



**Victorian
Women
Lawyers**



WOMEN KEEPING IN TOUCH

VWL E-NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2011

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A WORD FROM THE CONVENOR

Dear Member

As we mark the centenary of International Women's Day in March, it's timely to note that:

"... better opportunities for women do not mean they should relax. Results of past discrimination are going to take a long time to reverse."

That's Dame Roma Mitchell, speaking in 1982. More than a generation later, women still earn on average 17% a week less than their male counterparts for doing the same work, and only 17.1% of equity partners in major law firms are women. This is despite the fact that over 50% of law school graduates are women.

Let there be no doubt why Victorian Women Lawyers continues to exist and flourish. VWL truly has something to offer all members. Whether you're interested in networking with potential clients or fellow practitioners, whether you'd like to contribute to our research projects and submissions on important law reform proposals, or if you'd simply like to keep in touch with developments in the sector, VWL has it all covered. An easy way to stay in touch with our activities is to become a fan of our [Facebook page](#).

Once again, I welcome your suggestions, feedback and advice about how VWL can serve you better.

Sincerely,

Kate



Kate Ashmor

2011 Convenor

PH: 0403 334 245

E: kate.ashmor@gmail.com

UPCOMINGEVENTS

UPDATE:

2011 Law Student Mentoring Program

VWL's fourth annual Law Student Mentoring Program will open in late March for Expressions of Interest from mentors and students. Registration will occur via electronic forms on VWL's website and the 'mentoring year' will commence in late May.

Mentors are eligible to participate if they have been admitted to practice. Students must be in at least their *second* year of law studies in a Victorian law school in order to apply (note: legal trainees and law clerks are ineligible to participate).

Further details about this year's Mentoring Program will be released soon.

EVENTREPORTS

Women Making it Happen Networking Luncheon 17 February, RACV Club



Victorian Women Lawyers, in conjunction with Women in Finance (Vic) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants held its inaugural joint networking luncheon on Thursday 17 February at the RACV Club in Bourke Street, Melbourne.

The first of its kind between the organisations, Women Making It Happen in 2011 featured Alexandra Richards, Queen's Counsel; Kelly O'Dwyer, Federal Member for Higgins; George Savvides, Managing Director of Medibank Private; and Carol Schwartz, distinguished businesswoman, and the event was moderated by respected financial journalist Alan Kohler.

With the event initially aiming to attract 250 attendees, the organisers were thrilled to greet in excess of 400 guests on the day. Our panellists provided a lively debate on current issues affecting professional women, the most topical being on the question of

“quotas” for female appointments to boards. This debate is clearly alive and well with Carol Schwarz ending the discussion with the comment, “...until we have the same number of mediocre women on boards as mediocre men, we will not have achieved equality”.

The organisers hope that this event will be the first of many more to come which provide a forum for professional women across the legal, accounting and financial planning sectors to network and achieve mutual goals.

[Click here](#) to view photos of the Women Making It Happen Networking Luncheon on VWL's Facebook page.

COMMITTEEREPORTS

Law Reform Committee Update

On 28 January 2011, VWL's Law Reform Committee made a submission to the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in relation to its inquiry into the Australian Law Reform Commission. [Click here](#) to read the submission.

As a result of the submission, VWL was invited to address the Senate's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee at the public hearing of its inquiry in Canberra on 11 February 2011.

Jessica Saunders, Laura Vines and Emily Hart spoke to the Senate Committee, sharing a speaking session with the Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH) and the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

The Senate Committee comprised Senator Guy Barnett (Tas) and Senator Trish Crossin (NT). At the hearing, VWL encouraged the Committee to consider restoring funding to the ALRC to continue its law reform work at its full capacity.

The Law Reform Committee has also lodged its submission to the Federal Government in relation to its consolidation of anti-discrimination legislation – [click here](#) to view this submission.

The Committee's next project will focus on the ALRC's inquiry into Commonwealth Family Violence legislation, and we encourage anyone with an interest or experience in this area to contact the Committee's co-chairs, [Akane Kanai](#) or [Emily Hart](#) to learn more about the project.

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.

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 to express your interest. Full training will be provided in the intuitive Content Management System that runs the website.

OTHEREVENTS

Muriel Matters – A Public Lecture, 15 March 2011

The Victorian Women's Trust, YWCA Victoria, the League of Women Voters and the National Council of Women of Victoria will be holding a public lecture on Tuesday 15 March at the Welsh Church, 320 La Trobe St, to commemorate the centenary of International Women's Day.

The lecture, to be delivered by Frances Bedford MP, will explore the life and contribution of Muriel Matters, one of our most important women activists. Entry is via gold coin donation.

[Click here](#) for further details including how to RSVP.

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 **Philippa Darlow**, Senior Associate at [Westminster Lawyers](#) and Co-Chair of [VWL's Women Migrants Legal Information Project Committee](#):

I became a lawyer because... I knew I wanted to do something where I felt I was helping people. After completing a double degree in law and psychology, family law turned out to be a good fit for me. I am helping people through a difficult and stressful time in their lives and doing what I can to make it a little easier for them.

I am really proud of... achieving my LIV Specialist Accreditation in Family Law.

You can have it all... but it's a bit like a smorgasbord. You will probably end up feeling like you have overdone it.

I am extremely grateful for... My new dishwasher. Oh, and my loving and supportive partner Andre (who also happens to be my earlier model dishwasher).

A key mentor who influenced my career is... It is hard to single one out because at Westminster Lawyers we all draw on each other's expertise a lot. I must say though that on occasions when I have found myself faced with what I have considered to be a very complex problem, I have often marvelled at the ability of one of our partners Michael Lefebvre to make it seem suddenly simple and the preferred course of action seem obvious.

If I wasn't a lawyer... I would have indulged my interest in human behaviour and become a psychologist, ideally one with some attitude like Cal Lightman from "Lie to Me".

Before I started at my present position... I have actually been at my current workplace since my Articles year in 2003. While I was at uni, I worked at a kebab shop and spent a lot of time serving lamb kebabs with garlic sauce to hung over customers. I like to think I still make a mean kebab.

The best advice I ever received was... from my Vice School Principal who said: "Everything matters but nothing matters much". I am still not convinced by the "nothing matters much" part but it tends to help me when I find myself worrying about something too much.

One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in is... is the Women Migrants Legal Information Project. This is a really positive and important initiative which recognises that women migrants in Victoria face huge obstacles accessing information about their legal rights, and that as Victorian Women Lawyers we are in a position to help them.

Outside of the law I enjoy... I like to engage in non-billable activities such as gardening, cooking, running, and spending time with family and friends.

SPONSOR UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

This month we profile **Brooke Dellavedova**, a Principal in the Major Projects (Class Action) practice at [Maurice Blackburn](#):

I became a lawyer because... I've always had strong notions of justice and equality and these inclined me towards law. I also enjoy creating order and clarity from complexity and confusion and this is something lawyers strive to do. Less loftily, I undertook to study law because I had the marks and fancied wearing a suit (I had previously planned on being a vet or an astronomer!).

I am really proud of... My kids - they are amazing small people and I love spending time with them and watching them grow. I am also proud of the outcomes I've achieved for class action clients over the years, for example livestock farmers and feedmills in the vitamins price fixing action, and victims of salmonella poisoning.

You can have it all... Hmmmm. Depends on which day of the week you ask. Currently I am working four days a week, and my kids are both at primary school. I find I have enough time with my family, enough time for work, and enough time to do things for myself. I don't have enough time to do stuff around the house, so I outsource most of this and try not to feel bad about it. I also don't have time to save the world or contribute to my local community, but I figure I can do that later.

I am extremely grateful for... My family - my husband and two daughters are my favourite people and a great source of joy and support.

A key mentor who influenced my career is... My professional coach, Ann Shannon. Maurice Blackburn has a practice of offering one-on-one coaching to its senior lawyers, and I have found working with Ann to be enormously beneficial and enriching. Skills-wise, Bernard Murphy is a top-notch litigator and strategist who has taught me a great deal over the years.

If I wasn't a lawyer... and if I had the talent . . . and the patience . . . I would be a writer.

Before I started at my present position... I was a university student juggling two jobs and a demanding social life. I commenced my Articles straight from University.

The best advice I ever received was... my parents were very big on the idea that what mattered most was not what everyone else thought, but rather what I thought was the right thing to do, and that has always stuck with me..

One of the key legal initiatives I am involved in is... is working with group of lawyers on proposals to reform private enforcement of Australia's competition law. I mainly work on class actions seeking compensation for loss caused by alleged cartel conduct (price fixing). For a number of reasons, these actions are very difficult to run and there have been very few of them. Reform in this area will hopefully make it easier for victims of price fixing to obtain compensation.

Outside of the law... I like spending time with my family and friends, reading, going to the movies and seeing bands.

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.

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.