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Dear Member,

WORD FROM THE CONVENOR

On 23 September 2009 I attended the White Ribbon Day breakfast hosted by VWL in conjunction with the LIV. It brought to the fore the pervasiveness of violence against women and the need to act to protect women and children from violence.

Over the past few years VWL has been running a series of seminars on sexual assault in regional areas as well as the CBD. These seminars are an important part of VWL's role in educating the community on issues which have a significant impact upon women. Our next Melbourne forum is coming up in October. We have gathered an impressive line up of speakers and I encourage you all to attend ñ whatever your area of law this is an important issue to be informed about.

UPCOMING VWL EVENTS [\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

VWL Sexual Assault Forum 15 October 2009

This is an invitation to attend Victorian Women Lawyers' Sexual Assault Forum on 15 October 2009. Drinks and canapés start at 5.30pm, the forum will commence at 6pm finishing at 7pm. The event will be held at Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Bourke Place, Level 36, 600 Bourke Street, Melbourne.

A range of experts will speak on the issue of sexual assault and vulnerability, including Dr Vivian Waller of Waller Legal, and representatives of the Office of Public Advocate, the Victorian Women with Disabilities Network and Senior Rights Victoria. The forum will cover issues in relation to addressing sexual assault for vulnerable groups such as seniors and people with intellectual and physical disabilities.

Please RSVP to Tehani Suafoa at tsuafoa@liv.asn.au or Tel. 9607 9385.

VWL Community Justice Award 2009 - Deadline for nominations now extended

In order to coincide with the revised date for the VWL / WBA Women's

MinterEllison
LAWYERS

Blake Dawson

CLAYTON UTZ

Allens Arthur Robinson



Maddocks

MALLESONS STEPHEN JAKES

middletons
straight talking

Achievement Awards, the deadline for nominations for the Victorian Women Lawyers Justice Award has been extended and nominations will now be accepted until 11 December 2009. The award is for a law student or recent graduate who has contributed to social justice through pro bono or volunteer work. More information can be found [here](#).

Women Migrants Legal Information Project

The Women Migrants Legal Information Project (WMLIP) is working towards producing a publication which identifies key legal resources and laws that impact on recently arrived migrant women. The intention of the publication is to inform migrant women of their rights and to encourage them to seek further assistance if their rights are being infringed.

The WMLIP sub-committee is the backbone of the project, and is always interested in new members. If you are interested in issues that face migrant women and would like to join the sub-committee, please contact Caitlin Tierney at tierneycl@gmail.com

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VWL Submission: Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009

The VWL Justice Committee has prepared a submission to the Inquiry into the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2009. The Bill seeks to remove all discrimination from the Marriage Act 1961 on the basis of sexuality and gender identity and to permit marriage regardless of sex, sexuality and gender identity. VWL supports the Bill.

[Please click on this link to access the submission.](#)

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VWL Annual General Meeting ñ 6 November 2009

With this AGM fast-approaching, could all members please update their contact details (name, address, etc) by writing to Tracey Spiller at tspiller@liv.asn.au.

EVENTREPORTS [\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

White Ribbon Day Breakfast ñ 23 September 2009

VWL co-hosted the WRD breakfast with the LIV at the RACV club on 23 September 2009. White Ribbon Day supports the elimination of violence toward women by promoting cultural change. The event included a moderated discussion with Mary Louise Hatch from the Women's Legal Service Victoria, Ian Gray, the Chief Magistrate of Victoria and Fiona McLeod SC of the Victorian bar. The event

was well attended with 170 guests, many who asked cogent questions about the legislation that governs family violence.

VWL and Community Connections South West Community Legal Centre - Regional Sexual Assault Forum Warrnambool 21 August 2009

On 21 August 2009 VWL and Community Connections South West Community Legal Centre jointly hosted the 2009 regional sexual assault forum in Warrnambool. The event was kindly sponsored by Organisational Excellence Australia and South West TAFE. A wide variety of local professionals including solicitors, teachers, community workers, counsellors and other health care professionals attended the event.

The aim of the forum was to discuss issues affecting sexual assault victims including how victims may seek assistance and legal advice regarding a sexual assault. Discussion also focussed on sexual assault issues affecting the Indigenous community.

The forum consisted of three presentations and was facilitated by Juliet Williams of Community Connections. Of concern were the statistics obtained from the South Western Centre Against Sexual Assault which showed the prevalence of sexual assault amongst vulnerable groups such as children and persons with intellectual disabilities.

The services of the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service were highlighted and include court support, legal representation and outreach services.

Munya Andrews, Victoria's only indigenous female barrister, gave a powerful presentation on the issues facing indigenous victims of sexual assault. She noted that fear of persecution, retaliation, abandonment and disownment from communities were serious issues affecting victims of sexual assault.

Please see this [link for photos of the forum](#).

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Clare Burton Memorial Lecture 2009: A Slow Revolution: Maternity Leave, Women and Work

Why has it taken so long for women in Australia to achieve paid maternity leave and what happens next? For more information about the Clare Burton Memorial Lecture, please see the [this link](#).

Monday 19 October 2009 from 5.30 to 7.30 pm
[Storey Hall](#), Building 16, 336-342 Swanston Street, Melbourne
Hosted by RMIT University
Contact [Amy Love](#) on 03 99250710
RSVP to events@rmit.edu.au

Protecting and Promoting Women's Rights: A Seminar for Lawyers and Barristers on Using the Optional Protocol to the UN Women's Convention

In December 2008, Australia became a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This treaty establishes two procedures – a communication procedure and an inquiry

procedure to enforce women's rights to non-discrimination and equality.

This seminar will examine how the communication and inquiry procedures can be used to better protect and promote women's rights, both domestically and internationally. It will explain how these procedures operate and provide detailed information on how to use them. The seminar will consider key jurisprudence decided under the Optional Protocol and reflect on lessons for advocates.

Date: Tuesday, 17 November 2009 at 9.30am to 12.30pm

Venue: Allens Arthur Robinson, Level 27, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne

RSVP: [Please register here](#) by 1 November 2009. We will contact you to confirm your reservation.

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This month we profile **Jacinda de Witts**, Partner, Commercial and Regulatory.

I became a lawyer because ... I liked the intellectual stimulation. I stayed working as a lawyer because I discovered I liked to work on projects and see clients achieve their goals.

I am really proud of ... my involvement in mentoring students.

You can have it all ... but you can't do it all.

I am extremely grateful for ... a happy marriage and great supporters throughout my career.

A key mentor who influenced my career is ... my fellow partner, Mitzi Gilligan, who has been a wise advisor and a great supporter.

If I wasn't a lawyer ... I'd like to work on renewable energy or health projects in Asia.

Before I started at Minter Ellison ... I worked in government for a few years, followed by 5 years in private practice at another firm.

The best advice I ever received was ... it's fine to be bad at some things. My cooking has suffered ever since!

One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in ... is considering how regulation delivers or impacts on government policy objectives.

Outside of the law ... I love to travel and learn new languages.

VWL COMMITTEES

Joining a committee is a great way to become more involved with VWL. All committee work is voluntary. The time commitment is flexible; we are looking for enthusiasm most of all. Please send your expression of interest in joining a committee(s) to our Secretary, Beth Hilton-Thorp at jthorp@bigpond.net.au

Our committees are:

Justice - dealing with all justice related issues including submissions to government, organising the annual sexual assault forums, supporting indigenous law students, spearheading the Women Migrant's Legal Information Project.

Work Practices - addressing the important issues that affect women lawyers in the workplace; conducting research, and holding forums.

Networking - organising events with many organisations including the Women Barristers Association, liaising with regional lawyers networks, and encouraging members and friends events.

Communications - organising this newsletter, co-ordinating the editing and publication of Portia, our annual magazine, and liaising with the media.

Membership - Looking after our members needs and promoting VWL membership within the legal community.