



2023 Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Women Lawyers Association Inc.

Tuesday 28 November 2023 at 5:30pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. President's welcome & Acknowledgement of Country

Sophie Levebvre (**the President**) opened the Annual General Meeting of Victorian Women Lawyers ("VWL") for 2023 with an Acknowledgement of Country reiterating VWL's commitment to the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

2. Attendance and apologies

Attendance and proxy register attached. The following were an apology:

- Stephanie Pasharis
- Stephanie Vejar
- Megan Lawton
- Lucy Padula

3. Minutes of 2022 Annual General Meeting

First motion

second by vice president

Minutes for the 2022 approved as a true and correct record and annexed to the minutes below.

Motion to confirm minutes of 2022 AGM carried by majority.

4. Committee Annual Report

The president invited our Voting Executive members to discuss the work they did in their respective portfolios.

Immediate Past President and AWL Representative (Stephanie Pasharis) as Stephanie was an apology the vice-president read out her summary:

"This year, I served as VWL's Australian Women Lawyers representative. AWL is Australia's peak representative body of women lawyers and is governed by a board of directors comprising representatives from each State and Territory women lawyers association.

In early 2023, AWL held its annual planning meeting, where we identified the following areas of focus for AWL going forward for the year:

- Sustainable practice for women lawyers;
- Encouraging diversity and intersectionality in all areas of legal practice;
- Equitable briefing
- Gender pay gap closure within the legal profession;

- Supporting initiatives to stamp out sexual harassment, and encouraging respect at work; and
- Support for indigenous women involved in the justice sector.

This year, AWL continued its advocacy work, with our President and various board members speaking to media outlets including the ABC, Lawyers Weekly, The Age, Lawyerly, AAP, The Australian and The AFR on topics relevant to women lawyers, such as harassment in the legal profession. AWL also published many news articles and submissions on areas of law reform.

This year AWL's Patron, the Hon. Chief Justice Susan Kiefel, retired, and AWL's President attended Her Honour's ceremonial sitting. AWL is extremely grateful for Her Honour's leadership of the legal community since 2017, I am delighted to report that AWL approached the Hon. Justice Jacqueline Gleeson of the HCA to be AWL's new patron following the retirement of Chief Justice Kiefel, who accepted the appointment.

Lastly, AWL is currently planning for next year's conference, to be held in Canberra. The dates are yet to be confirmed, but I would encourage you all to monitor AWL's LinkedIn for updates.

I am delighted to have been re-elected by VWL's Executive Committee to remain as VWL's representative next year. I look forward to assisting AWL organise next year's conference."

Sophie thanked Stephanie for her hard work and announced the VWL Executive Committee had appointed Stephanie to remain VWL's representative of AWL for another 12 months.

Communications Officer: presented by Alexandra Lioudvigova

"I stepped into the role following our previous communication officer, Roxanne Taylor's departure midway through this year. It has been a pleasure stepping into this role and getting involved with the executive operations at VWL and I am pleased to report a good year for the communications portfolio at VWL.

We have maintained strong levels of engagement across our socials, including facebook, linkedin and instagram.

On LinkedIn, our analytics show consistent levels of engagement, page visits and follower growth, including a particularly positive month in September where we received especially strong engagement, particularly in relation to our industry event on equitable briefing. We are on track to hit 10,000 followers soon.

We also continue to receive strong engagement on Instagram, especially for our Instagram stories. These have been a great opportunity to not only advertise our events and share news regarding VWL, but also to promote other posts regarding issues relating to gender and diversity. We have regularly received positive interactions to these and consider these are a great opportunity for VWL to engage with the broader community and various gender and diversity issues across Australia and indeed globally. We have also harnessed the use of interactive/graphics based insta-stories to provide more engaging event promotion.

This year, we have also introduced a more consistent approach to image descriptions, to ensure our content is accessible to all.

Our strong social media presence is reflected in several external groups reaching out to collaborate with us on cross-organisational promotion, including Foley's List, Red Cross Australia and Women's Legal Service Victoria.

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We also continue a strong relationship with the Law Institute Journal through our regular contributions on issues of diversity. I thank all the contributors this year for producing timely, quality and thought-provoking pieces.

I'd like to finish my wrap up by thanking several people. Firstly, Roxanne, for her hard work in setting up a strong foundation for the communications portfolio and being so thorough and helpful in the handover, making the process as smooth as possible. Secondly, Sophie and Jo, for their consistent support and guidance in the role. Thirdly, the broader VWL committee for its assistance in preparing content and sharing VWL's socials throughout their networks - I'd like to give a special shout out to Skye for her work on facebook and Jess for her work on the website.

And lastly, I'd like to thank the VWL members for their engagement with us throughout our various communications. In circumstances where members cannot attend every event and our network spreads far and wide, the online world provides a way for members to remain abreast of VWL's activities and feel involved across issues of gender and diversity. It is so positive to see these levels of engagement across the community and we thank you for your support. We look forward to continuing to grow next year."

Sophie said social media is very important to VWL our presence on social media has elevated our platform and acknowledged the hard work of previous Comms Officer, Roxanne Taylor.

Sponsorship Officer: presented by Isabel Britten-Jones

Victorian Women Lawyers would like to thank our sponsors for their ongoing support in 2023:

- Allens
- Brave Legal
- Clayton Utz
- College of Law
- Coulter Legal
- Ethos Migration Lawyers
- Foley's List
- Justitia Lawyers and Consultants
- K&L Gates
- KHQ Lawyers
- Maddocks
- Maurice Blackburn Lawyers
- Nicholes Family Lawyers
- Stuart Family Lawyers
- Svenson Barristers
- Victorian Government Solicitor's Office

Many of our sponsors hosted VWL events which you can read about in the Events section of this Journal. We also thank our sponsors for their contributions to Portia and acknowledge those who were unable to contribute this year: Allens and K&L Gates.

We also extend our gratitude to the following event and project sponsors for their support in 2023:

- Clarence Workplaces for Professionals
- Cornwalls

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- Deakin Law School
- Gatehouse Legal Recruitment
- Lex Medicus

VWL would not be able to do the work they do without the support and contributions of our sponsors and supporters. The generosity of our sponsors has enabled us to host engaging and impactful events and foster important conversations in our community. We have been able to bring together legal professionals from diverse backgrounds and provide opportunities for learning, growth, connection and empowerment. We congratulate our sponsors on another successful year and are looking forward to collaborating with our sponsors again in 2024."

Sophie thanked Isabel for all her hard work. Sophie echoed that we wouldn't be able to run our events without our sponsors and also make our events affordable.

Community and Membership Engagement Officer: presented by Sophie Levevre on behalf of Megan Lawton

Sophie shared feedback from members on the screen. Sophie mentioned that people are generally surprised how we are all volunteers as our events are run so well.

Sophie thanked Megan for her work this year.

The engagement portfolio offers a breadth of opportunities, and the tone was truly set by the discussion of intersectionality in 2022 by Antoinette Lattouf. The role has a broad remit to support the Outreach committee, whom I congratulate on hosting an event in Geelong in 2023.

Special Projects Officer: presented by Sophie Levevre on behalf of Stephanie Vejar

Events:

- Dame Roma 2023
- Foleys Podcast (postponed)
- In collaboration with Justice Committee – Temporary visa holders and family violence (postponed)

Dame Roma 2023

On 9 March 2023, Victorian Women Lawyers held the Dame Roma Mitchell Memorial Lunch in celebration of International Women's Day.

Attendees from across the legal profession gathered in the Melbourne Town Hall to hear a lively discussion between Jane Caro AM, feminist, writer and journalist and Zoe Condliffe, founder and CEO of She's A Crowd.

With the UN theme for International Women's Day "Cracking the Code: Innovation for a gender equal future" as their starting theme, Jane and Zoe shared intergenerational views on past and current barriers that women face within the workforce, society and discussed innovative practices that are being used to break these biases. Importantly, they also provided practical tips for how individuals can work towards an equitable future.

We had a great response from participants re: Dame Roma so I'm sure next year is due to be a hit as well.

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Joanna mentioned that 7th March 2024 is the date for Dame Roma next year and to lock it in the calendar. Sophie thanked Stephanie Vejar for her hard work

Wellbeing Officer: presented by Sounita Viravout

As VWL believes the wellbeing of our members and the wider profession is an integral to our objective of increasing the opportunities for participation by and advancement of women in the legal profession in Australia, this year we launched our Wellbeing workshop series, which we called the Flourishing workshops to help attendees to flourish in a world through a different lens, one which allows the attendees to flourish especially in times of uncertainty and to find the joy in stressful times.

Last year we listened to our members' feedback, where we saw a number of our members desiring more interactive and smaller group workshops designed to provide women leaders in law with learnings and empowerment to live healthy and high performance, lives which in turn enables them to have sustainable and healthy careers in law.

In response to that feedback, this year we held three interactive workshops throughout the year which was facilitated by Penny Locaso, the author of Hacking Happiness. The first workshop was called the Fear(less) Masterclass, the second was on Work-Life boundaries for energy, presence and calm, the finally the third workshop was an online interactive workshop was about clarity (which again we listened to the feedback where members and past attendees had asked for an online format, which also meant that our the workshop was accessible to our members and legal professionals in the suburbs and the regions). We've received incredible feedback when asked about what attendees liked about the workshop, one attendee said:

“Everything. Penny has actually changed my life in three hours. The clarity and direction that I now see, is amazing. Her tools, tips and passion are inspiring and as usual and I am excited to see where this now takes me.”

This year we also held a panel discussion on Managing and Preventing Vicarious Trauma in Legal Practice, to help provide participants with the knowledge, skills and tools to better recognise the early signs of vicarious trauma and intervene, which was very well attended. In fact we felt that it was so important that every lawyer and every person working in the legal profession or adjunct to it, should have access to this resource that we have subsequently made a recording of the panel discussion with the same speakers. The recording will shortly be uploaded onto our Wellbeing page of our website and be permanently available to everyone as a Wellbeing resource.

Sophie thank Sounita for her hard work.

Competitions Officer: presented by Maddison Harrington and Alanna Attard

In 2023, Alanna Attard and Maddison Harrington were VWL's competitions portfolio leads on executive committee.

This year was a busy year, with two competitions to organise, firstly, the Expert Witness Examination competition, which was due to be held in the first half of the year, and of course, the Warren Moot.

Unfortunately due to time constraints, we were unable to run the expert witness examination competition this year, and we have decided to change the event to a bi-annual event, to be held early in 20234. We are in the final stages of confirming availability and dates with our partners to lock this in for early next year to hit the ground running.

The Warren Moot was held again in 2023 and was hotly contested and a great success in 2023. Once again, the moot was generously sponsored by Maddocks Lawyers who

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generously gave us their client floor and meeting rooms to host each of the rounds. This year saw the competition span 12 weeks, with 10 teams and 37 participants.

We were fortunate enough to have 13 judges from the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, County Court and the Fair Work Commission generously give up their time to support the moot this year, through being part of the launch event panel, and being judges for each round. The feedback provided from each of our judges to the teams was fantastic, and incredibly generous. Despite taking time out of their busy lives and evenings, our judges took the time to give considered and insightful feedback to each of the teams on their oral advocacy skills and the written submissions.

This year, teams were given brand new problems, ranging from topical issues of independent contracting post *Workpac v Rossato*, and Personnel Contracting to sexual harassment / sex discrimination in employment, in addition to traditional moot topics of criminal law and commercial contracting matters.

The launch event occurred on 23 August 2023 was held at Maddocks offices in Docklands. We held a panel discussion with esteemed members of the bench, including the Hon. Justice Walker, and Justice Dixon of the Supreme Court of Victoria. Liz Ruddle SC provided an insightful crash course in courtroom advocacy. Unfortunately, the moot's namesake, and our Patron, the Hon Marilyn Warren AC KC was unable to attend.

In contrast to previous years, this year's teams came predominately from private law firms, with only 2 student teams coming from Monash University. After 3 rounds of intense competition, we were left with two grand teams.

The Supreme Court of Victoria hosted the grand final in the Banco Court with former Chief Justice Warren presiding. The Essoign Club at the Victorian Bar hosted the presentation evening after the grand final which was well attended.

Dennis Denuto Memorial Scholars (aka 'the Vibe') were successful in seeking judicial review in the Supreme Court of a VCAT discrimination decision, strongly represented by Amanda Robinson, Lauren Woolley, Ebony Mack, and Summar Altaee of Aitkin Partners.

The 'VGSO Grads' team, comprised of Madeline Gome, Alana Morgante, Ellen Kalaja and Georgia Lucas, with Madeline Gome also being awarded 'best speaker' by Chief Justice Warren.

Thank you to Maddocks for their generous continued sponsorship of this excellent competition, and to all those volunteers from VWL, WBA and the judiciary who gave up their time to judge rounds, time keep, and to those members of the Victorian Bar and Foley's List members for preparing this year's problems.

Sophie thanked both Maddie and Alanna for their work. She mentioned that our moot is considered one of a kind.

Sophie also commented that previously this role was held by one person so this year this role is done by two people and our patron was very complimentary.

Justice Committee: presented by the Co-Chairs Zefy Souvlakis & Amanda Emonson

The role of the Justice Committee is to bring justice and human rights related issues that impact women to the attention of VWL, it's members and the wider legal community.

This year, the Justice Committee partnered with sponsor Clayton Utz, to hold the Reproductive Justice Panel discussion during Women's Health Week to explore our

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rights and employers obligations through the various stages of the reproductive journey.

From this impactful event we are working with the wider VWL volunteer base to look at how we can make workplaces in the legal industry better for women who might be impacted by gender specific health issues.

Thanks to our dedicated committee members: Julia Despard and Rebeka Glover

The Justice Committee this year brought together a community who are passionate about advocating for reproductive rights in the workplace. We are inspired to continue a difficult and deeply personal conversation to promote change within our workplaces.

Sophie added that our purpose is not just improve the lives of women who work in the law but also women who are impacted by the law. Reproductive issues in the law and how it impacted the workplace and how we can change the law led discussions to develop a guide with our work practice committee.

Sophie thanked the justice committee for all their hard work.

Diversity & Inclusion Committee: presented by the Co-Chairs Shivani Pillai and Felicia Leong

During 2023 the Diversity and Inclusion Committee have worked on building VWL's connections and collaborative opportunities with law associations representing diverse and intersectional co-horts. In particular we have grown VWL's relationship with Tarwirri, Indigenous Law Students and Lawyers Association of Victoria and with Pride in Law.

We are committed to learning through discourse and discussion how the legal profession can promote inclusion of those with diverse backgrounds, plans are in the works for events in 2024.

The D&I Committee continued to represent VWL at round table meetings of the Victorian Legal profession and provided support to a number of initiatives and events ensuring an intersectional lens was applied to VWL's work. The D&I team also contributed to many of VWL's communications and publications in 2023 including statements in support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

In October the committee contributed an article to the Law Institute Journal. In 'Respecting and celebrating cultural differences - Finding a spirit of unity' Shivani Pillai, wrote about culture diversity of race, ethnicity, religion, language and customs *within* culture and how we can find a spirit of unity inspired by her experience in Papua New Guinea where she was voluntarily teaching advocacy to 150 Law graduates on behalf of the Victorian Bar (International Advocacy Training Committee).

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee welcomes new members particularly those with diverse abilities, gender diversity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so truly reflect and advocate for diversity, for women in law in Victoria and beyond.

Shivani also asked that everyone put 20th March 2024 in their diaries for a First Nations event- proud to be co hosting this with Tawarri. Allens will be sponsoring and we will discussing the issues that First nations women face

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Felicia discussed Pride in Law and that we will be joining them for an event 2024 will be an exciting year.

Shivani gave a big shout to Sophie, Joanna and Linda and thanked them for their support.

Sophie thanked the committee and reflected on their hard work and the importance of us connecting with First Nations women in the law. VWL sponsored two indigenous women to attend the indigenous women summit this year and you can read about their experience in Portia.

Publications Committee: presented by the Co-Chairs Annaleise Vulin & Greta Marks

Portia is the annual journal and report of VWL, which is produced by the Publications Committee and distributed to members at the AGM and by post. The 2023 theme for Portia is 'community', mirroring the theme of VWL in 2023. As members of a diverse and brilliant legal community, we unite and support one another amongst obligations, challenges, triumphs and goals. In this edition, Portia seeks to explore, showcase, and celebrate a range of communities, however defined. We had many events this year and sponsor contributions who all wrote about what community means to them.

This edition features an important, vulnerable, and generous piece by Holly Harris, an account of her experience as both a law student and complainant in an alleged sexual assault case, and how it has evolved the way she views the law. This year's other features take on the theme of community and consider what it means in different contexts, including an interview with Ms Julie Dodds-Streton KC and Ms Amber Harris of Counsel who drafted the Judicial Conduct Guideline on Sexual Harassment; everything you wish you knew about making the move to the Bar; and articles exploring how online communities have changed the world and how we interact with it, and how networking through non-professional communities can impact your career.

A huge thank you to our editors of Portia, the Co-Chairs of the Publications Committee [Annaleise Vulin](#) and [Greta Marks](#), and the dedicated Publications Committee [Nancy Abdalla](#), [Skye Cody](#), [Liz Main](#), [Alana Morgante](#), [Andree Pianta](#), [Shifa Shaikh](#), [Amy Stagg](#) and [Lili Rand](#). Your tireless efforts are greatly appreciated in bringing to life the 2023 edition of Portia. Thank you as well to our sponsors for their reflections on community which are shared in Portia.

VWL always encourages contributions to Portia by our members. If you are interested in submitting an article to Portia in 2024, we would love to hear from you. Thank you to Sophie for all her assistance, Liz for the mailing list and our designer and publisher Design by Wolf.

Law Reform Committee: presented by Sophie Levevre on behalf of the Co-Chairs Casey Guilmartin and Sophie Lloyd

The Law Reform Committee's primary role is to promote women lawyers and gender equality through submissions and contributions to law reform initiatives, such as Victorian or Commonwealth government public consultation on proposed law reform.

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In 2023 we farewelled exceptional past Co-Chairs: Andrea de Silva and Stephanie Dendrinis, and welcomed Sophie Lloyd and Casey Guilmartin as new Co-Chairs.

The Committee had a busy start to the year, contributing to three law reform consultations at both a Victorian and Commonwealth level:

Federal Attorney-General's Department's (AGD) public consultation process on Scoping the Establishment of a Federal Judicial Commission. The consultation received 57 submissions, of which 37 have been made public on the AGD website.

Federal Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee's Inquiry into Current and Proposed Sexual Consent Laws in Australia. The final Inquiry Report was published in September 2023. The VWL submission is #47 and is available for download on the Senate Inquiry Report website.

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office of Women's public consultation on the National Strategy to achieve Gender Equality.

Behind the scenes, we have been consulted on several nascent law reform proposals and are developing tools to support the broader community to make law reform submissions. We are excited to share these in 2024.

Thank you to our enthusiastic Committee members: Luisa Ashton, Sabrina Berardinelli, Sarah Lefevre, Jasmine Tonkin, Quynh Trang McGrath, Andree Pianta, Bronwyn O'Brien, Samreen Shakeel, Madeleine Stratman, Natasha Whitehead, and all past members.

A warm thank you to Jess Date and Raff Rossignuolo from the Law Institute of Victoria for generously finding our Committee a space to meet throughout the year.

We are excited to continue contributing to Commonwealth and Victorian law reform and sharing tools to support the broader community of women and gender diverse peoples to make submissions to law reform consultations in 2024.

Sophie thanked the law reform committee and said that if anyone is interested in making a change you can join the committee.

Outreach Committee: presented by Shaniya Vilash on behalf of herself & Lucy Padula as Co-Chairs

The Outreach Committee aims to strengthen VWL's engagement with regional, suburban and other members with limited access or connection to Melbourne CBD or the profession, with a focus on enhancing VWL's online offering. The composition of the Outreach Committee is a representative model, comprising members of the profession from across Victoria and at various stages of their legal career.

This year, the Outreach Committee continued to focus on connecting people through technology, to further remove barriers to engagement with our regional and suburban lawyers and students. We proudly hosted an online panel-based event focussed on 'Difficult Conversations at Work', which provided invaluable insights to our community on managing conflict and difficult conversations. We also organised a joint community themed networking event in Geelong with the Women in the Public Sector Committee.

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We wish to thank our committee members for their time and support. We also wish to thank Nicole Davidson, Nina Hoang and Maddison Harrington in helping deliver an important discussion on approaching difficult conversations and providing some practical tips to navigate them. In addition, we wish to thank Diana Taylor for being a part of our community themed networking event in Geelong.

We also wish to acknowledge and thank the work of VWL's Executive and other committees in helping to further to aims of the Outreach Committee. We will continue to offer a mixture of online and hybrid events to enable VWL members and the broader legal community, regardless of their location and circumstances, to attend and remain involved.

The theme of 'Community' brings a sense of togetherness and belonging. The commitment to community goes to the heart and soul of Outreach, and will continue to be a focus in the future.

Sophie said so many travelled to go to the Geelong event and encouraged people who have connections outside to CBD to get involved in VWL. We are not just CBD based and we want to engage with law societies and regional practitioners so we produce meaningful events. Sophie also said there are changes to our Rules of Association so that we can make the AGM available online

Networking Committee: presented by the Co-Chairs Rhiannon Zarro & Jyoti Haikerwal

The Networking Committee's role is to create opportunities through which women in the legal profession, or who are about to enter the profession, can build strong professional relationships and connections in a supportive environment.

We do this by hosting a number of interesting and engaging networking events and panel discussions throughout the year, which aim to highlight the value of forging and maintaining networks for one's career development and building their community in the legal world.

The Networking Committee had a successful year of events which you can read about in the events section of this Journal.

We held our annual Members and Guests event as well as introducing a new event "Building Your Community Event" and have been working to build connections with associations outside of the law to provide VWL members with even more diverse opportunities for networking in 2024.

Finally, the Networking Committee have provided support for VWL's AGM and End of Year celebration to take place at the College of Law.

The Co-Chairs, Rhiannon and Jyoti would like to say a very big thank you to all of our wonderful Committee members – Ariella, Abigail, Victoria, Rachael, Elle, Lucy, Jess, Alex, Louise, Shannon, Felicia and Paloma.

Their enthusiasm, imagination and hard-work was the reason that the events held by the Networking Committee were a huge success!

Community in the law is so important now more than ever. It is our committee's role to continuing to provide opportunities to connect VWL members together, this is always a

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privilege and we thank everyone who attended our events and contributed to the community VWL is building.

Sophie thanked Rhi and Jyoti for their hard work. Although there has been false start for cross industry event we hope next year and we are including networking outside the law.

Women in Public Sector Committee: presented by the Co-Chairs Natalie Plumstead & Rachel Matulis

Good evening my name is Rachel Matulis, and together with Natalie Plumstead we are the Co-Chairs of the Women in the Public Sector Committee.

2023 has been an exciting year for our committee, as we continue to embody our aim to bring opportunities for engagement in the public sector context, with the added layer of fostering community, consistent with VWL's theme for this year. The activities of the WiPS committee in 2023, and the community forged within the committee itself, is a credit to the strong social and working relationships fostered through VWL.

In February of this year, with the support of the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office, we hosted the 'Frank and Fearless: Ethics in the Public Sector' panel CPD event. Our wonderful panel included First Parliamentary Counsel Meredith Leigh; barrister Elizabeth Bennett SC; Wage Inspectorate Victoria's Chief Counsel Tien Tran; and VGSO Lead Counsel Nicole Spicer.

The panelist discussion centered on the ethical landscape that public sector lawyers operate within, and tools for overcoming the ethical complexities that may be faced in the course of carrying out their roles.

As Co-Chairs we'd like to particularly thank our moderator on the evening Maira, and committee event leads Kiara and Alex.

I'll now handover to Natalie to talk about our most recent community building event, held in the Geelong region.

WiPS broke new ground with the first VWL event at Deakin University Geelong. WiPS partnered with the Outreach Committee to host the 'Geelong: Building your Community Event' on 17 November. Our keynote speaker Diana Taylor, the first female Vice President of the Geelong Football Club spoke about the importance of finding a personal meaning of community to forge meaningful personal and professional outcomes.

As co-chairs we especially thank Deakin Law School and our sponsor Coulter Legal for their support.

Sophie also acknowledged and thanked Catherine Dent who was the co-chair in the first half of the year and then Natalie joined

Work Practice Committee: presented by the Co-Chairs Isabella Armao & Ninawa Milner

The Work Practices Committee is dedicated to addressing the various aspects of employment practices that affect women lawyers. With a primary emphasis on key areas such as flexibility, workplace discrimination, pay equity and transparency, parental leave policies, part-time work, and the professional advancement of women lawyers, our committee seeks to discuss and analyse challenges consistently faced by women. The committee also aims to improve the overall work environment for women in the legal profession, fostering equal opportunities and gender inclusivity in the field.

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2023 marked the return of 'Tough Talks,' an engaging session where experienced legal professionals shared their insights on handling challenging conversations. Throughout this interactive event, we collectively explored effective strategies for addressing crucial topics such as advocating for well-deserved remuneration increases, managing high-stakes client matters, and championing diversity in the legal profession.

The Work Practices Committee then re-launched the Coming to the Bar event where we were joined by four barristers and Anna Svenson, director and principal clerk to discuss various aspects of life at the Bar, including exam preparation, mentors and clerks, practice areas, parent and care giving responsibilities and disability supports.

We would like to thank all of the speakers that presented at our events. Their honesty and transparency made the events successful and inspirational. They each provided valuable insights and knowledge to our audience, which have greatly contributed to our goals.

We also extend our gratitude to our dedicated committee members for their tireless efforts and valuable contributions throughout the year. Special thanks to Julia Eastoe, Audrey Capasso, Kat Tilnak, Katerina Petkovska, Mary Quinn, Safai Alidad, Sage Wilson-Short, Sapphire Parsons, and Stacey White for their unwavering commitment and support.

Looking ahead to 2024, our focus will be on the continued development of our events and projects, with an aim to make them even more enriching and impactful. We recognise the importance of creating a platform for open dialogue and learning, where individuals from all stages of their legal careers can find guidance.

Sophie said Work practice is one of the most important committee about supporting women in the law. Sophie commend Bella and Nina for all their work.

Mentoring Committee: presented by the Bridget Coutts on behalf of herself & Justine Sammut as co-chairs

VWL's Mentoring Committee is responsible for all mentoring programs and associated education and support for mentors and mentees. Mentoring programs are a great opportunity for students and junior lawyers to gain insight into working in the law, develop their network and share ideas with mentors in the legal profession.

VWL & Women Barristers' Association Student Mentoring Program

This program has been run since 2009 bringing together law students with solicitors and barristers and providing an opportunity for those about to enter our profession to learn from those who are already working in it. The patron of this program is Honourable Justice Rita Incerti, we are honoured to have her valued support and guidance for this program. This year we matched over 60 pairs of program participants. In a sign the profession does care about giving back and helping the next generation, we had more applications from members of the profession wanting to be a mentor than we had students to pair them with.

VWL Professional Mentoring Program

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Designed to enable junior women (less than 5 years PAE) in the legal profession to obtain the benefits that may be drawn from a 1:1 mentoring relationship. VWL matched over 60 pairs of program participants eager to grow their network and develop as professionals. We thank the patron of this program, the Honourable Associate Justice Mary-Jane Ierodionou for her continued support of this program. Special mentions to:

- Justine Sammut
- Bridget Coutts
- Cordilia Thomas
- Mia Hyslop
- Pearl Wang
- Batool Al Sallakh
- Ginevra Greco

Monique Hardinge – special mention for her assistance with the pairing process for the 2023 VWL Student Mentoring Program.

In addition, Bridget said she is looking forward to 2024 – we are going to have an event to support mentors where mentor can discuss their experiences. We also want to put out a guide to share tips and trips on mentoring.

Sophie said we had more applications for people who wanted to be mentors which is really heartening this year. Looking forward to what this committee does in the future.

5. Treasurer's Report: presented by Elizabeth Cooper

We did well this year in comparison to last year.

We hosted Dame Roma so lunch expenses went up and we made more money from deposited funds and made more money through memberships. We also had new associate sponsors.

Liz thanked Rose, Carey and Jess from Two & Two they are administrative specialists

Motion

Sophie proposed a motion to approve the tabled financials

Motion carried by majority

6. Membership fees for the 2024-2025 Financial year

We propose to keep the membership fees as they are but we will be seeking more sponsorship

Motion

Sophie move to confirm that the annual subscription for VWL membership fee for each category of members will remain as they currently are for the next financial year, being the year ended 30 June 2025.

Second Joanna Abraham

Motion carried by majority

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7. Special Resolution: Proposal to amend Rules of the Association

In accordance with our rules if we wish to amend the rules we need to do by special resolution.

In our AGM packs it was included to show the key changes.

Purpose is to improve and remove inconsistencies that's in our rules.

We have paid for legal advice and paid Maddocks.

One of the changes is doing away with a paper ballot. We also want to change it so we can run the election prior to AGM. We are also proposing that a condition joining exec you have been a member for 12 months.

The president asked if anyone has any questions.

Motion

Move to approve to amend the Rules of Association.

Second Jo Abraham.

Motion carried by over 75% on a show of hands

8. Election of VWL Executive Committee

1

2

The President declared that all current positions are vacated, and all current members are stood down.

3

4

President informed members of the process that we will first elect our officer positions, then our ordinary member positions. If we need to conduct a ballot for any position, we will do so in accordance with our Rules of Association. A member who is nominated for a position and fails to be elected to that position may be nominated for any other position for which an election is yet to be held.

Election of Officers of the Association:

- Joanna Abraham: President- elected
- Linda Hart: Vice President- elected
- Annaleise Vulin: Secretary
- Elizabeth Cooper: Treasurer

Motion carried by majority

Motion: That members approve seven (7) ordinary members of the Executive Committee be elected for the next year

Motion carried by majority

A ballot was conducted as there were eight nominees or 7 positions.

Nominees

- Sounita Viravout
- Shaniya Vilash
- Isabella Armao
- Bridget Coutts

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- Alanna Attard
- Alexandra Lioudvigova
- Maddison Harrington
- Eugenie Chung

Elected Executive Committee (by ballot)

- Sounita Viravout
- Shaniya Vilash
- Isabella Armao
- Bridget Coutts
- Alanna Attard
- Alexandra Lioudvigova
- Maddison Harrington

9. Other business

Sophie thanked everyone for the amazing work that they have done. We have done so much this year and most important is that we created a safe community. Sophie now moves to immediate past president and thanked the support of VGSO and also thanked her parents. She thanked outgoing exec committees Roxanne Taylor, Stephane Vejar, Megan Lawton. Also thanked Stephanie Pasharis and the team from Two and Two. She thanked the networking committee for organizing the event and thanked Liz and Linda for their work,

Sophie thanked Joanna Abraham for being such a big support to her this year.

Jo thanked outgoing president Sophie Lefebvre.

No other business was raised.

The meeting was closed.

VWL 2023 Annual General meeting

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Attendance Register

Number	First Name	Last Name
1.	Alanna	Attard
2.	Bridget	Coutts
3.	Shannon	Hubert
4.	anupama	baker
5.	Chami	Rupasinghe
6.	Christina	Potts
7.	Helen	Lou
8.	Cassandra	Hurley
9.	Lilly	Kimpton
10.	Oriana	Torcasio Barberis
11.	Jyoti	Haikerwal
12.	APSARA	MURALEDHARAN
13.	Elise	Steegstra
14.	Thirumalai	Shanmugam
15.	Deborah	Kliger
16.	Greta	Marks
17.	Iresha	Hendavitharana
18.	Filippina	Ensabella
19.	Isabel	Britten-Jones
20.	Nina	Milner
21.	Sophie	Lefebvre
22.	Felicia	Leong
23.	Isabella	Armao
24.	Annaleise	Vulin
25.	Rachel	Matulis
26.	Vera	Mom
27.	Stephanie	Pasharis
28.	Rose	Storey
29.	Alexandra	Lioudvigova
30.	Collette	De Silva
31.	Clare	Peterson
32.	Joanna	Abraham
33.	Elana	Szabo
34.	Linda	Hart
35.	Prajakta	Keni
36.	Sounita	Viravout
37.	Emma	Halliday
38.	SHANIYA	VILASH
39.	Catherine	Dent
40.	APSARA	MURALEDHARAN
41.	Eugenie	Chung
42.	Estefany	Jimenez
43.	Christina	Potts

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44.	Sophie	Lefebvre
45.	Sam	Vasaiwalla
46.	LEILA	FARIHA
47.	Namal	Melewwe
48.	Georgia	Bradley
49.	Anthony	Salgram
50.	Sarah	Salgram
51.	Natalie	Plumstead
52.	Shifa	Shaikh
53.	Alexandra	Cowden
54.	Harriet	Whiteley
55.	Alanna	Attard

VWL 2023 Annual General meeting Proxy Register

No.	Member	Appointed Proxy
1.	Evangelia Diamantopoulos	Alexandra Lioudvigova
2.	Justine Sammut	Bridget Coutts
3.	Roxanne Taylor	Bridget Coutts
4.	Nicolina Lademann	Chair
5.	Alessandra Daly-Sutton	Chair
6.	Pearl Wang	Chair
7.	Alison Mercer	Chair
8.	Amanda Emonson	Chair
9.	Alana Morgante	Chair
10.	Georgia Lucus	Chair
11.	Lucy Padula	Chair
12.	Rebecca Radford	Chair
13.	Katie Baxter	Chair
14.	Megan Lawton	Chair
15.	Winning Wang	Isabel Britten-Jones
16.	Katerina Petkovska	Isabella Armao
17.	Julia Eastoe	Isabella Armao
18.	Cordilia Thomas	Joanna Abraham
19.	Stephanie Vejar	Joanna Abraham
20.	Zafiroula Souvlakis	Joanna Abraham
21.	Collette Maree De Silva	Joanna Abraham
22.	Kate Ross	Joanna Abraham
23.	Sophie Williams	Joanna Abraham
24.	Jacinta Learey	Shaniya Vilash
25.	Eve Foster	Shaniya Vilash
26.	Maddison Harrington	Sophie Lefebvre

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27.	Eloise Connelly	Sophie Lefebvre
28.	Caroline Layton	Sophie Lefebvre
29.	Kathryn Schuck	Sounita Viravout
30.	Madeleine Gome	Veronica Belot
31.	Melanie Kiremitciyan	Chair