

PORTIA

ANNUAL 2012





Photos by Tess Kelly

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CONVENOR'S MESSAGE

BUILDING MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS IN 2012

PATRICIA ATHANASIADIS

MOST LAWYERS, INDEED MOST PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL CAREERS AND PERSONAL LIVES. THERE ARE CERTAINLY NO HARD AND FAST RULES ON HOW SUCCESS IS ACHIEVED OR HOW SUCCESS IS DEFINED, AND THERE WILL LIKELY BE STUMBLING BLOCKS ALONG THE WAY. HOWEVER, WHAT STUDIES HAVE FOUND IS THAT A KEY FACTOR FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION IS *BUILDING MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS*.

Knowing the importance of mentoring, VWL has provided mentoring opportunities for law students since 2008. This year, VWL took our commitment to provide mentoring opportunities one step further and provided the building blocks of mentoring to all members! Whether your query was how to find a mentor, how to be a mentor (or mentee) or what actually is mentoring, VWL offered practical tips and insights to members by hosting events dedicated to explaining mentoring relationships and offering members and potential members the opportunity to build a mentoring relationship. VWL has the object of furthering the advancement and participation of women in the legal profession; this year *building mentoring relationships* was the theme to help achieve this goal!

A snapshot of 2012 for VWL includes:

- representing upwards of 800 members in Victoria;
- making submissions for reform of the law for women in the workplace;
- providing a platform for change in professional standards for flexible work practices through firm management training with Diversity Partners;
- creating a membership committee and VWL ambassador program focused on the engagement of members, potential members and sponsors of VWL;
- pairing over 150 law students and lawyers in the VWL mentoring program;
- implementing internal governance processes and policies to ensure the continued financial sustainability of the organisation;
- co-hosting events with Australian Women Lawyers, the Law Institute of Victoria, the Women Barristers Association, Women in Finance Victoria, the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the National Association of Women in Construction, Westpac, Deakin University and Reprieve Australia; and
- presenting the biannual Women Achievement Awards, as well as our highly anticipated annual events including the sold out Dame Roma Mitchell Memorial Luncheon, Members and Guests evening and Coming to the Bar events.



The success of VWL in 2012 is due to the support and guidance of our patron, the Hon. Chief Justice Marilyn Warren AC and the continued generosity of VWL's sponsors: the Law Institute of Victoria, Allens Linklaters, Minter Ellison, Ashurst, Middletons, Maurice Blackburn, King & Wood Mallesons, DLA Piper, Corrs Chambers Westgarth and Maddocks.

I would like to personally thank every member of the VWL Executive. Every person on the Executive brought their passion for and commitment to the organisation to all of VWL's projects, well done – it was a fantastic year! The editors of Portia, Bree Ryan and Jane Wolfe have created a wonderful edition for 2012 and I congratulate them on all their hard work!

Lastly, it has been a privilege to serve as Convenor of VWL in 2012 and I thank each member engaging with VWL. Whether it was by attending an event, sending a suggestion or offering to be more involved. I hope you enjoy the 2012 edition of Portia!

OUR PATRON'S MESSAGE

THE HON. MARILYN WARREN AC CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF VICTORIA

VICTORIAN WOMEN LAWYERS IS A VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION THAT PROMOTES AND PROTECTS THE INTERESTS OF WOMEN LAWYERS AND ENGAGES WITH LEGAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES THAT AFFECT WOMEN.

Women have made great achievements, particularly in the last decade, in the representation of the feminine face in law: three women have now been appointed to the High Court, women have been appointed as heads of jurisdictions, they are represented in all levels of courts and tribunals, female law graduate recruitment has risen with commensurate appointments as senior associates and partners of law firms, there have been four women presidents of the Law Institute of Victoria and three women chairmen of the Victorian Bar.

Through their talent, their legal skills, their intellects and their capacity for hard work women have achieved permanence in the legal landscape. However, disproportionate representation remains. Recently, national research revealed that women advocates in the law receive disproportionately less court work, and in all likelihood, less of the significant court work than their male counterparts. The Victorian experience mirrors the national experience. In legal practice, things are little better. There is under representation of women in senior positions in law firms in Victoria. This is despite the fact that women make up over 60 per cent of law graduates.

The institutional and structural barriers within legal practice that still operate against women highlights that those women who do succeed cannot rely solely on their example. They ought to use their achievement to expressly and practically support the development and promotion of younger women in the law.

The 2012 edition of *Portia* features articles about the Victorian Women Lawyer's Law Student Mentoring Program, which matches aspiring and young lawyers with senior women mentors from the profession. It is encouraging to read about the dedicated efforts of VWL mentors to guide and promote the abilities of individual young women.

Those who have participated in and supported VWL's mentoring program should be congratulated. Their vision, commitment and investment will reap so much benefit to the legal system as a whole. The mentoring Program has been an outstanding success and is another example of VWL's groundbreaking work in promoting the interests of women in the law.



LIV PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MICHAEL HOLCROFT

THE LAW INSTITUTE OF VICTORIA HAS A PROUD HISTORY OF ENCOURAGING WOMEN IN THE LAW. THIS HAS REMAINED A MAJOR PIECE OF THE LIV'S ADVOCACY EFFORTS IN 2012.

Looking back over the year, I am pleased to see the considered and multi-faceted approach the LIV and associated professional bodies have taken to understand and address the challenges facing women in the law.

The number of women in the law is growing. LIV figures show female membership at 49.7 per cent compared to 50.3 per cent male membership.

The roll-out of initiatives began with the Young Lawyers Hot Topics Series: Your Career. It focused on how to advance your career, pathways, options and opportunities.

Mid-year the LIV launched its Re-energise Your Career series. Three forums looked at employment opportunities, trends and needs in the market; making successful career transitions and flexible work practices.

The LIV also held an Equal Opportunity Update which detailed key changes to the new Equal Opportunity Act 2010 and their likely impact on equal opportunity in legal practice.

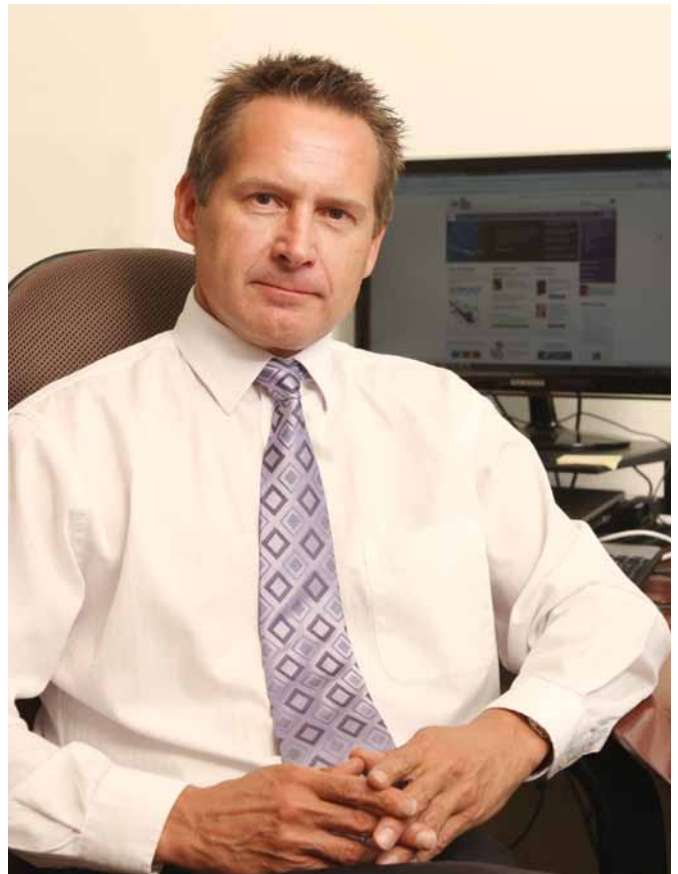
It was also pleasing to see the launch of Victorian Women Lawyers (VWL) new webpage for female barristers. At the click of a button, solicitors can access complete lists of every female barrister in every Australian state and territory.

Many practitioners attended the Women in Leadership lunch, an annual event hosted by the LIV and the Australian Institute of Management.

In December, we will be co-launching the Women in the Law survey with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human rights Commission (VEOHRC). The report will contain a checklist with recommended actions for employers to achieve gender equality, as well as recommendations for education and best practice for the profession more broadly.

In conjunction with the launch, the LIV will be releasing a checklist for members to promote and support diversity in their workplaces. This is part of the wider diversity framework the LIV is developing.

The LIV also made submissions to government on the consolidation of commonwealth anti-discrimination laws and on workplace bullying, calling for a national definition of workplace bullying. It is also monitoring the status of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Bill 2012 which is before the Senate. Its aim is to improve gender equality in employment.



The Law Institute Journal has run a series of articles and features on 'female friendly' practices and successful women in the law.

We continue to support the Victorian Women Lawyers Association.

Individually, these very worthwhile initiatives contribute to a better working environment for female practitioners. Combined, they further the interests of women in the legal profession and in society now and into the future.

Michael Holcroft

President
Law Institute of Victoria

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM



Left to right: Amber Millhouse, DLA Piper; Felicity Cull, King & Wood Mallesons; Bree Ryan, Maurice Blackburn; Katrina Stuart, White Cleland & Membership Committee Co-Chair; Jessica Heyes, Minter Ellison; Marlene Dixon, Victoria Legal Aid & Membership Committee Co-Chair.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM SAW AN EXCITING EXPANSION OF OUR DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WOMEN'S LEGAL PROFESSION AS WELL AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR COLLABORATION WITH OUR SPONSOR FIRMS: ALLENS >< LINKLATERS, ASHURST, CORRS CHAMBERS WESTGARTH, CLAYTON UTZ, DLA PIPER, KING & WOOD MALLESONS, MADDOCKS, MAURICE BLACKBURN, MIDDLETONS AND MINTER ELLISON.

VWL started the year wanting to engage further with our sponsors so that we could then engage further with members from our sponsor firms. Accordingly, we introduced the VWL Ambassador Program, designed to encourage greater communications between VWL and our sponsor firms. With over half our sponsor firms taking part in the Program we obtained excellent feedback, allowing VWL to understand the type of activities which our sponsor firms and members from sponsor firms would like to see more of and how VWL membership is valued.

After a challenging brainstorming session with representatives keen to develop ways in which VWL and sponsor firms could work together in the future to support and enhance women's experience within the legal profession. We found common themes and discussion points which VWL used this year and will continue to use in future years to promote greater engagement with sponsor firms, VWL members at sponsor firms and VWL members.

See our Sponsorship Officer, Jackie Gillies report in our Committee Reports for more information about our sponsor firms.

FEATURE ARTICLES

COFFEE SHOP MENTORING

JENNIFER BATROUNEY S.C.



Left to right: Stella Gold, Michelle Sharpe, Jennifer Batrouney S.C. holding Michelle's daughter (and future Chief Justice) Cara. I have mentored Michelle and Michelle has mentored Stella. **Photo:** Krystal Seigerman kseigerman@hotmail.com

I MENTOR A FLEET OF WOMEN — 22 OF THEM TO BE EXACT. I TREASURE THEM ALL. I HAVE MENTORED MOST OF THEM FOR YEARS. IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO BE A SMALL PART OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIVES.

It all started in a shoe shop in Balwyn. The proprietor offered me a pair of fairly high heels which I refused on the ground that I spent a lot of time on my feet. He asked me what I did and when I told him that I was a barrister, his eyes lit up with pride and he told me that his daughter was a law student. It turned out that she was quite a brilliant law student and I have been her mentor for over a decade. I am not sure if I still qualify as her mentor — she is now quite a senior lawyer. Perhaps I have crossed the line and am now an old friend? Either way suits me.

Other women that I have mentored have been referred to me from a variety of sources — the Victoria Law Foundation, the Guides, friends, colleagues in chambers, teachers at my sons' school, the Mary Jane Lewis Scholarship Foundation, professional organisations such as the Taxation Institute and formal mentoring schemes such as those run by the Victorian Bar, the University of Melbourne Law School and, of course, Victorian Women Lawyers.

Every single one of these women has been an inspiration to work with. From my point of view, I have enjoyed watching over them — keeping an eye on their professional development and simply being there for them when they need a confidential chat about this or that. It is not a one way street... I also relish the opportunity to hear of their progress through work and life. Together we have

shared the joy of being admitted, promotions, marriages and the birth of children — it is a very refreshing and invigorating process for me.

My passion for mentoring arose from my own experience in the law. When I started my career I did not know even one lawyer. I am from a family of school teachers. On the first day of my articles, I remember heading straight to the tax partner's office and asking if I could work in the tax area. That partner has mentored me (and my husband) throughout our careers and we now count him as a close friend and advisor. Similarly, when I came to the Bar – the only barrister whom I had heard of was Neil Forsyth QC and when I asked him to help me find a “master” to read with, he not only did that but he continued to mentor me throughout his life. In turn, it has been a special honour to be able to remain friends with his lawyer daughters and widow after his untimely death.

One of the younger women that I mentor particularly impressed me with her forthright approach to me. We were at a Taxation Institute function and she simply came up to me and introduced herself. When I discovered that she was from Far North Queensland I decided then and there that she needed all the help that she could get (just kidding!). Her lack of contacts in Victoria resonated with my early experience. I was able to utilise my network to help this intelligent and vibrant young woman obtain part time work while she completed her studies and also to provide an introduction for her into the firm where she obtained graduate employment. While I do not see it as my function to act as an employment agency for the women that I mentor, it does give me a great sense of satisfaction to (sometimes) be able to play a part in opening the door for them. That is all that I can do – from then on it is up to them to prove their worth to a potential employer ...and they do that in spades! I am very proud of them all.

I have read material which suggests that mentoring needs to be a very structured affair. I do not subscribe to that theory. My contact with the women that I mentor is quite haphazard. We email each other when we want to have a chat and we make a time to have a coffee.

Sometimes it might be a “pick me up” session — the young graduate might be finding it difficult to obtain a position in a firm. In that case I might point out that although they have not been chosen for the position THIS TIME at least they made it to the cut and were offered an interview!

Another time I might counsel a young woman working as a graduate law student in an accounting firm to seek to do all she can to ensure that the firm supports her in completing the Leo Cussen/ College of Law course so that she can actually be admitted as a lawyer. It is not unknown for accounting firms to discourage this necessary and final step toward qualification as a solicitor in favour of a Chartered Accounting or other qualification.

“ONE OF THE YOUNGER WOMEN THAT I MENTOR PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED ME WITH HER FORTHRIGHT APPROACH TO ME. WE WERE AT A TAXATION INSTITUTE FUNCTION AND SHE SIMPLY CAME UP TO ME AND INTRODUCED HERSELF.”

I have taken some of the women that I mentor to the High Court to observe cases that I am appearing in — they really see the cut and thrust of the law in that situation!

When I was President of Australian Women Lawyers, I took one of the women that I mentored with me to meet the Chief Justice of the Victorian Supreme Court and the Victorian Attorney-General. We took photos of ourselves with these dignitaries and when she forwarded these photos to her country Victorian parents she said that they were “so proud” of her.

It is moments like these that make mentoring such a worthwhile experience for me. I encourage women of all ages to consider mentoring a less experienced woman or to seek a more experienced woman to be their mentor. It is the ultimate “win-win” experience.

Jennifer Batrouney S.C.

List A Barristers

MENTORING — A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

SAMANTHA MARKS S.C.

I WAS ENCOURAGED TO COME TO THE BAR (AT AGE 24, IN 1989) BY A BARRISTER I HAD BEEN WORKING WITH ON A MATTER, LESLIE GLICK (NOW S.C.). HE TOLD ME I COULD READ WITH HIM. HE TOLD ME HE WOULD SHOW ME HOW IT WAS DONE. HE TOLD ME I WOULD NEVER LOOK BACK. BECAUSE OF HIS ADVICE AND ENCOURAGEMENT I TOOK THE LEAP AND COMMENCED WHAT HAS NOW BEEN AN EXTREMELY HAPPY AND PRODUCTIVE 23 YEARS AT THE BAR (AND CONTINUING). I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT A MENTOR WAS IN THOSE DAYS. I NOW KNOW THAT HE WAS DEMONSTRATING HOW TO BE A GREAT ONE.

I read with Les and another barrister, George Golvan (now QC). I had of course learnt a lot at University, when I did articles, and in my Readers Course. However, when I look back it was the on-going relationships with these mentors (then called 'Masters' in pre-gender-neutral times!) and the ability to observe them in their practices, and ask questions of them — even the silliest of questions — in an environment where I knew I would be well-received that gave me so much help. They encouraged me when cases seemed difficult, or judges tricky. They gave me confidence in my own ability to find the answers when at times I wasn't sure which direction to turn.

Some years after I had commenced at the bar, the Women Barristers Association (WBA) was formed. Through it, I got to know a number of other women barristers further down the track than me, such as Judge Rachel Lewitan, Justice of Appeal Pamela Tate and Justice Jenny Davies (giving them their current titles). Seeing how they managed their practices and enjoyed their young families as well, gave me confidence that it could be done. As my family grew to include three children (now aged 10 to 17) and my practice grew in tandem, informal mentoring from other women in the law helped when sometimes it seemed more difficult to manage everything.



Samantha Marks S.C.

In the course of my own career I have tried to provide that same assistance to many others who have crossed my path. Both formally through law student mentoring programs arranged through VWL and WBA, or informally when people have approached me from their position as a law student, reader, junior barrister or solicitor, I have been pleased to help — particularly knowing how much others helped me.

Our discussions have covered issues ranging from problems in their practices, doubts and concerns they might have about their career, the next step they want to take, whether to apply for that associateship, whether to apply for a particular course, how to set out in a new direction in the law, how to manage now that they have a new baby in the house, to what area of law might best suit them. Where I have gone to or given seminars that I thought would assist them, I have endeavoured to include them. Where I have seen things of interest to them I have sent them through. Sometimes my assistance has been a call to someone I knew at a law firm to suggest that they take on one of my mentees for work experience, sometimes a suggestion that they approach another colleague to offer pro bono assistance in the first place in the area of law they want to get into (thus breaking the barrier of having no experience in the particular area), sometimes a suggestion as simple as joining and attending VWL events and continuing to make connections and get support in that way.

I have received so much in return: on-going friendships, a semi-maternal pride in the achievements and appreciation of their careers, a link with the next generations of those in the law at a much more personal level. I have found out personally how university differs from what it was when I was there in the early eighties. I have been able keep seeing our legal landscape from the perspective of those just starting out.

One of my mentees was first matched up with me when she had a young child, was pregnant with her second, and was studying part time. She continued on, having three beautiful children, finishing her degree, and doing work experience with me for over a year, part time. Seeing the joy she had achieving her degree and starting work at last as a lawyer after a 10 year part time degree process, reminded me how lucky I am to work in such an interesting area. As a bonus, Linda and I — and our now 10 year old daughters — have become close friends.

You never know where mentoring will lead you. It has been, and continues to be, one of the more rewarding parts of my working life.

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THE POWER AND IMPACT OF MENTORING — MY STORY

LINDA WITHINGTON

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE VOLUNTEER



Linda Withington

I WAS A MATURE AGE STUDENT OF 35 WHEN I STARTED MY LAW DEGREE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE IN 1999. BEING A LAW STUDENT WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY THE BANE AND THE LIGHT OF MY EXISTENCE FOR MANY YEARS.

I was the first in my family to attend University so they and my peers could only watch helplessly as I struggled to comprehend what was required of me. One does not drop out of law school. I reminded myself continually as I strove to understand how to do a 'hypothetical' and write a law essay whilst first working full time and then bathed in the fog that having babies creates. I tried every permutation – I deferred, I returned, I tried full-time and part-time. Somehow, I managed to keep on passing, although for every exam sat, I believed that I would fail and then the decision to stay or go would ultimately be made for me. At one stage though, whilst sleep deprived and acutely overwhelmed after the birth of my second child I decided I could go no further. I spoke with my lecturer Professor Carolyn Evans (now Dean of the University of Melbourne Law School) who having had two children herself was able to empathise with my situation. She provided much needed advice and support at that meeting which reinvigorated me immensely and I decided that I would not give up. I realise now that this was my first (mini) mentor experience.

In 2002 I decided to join a feminist lawyers group in an attempt to meet practising lawyers who would help make this journey less lonely and confusing. I did indeed meet some lawyers who were inspiring and welcoming, however at times I felt even more alienated than before. I was informally allocated a mentor but it just didn't seem to work out. The lawyer was kind but extremely busy and I didn't really know what I expected from the relationship anyway. Once again indecision and fear bubbled within. Into that swirling mess of uncertainty and doubt I was thrown a lifeline. In 2004 the University of Melbourne's 'Women in Law Group' advertised a new Mentoring Program launch. The premise behind its inception was based on statistics which indicated that women have access to fewer senior role models than males in the legal profession. This discrepancy can lead to female graduates feeling disconnected from the legal fraternity, lacking access to networking circles and feeling confused about their chosen career path within the law. These issues definitely resonated with me and I signed up immediately, however my expectations were quite low due to my previous experience.

My assigned mentor was Samantha Marks (now SC) and my mentoring relationship with Sam has far surpassed anything I believed possible. I have known Sam now for almost 9 years and her support of my legal education and budding career path has been immense. When we first met she was working full time as a barrister, had numerous readers, was mentor to various younger female barristers and lawyers and was the Convenor of the Women's Barristers Association. She had a thriving practice, a husband who was Senior Counsel and three young children, yet somehow she still managed to find the time to volunteer for the University of Melbourne Women's Mentoring Program. In the beginning Sam invited me to various legal conferences. At one such conference I sat next to and chatted with the Chief Justice Marilyn Warren! Anything seemed possible then. The opportunities and support that she created for me over time were truly amazing. All of a sudden my lack of direction and fear started to abate as I felt the firm hand of Sam mentoring and guiding me. Sam was such a genuine, sincere and committed mentor that I actually started to believe that maybe I could be a lawyer one day!

While completing my law degree Sam organised for me to complete 20 days of the ANU GDLP placement at a colleague's small commercial law firm where I was involved in property transactions, probate and contract law. Immediately after, I completed another 20 day placement with Her Honour Linda Dessau at the Family Court of Australia. This placement was truly exceptional, I had the incredibly surreal experience of chatting casually with an esteemed judge about the law and her judgments. After 7 years out of the work force my confidence in my ability to work had been seriously eroded. Sam and Her

Honour were aware of this. The guidance and respect that they granted me and my humble opinions helped to build up my confidence within a legal workplace arena. Not long after I completed those two placements I gave birth to my third child. Two years later I commenced working with Sam as her research assistant whilst juggling the demands of three young children. When I encountered personal family issues, she immediately allowed me flexibility with my work arrangements. Her ability to accommodate my personal life, whilst still managing to instil in me a desire to pursue a legal career was truly inspiring.

When I reflect on Sam's mentoring role in my life, it becomes obvious that her commitment to mentoring reflects her deep passion and love for the legal profession. As a mentor Sam has always positioned my hard earned legal qualifications as a back drop to her advice to me. Her balancing of personal fulfilment and career guidance against that common denominator has been extraordinary. The other element that I had not expected was the longevity of this relationship. Sam has mentored me for almost a decade and calibrated that mentoring to suit each stage I experience. It is with a sense of awe and gratefulness that I realise that she will be there for many decades to come. Due to my exposure to Sam's mentoring I hope that one day in the future I will be able to mentor another woman and share the valuable advice and experiences I have learnt and am still learning from Sam. That person will of course meet my mentor.

I have been extremely fortunate, for not only was I introduced to an amazing mentor, I also gained a valuable friend.

“ WHEN I REFLECT ON SAM’S MENTORING ROLE IN MY LIFE, IT BECOMES OBVIOUS THAT HER COMMITMENT TO MENTORING REFLECTS HER DEEP PASSION AND LOVE FOR THE LEGAL PROFESSION. AS A MENTOR SAM HAS ALWAYS POSITIONED MY HARD EARNED LEGAL QUALIFICATIONS AS A BACK DROP TO HER ADVICE TO ME.”

ACCESS TO JUSTICE — THE MIGRANT WOMEN EXPERIENCE

AZMEENA HUSSAIN

LAWYER, MAURICE BLACKBURN

BOTH MY PARENTS WERE BORN IN SRI LANKA. IN HIS EARLY TWENTIES, MY DAD MOVED TO LONDON AND LATER GRADUATED FROM CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY. HE THEN MIGRATED TO AUSTRALIA WHERE HE WORKED ON THE ADVISORY BOARD OF SOCIAL SECURITY BEFORE RETURNING TO SRI LANKA.

My mother was an innocent, shy but educated Sri Lankan girl. After finishing school she completed an accounting degree and was well-equipped with a PhD in domestic duties. In the late seventies, my dad married my mum and brought her to Australia. My mum knew absolutely no one in Australia and nothing about the way of life of this country.

My mum worked but remained completely dependent on my dad for understanding the Australian way of life. My mum told me about the times when my dad would go to pick her up after work. She would wait on the same corner on Swanston near a No Standing sign. She believed that meant you literally cannot stand there so she would slowly pace around the sign until my dad arrived and then she would quickly get into the car.

My dad was paranoid that my mum wouldn't integrate fast enough and that she'd be noticed as different. It was so important to my dad that she fit in to the Aussie lifestyle so she would be treated as an equal. To my dad, fitting in meant going to the footy and cricket every single weekend, never missing after-work drinks and hosting barbecues on the weekend. When my siblings and I were born, my dad made it clear at home that we weren't to learn our Sri Lankan languages, Tamil and Singhalese.

So unfortunately, despite shop assistants who often find the need to speak to me slowly (I think it might have something to do with my headscarf), the only language I know is English. I sometimes get compliments, like 'Wow! Your English is fantastic'.

A migrant woman's journey to have access to the law

My mum and dad bought a business that was successful. My dad continued to adopt 'iconic Australian behaviours' which became his life, but overtime this included alcoholism. Unfortunately, with the alcohol came violence and a year after I was born, my dad relocated back to Sri Lanka. He abandoned my family and a family business.

My mum suddenly found herself as a newly settled migrant with a stack of legal issues to deal with. Initially, she tried to resolve matters on her own. She started appearing at court on her own until the court told her not to come back without legal representation. Eventually, my mum tracked down a Sri Lankan retired lawyer who had visited our house in the past, and who prior to his retirement, used to specialise in what he called 'ADT'— *Any Damn Thing*.

He put my mum in contact with a lawyer who assisted her. That lawyer was a generous man, he became someone my mum trusted and relied upon. He resolved my mum's family law matters and it was only recently I found out he wasn't even a family lawyer: he specialised in tax.

Mum trusted this lawyer and his team because her Sri Lankan friend and her community did. It made me realise that access to the law was not a matter of searching for a firm in a yellow pages or knowing its reputation. It was about trust. Word of mouth from community was so much more important than any other accolade. I witnessed how these lawyers' would allay my mother's fears and anxiety. She felt reassured that the matters of her family were being dealt with by people she could trust.

In witnessing this, from the age of two I was determined to become a lawyer. At the time, I wanted to be a lawyer to help my mother the way those lawyers did. I could see the profound impact they had on her and I wanted to help her in the same way.

I used to always tell my mum: 'just wait, I will become a lawyer to help you out'. I was convinced that my mum was waiting so I started reading random readers digest law books at primary school. You can only imagine what my mum was like on the day of my admission. I don't think the partner from Maurice Blackburn that moved my admission had been kissed so many times by a woman other than his wife!!

My mum's experiences really opened my eyes to the migrant woman's journey to merely have access to the law. So for me, it's now about giving back to my community.

When many newly arrived migrants settle in Australia, there is an automatic us and them. Us: being the migrants and their familiar migrant communities. Them: being the wider Australian community, there is a fear of those in uniform, such as police and a distrust of those in authority.

I did some work experience with a criminal lawyer and was sitting in on an interview with a woman who had accumulated substantial parking fines for merely not understanding the law. The client was hesitant in providing Centrelink benefit details to her lawyer because she feared the lawyer was trying to get her into trouble somehow by doing an audit with the tax department. Her lawyer was merely trying to help her get the smallest instalment payment plan.

So what underpins this fear and divide? There is a lack of trust, which is due to a lack of understanding which creates a lesser sense of belonging. Because of this disconnect, enforcing and asserting ones rights comes only over time — when there is an increased sense of belonging.

I have spoken to female groups at local mosques across Melbourne, at 'know your rights' type sessions. I remember at my first session I spoke about about how to pursue your rights when injured at work. During the question time, I realised I had to take a step back and explain to a majority of the attendees that they are *actually* protected if they are injured at work.

I've heard of horror stories of female factory workers who were too scared to inform their boss when they injured themselves. I spoke with a woman who had her finger caught in a large commercial sewing machine requiring stitches and surgery. She didn't report it, but rushed home with her hand wrapped in cloth because she didn't want to lose her job for causing her injury.

Like my mum, until people know their rights in relation to a legal issue, you can be sure a woman would call on her aunties, cousins, daughters or sister who is studying first year law for trusted advice, than ring up an adept law firm for some free, genuine legal advice.

My experience entering the legal profession

Several years ago, when applying for traineeships, I secured an interview with a personal injury firm. I remember nervously waiting in reception, thinking about: 'why a career in personal injury?' and 'why this firm?'. I had studied the values of the firm and the reasons why I wanted to work there.

The partner of the firm seemed surprised when he saw me (probably because of the headscarf I wear), and his demeanour and questions, were not what I expected. There were no questions that I had prepared for. Rather, an evaluation of whether my religious beliefs and whether my appearance would fit into the firm.

By the end of it, it was a matter of 'Sorry Azmeena, I don't think I would be able to accommodate the potential controversy that you could potentially bring to this firm when it would be a lot easier for me to hire someone who did not have such differences.' I actually considered removing my headscarf for any future potential interviews.

The legal profession is an extremely conservative one and has always been dominated by Anglo-Saxon men. There is still a long road ahead for women, let alone women that dress or look different.

We all know the struggle we face as women even in our legal careers alone. As women, we have a far greater moral obligation to support migrant and disadvantaged women, because we know first hand what it is like.

So how can we, as women lawyers, go from being one of them, to one of us? It is about building relationships and genuinely getting to know our communities and creating understanding and meaningful relationships.

" I SPOKE WITH A WOMAN WHO HAD HER FINGER CAUGHT IN A LARGE COMMERCIAL SEWING MACHINE REQUIRING STICHES AND SURGERY. SHE DIDN'T REPORT IT, BUT RUSHED HOME WITH HER HAND WRAPPED IN CLOTH BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T WANT TO LOOSE HER JOB FOR CAUSING HER INJURY."

Helping you manage your personal and professional wellbeing



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THE HIDDEN AND COMPLICATED MENTAL ILLNESS

ALEXANDRA BRAND

GRADUATE LAWYER, SLATER AND GORDON

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS THERE HAS BEEN INCREASED AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AFFECTING LEGAL PROFESSIONALS AND IN PARTICULAR DEPRESSION, STRESS AND ANXIETY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ALSO BE AWARE OF SOME OF THE OTHER MENTAL ILLNESSES THAT MAY AFFECT THE LEGAL PROFESSION, SUCH AS EATING DISORDERS. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF EATING DISORDERS: ANOREXIA NERVOSA, BULIMIA NERVOSA, BINGE EATING DISORDERS AND EATING DISORDERS NOT OTHERWISE SPECIFIED (EDNOS).

DESPITE BEING INTELLIGENT, HIGHLY QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS, LAWYERS ARE NOT IMMUNE FROM EATING DISORDERS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN. IF NOT TREATED, AN EATING DISORDER OR MENTAL ILLNESS CAN SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT YOUR LIFE AND PRACTICE. SOME FACTS YOU MAY NOT HAVE KNOWN — ONE IN TEN AUSTRALIAN WOMEN WILL SUFFER FROM AN EATING DISORDER.¹ SUICIDE RATES FOR ANOREXIA ARE 32 TIMES HIGHER THAN FOR PEERS AND EATING DISORDERS HAVE THE HIGHEST MORTALITY RATE OF ANY OTHER PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS.²

What is an eating disorder and how do they come about?

Eating disorders are a group of conditions classified by abnormal eating habits, often involving either insufficient or excessive food intake. Eating disorders are a mental illness and not a lifestyle choice, therefore the illness is caused by a variety of psychological and emotional factors.

Eating disorders often exist simultaneously with one or more other mental illnesses, including depression or anxiety, due to associated negative feelings and low self-esteem. Ultimately, eating disorders are a distinctive reaction to a variety of external and internal conflicts, such as stress, anxiety, unhappiness or lack of control; hence it is important to identify and address the reasons behind the sufferer's symptoms.

Eating disorders usually develop when a person begins to see their food intake as the only part of their life they can control. It is important for lawyers to recognise that the same personality traits that can make a person successful in a competitive, high-stress profession, such as the law, are also reflected in the personalities of eating disorder sufferers.

Some of these personality traits include self-imposed perfectionism or compulsivity issues. Quite often the high expectations and unrealistic goals that sufferers set for themselves are internally motivated, rather than set by social expectations. An example of this might be obtaining high distinctions in every subject at university. Generally, most sufferers are afraid of losing control over their professional and/or personal life; consequently, developing an eating disorder as the only thing they feel they can control. As female lawyers we must ensure that we maintain a healthy work life balance and if we find ourselves or a female colleague at risk, we must seek professional medical advice.

How an eating disorder can develop amongst women lawyers

An eating disorder *may* develop because of the following circumstances: the academic pressure of several difficult and competitive years of study; the long hours expected of many lawyers; a huge file load; the stress of dealing with sensitive or distressing matters (especially in criminal or family law); pressure to meet high billing targets or budget; or the stress of difficult ethical situations faced in the course of practice. It is important to understand that each person reacts differently to every situation therefore one person may thrive in a stressful work environment but another person may not be able to cope.

1 The Butterfly Foundation, *Fact sheets – Eating Disorder Information* (2009), <http://thebutterflyfoundation.org.au/Uploaded_Files/CMS_Image/file/Eating%20Disorders%20Information.pdf> accessed 2012

2 P. Beaumont, 'Anorexia nervosa as a mental and physical illness – the medical perspective' in D. Gaskill and F. Sanders (ed), *The Encultured body – Policy implications for Health Body Image and Distorted Eating Behaviours*, Brisbane, Queensland University of Technology, (2000) pp 80-94.

As women lawyers we are noticed within the work place and public sphere. Women lawyers should not have to change themselves to get ahead in their career or achieve perfectionism to excel. Eating disorders appear to remain hidden from the public sphere. As women lawyers we need to advocate for societal awareness and support our colleagues within the profession suffering from an eating disorder. The negative stigma and shame associated with the illness often stands in the way of identifying and recovering from an eating disorder, leaving many people to suffer in silence.

If you believe a person you know may not be coping well or may have an eating disorder, it is essential that these concerns are raised with the person as soon as possible. Confronting the situation may be difficult, but it is imperative to communicate your concerns.

Women lawyers supporting each other

Finding a female mentor is valuable for your own professional growth and understanding of the profession. Given that female lawyers encounter a different set of problems in the workforce than men, for example how to excel in a male-dominated industry and how to deal with gender discrimination issues, a like-minded female mentor may be able to guide you more efficiently.

Perfectionism, depression and stress are often intertwined with an eating disorder. Eating disorder sufferers, especially those from the legal profession, tend to be perfectionists with high expectations of themselves. Working in a stressful and fast paced profession is difficult, however being supportive and acting as a mentor to your colleagues helps them (and you) identify the difficulties of the profession and learn how to overcome them in a healthy and professional way.

Just like depression, it may be extremely difficult for a person suffering from an eating disorder to admit they have a problem. As women lawyers, we have to work together and support each other — this is why mentoring is so important amongst our profession. If you are concerned that someone you know may be affected by an eating disorder and you do not know how to approach the topic, seek advice from a health care professional or one of the organisations listed below. Finding the courage to take that first step is vital.

Where to get help

Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria (EDFV)

A non-profit organisation which aims to support those affected by eating disorders and to better inform the community about disordered eating.

Telephone: 9885-0318

Website: www.eatingdisorders.org.au

The Butterfly Foundation (Victoria)

The Butterfly Foundation is dedicated to bringing about change to the culture, policy and practice in the prevention, treatment and support of those affected by eating disorders and negative body image.

Telephone: 9822-5771

Website: www.butterflyfoundation.org.au

“ EATING DISORDERS ARE A GROUP OF CONDITIONS CLASSIFIED BY ABNORMAL EATING HABITS, OFTEN INVOLVING EITHER INSUFFICIENT OR EXCESSIVE FOOD INTAKE. EATING DISORDERS ARE A MENTAL ILLNESS AND NOT A LIFESTYLE CHOICE, THEREFORE THE ILLNESS IS CAUSED BY A VARIETY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS.”

WHEN MENTORING WORKS

– A CASE STUDY

JESSICA HEYES

SENIOR ASSOCIATE, MINTER ELLISON

JESSICA HEYES IS MINTER ELLISON'S CURRENT AMBASSADOR FOR VICTORIAN WOMEN LAWYERS. SHE SPOKE TO TWO PARTNERS OF THE FIRM – KYLIE DIWELL AND JAMES HUTTON – ABOUT THEIR SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP, AND THEIR ADVICE TO THOSE SEEKING OR WORKING WITH A MENTOR.

Mentee-led relationship Kylie sought out James as her mentor in 2009 as part of an internal mentoring programme run by Minter Ellison. At the time, Kylie was preparing for admission to the partnership and sought out James as a source of guidance through that process. Kylie says that James made it clear that it was up to her, as the mentee, to set the agenda and lead their relationship.

Initially, James supported Kylie through a leadership development programme, which required Kylie to take an in-depth look at her strengths and challenges, and form a personal development plan setting clear, specific objectives.

Evolution The relationship didn't end with Kylie's successful partnership appointment. Since then, Kylie and James have kept in regular contact – Kylie often contacts James to discuss legal issues, ideas for areas of law or service lines she is keen to get into, ways to develop Kylie's team and get the best out of others, dealing with different communication styles and personalities, and work/life balance.

So what's in it for the mentor? Mentoring is not all one way. James says that "a mentoring relationship which involves two-way communication is beneficial to both mentor and mentee. A mentoring relationship can help a mentor to gain a fresh perspective on their own situation – and it's satisfying to support a motivated person to achieve their goals".

The relationship has now evolved into one that is valuable to both their legal practices. James and Kylie continue to share internal and external contacts and business ideas, and are building complementary practice areas.

What you should look for in a mentor Kylie and James agree that if you're looking for a mentor, you should seek out someone who is:

- *Prepared to give their time* – such a mentor may not be the most senior, experienced or high-profile person, but there is no point in having such a person as a mentor if they are unable to devote enough time to you.
- *A great listener* – and someone who will not just give you the answers, but help you to work them out for yourself.

- *Trustworthy* – to maximise the benefit you can obtain from the relationship, you need to feel free to share personal information with your mentor, in the knowledge that the mentor will keep it confidential.
- *Honest* – your mentor owes it to you to give you an honest opinion about how you are progressing.
- *Has some distance from your day-to-day activities* – if you are selecting a mentor from within your firm or organisation, it may be best to ask someone from a different practice group so the mentor can provide a greater degree of objectivity. As Kylie points out, "many of the senior people you work closely with will be a mentor to you in one sense or another, but someone outside your team will bring a different perspective".

How to get the most out of your mentor Kylie and James suggest that you take a proactive approach, and:

- *Be clear about what you would like to get out of the mentoring relationship* – the more clearly you can articulate your goals, the more constructively the mentor can help you to discuss ways of achieving them. (Of course, one goal of a mentoring relationship can be to help you more clearly identify your goals.)
- *Be organised* – plan ahead for each discussion or meeting with your mentor so you get the most out of the session.
- *Be willing to accept constructive criticism* – the perspective that a mentor can provide, which is often one that is based on longer experience and an objective standpoint, can be invaluable – so make the most of the opportunity to learn.

James Hutton and Kylie Diwell are based in the Melbourne office of Minter Ellison. James specialises in corporate and securities law, specialising in equity, debt and hybrid capital markets transactions, mergers and acquisitions, takeovers, corporate restructures, and joint ventures. Kylie specialises in advising clients in the higher education, government, health, biotechnology, telecommunications and energy sectors on intellectual property, information technology, regulatory, and commercial matters.



James Hutton



Kylie Diwell

EVENT REPORTS

DAME ROMA MITCHELL MEMORIAL LUNCH

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF MARCH, VWL IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE LIV, HOSTED THE ANNUAL DAME ROMA MITCHELL LUNCHEON AT ZINC. KEY NOTE SPEAKER FORMER JUSTICE MICHAEL KIRBY, ENTHRALLED THE AUDIENCE WITH HIS PERSONAL-LEGAL PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT THE MOVEMENT FOR EQUAL MARRIAGE RIGHTS CAN LEARN FROM THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT.

Not only did Michael Kirby provide an entertaining discussion, but he honoured Dame Roma Mitchell's memory and reminisced about her chambers in South Australia.

You can read about the Dame Roma Mitchell keynote address of The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG in the Law Institute Journal: 86 (04) LIJ p20.



JUSTICE FILM SCREENING: A COMMON PURPOSE

A film screening of 'A Common Purpose', Winner of the Audience Award for Best Documentary at Sydney Film Festival 2011 and Nominated for Best Feature Documentary AFI/AACTA Awards 2012, was held in the State Library theatre, on 31 October 2012.

25 people in Uppington are convicted of the murder of one man, 14 are sentenced to hang, one lawyer is assassinated and the other goes into exile. 'A Common Purpose' is the dramatic story behind a notorious murder trial that marks South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. Told through the perspectives of defence lawyer, Andrea Durbach, independent journalist, John Carlin and the accused. The story unfolds to reveal one of legal history's biggest cases on the death penalty. A timeless and inspirational story about a struggle for justice in a country where injustice was entrenched in the law.

The film screening was followed by a Q & A session with both A/Prof Andrea Durbach and filmmaker Mitzi Goldman.

Associate Professor Andrea Durbach is an inspirational human rights lawyer born and educated in South Africa. She practised as a political trial lawyer and human rights advocate, representing both victims and opponents of apartheid laws. She is currently the Director of the Australian Human Rights Centre, University of New South Wales.

Mitzi Goldman has written, produced, edited and directed documentaries for over 20 years and has a wealth of experience in many aspects of filmmaking and teaching. Her films have been screened around the world and been awarded internationally,

including receiving an ATOM award for Best Social Issues Documentary.

Ticket sale proceeds have gone to 'A Common Purpose Trust' established to support the educational and health care needs of the families of the Uppington 25.

This event was organised by Victorian Women Lawyers, in conjunction with Reprieve Australia and sponsored by Justitia Lawyers & Consultants.



A Common Purpose Film night from left to right: Anna Martin, Hilary Harrison-Smith, Assoc. Prof. Andrea Durbach, Claire Humble, Mitzi Goldman, Marg Willis and Sarah Rey.

CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE: WHAT CAN LAWYERS DO?

ON WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2012, ATTENDEES HEARD FROM AN EXTRAORDINARY PANEL OF WOMEN, PROFESSOR LORRAIN DENNERSTEIN AO, DR VIVIAN WALLER, CHRISSIE FOSTER AND CHRIS MACISAAC SHARED HOW THEIR LIVES HAD BEEN AFFECTED BY CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE. THEY SPOKE ABOUT WHAT ASSISTANCE WAS AVAILABLE FOR VICTIMS AND THE ORGANISATIONS THAT COULD HELP.

Alarming statistics were provided, however what had attendees almost in tears was the brave retelling of Chrissie Foster's story as a mother of two victims of clergy sexual abuse. The event was finalised with a question and answer section, in which attendees discussed how the church ran investigations and how institutions will change in the future.



COMING TO THE BAR

ON 30 OCTOBER 2012 VWL, IN CONJUNCTION WITH WOMEN BARRISTERS ASSOCIATION HELD THE ANNUAL COMING TO THE BAR EVENT AT OWEN DIXON CHAMBERS. PANEL SPEAKERS FOR THIS YEAR'S EVENT WERE MARY ANNE HARTLEY SC, SUZANNE KIRTON, ROZETA STOIKOVSKA AND JACQUELINE STONE.

The speakers were introduced by Ruth Hamnett, Barrister and Co-Chair of the VWL Networking Committee who also joined in the panel discussion which covered topics such as the bar exam, clerking, chambers, various practice areas and flexible work practices.

The discussion then continued informally over drinks and canapés in the Essoign. The event was well-received by the VWL Members with around 50 attendees, who took the opportunity to ask thought-provoking questions and learn about the nature of working at the Victorian Bar.

VWL MEMBERS AND GUESTS EVENING

WEDNESDAY 2 MAY, THE APARTMENT

VICTORIAN WOMEN LAWYERS HELD ITS ANNUAL MEMBERS AND GUESTS' EVENING ON WEDNESDAY 2 MAY. WITH APPROXIMATELY 170 VWL MEMBERS AND THEIR GUESTS ATTENDING THE EVENT, IT WAS A GREAT TURN OUT FROM WOMEN LAWYERS AND LAW STUDENTS ON A WINTERY WEEKNIGHT.

Cal Wilson, well-known comedian, radio and TV presenter, was fabulous as the guest comedian for the night, taking the crowd back to 1950s Melbourne to reminisce about a time when a woman's career ambition was limited to aspiring to be the perfect secretary.

Thankfully, a lot has changed since the 1950s although equality for women in law remains an aspiration. For example, many women lawyers continue to earn less than their male counterparts for performing the same work. In this sense, and in spite of Cal's self-confessed lack of knowledge about the law (a tort is a cake, right?), female comedians and lawyers have a lot in common. Sifting through the chocolate and two-for-one movie passes to the French Film Festival in her show bag (which VWL provided to all members and guests this year) she discovered a flyer for the VWL seminar Know Your Worth... how to negotiate a pay rise, musing that she would have to try her pay rise negotiation skills on the Networking Committee co-chairs at the end of her show.

In addition to the show bag gifts, VWL received generous donations from Cat Hammill Jewellery, Unico Hair, Tate & Lawson, Laneway Tours and Makeovers, Manicures and Martinis. We were able to treat a number of our lucky members and guests to door prizes ranging from jewellery to hair and makeover packages, book vouchers, and, of course, a free VWL membership.

The venue, The Apartment on Little Bourke St, where we have held this event for a number of years, was the perfect venue for the evening, with scrumptious food and flowing wine keeping everyone satiated and relaxed. In particular the staff are to be commended for dealing with unexpected, last minute dishwasher explosions with efficiency. With such a professional, friendly attitude it is doubtful any of the attendees noticed a thing!

Thank you to the VWL Networking Committee for their assistance in the lead up to the event; our sponsors who donated door prizes and materials for the show-bags; The Apartment on Little Bourke St; and most importantly, to VWL Members who brought along their friends and colleagues as our guests for the evening.





NETWORKING FOR SUCCESS

ON THURSDAY 2 AUGUST, A CAPACITY AUDIENCE OF ABOUT 80 VWL MEMBERS WAS TREATED TO A FRANK AND HUMOROUS DISCUSSION ABOUT NETWORKING SKILLS, HOSTED BY VWL SPONSOR FIRM ALLENS.

Master Networking guru Bev Brough, Maddocks Senior Associate Avril Smith and Allens Senior Associate Rachel Nicolson shared their networking tips and war stories. VWL's Immediate Past Convenor Kate Ashmor chaired the discussion.

Among the pearls of wisdom were tips for maximising social networking, the art of conversation and what to avoid in order to effectively network as a private practice lawyer.



Left to right: Kate Ashmor, Avril Smith, Bev Brough, Rachel Nicolson and Patricia Athansiadis

CONVERTING CONTACTS TO CONTRACTS

AT THE SECOND OF OUR ANNUAL JOINT VWL, INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS AUSTRALIA AND WOMEN IN FINANCE VICTORIA EVENTS, IN 2012 RICKY NOWAK, DIRECTOR OF CONFIDENT COMMUNICATIONS ENTERED INTO THE LIVES OF THE AUDIENCE IN A DRAMATIC FASHION AND WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF CHOCOLATE!

Ricky highlighted the importance of developing a plan for networking, as being just as critical to the development of your business and career as strategic and financial plans.

Her approach includes being fully engaged at networking opportunities. Which, as everyone knows, is not easy! Whether you're thinking about work or the fact that you would rather be at home, it is hard to stay focused on the moment. But that

is exactly what you should be. Other important tips included: being yourself, remember what it feels like to walk into a room of strangers, being objective and assess your actions against your plan. Keep your network current and real. As Ricky put it you won't receive a trophy by having a dozen cards on your desk the next day. The aim of networking is to *connect* with people.

Ricky taught the audience much more and for more information please see her website at www.rickynowak.com.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN LAWYERS 4TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

THE FOURTH ANNUAL AUSTRALIAN WOMEN LAWYERS CONFERENCE WAS HELD AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN CANBERRA FROM 10-12 AUGUST 2012. THE CONFERENCE INCLUDED GUESTS SUCH AS ATTORNEY-GENERAL THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP, FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA CHIEF JUSTICE THE HON DIANA BRYANT AO QC, CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE HIGH COURT OF AUSTRALIA THE HON ROBERT FRENCH AC, HIGH COURT OF AUSTRALIA JUSTICE THE HON VIRGINIA BELL SC, AND PENNY WILLIAMS, AUSTRALIA'S GLOBAL AMBASSADOR FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS.

The Conference program featured discussion panels on digital intellectual property rights, the perils and opportunities social media presents for practitioners, construction law and the challenges women lawyers face surviving and thriving in the

profession. Other presentations explored research projects on female lawyers practising in regional and rural Queensland bullying in Western Australian legal workplaces and collecting oral histories of trailblazing women lawyers.

The AWL Annual General Meeting was held on the Sunday immediately following the conclusion of the Conference. VWL's immediate Past Convenor Kate Ashmor was elected AWL President for 2012-2013.



INTELLIGENT & EFFECTIVE MENTORING FOR THE TIME POOR

ON 23 AUGUST 2012, THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION AND VWL JOINED WESTPAC'S RUBY CONNECTION, FOR A FRANK CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTORING. PANELLISTS, DAVID RENNICK, CEO OF MADDOCKS, ALISON MCKECHNIE, PROJECT DIRECTOR/ARCHITECT OF SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ, BROOKE MILLER, CFO OF BP AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND AND MODERATOR REBECCA LICCARDI, RELATIONSHIP DIRECTOR OF WESTPAC'S PREMIUM FINANCIAL SERVICES DIVISION GAVE INSIGHTS FROM THEIR OWN CAREERS, INCLUDING:

- tips on how they found mentors
- the ways in which they approach their mentors, and
- the differences between having a mentor and a career sponsor.

After listening to the speakers, attendees broke out into groups of four and were given the opportunity to discuss the challenges they faced in finding and engaging with their mentors.

From those discussion groups VWL will collate the responses and identify action points for attendees and members.

Aimed at Senior Associates, Special Counsel and Partners this luncheon was attended by over 60 people from the legal, construction and finance industries and provided a wonderful networking opportunity for all.

FEDERAL COURT NETWORKING EVENT

ON THURSDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2012, WOMEN OVERRAN THE FEDERAL COURT... WELL NOT COMPLETELY. VWL AND WBA HOSTED A SELL-OUT EVENING NETWORKING EVENT AT THE FEDERAL COURT WHERE MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS WERE ABLE TO MEET JUDGES OF THE FEDERAL COURT.

The Chief Justice Keane of the Federal Court opened the event, commenting on the trailblazing women in the law and noting how far organisations like VWL and WBA had come and how much further there was to go.

Attendees mixed with members of the Judiciary, senior members of the Bar and legal profession with ease. For pictures from this event please visit our website and if you would like to attend similar events please contact us.



5TH WOMEN LAWYERS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

THE WOMEN LAWYERS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS (VICTORIA), HELD BIENNUELY, RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING WOMEN WHO HAVE EXCELLED IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION AND HAVE PAVED THE WAY TO SUCCESS FOR OTHER WOMEN LAWYERS.

The 2012 Awards, jointly hosted by VWL and WBA, were held on Wednesday 30 May at a gala dinner at the Regent Theatre Plaza Ballroom, with over 240 guests including members of the judiciary and the Victorian Bar and solicitors in private practice, in-house and government.

On the night, the 13 nominees were announced by the evening's sponsors, Anne Winckel, Delta Partners and Ross Gordon, Gordon & Jackson Barristers' Clerks. The Awards were presented to the recipients by The Honourable Justice Maxwell, President of the Supreme Court of Appeal, who also delivered a thought-provoking speech about the history of the Awards, previous Award winners and the current (and dynamic) state of Australian law with respect to gender equality.

Guest Speaker: Dr Helen Durham

The Guest Speaker for the evening was Dr Helen Durham. Dr Durham is the Head of International Law for Australian Red Cross and a Senior Fellow at Melbourne Law School. She has a long history with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. She has worked previously with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as Legal Adviser for the ICRC Regional Delegation for the Pacific. She has also been involved in international legal negotiations in New York, Rome and Geneva as well as undertaking field missions in Burma, Aceh and the Philippines.

Dr Durham made an inspirational speech to the attendees at the event; drawing on her insightful experiences and the challenges in her chosen field of international public law and international humanitarian law.

The 2012 Award Categories

This year, the Awards categories were expanded to represent the array of women excelling in the legal profession:

General Excellence (Private Practice)

General Excellence (In-House/Government)

General Excellence (Judiciary/ Advocacy/Academic)

Rising Star (Less than 5 years in practice)

The 2012 Award Winners

VWL & WBA would like to congratulate the winners of the Awards and wish them the best in their future endeavours:

General Excellence (Private Practice)

Brooke Dellavedova

Brooke Dellavedova is a Principal at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers who has excelled as a female legal practitioner both in her capacity as a class action lawyer and in her significant non-billable contributions to Maurice Blackburn. She has a long history of involvement with VWL, AWL and Maurice Blackburn's Women's Law Section and has an ongoing role as a mentor to female legal practitioners.

Brooke's career and legal professionalism are an inspiration to all those who work with and around her. She has managed to excel as a legal practitioner whilst successfully balancing her family life, making women feel that talented, organised and hard-working women lawyers can have it all.

General Excellence (In House/Government)

Dominique Saunders

Celebrating 21 years in the law, Dominique Saunders is an example to all women in the law of how to excel. Dominique has made an enormous contribution to public law through her work in government, the not-for-profit sector; the private sector at Russell Kennedy and most recently, in regulation, through her role as first General Counsel of a national health registration body (AHPRA); the first body of its kind in the world.

Dominique is an accomplished legal practitioner, combining both legal skills and expertise as a social worker. She is well-respected in her profession, with particular expertise in human rights, health, mental health, disability and discrimination law. She currently sits as a presiding member of the Mental Health Review Board, and is a past member of Council and Director of the Law Institute.

Her support for women in the profession is tireless and her passion against discrimination in any form is remarkable. Dominique is an inspirational leader.

General Excellence (Advocacy/Academic/Judiciary)

Caroline Kirton SC

Caroline Kirton SC has had a successful career at the Bar, culminating in her appointment as one of two women appointed Senior Counsel on 22 November 2011. She has also been an active member of various committees, with her most recent appointment as Victorian Bar's Chair of the Equality and Diversity Committee.





Caroline has been extensively involved in WBA as Convenor, and in AWL - particularly in her role as President in 2006; during which she undertook various projects designed to address issues such as diversity and equality in practice; and importantly, deal with issues faced by females in the legal profession. She supervised and managed the release of the first National Gender Appearance Survey, and organised the Inaugural AWL National Conference.

Caroline's support and experience have inspired young lawyers to strive and achieve their career goals; while promoting equality for all women.

Rising Star

Kaylene Rawlings-Hunter

Kaylene Rawlings-Hunter has broken through both gender and racial barriers to become a role model and outstanding young lawyer. Her passionate contribution to female and indigenous law students and lawyers has paved a dynamic and inspirational pathway for women.

She is an active member and now President of Tawirri (the Indigenous Law Students and Lawyers Association of Victoria), VWL, Maurice Blackburn Women Lawyers Section, Maurice Blackburn Indigenous Equality & Land Rights Committee and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance.

In 2012, her effort and passion was recognised when Kaylene was selected as a delegate for the official Australian Government Delegation to the United Nations 56th Commission on the Status of Women.



The 2012 Award Nominees

We would also like to extend our congratulations to the 13 exceptional women who were nominated for awards this year. Read about all of the nominees via the VWL website.

VWL & WBA would like to thank the nominees of the awards, as well as the individuals and organisations who took the time to acknowledge and nominate these outstanding candidates.

VWL would like to thank The Honourable Justice Maxwell, Dr Helen Durham and the evening's sponsors - Delta Partners and Gordon & Jackson Barristers' Clerks. And last, but certainly not least, the night would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Claire Carrucan, the VWL Networking Committee and the VWL & WBA Executives.



Clockwise from top left: Georgina Costello, Paul Ross, Meg O'Sullivan VWLAA; The Honourable Mr Justice Christopher Maxwell, Dominique Saunders, Caroline Kurton, Kaylene Rawlings, Brooke Dellevadova, Patricia Athanasiadis VWLAA; Sarah Manly, Sabina Phillips, Carly Price VWLAA; Emily Hart, Natalie Devitsakis, Kaylene Rowlings-Hunter VWLAA; VWL Executives VWLAA; Sarah Leighfield, Nahrain Warda, Melissa Mahady VWLAA; the awards event; Dr Helen Durham, Ross Gordon, Anne Winckel, The Honourable Mr Justice Christopher Maxwell, Diana Price, Patricia Athanasiadis VWLAA

COMMITTEE REPORTS

VWL TREASURER'S REPORT

JACQUELINE BROWNING

2012 HAS BEEN A VERY STRONG YEAR FINANCIALLY FOR VWL FOLLOWING A CAREFUL BALANCE OF EXPENDITURE TO GIVE OUR MEMBERS VALUE FOR THEIR MONEY AND CONSOLIDATION OF FINANCES FOR FUTURE SECURITY.

As a result of funds being withheld in previous years to cover possible tax liabilities (which were not required as a result of a favourable tax ruling on VWL's tax status) VWL has been able to invest excess funds and thereby supplement its income.

The Profit and Loss Statement for the year ended 30 June 2012 indicates that VWL has earned good additional income from investment in excess of \$11,000. A prudent conservative approach by VWL was adopted of investing funds in term deposits for periods generally between 3 and 6 months with Westpac, our VWL bankers.

In addition, strong and greatly appreciated support by our sponsor firms has enabled us to supplement our membership fees and thereby have sufficient funds to support the numerous events which VWL has held in 2012. We also acknowledge with great appreciation the ongoing support of Law Institute of Victoria which has enabled us to employ an administrator to assist the volunteer committee members keep VWL up and running so well.

Our key events being the VWL Women's Achievement Awards and the Dame Roma event in March were great successes and were able to be well funded by VWL to ensure that they were signature, professional events that all associated with VWL can be proud of.

2012 has been a year of fine tuning the management of our financial accounts with Westpac to be more cost effective. Similarly we have relied more upon our accountants, Moore Stephens to assist us with BAS Statement preparation and preparation of monthly reports to committee. We are now confident that from a governance perspective VWL can be confident its finance management is transparent and professionally monitored.

VWL's accounts and financial statements can be viewed in the 2012 Annual Report, published on VWL's website.

LAW REFORM COMMITTEE REPORT

CO-CHAIRS BETH ALSTON & EMILY HART

About the Committee

The law reform committee was established to give VWL a dedicated committee to participate in law reform activities that impact and interest our members. The committee this year has contributed to discussions involving women's rights, the prevention of discrimination and violence, and areas of importance to our membership, women lawyers.

Jessica Saunders resigned her position as co-chair of the law reform committee in early 2012, and the law reform committee would like to take this opportunity to thank Jess for her hard work as both a long term committee member and valued leader of the committee. Jess was replaced by Beth Altson, who joined Emily Hart as co-chair of the committee for 2012.

This year has seen continued growth in our committee's membership, an ongoing commitment to our work in the area of anti-discrimination reform, and opportunities to consolidate our relationships with other groups and organisations committed to law reform.

Law Reform Submissions & Work

- The year started with a submission to the Attorney-General's department in relation to the consolidation of Federal anti-discrimination laws, in February 2012.

The submission, prepared jointly with the Women Lawyers Association of New South Wales, was borne out of an extensive review of the consolidation of Federal anti-discrimination laws ("the consolidation project") undertaken by the committee over the past two years. Our submission responded to the discussion paper released by the Attorney General and Minister for Finance and Deregulation on 22 September 2011, and aimed to build on an earlier submission prepared by the committee in February 2011.

In summary, the submission supported the government's move to consolidate Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation, so long as the consolidation:

- would not result in any diminution of existing protections in the law;
- would be developed with reference to the applicable international law principles;
- would simplify and strengthen the protections against sex discrimination; and
- would increase transparency, accountability and enforceability in relation to those protections.

A copy of our submission to the Attorney-General's department is available via the Victorian Women Lawyer's website.

- In July 2012 the committee was invited to participate in a forum established by UN Women, focusing on the elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls.
- The purpose of the forum was to inform two UN Secretary-General's reports for the 57th Commission on the Status of Women, which will take place in New York in March 2013.

The committee's contribution to the forum was to discuss the measures taken by VWL to address the structural causes of violence, and change social norms and behaviours – such as our law reform work in relation to family violence, our Women's Migrant Legal Information Project and our support of lawyers working in family violence and child protection. We also highlighted the importance of our annual sexual assault forum and our legal training sessions (i.e. assisting traumatised clients), which engage and support the lawyers working in these difficult areas.

The committee has also taken time this year to continue to monitor state and federal law reform bodies to ensure VWL remains involved in key areas of reform that impact on our membership.

Beth and Emily would like to thank all our committee members for their hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to our law reform projects, and they look forward to continuing the good work in 2013.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

CO-CHAIRS JANE WOLFE & BREE RYAN

THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE WAS FORMED IN 2011 TO KEEP OUR VALUED MEMBERS INFORMED ABOUT EVENTS, OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED AND TO KEEP UP TO DATE ON THE IMPORTANT WORK OF THE OTHER VWL COMMITTEES.

The Communications Committee keeps VWL in touch with its members, via:

- the VWL website
- Facebook
- our monthly newsletter Women Keeping in Touch
- our annual Journal, Portia.

The Communications Committee work and the Webmaster duties were managed by Bree Ryan during the year. Along with other new committee members, Jane Wolfe joined Bree Ryan as Committee Co-Chair during 2012. We hope that you have enjoyed our publications throughout the year. It was fantastic to also introduce you to two guest editors for a couple of our Women Keeping in Touch newsletters during the year:

- Kate O'Connor
- Evelyn Young.

Working in the Communications Committee is a great way to see the hard work of other committees and keep abreast of the many exciting VWL events taking place. During 2012, we coordinated a website upgrade, advertised many events, conquered a steep learning curve with website technology and tenaciously chased newsletter contributions. It is wonderful to play a role in connecting junior and senior female lawyers in Victoria.

A particular thank you goes out to Jackie Gillies and Patricia Athanasiadis for coordinating the Member and Sponsor Spotlights each month. We hope that our members have enjoyed meeting a wide range of professionals who enjoy their varied roles in the legal profession.

Bree and Jane capped off the year by compiling and editing this journal. Portia's theme this year is Mentoring. The feature articles on this topic have been prepared by some very inspirational women in the profession who have been willing to share their personal and professional experiences. As you will read, the support of our female colleagues plays such a key role in women lawyers prospering.

We hope that you have enjoyed reading Portia this year and we look forward to another communicative year with members in 2013.

WORK PRACTICES COMMITTEE REPORT

CO-CHAIRS MICHELLE WHYTE & AMANDA STEVENS

THE WORK PRACTICES COMMITTEE'S PRIMARY FOCUS IS TO EXPLORE, CRITICALLY EVALUATE AND PUBLICALLY COMMENT ON THE STATE OF WORK PRACTICES FOR WOMEN LAWYERS WHICH INCLUDES SUCH THINGS AS FLEXIBILITY, ATTRITION, DISCRIMINATION, PAY EQUITY, AS WELL AS THE ISSUES SURROUNDING THE PROGRESSION OF FEMALE LAWYERS INTO LEADERSHIP ROLES IN VICTORIA.

Women lawyers continue to face a host of unique challenges within the profession that are barriers to advancement. Despite having been the majority of law graduates for decades, women are still not adequately represented at senior levels and still have a disproportionate attrition level from private practice. In 2012 the Work Practices Committee has continued to publicly comment on these issues and find practical ways to address these issues by continuing to provide forums and seminars, research, and media.

Our work: 2012 and continuing

Do You Manage? Flexible work practices training for partners.

Based on the Work Practices 'Do you Manage?' report, launched in October 2010, the committee commissioned a training program for partners in law firms to assist in promoting the business model for flexible work practices in law firms. The training was taken up by several sponsor law firms and was well received as a practical training for implementing and managing flexible work practices and making them work for the benefit of all involved. We hope to continue the practical training with more firms in 2013.

VWL submission on the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Bill 2012

In May 2012 the WPC prepared a 7 page submission on the amendment Bill suggesting amongst other things, that consideration be given to bolstering the consequences of non compliance with the Act. We also submitted that consideration be given to the cultural obstacles that impede progress towards equal employment opportunity.

Know your Worth! How to negotiate a pay rise.

In May the WPC provided a free seminar for members on how to negotiate a pay rise. The seminar was prepared and presented by Sean Bates, Director of Sigma Executive. The seminar was well attended and provided some great insight into pay negotiations specific for the legal industry.

Flexible Work Practices Forum

The WPC co hosted with the LIV a forum on flexible work practices in August. This was an interactive forum with a great panel from different areas of the law and different types of practice. It provided information about types of flexible work practices; tips on negotiating and implementing flexible work practices and the panel were able to show examples of issues to consider and practical solutions.

Law Institute Journal – According to Merit

The committee continues to provide bi-monthly articles for the According to Merit column in the Law Institute Journal. The column gives the VWL an avenue and opportunity to agitate for debate and discussion regarding women in the law to a broader audience. The committee tries to highlight current issues and controversies effecting women. The articles will also be available on the VWL website.

Research

The committee continues to focus on developing research into attrition, including, assisting with other state and national legal bodies.

This will be a major focus of the committee in 2013.

I would like to thank the Work Practices for all their hard work and commitment in achieving another successful year!

The Work Practices Committee for 2012:

Alice MacDougall, Alina Humphreys, Amanda Stevens, Christine Willshire, Fiona Knowles, Georgina Frost, Kate Marshall, Kirsten Follows, Laura Kelly, Margaret Ryan, Michelle Florenini, Suzanne Tinkler, Vanessa Flippin, Jo Bowers & Michelle Whyte.

In 2013 the Work Practices Committee will continue to agitate for real change on the progression and retention of women in the law and the removal of barriers to women's full and equal participation.

WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT REPORT

CO-CHAIRS ASTRID HABAN-BEER & SARA LAW

THE WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT (WIG) COMMITTEE WAS BORNE OUT OF A CONVERSATION THAT THEN VWL CONVENOR, ASTRID HABAN-BEER, HAD IN 2010 WITH VWL'S PATRON, THE HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE MARILYN WARREN. THE CHIEF JUSTICE HERSELF AT ONE TIME WAS A GOVERNMENT LAWYER AND AT THE BAR PRACTISED IN PUBLIC LAW MATTERS.

Her Honour is a great supporter of government lawyers and was keen to see VWL cultivate stronger links with women lawyers in government to improve greater communication for all women lawyers and to provide both professional and personal networking opportunities.

And, since its inception in 2010, WIG has been working towards exactly that.

In March 2012, WIG hosted a drinks function to mark International Women's Day and International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Our special guest and keynote speaker was Dr Helen Szoke, Australia's Commonwealth Race Discrimination Commissioner. The event was supported by Russell Kennedy, who provided their scenic offices overlooking Melbourne's picturesque cityscape as the venue for the event.

Dr Szoke talked about three women who she referred to for inspiration, the Greek Goddess Athena who is strong, fair and merciful, Margaret Whitlam who was ahead of her time in terms of social justice and feminism and finally a lady of our own contemporary, Lady Gaga who is number 11 in the Forbes Top 100 Most Influential Women. Dr Szoke highlighted the powerful and influential attributes that these women share and how important it is to have women who are willing to pave the way and be role models to younger women. Dr Szoke's humorous and insightful speech gave many in the room the opportunity to pause and reflect on these women, amongst others, whose personal achievements have contributed in culmination to a 'clearing of the path' for women's participation and resultant successes.

In 2013, WIG intends to continue to provide ways for government lawyers to network both within this sector and with the broader legal community, and to build up a program of events that cater to the specific professional development needs of women in the government legal sector.

The committee's co-chairs, Astrid Haban-Beer and Sara Law, wish to thank all the women in government who gave their support to WIG in 2012, and particular WIG's committee members: Sophia Angelis, Kate Ashmor, Fiona Batten, Penina Perkovic, Emily Broadbent, Sarah Daniell, Catherine Haslock, Christine Ingvorsen, Anna Longley, Dao Nguyen, Claire Rennie, Suzanne Singh, Jessica Tribe, Priscilla Wong and Danielle Woollorton. WIG was again generously assisted, by way of donated resources, by the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office and Australian Government Solicitor.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

CO-CHAIRS KATRINA STUART & MARLENE DIXON

2012 SAW KATRINA STUART AND MARLENE DIXON ELECTED AS THE NEW CO-CHAIRS OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE.

Marlene and Katrina were motivated to develop new ways in which to encourage dynamic women lawyers from all over Melbourne to become a part of VWL.

A number of new initiatives were successfully implemented, including the ongoing development of a survey to engage with women in the legal profession and find out how VWL could best serve their needs and interests.

In addition, the Ambassador Program was launched mid-year and this involved individual representatives from sponsor firms gathering to brainstorm ways in which VWL could better serve the needs and interests of women.

We look forward to carrying on this exciting work in 2013.

WOMEN MIGRANTS LEGAL INFORMATION PROJECT COMMITTEE REPORT

CO-CHAIRS MARINE GUILLOU & YAGMUR CAGRIER

**THE WOMEN MIGRANTS' LEGAL INFORMATION
PROJECT COMMITTEE (WMLIP) BEGAN IN 2009
AND IS VWL'S ONLY PROJECT BASED COMMITTEE.
WMLIP'S AGENDA IS TO DRAW UPON THE EXPERTISE
AND RESOURCES OF ITS MEMBERS TO MAKE LEGAL
INFORMATION MORE ACCESSIBLE TO MIGRANT WOMEN.**

The WMLIP Committee is made up of senior and junior lawyers as well as law students. It is supported by marketing professionals working in the legal industry. It is currently chaired by Marine Guillou and Yagmur Cagrier, with Philippa Darlow and Samantha Perussich having also Co-Chaired the Committee until October 2012.

In 2012, the WMLIP Committee translated previous research and resources into a pilot project. The pilot project will consist of three radio announcements in Arabic to be broadcast on community radio station 3CR, on the topics of:

- Family law
- Family violence
- Spousal visas

On another positive note for this year, the Committee was delighted receive a grant from the Victoria Law Foundation, which will be used toward a part-time Project Manager to oversee the pilot project.

In 2013 WMLIP looks forward getting their first radio broadcasts on the air and hopes to explore opportunities for wider broadcasting.

WMLIP Committee meetings are held once a month. The Committee always welcomes new members as it is only with their skills and contributions that the Committee can advance its cause. If you are interested in contributing to the project please email: Yagmur (yagmur.cagrier@gmail.com).

NETWORKING COMMITTEE REPORT

CO-CHAIRS NATALIE DETVISAKIS & RUTH HAMNETT

VWL'S NETWORKING COMMITTEE AIMS TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL FRIENDSHIPS, SUPPORT AND EXCHANGE OF IDEAS.

The Committee organises events that support professional development by way of career planning, mentoring, learning about legal issues as well as 'meet and greet' events. It also organises non-legal events which focus on issues of general interest to our members to provide networking opportunities.

The Networking Committee hosted a number of well-attended and dynamic events in 2012, catering for a range of interests and providing a host of networking opportunities for our members. These events included:

- The annual Members and Guests Night, which included an entertaining performance by comedienne Cal Wilson (see the Event Reports section for a report and photos);
- The Women Lawyers Achievement Awards (Victoria) held in conjunction with the Women Barristers Association at the Plaza Ballroom, (see page 27 for a report and photos);
- An Eastern Suburbs CPD/CLE Networking Event held in conjunction with Women Barristers Association at Deakin University Burwood Campus;
- The annual Coming to the Bar event, organised in conjunction with the Women Barristers Association;
- The VWL AGM and Christmas Party.

The Co-Chairs, Natalie and Ruth, would like to sincerely thank each of the Committee Members for their endless enthusiasm, inspiration and tireless diligence. With a number of new, fresh faces on the Networking Committee this year, 2012 would not have functioned so seamlessly without the gusto of the following women:

- Amira Alic
- Eleanor Davis
- Lucy Duncan
- Michelle Florenini
- Vanessa McKay
- Julianna Marshall
- Melissa Swain

A special thanks must be extended to Claire Carrucan and Verity Shepherdson, the previous Co-Chairs of the Networking Committee. The changing of the guard in mid-2012 has not stopped both Claire and Verity from providing limitless assistance, advice and feedback.

As always, the Committee thanks the VWL Executive and our new Administrator, Judy Nutter, for their fantastic support throughout the year.

SPONSORSHIP REPORT

JACKIE GILLIES, SPONSORSHIP OFFICER

THE WORK OF THE VICTORIAN WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE ONGOING SUPPORT OF ITS PRINCIPAL SPONSOR: THE LAW INSTITUTE OF VICTORIA AND ITS MAJOR SPONSORS: ALLENS >< LINKLATERS, ASHURST, CORRS CHAMBERS WESTGARTH, CLAYTON UTZ, DLA PIPER, MADDOCKS, KING & WOOD MALLESONS, MAURICE BLACKBURN, MIDDLETONS AND MINTER ELLISON.

In 2012, VWL profiled a key female lawyer from each sponsor firm in our monthly e-newsletter *Women Keeping in Touch*.

Our Executive members presented to several sponsor firms about VWL membership and initiatives. This year, the following major sponsor firms also hosted a VWL event on their premises:

- Allens >< Linklaters hosted the *Networking for Success: Exploring Networking Skills for Women Lawyers in Private Practice* discussion forum;
- Middletons hosted the launch of the *2012 Mentoring Program*;
- Maddocks hosted the *2012 AGM and End of Year celebration*.

In addition, special thanks also goes to:

- Russell Kennedy for hosting the Women in Government's event *Life in the Law*, a discussion forum.

Victorian Women Lawyers would like to thank its sponsors for their ongoing support throughout the year. We look forward to working alongside these firms during 2013 and beyond.

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JUSTICE COMMITTEE REPORT

CHAIR CLAIRE HUMBLE

THE JUSTICE COMMITTEE UNDERTAKES EVENTS DESIGNED TO RAISE AWARENESS OF ISSUES RELEVANT TO WOMEN, THE LAW AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. PROJECTS ARE DESIGNED TO INFORM OUR MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC ABOUT AREAS OF INTEREST IN THE BROAD FIELD OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND TO ENCOURAGE DEBATE IN THESE AREAS.

Shiraz Gheyara and Claire Humble were elected as co-chairs for 2012 but early in the year Shiraz moved to Sydney as work opportunities opened up for her there. The Justice Committee however continued under one chair and although members departed for other committees and other commitments, there was an influx of new members during the year. Two key events were held – the annual sexual abuse forum and a film evening about human rights set in South Africa.

On 17 October 2012 the Justice Committee ran ‘*Clergy Sexual Abuse: What Can Lawyers Do?*’ Attendees heard from an extraordinary panel of women – Professor Lorrain Dennerstein AO Psychiatrist, Dr Vivian Waller Lawyer, Chrissie Foster Author and Chris MacIsaac President of Broken Rites an Advocacy organisation which assists victims of clergy abuse. They shared with those gathered how lives had been affected by clergy sexual abuse and what organisations and assistance was available for victims.

Alarming statistics were provided, however what had attendees almost in tears was the brave re-telling of Chrissie Foster’s story as a mother of two victims of clergy sexual abuse. The event was

finalised when a question and answer session ran over time, in which attendees discussed how the churches ran investigations and how institutions will need to change in the future. Net proceeds from this event will shortly be donated to Broken Rites. The Justice committee would like to thank Leo Cussen Centre for Law for its support of this event in providing a venue, some catering, print assistance and staff to run the night.

Recent events at the Marikana platinum mine in South Africa in August this year illustrate the importance of the need to remain vigilant against the abuse of civil liberties. Following a confrontation between police and miners, 34 miners were left dead and 270 of their co-workers charged with their murders. With their fate yet to be decided, the area around the mine remains in a state of emergency.

The Justice Committee would like to acknowledge all of the committee members for their support throughout the year and in particular give a huge thank you to Dr Vivian Waller, Rachael Hopkins and Raeesa Rawal for their assistance with the Clergy Sexual Abuse forum. Marg Willis’s outstanding contribution to the film night, “A Common Purpose” ensured its success.

2012 has been a consolidating year for the Justice Committee and we are looking forward to exciting events for next year, some of which are already under discussion. It is anticipated there will be new co-chairs for 2013 as Claire will be stepping down at the end of this year, but will remain involved in the Committee and look forward to seeing it flourish under the direction of new faces.

If you would like to become involved in the Justice Committee, please log onto the VWL website for further details.

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