

Victorian Women Lawyers - Committee of Management (Executive) Charter

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1 CONTEXT

Victorian Women Lawyers (VWL) is a voluntary association that represents women lawyers in Victoria. Its objectives are outlined in the Rules of the Association (‘the Constitution’, Annexure 1).

The affairs of VWL are conducted by a Committee of Management (“the Executive Committee”).

The Executive Committee is accountable to the members of VWL.

The conduct of the Executive Committee is governed by the Constitution.

In addition to the Constitution, this Charter assists and guides members of the Executive Committee in the performance of their roles and provides a framework for ensuring the Executive Committee is accountable to members of VWL.

The members of the Executive Committee for 2005 are named in Annexure 2.

2 ADMINISTRATOR

While not a member of the VWL executive, the administrator of VWL is critical to its continued operation and success.

The administrator of VWL is Suzanne Jukic, who is employed by the Law Institute of Victoria.

The administrator's duties include:

- a) Maintaining members' details generally and in accordance with the Privacy Act 2004;
- b) Managing correspondence with members including sending renewal notices each year;
- c) Acting as a central repository for VWL publications and materials including VWL brochures and banner;
- d) Collecting funds paid by members to attend functions run by VWL;
- e) Assisting with the ongoing maintenance of the VWL website including, where possible, updating text that appears on the site in accordance with instructions provided by members of the Executive Committee.
- f) Providing assistance to the Convenor as requested; and
- g) Assisting VWL in the administrations of all functions held by VWL.

3 COMPOSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee comprises:

- a) A Convenor;
- b) An Assistant Convenor;
- c) An immediate past Convenor;
- d) A Treasurer;
- e) A Secretary;
- f) Three elected members;
- g) The Chair(s) of each VWL committee; and
- h) Any other members as may be appointed from time to time.

3.1 Criteria for membership of Executive Committee

Each member of the Executive Committee must:

- a) Be a member of VWL; and
- b) Be committed to the objectives of VWL.

3.2 Responsibilities of all members of Executive Committee

- a) Regular attendance at monthly executive meetings (1.5 hours);
- b) Attendance at annual Sponsor's Dinner, Annual General Meeting and Planning Day;
- c) Regular attendance at functions and events organised by VWL;
- d) Availability to meet the time commitments of the particular role, including, in addition to the sub-paragraphs above, the time required to perform the duties and meet the responsibilities described in the following paragraphs (usually a

minimum of two hours each work, more for the Convenor and Assistant Convenor); and

- e) Succession planning for continuation of role.

3.3 Convenor

- a) Convene and preside as Chairperson at general meetings of VWL and of the Executive Committee;
- b) Approve all outgoing correspondence;
- c) Act as spokesperson for VWL;
- d) Liaise with heads of other associations;
- e) Oversee activities of the committees; and
- f) Be the principal point of contact for VWL's sponsors.

3.4 Assistant Convenor

- a) In the absence of the Convenor, preside as Chairperson at general meetings of VWL and meetings of the Executive Committee;
- b) Assist the Convenor in all the Convenor's responsibilities; and
- c) Act as contact for sponsors and members in the absence of the Convenor.

3.5 Treasurer

- a) Collect and receive all monies due to VWL, issue any receipts and make all payments authorized by VWL Executive Committee;
- b) Keep correct accounts and books showing the financial affairs of VWL with full details of all receipts and expenditure connected with the activities of VWL;
- c) Keep a register of all assets of the VWL;
- d) Keep all general records, accounting books and records of receipt and expenditure connected with the operations and business of VWL in such manner as the Executive Committee directs;
- e) Present a Treasurer's report at each Executive Committee meeting; and
- f) Ensure VWL's compliance with all legislation governing the financial status and activities of VWL.

3.6 Secretary

- a) Prepare and arrange for distribution of an Agenda for Executive Committee meetings;
- b) Advise members of general meetings;
- c) Keep minutes of the resolutions and proceedings of each Annual General Meeting and each Executive Committee meeting in books provided for that purpose, together with a record of the names of persons present at Executive Committee meetings;

- d) Distribute minutes of each meeting to the Executive Committee or general members as appropriate;
- e) Keep copies of all correspondence;
- f) Keep a record of the names and addresses of all members of VWL; and
- g) Keep other such books and records as the Executive Committee may determine.

3.7 General members

- a) Provide input into Executive Committee decisions.
- b) Vote on Executive Committee decisions.

3.8 Committee Chairs

- a) Convene and chair monthly Committee meetings (approx 1 hour), include prepare and circulate agenda prior to meeting and oversee preparation and circulation of minutes;
- b) Consistently and regularly review the activities of the Committee to ensure that the activities meet the objectives of the Committee;
- c) Regularly review the VWL website to ensure that portions of the site which relate to the activities of the particular committee are up-to-date, relevant and appropriate;
- d) Submit the following:
 - i. Brief committee report or copy of minutes to the Administrator for inclusion in the Agenda to each Executive Committee meeting;
 - ii. One-page committee report to the Communications Committee for inclusion in Portia each quarter; and
 - iii. Committee report for inclusion in the Annual Report on request by the Convenor.
- e) Liaise with the Committee regarding Executive Committee matters and issues raised at Executive Committee meetings;
- f) Liaise with the Convenor as required;
- g) Identify and pursue projects in accordance with the general objects of VWL and the specific objectives of that committee;
- h) Encourage and support member participation in Committee projects and activities;
- i) Regulate the Committee's record keeping;
- j) Organise any functions in consultation with the Networking Committee;
- k) Contribute to the work of the Committee;
- l) Maintain continuum of operation of the committee and plan for succession, including handing over any minutes of past meetings to replacement; and
- m) Refer any required expenditure to the Executive for approval.

4 VWL COMMITTEES

4.1 Criteria for membership of a committee

The criteria for membership of a committee, in addition to those described below in relation to each committee, are:

- a) Membership of VWL;
- b) Regular attendance at committee meetings (usually one hour each month) and extraordinary meetings as necessary;
- c) Availability to make project based time commitment tailored to project & individual capacity; and
- d) Commitment to and enthusiasm for the aims and objectives of the committee.

4.2 Communications

The aims of the Communications Committee are to:

- a) Develop and foster projects which enhance ability of VWL to communicate with its members and wider community;
- b) Support needs of the Executive Committee and other Committees in relation to communications related projects (as requested or on initiative of approach to fellow Committee);
- c) Supervise and assist the production of Portia including submitting ideas to Editorial Sub-Committee and writing for Portia, recognising that the Editorial Committee has the primary carriage of the production of Portia;
- d) Develop and update the VWL website to ensure it exists as an effective communication tool for VWL; and
- e) Provide committee participants with an opportunity to develop new skills, relationships and profile.

4.3 Justice

The Justice Committee aims to bring justice and human rights related issues that affect women to the attention of the executive and the membership.

The Justice Committee will do this by:

- a) Promoting justice;
- b) Providing a forum for justice related issues to be addressed by VWL;
- c) Initiating functions and projects which address justice related issues;
- d) Providing informative summaries in Portia of topical justice related issues;
- e) Supporting the Executive Committee's action and/or potential submissions on justice related matters that invite a VWL response/comment; and
- f) Creating and maintaining links with other justice related groups.

4.4 Membership

The VWL Membership Committee aims to support the objectives of VWL by supporting its members. The aims of the Membership Committee are to:

- a) Ensure that the process of becoming and remaining a member runs smoothly;
- b) Expand and broaden the membership;
- c) Analyse the demographic of members and survey members to find out what members want from VWL;
- d) Strive to provide members with what they want from VWL;
- e) Provide an interface, and forge links between VWL and other associations with compatible objectives;
- f) Manage VWL's relationships with its sponsors, and VWL's sponsorship by VWL of organizations and events; and
- g) Be accessible to VWL members by encouraging participation in the committee and its tasks and projects.

The composition of the membership committee is loosely based on a representative model whereby members act as representatives for different groups of members, including students, the bar, new practitioners, non-cbd practitioners and corporate membership.

This model is designed to provide direct links to each group to ensure that strategies to increase membership are appropriate, but also that it will assist to ensure the relevance of VWL to these groups.

The membership committee also comprises a 'sponsorship officer' or co-officers, specifically responsible for managing the relationship between VWL and its sponsors, and VWL and the events and organizations that it sponsors. The sponsorship officer or officers are also members of the VWL Executive Committee.

4.5 Networking

The Networking Committee aims to:

- a) Develop and foster events which support the aims of VWL;
- b) Develop a range of events. The range includes events focusing on career development, legal issues, practice development, networking and socialising;
- c) Develop events for practitioners both in the City, suburbs and country areas, where possible;
- d) Develop events which are of interest to people at different stages in their careers and from different areas of practice;
- e) Provide committee members with an opportunity to develop some new skills and relationships; and
- f) Encourage relationships with like organisations.

4.6 Work Practices

The Work Practices Committee aims to:

- a) Advance equality for women in the legal profession;
- b) Encourage and provide for the entry of women into the legal profession and their advancement within the legal profession;
- c) Participate as a body in matters of interest to the legal profession;

- d) Create and enhance awareness of women's contribution to the practice and development of the law; and
- e) Provide a professional and social network for women lawyers.

The Work Practices Committee aims to provide:

- a) Educational seminars and research reports on issues relevant to women working in the legal profession;
- b) An opportunity to effect cultural changes in the legal profession;
- c) A forum for the exchange of views by peer support and mentoring; and
- d) A voice for women lawyers on issues affecting women in the legal profession.

4.7 Other Committees

In addition to the Committees referred to above, the Executive Committee may authorize the creation of other committees and sub-committees for specific purposes (for example, a Mentoring Sub-Committee).

Additional Committees will be bound by the general provisions contained in paragraphs 3.1, 3.2, 3.8, and 4.1 as applicable.

5 MISCELLANEOUS

5.1 Performance Evaluation

The Executive Committee reviews its own performance and contribution to meeting the objectives of VWL on an annual basis, taking into account the Constitution and this Charter.

The Executive Committee may also review from time to time the performance of individual Executive Committee members to seek and provide feedback in relation to the member's performance of her roles and responsibilities.

5.2 Publication of the Charter

A copy of the charter is to be made available at www.vwl.asn.au and is to be provided to all incoming members of the Executive Committee or any other VWL Committee upon their taking up office or joining a Committee.