



**Victorian  
Women  
Lawyers**



# WOMEN KEEPING IN TOUCH

VWL E-NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2011

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## WORD FROM THE CONVENOR

Dear Member

Welcome to another fantastic VWL year!

In 2011, VWL is committed to *reaching out* to members with more events, initiatives and opportunities to get involved that ever before.

A smorgasbord of events is on offer for members. Learn new skills, network with other VWL members, entertain clients and relax with colleagues and friends. A number of events are brand new, while other cherished favourites will return. Various events will be held in conjunction with our valued allied organisations, offering members more diverse opportunities than ever to get involved. There is truly something for everyone, starting with [Mary Gaudron's Book Launch on 16 February](#), [Women Making it Happen Networking Lunch on 17 February](#) and the [Dame Roma Mitchell Memorial Lunch with Mary Kostakidis on 4 March](#).

VWL celebrates its fifteenth birthday this year, and like all teenagers we're dabbling with Facebook. Click here to become a fan of [VWL's Facebook page](#) and conveniently receive regular updates on events, submissions and VWL news:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Victorian-Women-Lawyers/158806047501314>

VWL cannot do what it does without the wonderful support of our sponsors and friends. We certainly couldn't have planned our frenetic year ahead without the generous hospitality of DHP Lawyers, who hosted our Planning Evening back on 2 December – thanks guys!

I welcome your suggestions, feedback and advice about how VWL can serve you better – please feel free to contact me or say hello at an upcoming VWL event.



Sincerely,

**Kate Ashmor**  
2011 Convenor

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# UPCOMINGEVENTS

## 16 February:

### Launch of Mary Gaudron's Biography

Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia Diana Bryant will launch the biography of retired High Court Justice Mary Gaudron on 16 February at 5:30 PM in the foyer of the Federal Law Courts in Melbourne. This is a free event held in conjunction with Australian Women Lawyers and the Women Barristers Association of Victoria.

[Click here](#) for further details and to RSVP by 11 February.

## 17 February:

### Women in Law, Finance & Accounting Networking Luncheon \*COMMERCIAL LAW EVENT\*

VWL together with Women in Finance (Vic) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants are proud to announce our first networking function will take place at 12:30-2:00pm on Thursday 17 February 2011 at the RACV Club in Bourke Street. The theme of the event is *Women Making It Happen In 2011*.

The number of women in finance and the law is rapidly growing and this event will provide an opportunity for VWL members to gain insights from industry leaders and develop professional relationships with women in the finance sector.

Women Making It Happen in 2011 will feature Kelly O'Dwyer, Federal Member for Higgins; Alexandra Richards, Queen's Counsel; George Savvides, Managing Director of Medibank Private; and Carol Schwartz, distinguished businesswoman, with the event to be moderated by respected journalist Alan Kohler.

To maximise networking opportunities, attendees may elect to either be seated with colleagues or with other members from the three organisations. Attendees may also submit questions to the panel.

[Click here](#) for more information or to register.

## 4 March:

### Dame Roma Mitchell Memorial Luncheon Featuring Mary Kostakidis on Courage & Free Speech

Join us for one of the highlights of the legal community's calendar on 4 March at Zinc in Federation Square. This year's Dame Roma Mitchell Memorial Luncheon will feature prominent human rights campaigner and former SBS broadcaster Mary Kostakidis, who will share her perspectives on freedom of information in a post-Wikileaks world, as she addresses the Luncheon's theme: *The price of courage: Has freedom of information gone too far?*

The Dame Roma Mitchell Memorial Lunch is a joint event with the Law Institute of Victoria, which celebrates the contribution of Dame Roma, Australia's first female QC,

judge and State Governor. The Lunch also marks International Women's Day, which marks its centenary this year.

[Click here](#) for event details and RSVP instructions (including early bird rates for registration by 18 February.)

## COMMITTEEREPORTS

### **Women Migrants Legal Information Project Committee Philippa Darlow elected as new Co-Chair**

The WMLIP Committee is excited to have Philippa Darlow join Noosheen Mogadam as Co-Chair of the Women Migrant Legal Information Project.

Philippa graduated from Monash University in 2003 with a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) and Bachelor of Science (Psychology) and was admitted to practice in 2004. Philippa works at Westminster Lawyers, a specialist family law firm, where she has been a Senior Associate since 2007. She became an LIV Accredited Family Law Specialist in 2009. Since joining the WMLIP Committee last year, Philippa has made some key contributions to the Project including offering her expertise to the drafting of the 'family law' pamphlet.

2011 promises to be a significant year for WMLIP particularly as the Project is really taking flight and we welcome Philippa's leadership at this time.

[Click here](#) for further information about the Committee.

### **Law Reform Committee Update**

On December 14, 2010, two members of VWL's Law Reform Committee, Akane Kanai (Co-Chair) and Prue Elletson attended a Canberra roundtable on the consolidation of federal anti-discrimination law, organised by the Equality Rights Alliance, a group of women's organisations interested in reviewing the consolidation project from the gender perspective.

The consolidation project aims to combine the four current anti-discrimination acts into the one act, with potential for reform to be initiated to ensure consistency across the four acts. The Federal Government has signalled that a draft exposure bill will be released in early 2011.

Attended by other women's organisation representatives and well-known academics in the field such as Margaret Thornton and Sara Charlesworth, the Canberra roundtable was a fantastic opportunity for VWL to make contact with likeminded women lawyers as part of a wider network, on an important issue.

The roundtable also gave VWL members the opportunity to meet with government representatives from the Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Finance and Deregulation regarding the Consolidation.

The Law Reform Committee will be preparing a submission on the Consolidation from a gender perspective in line with VWL's objectives. Law Reform has recently prepared a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Australian Law Reform Commission, highlighting the importance of the independent role of the ALRC in safeguarding rights, promoting access to justice, educating the community with a particular view to the positive flow-on impacts for women.

[Click here](#) to read the submission and for more information about joining the Committee.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### **Chair of VWL's Communications Committee**

The Communications Committee produces this monthly e-newsletter, our annual publication Portia, administers VWL's website and liaised with the media.

The position of Chair of the Communications Committee is currently vacant. This is a highly important and rewarding role at the heart of everything VWL does. If you are interested, please contact the Secretary, Beth Hilton-Thorp, via email: [jthorp@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jthorp@bigpond.net.au).

### **VWL Webmaster**

VWL's new website was launched in late 2010. It is critical means for VWL to communicate with its members and the general public.

The position of Webmaster is currently vacant. If you're internet savvy and would like to contribute to VWL from the comfort of your own computer, please contact Secretary, Beth Hilton-Thorp, via email: [jthorp@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jthorp@bigpond.net.au) to express your interest. Full training will be provided in the intuitive Content Management System that runs the website.

## OTHEREVENTS

### **Progressive Law Network Inaugural Conference 19 March, Monash Chambers**

The newly formed Progressive Law Network aims to link professionals, students, advocacy organisations and community groups to ensure that passionate and dedicated practitioners can use their legal skills to effect positive social change.

PLN's inaugural conference, to be held on 19 March at Monash Law Chambers in the

CBD, will feature Julian Burnside QC, Dr Caroline De Costa, Simon Molesworth QC and Adam Bandt MP, among others.

Be inspired and gain practical advice for students and legal professionals to work together in pursuing social and environmental justice. Visit the [Progressive Law Network's website](#) for further information about the Conference.

## MEMBER UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Every month, WKIT will feature a profile of one of our members as well as a sponsor firm lawyer. This way, we will introduce you to a broad spectrum of female lawyers who are proud to be VWL members.

This month we profile member **Stephanie Reid**, Family Lawyer at [Berry Family Law](#).

**I became a lawyer because...** I was attracted to the potential to directly assist people who are experiencing difficulties in their lives.

**I am really proud of...** having completed my law degree part-time while working full-time in management roles. It was a long seven years!

**You can have it all...** but you should always remember to give something back.

**I am extremely grateful for...** having a supportive partner and colleagues who inspire me.

**A key mentor who influenced my career is...** I've worked with many inspirational people over the years... some have been great strategists, some great business people and some extraordinarily compassionate. I'm grateful to each of them!

**If I wasn't a lawyer...** I'd have to iron far fewer shirts.

**Before I started at my present position...** I spent nearly a year living in Paris while my partner completed a contract. Visa restrictions (and my appalling French) precluded me from working so I filled my time (and my stomach) with art, cheese and wine. It was amazing.

**The best advice I ever received was...** something like "Roses are red, violets are blue, always paddle your own canoe".

**One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in is...** why, it's VWL! I also do voluntary work with the Women's Legal Service. I think women's access to the law is extremely important.

**Outside of the law I enjoy...** riding my bike, travelling, and enjoying good food and wine (all while I delude myself that the cycling offsets the food and wine).

# SPONSOR UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

This month we profile Frances Wheelahan, Senior Associate in the Intellectual Property, Technology and Competition Group at sponsor firm [Corrs Chambers Westgarth](#).

**I became a lawyer because...** I like problem solving and the art of drafting a great contract!

**I am really proud of...** the relationships I have maintained with old friends (with no help from Facebook!)

**You can have it all...** but do you really need it all?

**I am extremely grateful for...** the opportunities that my parents made available to me and the personal drive they instilled in me.

**A key mentor who influenced my career is...** not one person but a combination of people – including family, colleagues, clients and Harper Lee's Atticus Finch!

**If I wasn't a lawyer...** at high school I thought I'd like to be an engineer, but when I visited the engineering schools at the university open days I couldn't stand the smell of the grease! In my dream world I'd be a travel photographer...or maybe a gardener at the Botanical Gardens!

**Before I started at my present position...** was backpacking around the world with no concept of 4 weeks of annual leave per year!

**The best advice I ever received was...** keep it simple!

**One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in is...** is as a senior lawyer in Corrs' pro bono program with PILCH's Homeless Persons Legal Clinic. It's a great opportunity to give a voice to people who don't know their rights or can't advocate for themselves.

**Outside of the law...** I love to be active – personal training twice a week, cycling, swimming and tennis. I also love travelling - a road trip through the Northern Territory and the Kimberley in an old troop carrier with my husband in 2009 was a breath taking and incredibly relaxing journey...a month in France last year was pretty nice too!

## 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 to our Secretary, Beth Hilton-Thorp via email: [jthorp@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jthorp@bigpond.net.au).

Our Committees are:

**Justice** - dealing with all justice related issues including submissions to government, organising the annual sexual assault forums and supporting indigenous law students.

**Law Reform** - monitoring law reform proposals and coordinating submissions on behalf of VWL.

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

**Networking** - organising events with affiliated organisations including the Women Barristers Association, liaising with regional lawyers' networks, and coordinating the annual events including the Members and Guests Evening and the VWL End of Year Celebration.

**Women Migrants Legal Information Project** - planning and producing various publications (in several languages) to assist women migrants with key legal rights and support.

**Women in Government (WiG)** – VWL's newest Committee, in conjunction with the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office, plans events and initiatives to assist female practitioners working for public authorities and agencies.

**Communications** - organising this newsletter, coordinating the editing and publication of Portia, our annual magazine, maintaining VWL's website and liaising with the media.

**Membership** - looking after our members' needs, leading VWL policy and protocol development and promoting VWL membership within the legal community.



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