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WORD FROM THE CONVENOR

It is always exciting to launch the VWL Community Justice Awards. The Awards are held bi annually and through them we recognise and celebrate the work being done in the community in relation to women and justice. I am always delighted to see the depth and breadth of work being done by lawyers in the community. In a recent discussion with a major law firm in Victoria, it was interesting to hear that many lawyers were taking up part time work options to undertake community work.

VWL itself is an organisation which is run by volunteers. When I look at VWL's achievements over the past 12 years - from providing practical assistance to women trying to navigate family and work commitments to leading discussions on sexual assault and mentoring young practitioners - I am thankful for all the hard work of our volunteers.

There are many ways to get involved in your community and you don't need to limit yourself to legal work. Anyone who has volunteered to be on the committee of a local sporting club or kindergarten will know how valued a lawyer's skills are, even when not doing legal work. If you are not already volunteering in your community I encourage you to consider how you can get involved. If you or someone you know is making a contribution to women and justice in Victoria I urge you to nominate for the VWL Community Justice awards. I look forward to reading the applications and hearing of the interesting work being done.

Enjoy the June edition of WKIT!

CLAYTON UTZ

Allens Arthur Robinson 

Blake Dawson

CORRS
CHAMBERS
WESTGARTH
lawyers

 DLA PHILLIPS FOX

 Law Institute Victoria

 Maddocks

MALLESONS STEPHEN JAQUES

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Victorian Women Lawyers (VWL)
Community Justice Award 2009

Do you know a law student or recently admitted practitioner who makes a significant community contribution through pro bono or volunteer work? If so, you can nominate them (or nominate yourself) for the 2009 Community Justice Award.

The Award is in recognition of a student or recently admitted lawyer who, on a pro bono or volunteer basis, demonstrates a commitment to issues related to women

and justice.

The successful nominee will receive a prize of \$1000, of which \$500 will be donated to their organization. The Award will be presented at the Women's Achievement Awards in September 2009.

Nominations of 500 words or less should be submitted by 31 July to Tracey Spiller at email tspiller@liv.asn.au. For further information visit the [Victorian Women Lawyers website](#).

THEMIS APRIL 2009

[Please find attached a link to Themis, the monthly publication of Australian Women Lawyers.](#)

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VWL Pro Bono and Community Justice Forum

The VWL Pro Bono and Community Justice Forum took place at the Law Institute of Victoria on 21 May 2009. Three speakers presented to the audience about getting involved in community legal centres (CLCs) or pro bono work.

Marika Dias, principal solicitor of the Western Suburbs Legal Service, discussed the role of CLCs in the community, including the wide range of matters in which she acts from civil disputes to criminal matters to advising on anti-terrorism legislation. She also discussed the valuable role of CLCs in empowering communities by running targeted programs to educate people about their rights and responsibilities.

Mat Tinkler, Acting Executive Director of PILCH discussed the role of his organisation in the community, which is to provide access to pro bono assistance for thousands of community members, and the important legal and advocacy work of the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic, Seniors Rights Victoria, and PILCH-Connect for the not-for-profit sector.

Belinda Lo brought an engaging and humorous personal perspective to the forum, confessing to her own "addiction" to volunteer work and highlighting some of the valuable insights that both volunteering and being employed in the community legal sector had provided her with.

The VWL Community Justice Award was also launched on the night. The Award is in recognition of a student or recently admitted lawyer who, on a pro bono or volunteer basis, demonstrates a commitment to issues related to women and justice. A student enrolled in a recognized bachelor of laws at a Victorian University, or a law graduate up to one year post admission to legal practice is eligible for the award. Candidates may be nominated by their organization or may self-nominate.

[Click here for the event Photo Gallery](#)

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This month we profile Catherine Stuart, Senior Associate, Clayton Utz.

I became a lawyer because ... well, it seemed like an obvious choice after finishing my law degree (although I didn't really know at that stage what being a lawyer would actually involve). I think what is more important is that I decided to stick with it as a career. There are a number of reasons why I have continued being a lawyer but one of the most important for me is that it provides an opportunity for real teamwork. I know it sounds clichéd, but I do find genuine satisfaction in working towards and achieving goals with people that you enjoy working with.

I am really proud of ... the fact that I am part of a generation of women that have an opportunity to set an example for future generations in relation to career choices.

You can have it all ... but I think you need to make your own personal assessment of what "all" means to you.

I am extremely grateful for ... the opportunity to work and travel overseas for a couple of years (especially the couple of months I had eating my way around Italy!)

A key mentor who influenced my career is ... difficult to narrow down because I have had some fabulous mentors at Clayton Utz but I would single out Tricia Moloney and Dan Fitts as examples of excellent lawyers who are also extremely decent people.

If I wasn't a lawyer ... I would probably have finished some of the books gathering dust in a pile next to my bed! I suspect I might have become a teacher if I hadn't started down the lawyer path.

Before I started at Clayton Utz ... I was finishing my last year at university and having a pretty good time in the process.

The best advice I ever received was ... from my dad - there is no point being stressed about things you can't control (not actually that easy to follow in practice!)

One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in ... I couldn't really say that I am currently involved in any structured legal initiatives outside my day to day work. However, I do take seriously my role as a mentor for junior lawyers in our team. I remember feeling quite overwhelmed by the idea of working in a big law firm when I first started and I think it is very important to promote an open and supportive environment to give young lawyers the confidence to do the best job they can.

Outside of the law ... I play golf very badly and spend far too much time watching football on TV.

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

This is a reminder that membership renewals are now due 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 include any updated address or email details to our Tracey Spiller at tspiller@liv.asn.au or 9607 9403 or visit our [website](#).

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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-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.