



**Victorian  
Women  
Lawyers**



# WOMEN KEEPING IN TOUCH

VWL E-NEWSLETTER

MAY 2011

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## A WORD FROM THE CONVENOR

**Dear Member,**

Welcome to another edition of *Women Keeping In Touch!*

Victorian Women Lawyers has now reached its highest membership level in our fifteen year history: just over 600 members.

Our membership profile comprises a variety of practitioners in different sectors and from all walks of life. While the majority of members are employed in private practice, a growing number of members are government lawyers, corporate lawyers, barristers, legal recruiters, judges' associates, law students and former lawyers.

Such a diverse membership merits a diverse organisation to represent and serve them. I am delighted to welcome three new members to VWL's Executive who each bring a wealth of diverse experiences to the leadership team: Co-Chairs of the Communications Committee Masha Lezaic and Krystil Carter, and Webmaster Jessica Saunders.

Thank you to everyone who registered to participate in this year's Law Student Mentoring Program. Pairs are being matched up as we speak and all applicants will be contacted in the coming weeks. The launch function for this year's Program will take place later this year than in previous years – participants will be advised of the details.

Finally, a reminder about the huge line-up of events coming your way, including:

- **18 May:** VWL's Law Reform Committee will hold a lunchtime panel discussion on the hot topic of Women on Boards. This event is part of the Law Week calendar and will examine the issue in a law reform context. Further details will be released shortly.
- **24 May:** VWL teams up with ACLA to present a lunchtime panel discussion on leadership for women in-house. Speakers from the corporate and government sectors will share their secrets to achieving success as a female in-house lawyer. This event is only open to VWL and ACLA members. Further details to come.

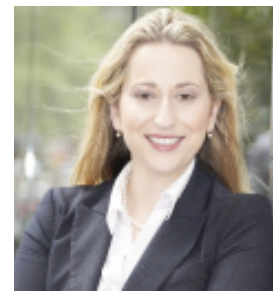
An easy way to stay on top of all the latest VWL news is to become a fan of our rapidly expanding [Facebook page](#). See you around in May!

Sincerely,

Kate

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**Kate Ashmor**  
2011 Convenor

Blake Dawson

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## **New Communications Committee Co-Chairs and Webmaster**

Krystil Carter and Masha Lezaic have been appointed the new Co-Chairs of the Communications Committee and Jessica Saunders is the new Webmaster.

Please contact [Krystil](#) or [Masha](#) if you are interested in writing articles for or editing VWL's annual publication Portia, which is currently being planned.

Welcome!

# UPCOMINGEVENTS

## **Women on Boards Event, 18 May**

*Women on Boards: to reform or not to reform?*

Join the VWL Law Reform Committee for a panel discussion with Claire Braund, Executive Director of Women on Boards and other prominent speakers on the topical issues of quotas for women directors, current ASX disclosure requirements and gender equity in corporate leadership.

The event will be held at Allens Arthur Robinson on 18 May 2011 between 12.30pm and 2.00pm.

Free for VWL members and \$20 for non-members. Further details will be released shortly.

## **Joint Event with ACLA, 24 May**

*Life as an in-house lawyer*

VWL, in conjunction with the Australian Corporate Lawyers Association, will be holding a lunchtime members only panel discussion at DLA Piper on 24 May. Speakers from the corporate and government sectors will explore leadership and achievement by female lawyers in-house. More details to follow soon.

# OTHEREVENTS

## **PILCH Walk for Justice, 16 May**

PILCH is once again organising the annual Walk for Justice. It is the first event on the Law Week calendar and coincides with Walks taking place in Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide, making it an increasingly national event. Attorney General Robert Clark will open the Walk.

The Walk will take place on the morning of Monday 16 May 2011, commencing at 7.30am on the steps of Parliament House before concluding at the forecourt of the County Court for a complimentary breakfast.

The Walk celebrates the important role of lawyers acting pro bono to provide access to justice for marginalised and disadvantaged persons. PILCH will be using the funds raised to establish a pro bono disbursement fund.

[Register or inquire via this link.](#)

# EVENTREPORTS

## **Progressive Law Network Legal (r)Evolution Conference, 19 March Conference Report by Alexia Staker**

On 19 March the Progressive Law Network (PLN) hosted the inaugural 'Legal (r)Evolution Conference.' The Conference sought to address the dominance of conservative politics and law schools' emphasis on corporate careers and it certainly did not disappoint! An impressive line-up of 14 academics, advocates, practitioners and politicians shared their experiences, insights and visions for the future. Speakers included Adam Bandt MP, Julian Burnside AO QC, Brian Walters SC, Professor Susan Kneebone, Dr Bronwyn Naylor and Munya Andrews.

The Conference was structured as a series of 4 panels, each discussing a key area of law "overdue for change", in particular, asylum seekers, the environment, gender and indigenous issues. Specific topics addressed by the panels included a bi-partisan approach toward refugees, abortion law reform, and racism and disadvantage suffered by indigenous Australians.

The PLN is to be congratulated for hosting such an incredible conference, which certainly inspired me to work in the community legal sector in order to tackle some of the most pressing legal issues of our times and I thank VWL for providing me with the opportunity to attend.

## **Women in Government 'Life as a Government Lawyer' Event, 6 April**

On 6 April 2011 WIG hosted a successful lunchtime event 'Life as a Government Lawyer: a conversation with Vanessa Twigg.' Angela Priestley, the editor of Lawyers Weekly, played the role of interviewer of Vanessa. Jennifer Patterson, Deputy General Counsel and the Department of Transport's Legal Division, made some opening welcome remarks. This was a forum to talk candidly about important issues relating to the career challenges faced by women lawyers in the government sector.

Vanessa is the Assistant Director at the Office of Police Integrity. She has 25 years experience in government. Her perspectives were certainly interesting, and we are grateful to both Vanessa and Angela for participating in the first of WIG's seminar events.

The event was held at the Department of Transport's Corporate Centre and jointly hosted by VWL and VGSO. The event was well attended with about 80 attendees. We had a strong presence from both State and Federal government lawyers.



(L-R) Jennifer Patterson, Kate Ashmor & Vanessa Twigg

[Click here](#) to view more photos of the Women in Government Event on VWL's Facebook page.

## **Diversity Council of Australia Leadership Briefing, 20 April**

On 20 April Amanda Stevens, member of the VWL Work Practices Committee attended the [Diversity Council of Australia's](#) Leadership Briefing on how to successfully mentor women from diverse backgrounds. Perspectives from an executive, a mentee, and a mentor were discussed.

Kathleen Bailey-Lord, Group General Manager Global Shared Services at ANZ, discussed some of the reasons why mentoring programs were an important tool for promoting gender diversity. ANZ considers diversity as a business imperative, and that women represent a greater market than India & China combined with over \$20 trillion at their disposal. Organisations need to pursue gender diversity in order to tap into the full talent pool and attract, develop, support and retain talented staff.

Caroline Coops, Partner at Mallesons Stephen Jaques shared her experiences of being mentored under the Business Council of Australia C-Suite Mentoring Program (a pilot for which 11 high potential women were chosen to be mentored by current CEOs with the aim of boosting the number of women CEOs, CFOs & COOs in Australia).

Caroline, a partner for the last five years works full time and has two children. She was paired with Jack Percy, CEO of Accenture and hoped to gain strategies for “sustainable achievement.” She prepared thoroughly for her meetings brainstorming the advice that she was seeking and then grouping her queries according to theme. She emphasised the benefit of a formal mentoring program of someone outside her firm, as this led to more candid discussions and that timing and seniority of mentors was something to consider, i.e. a very senior mentor too early in a career could be overwhelming especially for women.

Matt Gaffney, Director of Enindico, former partner of a ‘Big 4’ international professional services firm provided a mentor’s perspective by asking his 8 current mentees what worked and didn’t work in their experience of mentoring. The responses suggested that mentors needed to contribute to the relationship, that the selection of pairs had to be done sensitively and that a “try before you buy” coffee was a good idea, giving either party the opportunity to decline without embarrassment.

Matt’s mentees also suggested that the mentee needed to be clear on what they wanted out of the interactions and that some preparation and goals enhanced the outcomes for the mentee.

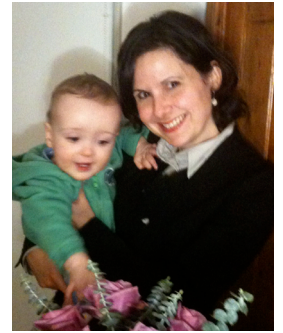
The conclusion from the panel was that mentoring programs both formal and informal were one of a number of important measures that organisations needed to embrace in order to further gender diversity targets. Mentoring programs need to be tailored to the individual and not to “women” per se as women are such a diverse group.

The VWL Work Practices Committee continues to undertake research and initiatives to assist Victorian Women Lawyers in their career progression, and to advocate for gender equality within the law.

# 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 VWL member **Sarah Bendall, Legal Counsel and Assistant Company Secretary** at the [Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman](#):



**I became a lawyer because...** it's a very powerful and wonderfully diverse career.

**I am really proud of...** all the parents and guardians who try their hardest, every day, to strike the magic balance between parenthood and career.

**You can have it all...** so long as you have good childcare.

**I am extremely grateful for...** the freedom I have to live my life the way I want to.

**A key mentor who influenced my career is...** a woman I greatly admire, and who continues to influence my career and my personal values, is Bertha Von Suttner - winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905.

**If I wasn't a lawyer...** I'd still be me.

**Before I started at my present position...** I was hanging around in South America, taking a lot of long bus rides.

**The best advice I ever received was...** I don't know about 'best', but one piece of advice I like to remind myself of lately is "health is wealth".

**One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in is...** my workplace. The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is a leading Australian Ombudsman's office. It deals with the most number of complaints of any Australian Ombudsman's office. The rapid pace of the telecommunications sector means that the TIO must always be innovative, welcome change and be committed to its social justice objectives. It has adapted extraordinarily well to the transformation of the telecommunications industry over the past 20 years and I'm sure it will continue to meet the challenges ahead as the sector continues to grow and change.

**Outside of the law I enjoy...** there is no outside the law. It really does permeate everything.

# SPONSOR UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

This month we profile **Jade Rowarth, Consultant** in the **Insolvency and Reconstruction team** at [Maddocks Lawyers](#):



**I became a lawyer because...** my dad always said to me aim for the top of the pyramid so when you are at the top all the other options in the rest of the pyramid are an easy walk back down not a massive climb up. The law seemed to be the top of the pyramid for me!

**I am really proud of...** the strength of my relationships with my family and friends.

**You can have it all...** close friends and family, a passport filled with stamps from 93 countries and counting, access to all the great restaurants and sporting events in Melbourne while maintaining a busy legal career- that to me is having it all.

**I am extremely grateful for...** my well-rounded country upbringing.

**A key mentor who influenced my career is...** my nan, a lady who had she been born into a different generation would likely be running the country, who taught me to work hard, to value family and friends but to never take myself too seriously.

**If I wasn't a lawyer...** I would have loved to have been a doctor but the thought of being 18 and having to go back and do Year 11 and 12 chemistry wasn't appealing at the time!

**Before I started at my present position...** I was working full time packing fish and chips, managing a bakery and running trips and tours around Victoria for Monash University's international students to put myself through a full time law degree at university. It was bliss starting at Maddocks because it meant I only had to go to one job!

**The best advice I ever received was...** to treat all people equally.

**One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in is...** having recently returned from a 4 year stint working in restructuring/insolvency in the UK, I am trying to bring to the Australian insolvency/restructuring world a taste of some of the ways the UK approaches financial stress and distress in the corporate world.

**Outside of the law...** there is so much to do and I count myself as very fortunate that the law enables me to get out and do it.

# 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 send your expression of interest in joining a Committee to our Secretary, Beth Hilton-Thorp via email: [jthorp@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jthorp@bigpond.net.au)

Our Committees are:

**Justice** - dealing with all justice related issues including submissions to government, organising 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 the annual events including the Members and Guests Evening and the VWL 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.