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## WORDFROMTHECONVENOR

At the launch of the VWL student mentoring program at Middletons this month, our speakers told of their experiences as both mentor and mentee. They spoke about their ambitions and fears and the challenges faced by legal practitioners. The increased number of volunteer mentors this year demonstrates a genuine desire by VWL members to share their insight and experience. While people often expect that the mentee will gain the most out of the relationship, it was clear that both mentees and mentors benefited from the experience. For mentors, the experience caused them to reflect on and gain an insight into their own practice. For mentees, the benefits of a friendly face in the profession cannot be underestimated. While women have made much progress within the legal profession, there is still a long way to go and the mentor program provides an opportunity to build on our professional knowledge and experience. I wish all VWL Mentoring Program participants a great year and, if you are yet to become involved in VWL's Mentoring Program, I encourage you to volunteer in 2010.

Enjoy the April/May edition of WKIT!

## UPCOMINGVWLEVENTS [BACK TO TOP]

Women Migrant Legal Information Project  
11 May 2009

This project aims to provide legal information specific to women migrants. For those interested, the next meeting to discuss this project will take place on 11 May 2009 at 1pm at Australian Government Solicitor (Level 21, 200 Queen Street, Melbourne VIC). RSVP/enquiries can go to Astrid Haban-Beer at 0402 057 044 or [astrid.beer@gmail.com](mailto:astrid.beer@gmail.com)

Law Week VWL lunchtime event: Mental Health - A  
Legal Perspective  
13 May 2009

Law Week brings the wider community into contact with the legal industry. This week aims to demystify the law, and also provide opportunity for the community and those within the legal industry to discover more about the law through a series of seminars, events, information sessions and celebrations. This year's Law Week theme is 'Law at Work.' See <http://www.victorialaw.org.au> for details of events on offer.

VWL's networking committee will be hosting one free lunchtime event called Mental Health - a Legal Perspective. This will be an interactive forum on mental health and the law; speakers will include a senior lawyer from the Mental Health Review Board, a Legal Prosecution specialist working in the area of Mental Impairment and speaker who has undertaken a survey of the mental health of legal professionals. All are welcome.

Details:

Where: Victoria University Law lecture theatre, Queen St, Melbourne campus (295 Queen St, access from Little Lonsdale Street)

When: Wednesday 13 May, 12pm-1pm

### Justice Committee Pro Bono Forum and Community Justice Awards 21 May 2009

The Justice Committee will host an evening to promote the work undertaken by practitioners in community organizations, and on a pro bono basis, contributing to social justice for Victorians.

If you are interested in how to get involved and how the community legal sector works, please come along to hear three speakers discuss their experiences. Our speakers will inform you about how pro bono works, including practicalities such as practising certificates; what sort of work community legal centres do and why it is important; and how you can get involved - whether as a volunteer, or as a career change.

There will also be representatives from a variety of community organisations present to speak with interested volunteers.

If you are a community organisation, please come along to this valuable networking event to meet potential volunteers and promote your good work in the community.

This event will also launch the Community Justice Award 2009, an award for a law student or young lawyer who has contributed significantly to social justice through either volunteer work, community legal work or pro bono assistance.

Date: 21 May 2009

Time: 5.30pm - 7.00pm

Venue: Law Institute of Victoria

Free canapés and drinks provided after the event

RSVP (for catering purposes): 15 May 2009

Tracey Spiller

Administrator, Victorian Women Lawyers

Tel: 9607 9390 - Fax: 9607 9542

Email: [tspiller@liv.asn.au](mailto:tspiller@liv.asn.au)

Please provide your name and the name of your organization

### Geelong Women Lawyers Dinner 4 June 2009

Victorian Women Lawyers in pleased to invite you to the Inaugural Geelong Women Lawyers Dinner to be held at 7pm on 4 June 2009 at the Empire Grill, 66 McKillop Street, Geelong. Her Honour Justice Elizabeth Hollingworth of the Supreme Court of Victoria will be our guest speaker.

Please see the [attached invitation](#) for further details.

### Coming to the Bar Event 4 June 2009

VWL and the Women Barristers Association are planning a joint event on 4 June 2009 - more details to follow.

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

### WOMEN and WAR FORUM and LAUNCH OF PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION 12 May 2009

Tuesday 12 May 2009  
6.30 to 8.30pm – BMW Edge, Federation Square

#### THE EVENT

Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, will launch the Australian Red Cross photographic exhibition Women and War at the BMW Edge on Tuesday 12 May 2009.

The official launch will be followed by a forum during which a distinguished panel of speakers, headed by Her Honour Judge Felicity Hampel, will address the issues of women and armed conflict, and former refugee Ms Tanja Mikulic, will share her powerful and personal story. The evening will also include world music by Sudanese song-writer Ajak Kwai and other community choirs. Guests will have the opportunity to view the photographs following the forum and launch.

Cost: \$10 per head  
RSVP by 4 May to Sue Anderson Ph 8327.7833 or email [sanderson@redcross.org.au](mailto:sanderson@redcross.org.au)

Pre-payment is required - by credit card over the phone or download and fax form from website [www.redcross.org.au/vic/vic\\_services\\_ihl\\_events.htm](http://www.redcross.org.au/vic/vic_services_ihl_events.htm) or cheque to IHL Dept, Red Cross, GPO Box 9949 Melbourne 3001.

#### THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition will then remain on display in the Atrium space of Federation Square from Wednesday 13th May – Thursday 21st May (inclusive). Weekdays: 9am to 5pm. Weekends: Open till late. Entry to the exhibition is free.

Compiled by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the collection of 34 images represents women from countries such as Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sudan, and portrays the many ways in which women experience war - displacement, physical and sexual violence, loss of contact with loved ones, detention, and lack of access to food and vital medical care.

The exhibition is a reminder of the protections that women are afforded in times of war under International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The Geneva Conventions, their Additional Protocols and other bodies of law prohibit outrages against personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault against people not taking a direct part in hostilities. In order to be respected, this law must be taught and promoted across the globe.

The exhibition launch and forum will also be a time of tribute – honouring the accomplishments of women, and marking the courage they show in the face of incredible hardship and disadvantage. Women should not be seen only as

vulnerable victims, but as dignified and resilient survivors.

Enquiries to Bev Patterson Ph 8327.7936 or  
[bpatterson@redcross.org.au](mailto:bpatterson@redcross.org.au)

Law Week Lunchtime Screening: "And what do we have here?!" The first 25 women to sign the Victorian Bar Roll - some personal reminiscences"  
12 May 2009

The Women Barristers Association (WBA) warmly invites you to attend the launch of its new 30 minute multimedia slideshow, titled "And what do we have here?!" The first 25 women to sign the Victorian Bar Roll - some personal reminiscences".

This free screening will be part of Law Week on Tuesday 12 May 2009 at the Queen Victoria Women Centre, Victoria Room, at Level 4, 210 Lonsdale Street (between Swanston and Russell Streets) at 1pm.

There will be introductory remarks by Juliette Brodsky (slideshow co-producer and Victorian Bar oral history consultant) about the film at 1.15pm, followed by the screening which will conclude by 2 pm.

The exhibition "Victorian Women Barristers Then and Now" will also be on display at the Centre in the ground floor foyer during Law Week, in conjunction with an art exhibition by female artists which includes a sculpture of Flos Grieg.

Please bring your lunch - coffee and tea will be provided. This event is open to the public and the legal profession are invited to attend.

RSVP to [simonejacobson@vicbar.com.au](mailto:simonejacobson@vicbar.com.au) by Monday 11 May 2009.

Women and the Law Breakfast  
15 May 2009

The Monash University Law Students Society have extended a special price of \$30 per professional ticket to VWL members to attend the Women and the Law Breakfast. Please see the following invitation for details:

The Victorian Council of Law Students' Societies is proud to invite you to the 7th Annual Women and the Law Breakfast. In 2009, the Women and the Law Breakfast will be held on Friday 15 May at the Park Hyatt Hotel, located in the heart of the Melbourne CBD. The Breakfast will commence at 7am and conclude at 8:30am, with 320 attendees including members of the judiciary, other professionals and students from each Victorian law school. Having grown since 2003 to become one of the highlight events of Law Week, the annual Women and the Law Breakfast promotes the achievements of women in the legal community and provides a networking opportunity for students and legal professionals. Each year, thanks to our sponsors Maurice Blackburn, and to the Victorian Women Law Students' Collective (VWLSC), we welcome three inspirational women who have made unique career breakthroughs in the legal profession. This year, we are proud to present three exceptional women as our speakers.

Judge Rachelle Lewitan  
AM of the County Court of Victoria

Alexandra Richards QC  
Senior Counsel

Meg O' Brien  
Articled Clerk

[Tickets are available NOW!](#)

Ticket Prices:

Professional Ticket \$35 per head

Student Ticket \$20 per head.

This price includes a full breakfast, a fantastic presentation from three astounding speakers and the opportunity to commemorate female success in the law with other colleagues in the profession.

We are selling full tables (10 people), half tables (5 people) and a limited number of individual tickets.

If you would like to book tickets, or if you have any other questions, please contact Emilia and Sarah at [women@monashlss.asn.au](mailto:women@monashlss.asn.au).

We look forward to seeing you on the 15th May!

## Women Trailblazers Project

Professor Kim Rubenstein and Dr Heather Roberts at the ANU College of Law have secured funding from the ANU to develop an Australian Research Council Linkage grant on Australian Trailblazer Women Lawyers.

The project will largely involve gathering a large and rich oral history record at the National Library of Australia (which has indicated it is interested in supporting this project as a partner) of these Australian Women Trailblazers, but it will also involve analytical work on biography, gender and the law.

In order to develop the application Kim and Heather are calling for suggestions of women who you think should be included in the list of possible interviewees.

The project will include trailblazer lawyers in all spheres - Judges, Barrister, Solicitors, Academics, Tribunal members, Parliamentary lawyers, Government lawyers, Women partners in law firms, In house lawyers, Union lawyers, Legal librarians etc etc. If the contact details of those individuals are known that will also be helpful.

Please forward names and contact details to Christine Melis by Friday 1 May 2009 at [christine.melis@gmail.com](mailto:christine.melis@gmail.com).

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

### Launch of the 2009 Law Student Mentoring Program



VWL's Law Student Mentoring Program kicked off for the year on Wednesday 1 April, when over 150 mentors and students gathered to meet over a glass of wine. Middletons was the gracious host of this bumper event, which also served to farewell 2008's pairs. Attendees were inspired by the experiences of three 2008

pairs, as well as Her Honour Justice Neave AO.



This year, 115 pairs are involved in the Mentoring Program, with all five Victorian law schools represented and practitioners derived from private practice, the bar, government and corporate. Pairs are encouraged to meet at least once a month, perhaps over coffee, lunch or at a VWL event over the next year.

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



This month we profile:

**Lisa Egan**  
Senior Associate  
Middletons.

***I became a lawyer because ...*** the discipline of looking at both sides of every argument and the intellectual challenges presented by legal problems really appealed to me at university and I was keen to see how this worked in practice.

***I am really proud of ...*** being able to combine a career in an area of law which I find enjoyable and challenging (intellectual property litigation), with motherhood and completing postgraduate study.

***You can have it all ...*** but maybe not all of the time. Balancing a busy professional life with a family and social life is not an easy task, but is worth the effort.

I am extremely grateful for ... the support of my extended family and my workplace which have allowed me to fulfil my personal and career goals.

***A key mentor who influenced my career is ...*** a combination of people but primarily my parents and the partner I work for.

***If I wasn't a lawyer ...*** I would be a journalist or author. If money was no object, I'd spend most of my time travelling and at the beach.

***Before I started at Middletons ...*** I spent a year backpacking through Europe and temping as a legal secretary in London.

***The best advice I ever received was ...*** to follow my instincts.

***One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in ...*** I think it is important to try and be involved in the profession beyond your everyday legal work. I have previously been on the Executive Committee for VWL (as an editor of Portia), I am currently on Middletons WIN (Women's Information Network) Committee, and I

am a committee member of the International Trade Mark Association Anti-Counterfeiting group. In addition, I have been fortunate to have been involved in a number of high profile intellectual property cases such as Muscat v Le, Cadbury v Darrell Lea and Ward v Brodie & Stone and have been involved in appeals including an appeal to the High Court.

**Outside of the law ...** I enjoy spending time with my family and seeing a toddler's view of the world, and relaxing with great company and great food and wine.

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

This is a reminder to renew your annual membership for 2009. Renewal notices were recently sent out. You will be pleased to know that the membership fee will not increase this year – it is a small amount for a good return and may also be tax deductible. Please ensure that membership renewals are forwarded by 30 April 2009.



Blake Dawson

Allens Arthur Robinson

MALLESONS STEPHEN JAQUES



CLAYTON UTZ

CORRS  
CHAMBERS  
WESTGARTH  
lawyers



## VWL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER PROFILES [\[BACK TO TOP\]](#)

In November 2008, VWL held its annual AGM where the new executive was elected (Term: December 2008- December 2009). The VWL executive consists of elected members with voting rights, and committee chairs with non-voting rights. Introducing the 2009 VWL executive:

Victorian Women Lawyers' work in promoting and protecting the interests of women lawyers and engaging with legal and social justice issues that affect women continues to be important and relevant. Jennifer is committed to working with members and the committees to continue to deliver innovative programs, research and events which stimulate discussion and debate, as well as being fun.



**CONVENOR**  
JENNIFER KANIS

Jennifer is an Employment and Industrial Relations lawyer at Holding Redlich. Prior to becoming a lawyer Jennifer was a secondary school English teacher. Jennifer joined Victorian Women Lawyers as an articled clerk. For the last two years she was co-chair of the Work Practices Committee with Amanda Stevens. In 2008 Jennifer became Assistant Convenor and worked closely with 2008 Convenor Christine Melis and the committee during the year to develop and deliver the VWL program.

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**ASSISTANT  
CONVENOR**  
ASTRID HABAN-BEER

Astrid has been a member of VWL since 2006, and an active member of the Justice Committee. In 2008, Astrid became co-chair of the Justice Committee and the Women Migrants Legal Information Project. Astrid has enjoyed organising and supporting important VWL events, such as the sexual assault forums and the pro bono forum. Astrid has been involved in sponsorship initiatives, law reform submissions, mentoring and has represented VWL at the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women roundtable conferences in Canberra in 2008.

Astrid is a lawyer in the Trade Practices and Enforcement team at the Australian Government Solicitor (AGS), however is currently on secondment to the Public Interest Law Clearing House. Prior to commencing at AGS, Astrid was a Judge's associate at the Supreme Court of Victoria where she gained valuable trial experience. She has also lived in Colombia working on anti-human trafficking policy and research with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

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**IMMEDIATE PAST  
CONVENOR**  
CHRISTINE MELIS

Christine has been a member of VWL since she started her articles with Minter Ellison in 2004. She initially joined the Work Practices Committee, going on to chair the committee the following year. Since that time Christine has been a general member on the Executive Committee, Assistant Convenor and Convenor between November 2007 and November 2008. In 2009 she is the Immediate Past Convenor. Christine has enjoyed involvement in many VWL projects including the 360 degree report, the Lesbia Harford Oration in 2006, the student mentoring program, the migration sub-committee, WKIT, the VWL website and Portia.

Christine has worked as a solicitor, Judge's Associate and is now a Barrister practicing out of Crockett Chambers.

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**SECRETARY**  
BETH HILTON-THORP

Beth has been a member of VWL for nearly five years serving as Secretary since 2006 and acting as Co-chair of the Membership Committee for the past four years. Beth enjoys the opportunities provided through the Executive Committee to participate more actively in VWL. Given that she is not currently practising law, VWL is important to Beth as it enables her to retain links with the profession. Beth previously worked for several years with the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and also in private commercial practice. Since coming to Melbourne, Beth has worked in the aid and development assistance field in global health principally with the University of Melbourne. Beth has also lived and worked in Thailand and the Philippines.



**TREASURER**  
ANNA TANG

Anna was admitted to practice as a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Victoria in 2004. Anna practices in tax and commercial law and has strong technical knowledge in both these areas. She commenced her practice at Ambry Legal and in 2006 joined the Revenue Team at Maddocks. She is the co-author of the Lawyers' Tax Manual and has written and presented several papers for a variety of continuing professional development providers. Anna is also a member of the Taxation Institute of Victoria.

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**GENERAL  
MEMBER**  
EILISH COOKE

Eilish is currently working as family law solicitor in a small suburban law firm in Glen Waverley. Eilish brings over 30 years of experience in practicing law across a variety of practice areas.

Eilish has held various policy positions in the State and Federal Governments. She also has 11 years experience sitting as a member of various State and Commonwealth tribunals including the Guardianship and Administration Board (now a division of VCAT), the WorkCare Appeals Board and the Refugee Review Tribunal.

In 1997 Eilish completed a Master of Laws and began practising at the Victorian Bar. She had a broad administrative law practice and appeared regularly in the AIRC, SSAT, AAT and Federal Court, later diversifying into family law. She particularly enjoyed the "people" focus of family law and practising in the Children's Court, the Federal Magistrates Court, the Family Court and the County Court and was regularly briefed by the Independent Children's Lawyer (Child Representative). She thoroughly enjoyed her 8 years at the Bar and was an active member of the Women Barristers Association.

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Kate was also a General Member of the VWL Executive in 2008. Kate developed and now coordinates the Law Student Mentoring Program, as well as a number of VWL events including Coming to the Bar. Kate is VWL's liaison



**GENERAL  
MEMBER**  
KATE ASHMOR

to the Women Barristers Association and Victoria's law schools.

Kate is a general commercial law practitioner with the Department of Transport, but she has also worked in private practice and in-house. In November, Kate retired after three years of serving as a Councillor for the City of Glen Eira. In her spare time, Kate enjoys hanging out with her husband Tom, dog Louis and the latest episode of House.

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**GENERAL  
MEMBER**  
JACKIE GILLIES

Jackie joined VWL as a General Executive Member in 2009. She co-ordinates sponsorship for the VWL and is the liaison between the Australian Corporate Lawyers Association (ACLA) and VWL. Jackie was admitted to practice in Victoria in early 2007. She completed articles in-house at AXA Australia and then worked as a Panel Case Manager for the Financial Industry Complaints Service (now FOS). Her love of interacting with people recently led her to exchange legal drafting for legal recruitment at Burgess Paluch Legal Recruitment. Now she gets to talk to people all day and be involved in facilitating their next exciting career change! Jackie loves to travel, is a voracious reader and has a great sense of humour.

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**CO-CHAIR WORK  
PRACTICES  
COMMITTEE**  
ALINA HUMPHREYS

Alina has been a member of the Work Practices Committee of VWL since 2003. In 2009, Alina became co-chair of the Work Practices Committee, together with Amanda Stevens.

Alina was admitted to practice in January 2001 and graduated from the University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Laws (Honours), and a Bachelor of Arts (majoring in psychology). Alina is currently a Senior Associate with Maurice Blackburn Commercial. Prior to joining Maurice Blackburn Commercial in 2004, Alina worked as a lawyer at Freehills and in 1999, was an associate to Mr Justice Chesterman of the Supreme Court of Queensland. Alina also holds a Diploma in Speech and Drama from the Australian Music Examinations Board.

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Kate joined Victorian Women Lawyers in 2008, contributing to Portia, the annual magazine of Victorian Women Lawyers. Kate recently became the Chair of the Communications Committee of VWL and is excited about extending her involvement with VWL.

Kate was admitted to practice in Victoria in May 2008, having completed her articles at Slater & Gordon Lawyers and currently works at the Supreme Court of



**CHAIR  
COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMITTEE**  
KATE BURGESS

Victoria as an Associate to the Honourable Justice Mandie. Kate aspires to become a barrister and is passionate about social justice issues. In addition she has broad interests including food and wine, French, travel, running and swimming.

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**CO-CHAIR  
NETWORKING  
COMMITTEE**  
VERITY SHEPHERDSON

Verity is a Senior Associate at Freehills, where she is a member of the Intellectual Property Litigation team.

Verity has been a member of the Networking Committee since 2005, and has been its Co-Chair since 2006. She enjoys organising VWL events with the dynamic and friendly members of the Networking Committee. Verity also particularly enjoys the fact that being involved with Networking and the Executive gives her the chance to meet and work with women from all areas of the legal profession. She looks forward to being involved with the good work and people of VWL for many years to come!

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**CO-CHAIR  
JUSTICE  
COMMITTEE**  
JACINTA MORPHETT

Jacinta has been a member of VWL since 2006 and in 2008, she became co-chair of the Justice Committee. Jacinta is committed to social justice issues and has enjoyed organising and supporting important VWL events including the sexual assault forums and law reform submissions e.g. to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Paid Parental Leave.

Jacinta is a legal policy officer in the Civil Law Policy team at the Department of Justice and provides legal policy advice to the Attorney-General and the Attorney-General's Office. Her work as a litigation lawyer gave her useful insights into the civil justice system, which was particularly helpful for her work on the Victorian Law Reform Commission's Civil Justice Review. Jacinta has also lived and worked overseas and loves travelling and reading.

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The VWL Executive Committee also comprises Amanda Stevens (Co-Chair Work Practices Committee with Alina Humphreys), Melanie Hodge (Co-Chair Justice Committee), Susan Pryde (Co-Chair Networking Committee) and Tracey Spiller (Administrator).

#### 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 Assistant Convenor, Astrid Haban-Ber at [astrid.haban-](mailto:astrid.haban-ber@vwl.org.au)

[beer@ags.gov.au](mailto:beer@ags.gov.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.