



**Victorian  
Women  
Lawyers**



# WOMEN KEEPING IN TOUCH

VWL E-NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2011

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Allens Arthur Robinson

## A WORD FROM THE CONVENOR

**Dear Member,**

This is the final WKIT for 2011 and while I know you'll miss our updates, don't despair we'll be back in Feb!

I am very pleased to announce the 2012 VWL Executive as:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Convenor:</b>           | Patricia Athanasiadis                                    |
| <b>Assistant Convenor:</b> | Claire Carrucan  |
| <b>Secretary:</b>          | Beth Hilton-Thorp  |
| <b>Treasurer:</b>          | Jacqueline Browning                                      |
| <b>General Members:</b>    | Jackie Gillies, Michelle Florenini<br>and Alexia Staker. |

I congratulate the incoming Executive and am honoured to have been elected Convenor of VWL for 2012. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the VWL Executive over the past two years and I thank Kate Ashmor for her leadership in 2011.

My interest in VWL stems from my commitment to promoting the interests of women lawyers. As Convenor I will continue to provide members with the opportunity to engage with their Executive, ensuring VWL remains a dynamic platform for the representation of women lawyers.

In 2011 VWL's focus was on 'Reaching Out' to VWL members all over Victoria. From a networking event in Geelong to a CPD session in Warrnambool and the creation of a social media presence via the VWL Facebook page, VWL delivered on its promise to 'reach out'. On that note, I am very excited to announce that in 2012, VWL's theme is 'Mentoring'.

The importance of networking and mentoring is well known and in a recent study by the NSW Law Society called [The Advancement of Women in the Profession Report and Recommendations](#), it was found that the main barriers to progression in legal careers for women were:

- the unavailability of flexible working arrangements; and
- difficulties returning to work after an absence such as maternity leave.

And that

- networking and mentoring were highlighted as key factors in achieving success in the legal profession.

Blake Dawson

middletons |  
straight talking

Maddocks

CLAYTON UTZ

MALLESONS STEPHEN JAQUES

Due to the significance that mentoring and networking play in progressing careers in the law, in 2012 VWL's focus will be on giving members more opportunities to network with other women in their practice areas, engage with speakers through more informal events, and learn soft skills to progress their careers within the law.

And we're already getting started, on 22 February 2012 VWL, in conjunction with the Institute of Chartered Accountants and Women in Finance Victoria are presenting our second annual joint event called "Converting Contacts to Contracts". This interactive event will demonstrate a networking formula to maximise business meetings and relationships and all you to tap into invisible networks to ensure that you are in a great position to convert contacts into contracts.

With spots strictly limited register early so you don't miss out. See details of this event below.

VWL is also very pleased to announce that the Honourable Michael Kirby will be the guest speaker at the 2012 Dame Roma Mitchell Luncheon, and will address the topic of Equal Marriage Rights for all Australians.

The Dame Roma Mitchell Memorial Luncheon remains a highlight of the VWL and LIV calendar. So don't forget to register!

If you would like to be more involved in VWL or would like to make a suggestion on how VWL can be more effective, please send us an [email](#), we are always keen to have your feedback.

I wish you a very safe and happy festive season and look forward to meeting you in the new year!

Sincerely,  
Patricia Athanasiadis  
2012 Convenor



## UPCOMINGEVENTS

### **Converting Contacts to Contracts**

**Date:** 22 February 2012

**Time:** 5.45pm

**Venue:** Bourke Room, The Hotel Windsor,  
111 Spring St, Melbourne VIC 3000

**Cost:** \$65 for members, \$75 for non-members

Register by Friday 17 February 2012

Victorian Women Lawyers, the Institute of Chartered Accountants and Women in Finance (VIC) are presenting their second annual joint event on Wednesday 22nd February 2012 from 5.45pm.

**Converting Contacts to Contracts** will feature guest speaker, Ricky Nowak MAICD, MCEOI, CAHRI, CSP and Director, [Confident Communications](#).

This interactive and engaging presentation will provide and demonstrate a networking formula to maximise business meetings, relationships and results, enabling you to fully develop and sustain your existing networks!

Learn how to tap into invisible networks and ensure that you are in a great position to convert contacts into contracts now and in the future.

What is really happening to women lawyers working in government? Are women smashing through that glass ceiling? Does it even exist in the government context? Does working in government mean that women really can 'have it all'?

Join our stellar panel for a thought-provoking discussion to be followed by networking over drinks and canapés.

Seating at this event is strictly limited.

Don't miss out! [Click here](#) to register for this event.

## SAVETHEDATE

### **Dame Roma Mitchell Memorial Luncheon**

### **Equal Marriage Rights for all Australians**

**Date:** 2 March 2012

**Guest speaker:** The Hon. Michael Kirby

## EVENTREPORTS

### **White Ribbon Day Luncheon - 24 November 2011**

### **In the Spotlight: Violence against women in the media**

WVL in conjunction with the Law Institute of Victoria celebrated White Ribbon Day with a luncheon at the RACV Club, Melbourne.

With over 100 guests in attendance, The luncheon discussion was moderated by her Honour Judge Hampel, who asked panellists Sam de Brito and Waleed Aly for their perspectives on how the media portrays women and the violence against women in advertising and computer games.

The luncheon concluded with the White Ribbon Day oath being sworn by all attendees.

Photos of the party can be viewed on WVL's [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## **NEW Membership Co-Chairs**

VWL's Membership Committee is shaking things up in 2012 and requires two keen operators to head up the Committee, including piloting the new VWL Ambassador program. If you're interested in being part of the VWL Executive please send us an [email](#).

## **Reform Forum**

VWL's Law Reform Committee featured in this month's issue of the Law Institute Journal.

Law Reform Committee Co-Chair Emily Hart and member Prue Elletson commented on the federal government's proposal to consolidate its anti-discrimination legislation.

The article can be accessed [here](#).

The Law Reform Committee will be powering ahead with its submission to the government's discussion paper, which is due early 2012. If you are interested in contributing please contact Law Reform Committee Co-Chairs Emily Hart or Jessica Saunders.

## **Federal anti-discrimination legislation**

The Australian Government has decided to consolidate existing federal anti-discrimination legislation into a single, comprehensive law.

Currently, Commonwealth anti-discrimination law is contained in four separate pieces of legislation, namely the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992; and the Age Discrimination Act 2004. A fifth act, the Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986, establishes the Australian Human Rights Commission and provides mechanisms for resolving complaints of unlawful discrimination.

The consolidation project aims to reduce complexity and inconsistency in the regulation; ensure simple, cost-effective mechanisms for resolving discrimination complaints; and clarify and enhance protections. The Government has committed to introduce new prohibitions on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Government has also committed to consider a number of the recommendations made by the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee in its inquiry into the effectiveness of the Sex Discrimination Act 1984

A background briefing note has been prepared by Mallesons Stephen Jaques and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre - click [here](#) for a copy. The Government has also published a discussion paper setting out some of the key issues and questions relating to the anti-discrimination framework - click [here](#) for a copy. Submissions are due by 1 February 2012.

# MEMBER UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

This month we profile **Patricia Athanasiadis**, 2012 Convenor of Victorian Women Lawyers and tax lawyer at [Clayton Utz](#).



**I became a lawyer because...** I wanted to change the world or rule it... and became a tax lawyer.

**I am really proud of...** having achieved things on my Life To Do List albeit not in the order I expected.

**You can have it all...** if you have good time management skills and don't need to sleep.

**I am extremely grateful for...** the support of my mum, Irene and (very) new fiancé, David who are both immeasurably patient and my cheer squad.

**A key mentor who influenced my career is...** there are too many to name, so I choose to mention the first, my mum, Irene who exemplifies all the qualities I want to possess and told me if at first you don't succeed, doesn't matter, what's next.

**If I wasn't a lawyer...** I would be a geologist or opera singer, but I'm sure everyone around me is far happier with me keeping my attempts at an operetta at home

**Before I started at my current workplace...** I was an associate for the Honourable Justice Davies at the Supreme Court and learnt that wearing robes can be an OH&S issue... particularly when walking near banisters.

**The best advice I ever received was...** Never stop learning.

**One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in...** is promoting greater networking for VWL with other organisations including ICAA, WIFV and NAWIC, and with its members.

**Outside of the law...** I am now planning a wedding, which I've been told will take over all my other interests, including watching River Cottage!

# SPONSOR UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

This month we profile **Catie Burdett**, Partner, Major Projects and Infrastructure Group, [Middletons](#).



**I became a lawyer because...** after attempting to study architecture I realised I had no creative ability and the left side of my brain was much stronger than the right!

**I am really proud of...** my 2 beautiful daughters who I consider to be the greatest achievement of my life.

**You can have it all...** but not all at the same time. At any given point in time you need to decide what your priorities are and how best to juggle all the balls you have in the air to meet those priorities. I think the most important thing to remember is that as your career progresses, different aspects of your life have different priorities

**I am extremely grateful for...** the value my parents placed on education and the large collection of books my father had in his study which I devoured growing up.

**A key mentor who influenced my career is...** there is no key mentor, rather different people have influenced and help guide my career at different times. I think it is important to keep an open mind and gather as much guidance and information as you can from those who are older and wiser and hopefully you will find 1 or 2 key things that resonate with you at that time of your career.

**If I wasn't a lawyer...** I would have a lot more free time to spend with friends and family but would probably be bored and not all that pleasant to be around!

**Before I started at Middletons...** I worked in a number of organisations including time as a management consultant and as general counsel of a biofuels development company. Both of these roles taught me the importance of understanding a client's key commercial drivers in providing good commercial advice.

**The best advice I ever received was...** you catch a lot more bees with honey than with vinegar.

**One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in...** waste to energy projects

**Outside of the law...** I spend time with my family travelling, at the beach and skiing

## 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** - social justice events including the annual sexual assault forum 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 broadcasts (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.

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