



↳ WORD FROM CONVENOR

↳ UPCOMING EVENTS

↳ OPPORTUNITIES

↳ UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

↳ NOTICES

↳ VWL COMMITTEES

↳ MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

WORD FROM THE CONVENOR

Dear Member,

I would like to begin this Word by congratulating the Hon. Julia Gillard, herself a former Victorian woman lawyer, in becoming Prime Minister of Australia - the first ever woman Prime Minister of this country. 24 June 2010 was an historic day for women in Australia, and I know many of you would have been as excited as I was about the unfolding developments of that day. We wish her well and trust that she leads the government with determination and integrity. The Prime Minister is a leader for all Australians, but I'm sure you will agree how significant and meaningful it is for women to be in positions of leadership - and how meaningful it is for all the community to see such leadership, whatever your political alliances.

In recent weeks we've also seen the passage of Australia's first Paid Parental Leave Scheme. This scheme recognises the need to improve assistance for families, and of course we will see particular benefits for working women. The scheme will also benefit industry and business, and is due to start on 1 January 2011. In further legislative reform, changes to the Sex Discrimination Act have been introduced into Parliament, with a focus on strengthening anti-discrimination in the workplace, and in combating electronic forms of sexual harassment for workers and students.

The Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick also released her Gender Equality Blueprint 2010. This important document sets out recommendations in 5 priority areas:

- Balancing paid work and family and caring responsibilities
- Ensuring women's lifetime economic security
- Promoting women in leadership
- Preventing violence against women and preventing sexual harassment
- Strengthening national gender equality law, agencies and monitoring.

You can download the Blueprint from the Australian Human Rights Commission website here:

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sex_discrimination/publication/blueprint/index.html

VWL is busy planning a number of upcoming events, including our Mildura sexual assault forum on 13 August. We are certainly excited to be meeting our colleagues in Mildura, and hope that we'll be able to share some of the enthusiasm we are used to seeing at our Melbourne based events, in that region. We also have the Members' and Guests' social event on 25 August at the Apartment in Little Bourke Street. This popular event is designed to give you the opportunity to introduce some of your friends and colleagues to VWL, and also

Allens Arthur Robinson 

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Blake Dawson

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 Law Institute Victoria

provide a bit of late-winter respite during the week. You'll be receiving information about this and other events soon.

I wrote to you last month about the AWL conference in Brisbane on 6-8 August, which is rapidly approaching. VWL will be sponsoring the attendance of some of its members and I would encourage those of you who are interested in attending to write to me as a matter of urgency as decisions will be made very shortly. There is a catch - those who are chosen to attend are asked to provide an article about the conference and your experience of it, and provide some photos that can be published in 'Portia', our annual magazine. I particularly encourage those who may be working in non-traditional legal roles to write to me. If you are interested, please email me (astrid.haban-beer@ags.gov.au) your details and a brief paragraph stating why you would like to attend. The VWL executive will then make a decision on who will be attending and let you know as soon as possible.

This month we profile Susie Wells, Special Counsel at Allens Arthur Robinson. Susie heads the Melbourne Women at Allens Committee. It's great to know that firms devote people and resources to supporting women within the workplace. As we all know, the culture of the workplace is a key factor in retaining and attracting good lawyers, and to have such a committee certainly suggests a positive workplace culture. Thanks Susie for sharing information about yourself with our members.

Finally, if you are yet to renew your VWL membership, please do so as soon as possible. If you haven't renewed, you will drop off our mailing list over the next month. Make sure you stay connected to VWL. A reminder that by signing up to VWL, you also become a member of Australian Women Lawyers, our peak body

All the best for the month of July. As always, please contact me if you would like to discuss anything at all.

Astrid Haban-Beer
Convenor



UPCOMING VWL EVENTS [BACK TO TOP]

Australian Women Lawyers Third National Conference 6-8 August 2010

To be held at the Stamford Plaza Brisbane. You can register online here:
<http://www.lexisnexis.com.au/pd/conference.aspx?id=217>

The program is full of highlights, including the official opening and welcome by The Honourable Justice Paul de Jersey, Chief Justice of Queensland, keynote address by AWL's patron, The Honourable Justice Diana Bryant, Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia, a book launch and high tea with the Governor General, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, sessions on the ALRC Family Violence Inquiry, corporate insolvency, gender discrimination and access to justice, state of the profession, and policy reform and processes. Speakers include judges, lawyers, barristers and academics from across the nation, including Professor Rosalind Croucher, President of Australian Law Reform Commission, The Honourable Berna Collier, Judge of the Federal Court of Australia, and The Honourable Justice Margaret McMurdo AC, President, Queensland Court of Appeal.

Come along and share in thought-provoking panel discussions, listen to talks on the state of the law in a variety of areas and mingle and network with the profession on a truly national level.

Members' & Guests' Night - 25 August 2010

VWL's popular Members' and Guests' Night will be held on Wednesday 25 August 6pm - 8pm at The Apartment. This year our guest performer will be well-known Melbourne comedian/broadcaster/writer/actor/presenter, Denise Scott. Full details of the event will be emailed out to members shortly, so keep the date free!

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

Women's Leadership Grants available

Applications are now open for the 2010-11 Victorian Women's Leadership Grants. Applications close on 3 August 2010.

The Women's Leadership Grants Program is funded by the Victorian Government through the Office of Women's Policy (Department of Planning and Community Development) and is part of the Victorian Government's commitment to creating a community where women have equal representation and can fully participate in all aspects of community and public life.

Grants of up to \$20,000 will be available to local councils, non-profit community and women's groups in Victoria for projects and activities that increase the capacity of women to participate in decision making, increase opportunities for women's leadership, and increase diversity among Victoria's female leaders, in particular women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and Indigenous communities, rural and regional areas.

For more information on this or the previous round of Women's Leadership Grants visit: www.women.vic.gov.au or call the Grants Information Line on 1300 366 356 (for the cost of a local call) on any weekday between 8.30am and 10.00pm (except public holidays).

Columnist wanted for the LIJ

VWL is now coordinating the 'According to Merit' column in the Law Institute Journal. We encourage submissions or contributions from our members in relation to gender issues in the workplace, discrimination and related matters. Also, please let us know if there is an issue you would like to see canvassed in this

column, which will reach all LIV members and the wider legal community. Please contact Liza Powderly at lpowderly@vicbar.com.au if you are interested in writing for the column, or you have an idea you would like to discuss.

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



*This month we profile **Susie Wells, Special Counsel, Allens Arthur Robinson Corporate Department.***

I became a lawyer because... the intellectual challenge of the law and its relevance to every facet of life appealed to me.

I am really proud of... having successfully (so far) combined a fulfilling career in the law with having children in a way that enables me to enjoy both.

You can have it all...or can you?

I am extremely grateful for... lots of things, including the strong role modelling provided by my mother, Cheryl Saunders, who has taught me so much about how to be - in both the professional and personal spheres.

A key mentor who influenced my career is ... hard to single out as so many people both within the firm and outside it have helped me along the way.

If I wasn't a lawyer... I'm not sure what I would be but an author or chef spring to mind.

Before I started at Allens Arthur Robinson... I spent a year working as a paralegal at Freshfields in London followed by a backpacking adventure throughout Europe and the Middle East.

The best advice I ever received was ... not to worry too much about other people's career paths but to work out and focus on what I want to achieve and how.

One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in... as Chair of the Melbourne Women at Allens Committee, part of the firm's program for professional and career development for women.

Outside of the law... lead a sporty and social life with my husband and 3 boys and our friends.

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

Role available for senior Lawyer with 5+ years PAE in national Employment and Industrial Law practice at Maurice Blackburn. This role is full time but part-time (minimum three days per week) will be considered. Call Anna Hart 03 9605 2853

for more details or go to www.mauriceblackburn.com.au.

VWL COMMITTEES [\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

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, providing information about pro bono and community work, and liaising with other relevant organisations.

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 - publication of this newsletter and our annual magazine, 'Portia', and liaising with the media.

Women Migrants Legal Information Project - planning and producing a publication to assist women migrants with key legal rights and support in several languages.

Law Reform - coordinating submissions and research projects.

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

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS [\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

To renew your VWL membership, go to:

http://www.vwl.asn.au/Portals/0/downloads/VWL%20Renewal%20Notice_2010.pdf