



2024 Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Women Lawyers Association Inc.

Queen Victoria Women's Centre

210 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000

and

by Electronic Meeting Link <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/82637d47-226e-4e5a-be3c-a910db35e5e7@e5217522-56d8-4996-a821-424b64e13cfd>

Tuesday 19 November 2024 at 5:30pm

AGM AGENDA

- 1 President's welcome & Acknowledgement of Country**
- 2 Attendance and apologies**
- 3 Approval of Minutes of 2023 Annual General Meeting**
- 4 Executive Committee Annual Report**
Executive Committee members and co-chairs of Committees will report on Committee activities over the previous year as outlined in VWL's Portia publication.
- 5 Treasurer's Report**
The Treasurer of VWL, Elizabeth Cooper, will present audited financial statements for VWL in the 2023-2024 financial year.
- 6 Election of VWL Executive Committee**
Election of Officers of the Association: President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary; and

Election of seven (7) ordinary members
- 7 Other business**



2024 Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Women Lawyers Association Inc.

Tuesday 19 November 2024 at 5:30pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. President's welcome & Acknowledgement of Country

Joanna Abraham (**the President**) opened the Annual General Meeting of Victorian Women Lawyers ("VWL") for 2024 with an Acknowledgement of Country.

2. Attendance and apologies

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

- Liz Cooper
- Isabella (Bella) Armao

3. Minutes of 2023 Annual General Meeting

First motion

second by vice president

Minutes for the 2023 approved as a true and correct record and annexed to the minutes below.

Motion to confirm minutes of 2023 AGM carried by majority.

4. Committee Annual Report

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

Immediate Past President and AWL Representative (Stephanie Pasharis):

" I was the President of Victorian Women Lawyers in 2022 and I am VWL's 2023-2024 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. As a reminder, by virtue of being a member of VWL, you are also a member of AWL.

This year, AWL's primary focus was organising our biennial National Conference, which was held on 18 October and 19 October in Canberra. The theme of the conference was "leading the way" and was attended by over 150 delegates from all across Australia.



The conference began with a welcome from AWL's Patron, the Hon. Justice Jacqueline Gleeson. Delegates then heard from keynote speaker Jennifer Robinson of Doughty Street chambers on how the law silences women, as well as many other esteemed women in the legal profession, including Dr Anna Cody, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Carly Kind, Privacy Commissioner, Dr Hannah Tonkin, NSW Women's Safety Commissioner, Dr Alice Edwards, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Kate Eastman SC who spoke of the general pay gap at the Bar. The conference ended with a presentation from Fiona McLeod AO SC, whose session was chaired by Jennifer Batrouney AM KC, both leaders in the legal profession and past Presidents of AW, with Fiona's reflections leading to a standing ovation from delegates.

The conference also featured the presentation of the AWL Award, with the recipient of the Award Fleur Kingham, honoured at a Gala Dinner. Ms Kingham is the immediate past president of the Australian Association of Women Judges. She co-founded the Women's Legal Service in Queensland and has spent many years advocating for the rights of women in the community.

Outside of the conference, AWL made submissions on matters such as bullying and harassment, and supported VWL member Sapphire Parsons on a submission to the Expert Panel Australian Federal Government Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches, on the topic of Safety Regulation for Primary Prevention of Gendered Violence.

Lastly, AWL's AGM will be held on Friday, 29 November at 1pm. You are welcome to attend in person or by Zoom. Details are on AWL's webpage. I will be resigning from the AWL Board at the AGM after serving as VWL's representative for the past 2 years. I look forward to seeing what VWL's new AWL representative, Sophie Lefebvre will achieve in the role."

Jo thanked Stephanie for her hard work and said that the board made a decision that Soph will be the next AWL representative.

Communications Officer: presented by Alexandra Lioudvigova

"I am pleased to provide another positive update for communications this year.

We have maintained strong levels of engagement across our socials, including Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Thanks to a suggestion by our sponsorship officer Bella Armao, we are also exploring the use of reels in more of our content, including in sponsor spotlight, though the more traditional image post remains the preferred method for now.

We continue to use Instagram and Facebook stories as a regular promoter of our events. It has been particularly helpful for reminders of already live events, especially in the lead up to events. In addition, we continue to use this method to promote other posts and news items regarding issues relating to gender and diversity, which has generated positive engagement.

It has been great to use our communications to continue building connections with our sponsors and other external stakeholders. We have also continued a strong relationship with the Law Institute Journal through our regular contributions on issues of diversity. Thank you to those who have provided contributions this year. Next year, the nature of



our contributions will change to become even more collaborative, and we will work more closely to LIV to produce articles that tie in to the relevant themes of their issues.

I'd like to finish this report by thanking several groups. Firstly, the VWL executive, especially Jo and Linda, for their support and guidance, including at short notice as can often be the case in communications! Secondly, our sponsors, for their continuous collaboration on and engagement with our communications. It is great to have this two way relationship in communications, with sponsors who are clearly passionate about promoting the work we have achieved together. Finally, I'd like to thank the VWL members for their engagement with us throughout our various communications over this year. We appreciate the support and look forward to further engagement next year!"

Jo thanked Alex for her contributions this year and the new initiatives the VWL has introduced on LinkedIn.

Sponsorship Officer: presented Joanna Abraham on behalf of Isabella Armao

Victorian Women Lawyers would like to thank each and every one of our sponsors for their ongoing support in 2024:

- Australian Migration Lawyers
- 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
- Nicholes Family Lawyers
- Svenson Barristers
- Victorian Government Solicitor's Office



We also extend our gratitude to the following event and project sponsors for their support in 2024:

- Gatehouse Legal Recruitment
- Clarence Workplaces for Professionals

VWL's work would not be possible without the invaluable support and contribution of our sponsors and supporters. The generosity of our sponsors has allowed us to run meaningful events and facilitate important conversations within our community. We have been able to come together as women in the legal profession from various backgrounds, offering 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 2025, including with our newest sponsor List G Barristers."

Jo thanked Bella for all her hard work and noted that Bella was an apology and her work to VWL this year was integral and VWL looks forward to continue building relationships with sponsors and welcoming new sponsors.

Community and Membership Engagement Officer: presented Shaniya Vilash

"This year we have had a number of events to keep members engaged and overall members' responses to these have been largely positive. From the surveys, the key takeaways have been that VWL does well in organising events and our members mainly value networking opportunities to build connections and the content that is being delivered through the various committees. There are also some areas VWL can improve in such as encouraging more engagement from senior members of the community and timing of events. Additionally, this year we have explored opportunities with a potential new sponsor for next year, and for the Outreach Committee, whom I congratulate on hosting an event in Bendigo as well. Finally, we are planning to send a member wide survey over the next couple of months, similar to that done in 2019 and 2021, to help give us further insight into what members value".

Jo thanked Shaniya and how the engagement surveys are critical to VWL further developing and improving future events.

Special Projects Officer: presented by Oriana Torcasio

"Events:

- Foleys Podcast
- Lesbia Harford planning
- Dame Roma 2024



On 7 March 2024, 300 diverse members of the legal profession converged on the Melbourne Town Hall in celebration of International Women's Day.

The event commenced with an operatic rendition of the Acknowledgement of Country. Kate Ramsay, author of 'A Hell of a lot of Glass' provided the keynote address at this year's Dame Roma. This was followed by an invigorating discussion from our panellists around the UN IWD 2024 theme: Count Her In, as well as the VWL theme for 2024: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow. Panellists engaged in an insightful conversation surrounding the barriers women face in the profession and more generally, including care giving duties and pay. This event has become VWL's flagship annual event and we look forward to Dame Roma again in 2025.

Foley's Podcast

In collaboration with Foley's List, we launched a podcast series, Getting your Ducks in a Row. The three-episode series explored the key life stages and financial milestones that may impact women in law. We had a number of keynote speakers discussing their experiences and insights about what goes into starting your own legal business, starting or ending relationships and going on parental leave or returning to work. The focus was on setting women lawyers up for success as they face various stages of life. We also celebrated the promotion of the series with a fabulous launch event that took place at the Foley's office in July.

Lesbia Harford

We have been laying down the groundwork for an exciting Lesbia Harford oration that will take place next year. Watch this space!"

Jo thanked Ori and stated that VWL looks forward to continue hosting its flagship events Dame Roma and the Lesbia Harford Oration in 2025.

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 held a wellbeing workshop led by Psychologist & Mental Health Advocate Anushka Phal from Umeed Psychology. Anushka created a supportive environment where participants were able to explore and address the unique challenges they face in their professional and personal lives. Attendees participated in candid discussions and interactive exercises to uncover the profound impact of childhood experiences, cultural values and societal expectations on their career trajectories. The workshop also helped legal professionals to recognize the deep-rooted influences that shape their professional lives; how cultural values, expectations and identity interplay to influence mental health and career; how to recognise and address burnout in the legal profession; and how to implement effective strategies for mental health resilience."

Jo thanked Sounita and noted that this is Sounita's last year on Voting Executive and that she will be dearly missed.



Competitions Officer : presented by Maddison Harrington and Alanna Ivanova

“The Warren Moot is a landmark event in VWL’s calendar, it attracts a diverse cohort of participants, ranging from law students to more established members of the legal profession.

The Moot provides participants with an opportunity to test their advocacy skills and engage directly with members of the Judiciary, with a view to providing solicitors with an insight into a career at the Bar and to also look to improve their advocacy skills.

The Moot, which celebrated its ten-year anniversary in 2024, was launched on 5 August 2024 by the Honourable Justice Rowena Orr KC of the Victorian Court of Appeal, Elizabeth Bennett SC of the Victorian Bar, and Michelle Dixon, a Partner at Maddocks. The panellists participated in an engaging panel discussion facilitated by Maddison Harrington and Alanna Ivanova, VWL’s competitions officers. The panellists shared their experiences in relation to oral advocacy and appearances before the bench as well as their insight on the skills and attributes of a good advocate.

Each moot round was presided over by members of the Judiciary, including judges of the County Court, Supreme Court and Federal Courts. Our teams grappled with all new and novel problems drafted by members of the Victorian Bar, and for the first time, encountered a rolling ‘factual matrix’ following the protagonist ‘Derek Smith of DStinct Aroma’ through his journey through the Australian court system. In recognition of the ten-year anniversary, we were fortunate enough to have 10 teams face off against each other, with the first two rounds being hosted at Maddocks. The four teams who reached the semi-final were invited to appear at the Fair Work Commission before Deputy Presidents O’Neil and Millhouse.

The Grand Final was held on Monday, 11 November 2024 at the Supreme Court before a ‘full bench’ comprised of (for the first time in the Warren Moot’s history) three judges – in celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the moot.

Two teams progressed to the Grand Final, being CU in Court and Felicitous Solicitors. We were incredibly fortunate to have VWL’s Program Patron, Chief Justice Warren, Justice Incerti of the Supreme Court, and Judge Tran of the County Court preside over the Grand Final.

Congratulations to the winners of the 2024 Warren Moot, team ‘CU in Court’, comprising of Clayton Utz graduates, Zanna Gorfe, Charlee Hawkes, Kate Buckley and Elizabeth Seychell.

VWL also congratulates the runners up, team Felicitous Solicitors, comprising of Fel Leong, Jennifer Xj Wu, and An Jiang.

Both teams displayed exceptional advocacy skills and are to be commended for their resilience and determination.

VWL extends its sincere thanks to Maddocks, who have sponsored the moot since its inception, together with the members of the Bar who drafted the problems, and to the members of the Fair Work Commission for so willingly hosting the semi-final round.



Lastly, we would like to thank all members of the Judiciary who kindly gave up their time to adjudicate each of the four rounds.

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

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 affect women to the attention of VWL and the wider legal community.

VWL is dedicated to achieving equity and promoting safety for women across Australia.

The Justice Committee with the support of our sponsor, Ethos Migration Lawyers, held a panel discussion on Family Violence and how it affects women and children in the community.

This year, the Justice Committee brought together legal professionals from diverse backgrounds and roles who are passionate about family violence and migrant rights.

We are inspired to continue advocacy and conversations on this live issue, and look to the future with hope.

In 2025, we look forward to bringing more awareness to the topic of financial literacy for women.”

Jo thanked Zefy and Amanda and noted the importance of women being aware of and knowing how to use their financial independence.

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

“On 20 March 2024, at Allens, VWL’s Diversity & Inclusion (D & I) Committee and Tarwirri-Indigenous Law Students and Lawyers Association of Victoria jointly presented a candid, insightful discussion, led by Tekan Cochrane of Tarwirri and Shivani moderating with a stellar panel: Her Honour Magistrate Rose Falla, Candice Jackson, Barrister, Victorian Bar, Neane Carter, Solicitor, Terri Janke and Company, Magistrate Abigail Burchill stepped in on the evening to impart a deeply moving Acknowledgement of Country. The seminar addressed how we can promote inclusion and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in the workplace including: Mandatory cultural training; Awareness of ‘tokenism’ in the workplace; Ensuring acknowledgments of country are genuine and meaningful; Neurodiversity and the Law: Successes and Ideas’

In June this year D & I joined with WiPS to hold a similar on Neurodiversity and the College of Law after one of our committee members Tamsin Jowett who is passionate about educating others about neurodiversity, initiated the topic and gave an invaluable contribution as a panellist. Alongside her was Natalie Phillips-Mason, Chief All and



Founder at Inclusive Change, Bree Ridgeway, Barrister at Victorian Bar; and Natalie Plumstead, VWL WiPS Co-Chair, moderating with great sensitivity, insight and style.

We learned about the significant challenges those with Neurodiversity face noting the often invisibility of neurodiverse peoples, respect for their confidentiality and measures to promote their inclusion.

It has been an exciting year for the Co- chairs presenting at the International Legal Regulators Conference at the Langham. speaking about our cultural journeys in the law and the discrimination and challenges we have overcome to be here.

As we move into 2025 we are proud to say we have committee members who identify as Aboriginal, LGBTQIA+ and with a disability from diverse religion and cultural backgrounds spanning Macau to Kenya.”

Shiv gave a big shout to Fel, Jo and Linda and thanked them for their support and noting this is her last year as Diversity Inclusion Co-Chair and she is very excited for Fel to lead the committee and that she will have brilliant ideas.

Jo thanked the committee and particularly Shiv and all of her hard work, supported and dedication to VWL over the years and wished her well in her next chapter.

Publications Committee: presented by the Co-Chair Nancy Abdalla (Shifa Shaikh was an apology)

“Portia is the annual journal and report of VWL, which is produced by VWL’s Publications Committee. This year, Portia explores the theme Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. This edition celebrates the achievements and progress of women in the legal profession while acknowledging the ongoing challenges that shape the future of law and society.

This year's collection of feature articles presents a diverse range of voices and perspectives, offering valuable insights into both personal journeys and professional developments. We are privileged to share the story of Commissioner Tran of the Fair Work Commission, whose remarkable journey from refugee to Commissioner sheds light on the power of embracing new opportunities. We also explore the evolving legal landscape surrounding gender dysphoria in the courts; hear from a lawyer’s reflections on returning to work after parental leave and explore the current mental health challenges facing the legal profession through the prism of Dr Tina Popa’s work in this area. Another highlight includes a profile piece on Mollie Tregillis, ex-lawyer and current consultant to firms on strategic and digital transformation.

Importantly though, we want to express our genuine belief that the Publication Committee’s work goes beyond just publishing these works. Portia serves as a means of capturing and celebrating the dynamic role of women lawyers, in and outside of VWL, and serving as a platform for dialogue, advocacy, and education on issues that affect the profession.

A huge thank you to the editors of Portia, the Co-Chairs of the Publications Committee, Nancy Abdalla and Shifa Shaikh, the dedicated Publications Committee,



Amy Stagg, Nicole Pereira, Ella Heaphy, Alana Morgante and Andree Pianta. Your tireless efforts are greatly appreciated in bringing to life the 2024 edition of Portia. Thank you as well to our sponsors for their reflections on this years' theme which are shared in Portia and to our designer and publisher, Design by Wolf."

Jo thanked Nancy and Shifa and stated that VWL always encourages contributions to Portia by our members. If members are interested in submitting an article to Portia in 2025, VWL would love to hear from them.

Law Reform Committee: presented by Sapphire Parsons (Casy Guilmartin was an apology)

The Law Reform Committee remains steadfast in its commitment to gender equality and in amplifying the voices of women lawyers through active contributions to law reform initiatives at both Victorian and Commonwealth levels. Our core mission is to engage in impactful submissions, consultations, and advocacy efforts that advance the rights and interests of women and gender-diverse communities.

In 2024, we bid a fond farewell to our dedicated Co-Chair, Sophie Lloyd, and warmly welcomed Sapphire Parsons as the new Co-Chair (joining Casey Guilmartin as continuing Co-Chair), and Madeleine Stratmann as our Secretary - who bring fresh perspectives and energy to our leadership team.

This year, the Committee proudly contributed to two law reform consultations:

Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry — addressing issues related to menopause and perimenopause, emphasising the need to close gendered health gaps and address policy challenges.

Australian Human Rights Commission Law Reform Collaboration — partnering with Pride in Law and Liberty Victoria, we worked to identify current and emerging threats to transgender and gender-diverse human rights, advocating for stronger, more inclusive protections.

We were also thrilled to co-host "De-mystifying Law Reform: A Focus on Coercive Control and Family Violence" with Nicholes Family Lawyers. This event featured a distinguished panel, including Her Honour Judge Alexandra Harland (Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, Division 2), Jade Blakkarly (CEO of Wire), and Joanna Fletcher (Executive Director, Family, Youth and Children's Law). The panellists explored the complexities of law reform surrounding coercive control and family violence, encouraging greater public understanding and community engagement on these critical issues.

Our heartfelt thanks go to our dedicated Committee members, and all former members whose contributions have been instrumental in shaping our work.

We also extend a special thank you to the Law Institute of Victoria for their invaluable support in providing a space for our meetings throughout the year.



As we look to the future, we remain committed to advancing law reform at both state and national levels. Through our ongoing efforts, we aim to inspire and enable the broader community—including women and gender-diverse individuals—to actively engage in shaping the future of Australian law.

Jo thanked Sapphire for her passion and enthusiasm and can't wait to see what the law reform committee will do next year.

Outreach Committee: presented by Annabelle Ballard and Bridgett Coutts

“The Outreach Committee ran three events this year.

Event 1: Unlocking the Power of Social Media – Strategies for Building Your Legal Brand and Network.

The Outreach Committee hosted an online panel discussion focusing on strategies for leveraging social media to promote legal professionals and expand their networks. The event featured presenters Ange Smith, Jennifer Tutty, and Hadassah Andagali, who provided insights into effectively using social media platforms to build a personal and professional brand. Key takeaways included authenticity, crafting a strong LinkedIn summary, focused social media strategy, and maintaining an updated website.

Event 2: Fair Fees and Cost Agreements

This event featured a panel of speakers including Annabelle Ballard, Bridget Kennedy, Binti Prasad, and Katie Lockey. The discussion covered essential components of cost agreements, risks of non-compliance, managing costs agreements, handling unpaid invoices, and communicating with clients about costs. The event provided practical advice and was well-received by attendees.

Event 3: Building Your Community in the Region

An in-person networking event aimed at connecting female law students and young practitioners with local firms. The event included speeches by La Trobe Law School alumni and career “speed dating” sessions. Key themes included opportunities in regional practice, work-life balance, and diverse career paths.”

Networking Committee: presented by the Co-Chairs Harriet Whieley & Shannon Hubert

“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. Our events hope to highlight the value of forging and maintaining networks for one’s career development and building their community in the legal world.



We also aim to bring our members fun events that do not feel too formal or overwhelming. It's a balancing act!

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 with our special guest Elise Pulbrook from MasterChef. We know so many women in the law juggle many passions and wear multiple hats at the one time, and Elise is a real testament to how broad those passions can be.

We held our Cross Industry Networking panel with Clayton Utz, which delved into the cross over between AI, Tech and the legal industry.

Finally, the Networking Committee have provided support for VWL's AGM and End of Year celebration to take place at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre. It's always a wonderful way to wrap up the very busy VWL year.

The Co-Chairs, Harriet and Shannon would like to say a very big thank you to all of our wonderful Committee members! Their hard-work was the reason that the events held by the Networking Committee were a huge success!

Our committee plans to keep bringing exciting events to our members and we are looking forward for another big year to come. For now, thank you to everyone who attended our events and contributed to the community VWL is building."

Jo thanked Shannon and Harriet for their creativity and fun events this year. Jo stated, as always the networking committee is known as the party committee!

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

"The Women in the Public Sector Committee (WiPS) has had an impactful 2024. The committee has grown and extended its activities to embody its aim to bring opportunities for engagement in the public sector context. In particular, this year the WiPS committee led events which engaged with thought provoking and socially impactful discussions in furtherance of VWL's theme that is reflective of the past while remaining future focused.

WiPS broke new ground partnering with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to host "Neurodiversity and Inclusion: Successes and Ideas" on 24 June, an event which sought to promote ideas for more inclusive working environments for neurodivergent lawyers. Our panellists Barrister Bree Ridgeway, Natalie Phillips-Mason, Tamsin Jowett in a lively discussion convened by Natalie Plumstead, provided lived experience insights and expertise on engaging with neurodivergent lawyers with respectful curiosity. The panel provided their insights on ways to create safe and inclusive legal environments where neurodivergent lawyers can thrive.



On 17 July, the WiPS committee hosted the 'Intersectionality and Discrimination: The Positive Duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984' panel event.

The panellist discussion centred on the positive duty to eliminate conduct that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, exploring the impetus for employers to comply. The discussion considered the particular application of the duty in the context of the public sector as a model employer.

The WiPS Committee expresses its gratitude to the College of Law and Victorian Government Solicitor's Office for supporting our events in 2024.

The WiPS Committee expresses its sincere gratitude to our wonderful committee members and their contributions in 2024 and in particular our event subcommittee members Stephanie D'Rozario, Eugenie Chung, Apsara Murale, Madeleine Stratmann, Kiara Wagner and Alexandra Lioudvigova.

Jo thanked Rachel and Natalie for their hard work this year and that VWL is grateful for their commitment to running events core to VWL's purpose."

Work Practice Committee: presented by the Co-Chairs Ninawa Milner and Julia Eastoe

"The Work Practices Committee addresses employment practices that impact women lawyers. Our primary focus for 2024 was on women's health issues, as well as our continued commitment to progressing flexibility in the workplace, reducing workplace discrimination and championing the professional growth of women lawyers. Through ongoing discussion and analysis, we aim to tackle the challenges commonly faced by women while enhancing the overall work environment in the legal profession to promote equal opportunities and gender inclusivity.

Earlier in the year, we were proud to partner with Maurice Blackburn for the inaugural Menstruation to Menopause panel event, emphasising the significance of education, policy reform, and open dialogue to create supportive workplaces for women at different life stages, from menstruation through to menopause and beyond. At the event, we announced the launch of the Victorian Women's Lawyers Menstruation to Menopause Guide to be published in 2025 with support from Maurice Blackburn - watch this space!

2024 was the third consecutive year of our hugely successful Tough Talks interactive panel event, sponsored by Justitia Lawyers and held at Clarence Workspace for Professionals. The event attracted a fantastic turnout, with an honest, insightful and engaging panel. This event continues to provide a valuable platform for attendees to listen, engage, and share their workplace experiences, which often bring feelings of disappointment, isolation, and a strong urge to advocate for justice and equality.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the speakers who contributed to our events this year. Their honesty and openness greatly enhanced the success and inspiration of these gatherings, providing invaluable insights and knowledge to our audience.



Committee members, Sapphire Parsons and Mary Quinn, worked with Women's Legal throughout the year, assisting with the development of the Starts with Us Framework to eliminate harassment and violence against women in the workplace. This involved contributing to forums, drafting and engaging with Women's Legal and other stakeholders on how we can address these critical matters in the workplace.

Committee member, Anupama Baker, assisted with the drafting of the VWL submission to the Inquiry into issues related to menopause and perimenopause by the Senate Community Affairs References Committee.

Our gratitude extends to the dedicated committee members for their relentless efforts and contributions throughout the year in supporting the work practices events, publications and submissions. Special recognition to our co-chairs Julia & Nina, and committee members Katerina, Mary, Keeley, Von, Shelvi, Safai, Jenny, Anupama, and Sapphire for their unwavering support and commitment.

We understand the importance of establishing a platform for open dialogue and learning, where individuals at all stages of their legal careers can seek guidance and support. Looking forward, our emphasis will remain on further developing our events and projects to ensure they are enriching and impactful.”

Jo thanked Nina and Julia for their work this year and stated that the Tough Talks event has become a landmark event for VWL.

Mentoring Committee: presented by Cordilla Thomas and Maira Dad

“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.

On Tuesday 4 June 2024, Victorian Women's Lawyers Mentoring Committee held its first event for the year, sponsored by Brave Legal, Clarence, and Foley's List. Focusing on Work, Wellbeing, and Health Hacks for Junior Lawyers.

The panel discussion was facilitated by Bree Knoester, Principal Lawyer and Founder of Brave Legal. The panellists were Meg Crawford, Chami Rupasinghe, Sashi Perera and Craig Evans who shared valuable insights, tip and tricks for thriving in law while prioritising well-being. These panellists came from music, comedy, entertainment and business backgrounds.

The discussion was vibrant, positive and provided attendees with "hacks" to manage their health and wellbeing. They discussed a "non-traditional" pathway in the law while pursuing passions beyond the law. The stories shared highlighted the importance of prioritising health over other conflicting priorities. Our panellists also explained how important it is to find a supportive employer who helps to enhance your well-being and while growing in your career.



We thank everyone who attended and thank you to our sponsors, Brave Legal, Clarence, and Foley's List for their support. A special thank you to the VWL Mentoring Committee for organising this event.

On 24 July 2024, the VWL & WBA Law Student Mentoring Program officially commenced with a formal launch event. The Program's dedicated patron, Her Honour Justice Rita Incerti, delivered inspiring remarks that underscored the value of mentorship and set a motivating tone for the year ahead.

Following the launch, K&L Gates led a values-based session designed to help mentors and mentees connect, laying the foundation for productive and meaningful mentoring relationships.

This event marked the 17th anniversary of the VWL & WBA Law Student Mentoring Program.

We extend our gratitude to K&L Gates for hosting and to everyone who attended, contributing to a successful and impactful launch of the mentorship program."

Jo thanked Cordilia and Maira and stated that the Mentoring Program is one of the foundations of VWL.

5. Treasurer's Report: presented by Elizabeth Cooper

"The 30 June 2024 financial year saw VWL record a deficit of \$19,848.83, a significant increase over previous years. This result was driven by a continued focus on networking as the year included the Dame Roma event, the always popular Members and Guests event, the mentoring programme, the Warren Moot and a new event, Equitable Briefing for women at the Bar, where VWL hosted Victorian women barristers and VWL sponsors, to improve the exposure of the firms to women who practice at the Bar. VWL also hosted an event in Geelong, in collaboration with Deakin University, which was very well attended. Overall member numbers reduced by 10% and VWL sponsorship increased by a similar amount. The financial result this year of a deficit reflects a desire to expand our membership base to include women practicing at the Bar and to provide practical training and support for all our members. Interest income reduced, as we drew down on some of our investments to fund the deficit.

VWL's accounting fees and administrative expenses remained constant when compared to the prior year. Our contributions to AWL dropped in line with the reduction in our membership fees overall. Legal fees were incurred ensuring VWL's Rules of Association were reviewed and brought up to date. Portia costs continue to grow, as we ensure it remains the high-quality magazine our members have come to expect. We will explore ways to reduce the Portia costs by allowing members to "opt-in" to physically receiving the publication, thereby reducing our carbon footprint.

Most other costs constant in comparison with prior years.

Motion

Jo proposed a motion to approve the tabled financials.



Motion is carried by majority

6. Election of VWL Executive Committee

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

President informed members of the process that e 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:

- Linda Hart: President- elected
- Annaleise Vulin: Vice President- elected
- Shaniya Vilash: Secretary
- Elizabeth Cooper: Treasurer

Motion has been carried by majority

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

In 2025 there were eight (8) nominations for the Voting Executive and a ballot was required.

Nominations for the 2025 VWL Executive

- Alanna Ivanova
- Alexandra Liouvigova
- Oriana Torcasio
- Bella Armao
- Joanna Pandelidis
- Harriet Whiteley
- Ninawer Milner
- Emma Holden

Motion has been carried by majority

Election of VWL Executive Committee

- Alanna Ivanova



- Alexandra Liouvigova
- Oriana Torcasio
- Bella Armao
- Joanna Pandelidis
- Harriet Whiteley
- Ninawer Milner

Immediate Past President: Joanna Abraham

7. Other business

Jo thanked everyone for their amazing contribution and hard work this year. In reflecting on the theme of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, VWL has achieved great things in 2025 and will continue to do so with its incoming President Linda Hart.

Jo now moves to immediate past president and thanked the support of Linda, College of Law and her partner Nam. She also thanked and the team from Two and Two who assist with accounting and running of the AGM. She thanked the networking committee for organizing the event.

No other business was raised.

The meeting was closed.



VWL 2024 Annual General meeting Attendance Register

Number	First Name	Last Name	Attendance Type
1.	Emma	Holden	In Person
2.	Felicia	Leong	In Person
3.	Karli-Belle	Bebbington	In Person
4.	Andree	Pianta	In Person
5.	Humaira	Dad	In Person
6.	Annalise	Pope	In Person
7.	Oriana	Torcasio	In Person
8.	Rachel	Matulis	In Person
9.	Annaleise	Vulin	In Person
10.	Shivani	Pillai	In Person
11.	Katya	Lakes	In Person
12.	Catherine	Dent	In Person
13.	Shijia Scarlet	Qin	In Person
14.	Taahira	Rajudin	In Person
15.	Fathima Mariam Hazma	Hassan	In Person
16.	Stephanie	Angelidis	In Person
17.	Sophia	Ulrich	In Person
18.	Natalie	Plumstead	In Person
19.	Ella	Pullin	In Person
20.	Annabelle	Ballard	In Person
21.	Isabella	Armao	In Person
22.	Shaniya	Vilash	In Person
23.	Faiza	Farhia	In Person
24.	Anupama	Baker	In Person
25.	Cordilia	Thomas	In Person
26.	Sounita	Viravout	In Person
27.	Alanna	Ivanova	Online
28.	Nancy	Abdalla	In Person
29.	Emma	Halliday	In Person
30.	Cait	Bowman	In Person
31.	Harriet	Whiteley	In Person
32.	Alexandra	Cowden	In Person
33.	Shannon	Hubert	In Person
34.	Nina	Milner	In Person
35.	Sophie	Lefebvre	In Person
36.	Linda	Hart	In Person
37.	Mary	Quinn	In Person



38.	Cassandra	Hurley	In Person
39.	Stephanie	Pasharis	In Person
40.	Alessandra	Daly-Sutton	In Person
41.	Madeleine	Stratmann	In Person
42.	Sophie	Simmonds	In Person
43.	Alexandra	Lioudvigova	In Person
44.	Melanie	Kiremitciyan	In Person
45.	Maria	Vatmanidis	In Person
46.	Thirumalai	Shanmugam	In Person
47.	Julia	Eastoe	In Person
48.	Joanna	Abraham	In Person
49.	Oriana	Torcasio	In Person
50.	Anna	Filing	In Person
51.	Daye	Gang	In Person
52.	Kate	Ferrie	In Person
53.	Karli	Bebbington	In Person
54.	Robert	Jurcic	In Person
55.	Zefy	Souvlakis	In Person
56.	Shifa	Shaikh	In Person
57.	Sapphire T M	Parsons	In Person
58.	Bridget	Coutts	In Person
59.	Nam	Nguyen	In Person
60.	Andree	Pianta	Online
61.	Sarah	Younan	Online
62.	Andree	Pianta	Online
63.	Dr Apurva	Sharma	Online



VWL 2024 Annual General meeting Proxy Register

No.	Member
64.	Liz Cooper
65.	Nicolina Ladsmann