of my brain.

I am really proud of... professionally: A lot of the things that I've been able to achieve as the National Chair of the Law Council's Financial Services Committee – in particular influencing regulators and regulatory reform. Personally: Being a mum.

You can have it all... if you are prepared to make a lot of personal sacrifices, work a lot harder than the boys, and most importantly look after yourself. As a sole parent of two pre-schoolers, working full time as a Special Counsel in a big firm – I guess I do have it all. My advice to others struggling with legal work and motherhood is to make sure to make some time for yourself each week for a workout, coffee/meal with friends and for a small treat AND remind yourself that it is perfectly normal for your life to feel like a circus more often than not. If you don't look after yourself, the relentless pressure and competing demands will get you. You have to cut yourself a little bit of slack and be nice to yourself if you want to achieve your full potential without having a breakdown en-route.

I am extremely grateful for... having been born with cerebral palsy. It meant that I got used to falling over (and pulling myself back up) frequently, having to work harder than everyone else to master simple tasks and giving things a go even though I knew I'd probably end up on my rear end with my class mates laughing at me. After a childhood of rehab exercises, few people would pick up that I'd been born with CP now, and while its effects have been short-lived the lessons I learned from living with it have lasted, namely – give anything a red hot go because there's nothing wrong with failing if you give your best.

A key mentor who influenced my career is... my PhD supervisor. After I graduated he convinced me that I would be better off staying in the law with his tales of political skulduggery in the economics faculty.

If I wasn't a lawyer... I'd be ignoring the advice of my PhD supervisor and working as an economist in a university.

Before I started at my present position... I worked as an in-house lawyer at Westpac/St. George Bank. I chose to ignore the tide of lawyers going from top tier to in-house.

The best advice I ever received was... from a partner I worked for in Sydney: "Don't take life too seriously".

One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in is... sitting on the Commonwealth Treasury's industry advisory group on consumer credit law reform.

Outside of the law... I compete at state and national level in athletics (I used to be at an elite/international level in my pre-lawyer days in distance events as they require little co-ordination but a lot of persistence – so my CP background was advantageous). I also do a reasonable job as a vertically integrated amusement system for the little people who live with me and their friends.

VWL COMMITTEES

Joining a Committee is a great way to become more involved with VWL. All Committee work is voluntary. The time commitment is flexible; we are looking for enthusiasm most of all. Please [email](#) your expression of interest in joining a Committee to our Secretary, Beth Hilton-Thorp.

Our Committees are:

Justice - dealing with all justice related issues including special events such as the annual sexual assault forums and supporting indigenous law students.

Law Reform - monitoring law reform proposals and coordinating submissions on behalf of VWL.

Work Practices - addressing the important issues that affect women lawyers in the workplace, conducting research and holding forums.

Networking - organising events with affiliated organisations including the Women Barristers Association, liaising with regional lawyers' networks, and coordinating annual events including the Members and Guests' Evening and VWL's End of Year Celebration.

Women Migrants Legal Information Project - planning and producing various publications (in several languages) to assist women migrants with key legal rights and support.

Women in Government (WiG) – VWL's newest Committee, in conjunction with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office, plans events and initiatives to assist female practitioners working for public authorities and agencies.

Communications - organising this newsletter, coordinating the editing and publication of Portia, our annual magazine, maintaining VWL's website and liaising with the media.

Membership - looking after our members' needs, leading VWL policy and protocol development and promoting VWL membership within the legal community.