



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Women Lawyers' Association  
South Australia Inc





## Annual Report 2023/2024

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## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Fostering equality and justice in the legal profession and the general community while championing the recognition of women lawyers and supporting them to achieve their full potential

## ABOUT THE WOMEN LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION OF SA

The Women Lawyers' Association of South Australia ('the WLASA') is a professional association that represents the interests of women legal practitioners across South Australia as well as aiming to achieve equity and justice for all women in society. The WLASA is a constituent body of the national organisation, Australian Women Lawyers ('AWL'). The WLASA makes representations on issues that impact the status of women in the law and society more generally. The WLASA also provides opportunities for networking amongst women members of the legal profession and hosts continuing professional development seminars.

Ordinary Membership of the WLASA is open to all individuals who hold a law degree, are studying law or are otherwise eligible to practice law in South Australia. Corporate Membership is open to all incorporated bodies and partnerships that have principals or employ individuals who would be eligible to be an Ordinary Member.

Membership of the WLASA demonstrates that the individual or organisation wishes to advance the interests of women under the law and women legal practitioners in South Australia.

WLASA is now regarded as one of South Australia's peak professional bodies representing women in the law. We have a large and diverse membership of women at varying stages of their legal careers and in various fields of law and legal roles. We also have strong corporate support from our corporate members, including those who have signed our Charter for the Advancement of Women in the Legal Profession.

## THANKS TO OUR SUPPORT TEAM

We are incredibly fortunate to have the ongoing contracted administrative services of Robyn Dibben. Robyn has been with us for just over five years now and, notwithstanding her increasing workload, she has continued to provide the WLASA with seamless administrative support. We would be lost without her.

Our sincere thanks and gratitude to the Honourable Margaret Nyland AM who is a continual source of inspiration, support and guidance as our Patron. We were delighted to have Margaret introduce our guest speaker Judge Emily Telfer (her former associate) at this year's Margaret Nyland AM Long Lunch.



Picture: Robyn Dibben



Picture: (from left): Diana Newcombe, Judge Emily Telfer, the Honourable Margaret Nyland AM, Marissa Mackie, Adeline Lim



# OUR VALUES

## Respect

Respect is an essential and core value which drives all dealings undertaken by the WLASA. The WLASA prides itself on engendering respect and esteem from the legal profession, the judiciary and the business community. By pursuing excellence and having committed and professional people to deliver, work towards and achieve its goals, the WLASA aims to earn the respect of all parties with whom it deals and interacts. As a professional association, the WLASA respects its members, stakeholders, all members of the legal profession, the judiciary and members of the broader community.

## People

People are integral to the success of the WLASA and are its most important asset. It is essential to the WLASA that its members feel proud of their involvement and participation in the WLASA and receive benefit from their membership.

## Excellence

The WLASA is committed to strive for excellence at all times. This includes being innovative and delivering a wide range of services tailored to benefiting the needs of its members. The WLASA is committed to hosting events that exceed the expectation of its members, stakeholders, sponsors and associated organisations and charities. The WLASA is committed to improving the level of enjoyment by the WLASA members, their colleagues and the Friends of the WLASA.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This year, the WLASA updated and published its Strategic Plan for 2024-2027. The 2020 to 2023 period of our last strategic plan was difficult, as the COVID pandemic limited the opportunities for in-person interaction. Nevertheless, we were able to achieve most of the actions we identified, and will continue to work towards achieving our long term goals in the upcoming period.

The WLASA Strategic Plan for 2024 to 2027 reflects the next stage of WLASA's growth and evolution, from a small group of pioneering women to a professional body that is committed to addressing the needs of our membership, as well as supporting all women in the legal profession and in the community more broadly to achieve genuine equality.

The WLASA is committed to ongoing improvement of the organisation to ensure its sustainability and to strengthen its capacity to have a positive effect and act as a catalyst for change in both the legal and wider communities.

The WLASA's strategic direction is underpinned by the following four strategic priorities as set out in the updated Strategic Plan:

- To position the WLASA as a leading resource and advocate for women in the legal profession at all stages of their careers;
- To become a peak body representing the legal rights and interests of women across all areas of society by influencing the reform of policy, legislation and legal processes;
- To maintain the effective and appropriate operation of the WLASA to ensure sustainability and support the delivery of services to its members; and
- To provide members with opportunities to create professional and social networks and advance their careers as women in the South Australian legal profession.

In achieving its strategic vision, the WLASA recognises that it must continue to strive for excellence in all aspects of its operation. This includes hosting events, engaging in consultation with stakeholders, providing professional development for members and fostering strong and enduring relationships with sponsors and members.

# GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

## Introduction

The WLASA is incorporated under the Associations Incorporations Act 1985 (SA). The WLASA is a not-for-profit member organisation, is a 'Charitable Institution' for the purposes of Commonwealth taxation Laws and has been endorsed as a tax concession charity by the Australian Tax Office. The Secretary of the WLASA submits an Annual Information Statement to the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission each year.

The business and affairs of the WLASA are overseen and controlled by a committee. The 2023/24 committee comprises WLASA Ordinary Members elected to office bearer positions, namely President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary and nine other WLASA Ordinary Members elected as general or associate members of the committee. All committee members provide their time and expertise on a volunteer basis.

The WLASA is governed with integrity and in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner. The committee is dedicated to achieving the objectives of the WLASA by implementing key strategies to support those objectives.

The committee meets once a month for the purposes of overseeing and implementing all aspects of the WLASA's Strategic Plan, its objectives and values. The committee reviews its performance by measuring the outcomes of its yearly actions against its objectives and its legal obligations.

During the period 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024, ten formal meetings of the committee were held. A Strategic Planning Day was held on 26 November 2023.

## WLASA Committee

The WLASA Committee for the 2023/24 year was as follows:

- **Marissa Mackie** (President)
- **Antonella Rodriguez** (Vice-President and member of the Policy & Education Sub-Committee)
- **Tyneil Flaherty** (Treasurer)
- **Kristy Zander** (Secretary)
- **Tiah Brooks** (committee member and member of the Social Media & Website Sub-Committee)
- **Courtney Chow** (associate committee member and Co-Chair (Members) of the Members & Events Sub-Committee)
- **Margaret Cusenza** (committee member, Chair of the Policy & Education Sub-Committee and member of the Members & Events Sub-Committee)
- **Adeline Lim** (committee member and Co-Chair (Events) of the Members & Events Sub-Committee)
- **India Hopkins** (committee member and member of the Policy & Education and Members & Events Sub-Committees)
- **Poppy Matters** (committee member and member of the Members & Events Sub-Committee)
- **Jessie Murphy-Allen** (committee member, Chair of the Social Media & Website Sub-Committee and member of the Member & Events Sub-Committee)
- **Shelley O'Connell** (committee member and AWL Representative)
- **Phoebe Pitt** (committee member and member of the Members & Events Sub-Committee)

The composition of the committee reflects the broad range of experience, skills and knowledge required to oversee the running of the WLASA, its business and affairs. We thank all members of the Committee for their dedication and commitment to the WLASA.

The following committee members will not be re-nominating for the 2024/25 year:

- Tyneil Flaherty
- Phoebe Pitt

We thank each of you wholeheartedly for joining the committee and for the immense time and effort you have contributed. We sincerely enjoyed and appreciated having you on the committee, and we wish you

every happiness going forward on each of your new and exciting endeavours. We are very sad to see you go, and of course would be so pleased to welcome you back to the committee if you should be in the position to return in the future. In particular, we would like to acknowledge and thank Tyneil for her efforts as Treasurer of the WLASA over the past few years.

In addition, we would like to thank Marissa Mackie for her tireless work as President of the WLASA over the past few years. Marissa will not be re-nominating as President for the 2024/25 year but will re-nominate as a general committee member. We thank her for her hard work advocating on behalf of the WLASA and are happy that she will remain involved with our important work.



Picture: Some members of the WLASA Committee at the 2023 Christmas Drinks with the Judiciary event

## Sub-committees

To assist in the execution of its responsibilities, the committee has established a number of sub-committees. These sub-committees operate to focus on specific strategic objectives.

The current permanent sub-committees are the:

- Policy & Education Sub-committee
- Members & Events Sub-committee
- Social Media & Website Sub-committee

## Members' role

The Constitution of the WLASA requires that a meeting of financial members known as the Annual General Meeting ('AGM') is to be held annually (see section 4.7 of the WLASA Constitution).

The purpose of the AGM is to:

- confirm the minutes of the preceding Annual General Meeting;
- receive the President's report for the previous financial year;
- receive the Treasurer's report and the financial statements for the previous financial year;

- elect or re-elect the office bearers and committee members; and
- conduct any other business placed on the agenda before the commencement of the meeting.

All financial members of the WLASA are advised in advance of the AGM in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution. This notice includes notice of nominations for the election or re-election of office bearers and general members of the committee. The notice for this year's AGM was first distributed to all members via e-mail on 24 July 2024.

The WLASA committee encourages all of its members to attend the AGM in person or by proxy.

## **Communication to members**

The WLASA continues to enjoy a growing membership from all different corners of the profession and State. It is incredibly important to the committee that all members are regularly informed about, and are actively engaged in, the work of the WLASA.

### **Annual Report**

The WLASA prepares an Annual Report that is made available to all members. The Annual Report provides information on the WLASA's mission and objectives and provides an overview of the WLASA's achievements in the past year. The Annual Report also details all information required to be disclosed by the WLASA under its operating rules and policies and/or as required by law.

A copy of the Annual Report can be downloaded from the WLASA website following its Annual General Meeting.

### **Find a Woman Lawyer Directory**

This year marks the seventh anniversary of the WLASA's 'Find A Woman Lawyer' Directory. The Directory provides a vehicle for anyone looking for a woman lawyer in South Australia to search the directory through the WLASA website according to a practitioner's name, firm, location or practice area. The Directory also allows women lawyers to promote their areas of expertise in the competitive South Australian legal market.

Over the past year, the name of the Directory was changed from the 'Find a Female Lawyer' Directory to the 'Find a Woman Lawyer' Directory in order to be more inclusive. The entries listed in the Directory were also updated to ensure their accuracy.

### **Social media and website**

In 2024, WLASA has continue to build its presence on social media, as an important vehicle for communication with our members and the wider public. The WLASA Facebook page now has in excess of 2,000 followers, the WLASA LinkedIn page has more than 1,000 followers and the WLASA Instagram page has more than 100 followers.

We have also been working on a new website which aims to improve members' experience, provide more relevant information and enable our volunteers to update it with ease. We hope to unveil the website in the next few months.

### **Member emails and newsletters**

Regular emails are distributed to members who have submitted their email addresses to the WLASA on issues such as providing notice of WLASA and external events and other key information for members. A member newsletter was published by email on 5 May 2024 and we hope that this will be a regular new feature for members going forward.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the WLASA Annual Report for the 2023/2024 financial year.

It is a bittersweet feeling writing this report as my last as President of the WLASA, after three years in the role.

I became a committee member of the WLASA in early 2015 and reflecting back on our hard work over the last almost-ten years is nothing short of inspiring. The only thing more inspiring, was being able to reflect and recognise all of the tireless work and achievements of the WLASA in March this year, when we celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the incorporation of the WLASA.

We were honoured to have a number of very distinguished guests attend to celebrate with us, including founding president, Candida D'Arcy, who spoke about the early years of the WLASA back in the day where women made up less than third of the profession and we only had one woman justice sitting on the Supreme Court (our patron, the Honourable Margaret Nyland AM).

A striking difference now where women now make up over half the profession and almost half of our Supreme Court Justices are women. In the last ten years we've seen a 32% increase in women practising in the law, and whilst we still have work to do at senior levels we will get there.

Whilst this President's Report should be about the last financial year I want to acknowledge the work and achievements of the WLASA over the last 25 years, which has been instrumental in that shift and in the advancement of women both within the profession and beyond. This work has included:

- making numerous submissions on matters affecting women in the legal profession including on the gender pay gap, flexible working, parenting leave, equitable briefing, bullying and harassment in the legal profession and more;
- negotiating the State Higher Courts' sitting hours protocol in 2008;
- becoming a part of the Silk consultation process;
- acting as a key advocate for reform to the Law Society rules for greater gender equality;
- lobbying for the women and infant prison facilities at the Adelaide Women's Prison;
- undertaking valuable statistical analysis on the numbers of women appearing as counsel in the courts in South Australia which was integral to the development of the LCA's Equitable Briefing Policy and submissions in respect to the NARS Report;
- launching the Find a Women Lawyer directory;
- establishing our corporate membership offering and the Charter for the Advancement of Women in the South Australian Legal Profession which (amongst other signatories) has been adopted by the Attorney General's Department and endorsed by the Equal Opportunity Commissioner;
- providing significant input into abortion law reform;
- providing mentoring and invaluable networking opportunities for members across all ages;
- supporting a number of charities;
- hosting our flagship events including the Christmas Drinks with the Judiciary and Margaret Nyland AM Long Lunch; and
- Offering scholarships for our members.

We still have much to achieve, when looking through old documents I came across the 2007 submission to the Select Committee on Balancing Work and Life Responsibilities which addressed issues of paid maternity leave, flexible work practices, willingness of courts to accommodate the needs of parents, cultural issues



surrounding the advancement and remuneration of women. Many of these are still live issues. We look forward (albeit somewhat hesitantly) to the review of the Equal Opportunity Commissioner to see how far we have come as a profession over the past few years in addressing bullying and harassment in the legal profession.

Whilst change may be slow, reflecting back on the last 25 years, we have collectively made a positive change and we will not stop.

It is not only our Committee members who have helped us to achieve these goals but it is also our membership base who have given us our voice and those at senior levels in the profession and in government that have supported us along the way, our corporate members and our signatories. For that I would like to thank every single person who is reading this.

I especially want to thank the WLASA for my journey as a lawyer. I joined this committee originally seeking to expand my professional networks after returning from parental leave and having worked predominately in government. I was embraced by the WLASA and its members at the first event I attended, our famous Christmas drinks. I was lucky enough to work with the president at the time who invited me along to a meeting and I quickly joined the committee.

Since that time I have gotten the personal satisfaction of being able to contribute to making a difference for others in the profession, to be someone who people reach out to, to make life-long friends who rally together to celebrate and support each other throughout many of life's major events. We look out for each other and are not afraid to lean on each other.

I have been both honoured and humbled to be able to lead the WLASA over the past few years and look forward to remaining a part of the Association and continuing to strive towards our objectives.

**Marissa Mackie, President**



Picture: Marissa Mackie, WLASA President

# TREASURER'S REPORT

## Financial statements 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

### Combined Bank accounts (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024)

	Balance (\$)
Opening Bank Balance as at 1 July 2023	91,513.29
Deposits	43,064.15
Withdrawals	(33,157.41)
Closing combined Bank Balance 30 June 2024	<b>101,420.03</b>

### Summary of Income and Expenditure (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024)

Income	(\$)
Membership	
Individual	5,200.00
Corporate	13,980.00
Unwaged/ Community	390.00
Find a Woman Lawyer	900.00
Christmas Drinks with the Judiciary	4,110.00
Christmas Raffle	1,565.00 <sup>1</sup>
Anniversary Function	1,595.00
	<b>28,360.00</b>
Expenses	
Administration	2,531.95
AGM costs	0
Anniversary Function	7,195.10 <sup>2</sup>
Bar Reader's Drinks	0
Capitation Fees	0 <sup>3</sup>
Christmas Drinks with the Judiciary	4,378.00 <sup>4</sup>
Christmas Lunch	841.00
CPD	107.53
Donations	0 <sup>5</sup>
Gifts to winners of competitions	200.00 <sup>6</sup>
International Women's Day	620.00
Insurance	835.62
Meeting costs	436.83
Membership – JusticeNet	288.00
MNLL	142.86 <sup>7</sup>
Planning day	273.60
Robyn Layton Award	371.11
Stripe Fees	215.71
Web Hosting Fees	15.95
	<b>18,453.26</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>9,906.74</b>

### Notes to Income and Expenditure Statement

- Raffle: Total figure raised was \$1,975.00, however the figure recorded above presents the dollar figure collected on the night of the Drinks with the Judiciary (and by way of IOU's collected within the 2023 Financial Year). \$560.00 of the IOUs and donations were not received by the Association within the 2023 Financial Year and will be carried over and recorded in the financial year ended 30 June 2025. A reimbursement is owed to the Treasurer of \$150 and remains outstanding at the end of the financial year.
- The costs for the Anniversary Function include the food, drinks, photographer, decorations, banners and paid advertising including in InDaily.

3. No capitation fees were paid this financial year. Payments totalling \$5,789.00 were paid to the AWL in July and August 2024 meaning that they will be recognised in the 2025 financial statements.
4. The Treasurer paid the Bar tab at Mrs Q on the evening of the Judiciary Drinks function. \$1,055 was paid in cash (it being the cash collected from the raffle on the night) and the balance \$2,783.00 on her credit card. The Treasurer was reimbursed in this financial year. The actual cost of the food and drink at the Christmas Drinks function for the November 2023 event was \$3,838. Additional costs of \$540 relate to the photographer for the evening and does not include the Robyn Layton KC Award associated costs as they are reported separately.
5. The Association has not yet transferred donations to its 2023/ 2024 Charity. \$3,000 will be transferred in FY 2025 to The Zahra Foundation.
6. In Financial Year ended 2022 the Association ran a student competition. There were two prize winners each being awarded \$100. Gift cards were purchased in this financial year and paid to each of the winners.
7. A reimbursement to a committee member of \$199.97 for the gift at the Margaret Nyland Long Lunch was not processed in this financial year but will be recognised in the 2025 financials.

### Comparison to prior years' financials

Income	21/22 FY (\$)	22/23 FY (\$)	23/24 FY (\$)
Memberships <sup>1</sup>	22,200.00	22,080.00	20,190.00
FAWL	3,660.00	3,020.00	900.00
Donations Received	976.00	1,221.00	1,565.00
Functions & CPD	3,765.00	4,584.35	5,705.00
	<b>30,601.00</b>	<b>30,905.35</b>	<b>\$28,360.00</b>
Expenses			
Australian Women Lawyers	2,641.50	0.00	0.00
Competition Prizes	0.00	0.00	200.00
Functions & CPDs <sup>2</sup>	1,888.74	8,870.76	12,814.60
Donations made	0.00	4,308.11	0.00
Administrative support	2,577.50	2,277.50	2,531.95
AGM	808.95	640.10	0.00
Meeting Expenses <sup>3</sup>	862.26	617.21	1,567.38
Online payments (Stripe Fees)	273.00	269.76	215.71
Legal Advice	1,424.50	0.00	0.00
Insurance	575.26	801.45	835.62
Memberships		288.00	288.00
	<b>11,051.71</b>	<b>18,072.89</b>	<b>18,453.26</b>

### Notes to Comparative Financial Statements

1. Membership fees include fees for the financial year 24/25 that were paid before 30 June 2024.
2. All event costs including gifts, trophies and other expenses are recorded in this category.
3. Includes the expenses associated with the planning day, Christmas lunch and meetings generally (including Zoom fees incurred to host the Committee meetings electronically as well as in person).

## Treasurer's Report

The financial position of the WLASA is a strong one, and the Financial Year ended 30 June 2024 was again a prosperous one for us. Memberships were relatively steady across the year however there was a noticeable drop in unwaged and community legal centre membership. There was also a significant drop in subscriptions to the Find a Woman Lawyer service, and a noticeable decline in the number of individual memberships.

Our Christmas Drinks with the Judiciary function was again very successful which, courtesy of two individual members each donating \$250, increased the donation that we were able to provide to The Zahra Foundation to \$3,000 (although I note that the donation will be paid in the next financial year). It was again so wonderful to see our membership and guests getting behind our chosen charity.

Whilst our expenditure remained consistent with previous years, the largest increase in costs was in respect of our functions. As members are aware, we held a very successful 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party earlier this year which resulted in an increase in expenditure on functions generally. Attributed to the cost of the Anniversary function are two advertising campaigns that we ran in the lead up to the event, and additional banners and marketing materials that we have produced to commemorate the event.

We thank our membership for their support during 2024 and I would also like to thank our Committee who has regularly met in person or via Zoom over the last 12 months to keep the Association running smoothly. I am stepping down as Treasurer after 3 years and I am sad to be leaving the Committee; but know that the Association remains in safe and careful hands.

***Tyneil Flaherty, Treasurer***



Picture: WLASA Committee members at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary party



## AUSTRALIAN WOMEN LAWYERS' REPORT

Australian Women Lawyers Ltd (AWL) is the national peak body of women lawyers in Australia. The WLASA is one of our constituent bodies. I have been the SA delegate to AWL since the start of 2023.

The AWL Annual General Meeting for the past year was held in Adelaide on 18 November 2023.



The 2024 AWL Board comprises:

- Astrid Haban-Beer (Vic) – President
- Renee Bianchi (NSW) – Vice President
- Harriet Boothman (ACT) – Secretary
- Catherine Cheek (Qld) – Treasurer
- Stephanie Pasharis (Vic)
- Shelley O'Connell (SA)
- Emma Luck (WA)
- Georgia Hagias (NT)
- Alinta Robinson-Herbert (Tas)

Special thanks were given to outgoing Immediate Past President Leah Marrone (SA) (pictured left with President Astrid Haban-Beer), and outgoing board members Janette McCahon (WA) and Traci Keys (NT).



One of the main roles of AWL as the peak body is to provide the national voice on key issues that women in the profession face, and more broadly law reform areas relating to women. AWL is a regular commentator in the legal and wider press about issues relevant to its objectives.

## Conference

2024 for AWL has largely been about planning our bi-annual conference – this year to be held in Canberra on 18 and 19 October 2024.

The theme is “Leading the Way”. The Conference will be held at the Hotel Realm, with the Gala Dinner at the National Portrait Gallery.

AWL is proud to welcome Conference keynote speaker, human rights lawyer and barrister, Jennifer Robinson of Doughty Street Chambers in London and Gala Dinner keynote speaker, the Honourable Justice Louise Taylor of the ACT Supreme Court.

Other speakers confirmed include our new Patron, the Honourable Justice Jacqueline Gleeson; Dr Hannah Tonkin, NSW Women's Safety Commissioner; and Dr Anna Cody, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, with many more to be announced soon.

## Strategic Plan

The AWL Board will hold its Strategic Planning Day meeting for 2024 in Canberra around the same time as the bi-annual conference, in October 2024. Our 2019-2024 Strategic Plan (available on the AWL website) is due for review.

AWL's priorities for 2019-2024 have been:

1. Educate and inform the profession and the public about matters affecting women in the profession and legal system;
2. Provide leadership on issues affecting women in the profession and the legal system by driving and advocating for change; and
3. Effectively manage AWL to ensure its continued operation and continued accountability to its members.

Additionally, priorities for advocacy in 2024 include:

1. Sustainability of practice
2. Encouraging Diversity and Intersectionality
3. Closing gender pay gap
4. Equitable briefing
5. Flexible working
6. Stamping out sexual harassment/respect at work
7. Support for Indigenous women in the justice sector

Stay tuned for updates on our website <https://australianwomenlawyers.com.au> and our social media LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

**Shelley O'Connell, AWL Delegate for SA**

## MEMBERS & EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

The Members and Events Sub-committee aims to provide further development, exposure and opportunities for women in the legal profession and to organise events for our members that not only give members the opportunity to catch up and network with others in the profession but also organise events that are of benefit and interest to our membership.

### Events

#### *Christmas Drinks with the Judiciary*

We had one of our favourite events of the year, 'Christmas Drinks with the Judiciary' on 16 November 2023 at Mrs Q. We had over 120 RSVPs for this event. Our charity for 2023 was Zahra Foundation.

A big thank you to the following generous sponsors: Al Forno Pizza Ovens, Jasmin Indian Restaurant, Gentle Folk Wine, I have Time café, Never Never Distilling, Battery Bar, Mills Oakley, Paul D Bear Lawyer, Murray Chambers, LK Law, Norman Waterhouse, Vardon Legal, Tyneil Flaherty and Marissa Mackie, who donated an amazing variety of prizes for our raffle draw. We managed to raise a total of \$3,000 for the Zahra Foundation.

We had Arman Abrahamzadeh (Zahra's son) and board member Genevieve Lewis join us on the night to share with us the amazing work that they do.

Dr Robyn Layton AO KC was also there to present our annual award named after her to 2023's worthy winner, Zainab Alsweedy.

#### *25<sup>th</sup> anniversary party*

The WLASA celebrated its 25-year anniversary this year and on 21 March 2024 we were thrilled to celebrate with a party at the beautiful Treasury 1860 Courtyard. It was wonderful to gather together and spend time reflecting on the growth of an Association which has achieved so much over the years. Special thanks to all who attended including Members of Parliament, the Judiciary, Founding Members and many Past Presidents and Committee Members. The anniversary also provided the occasion for an article about the Association in InDaily which you can read here: [InDaily Article - All Rise: Ensuring Equality for Women within the Legal System](#)

#### *International Women's Day Breakfast*

On 8 March 2024, WLASA committee members and member competition winners (and over 3,000 others) celebrated International Women's Day at the Adelaide Convention Centre. Hosted by the Honourable Penny Wong for the 22<sup>nd</sup> year, we were thrilled to hear from Annabel Crabb with such pearls of wisdom as "When you count others in, you accumulate merit" and "Here's to the women who went before us. Here's to the women whose stories we know, and here's to the women whose stories we missed. Let's not make that mistake again..."

#### *Margaret Nyland AM Long Lunch*

The Honourable Margaret Nyland AM Long Lunch was held on 31 May 2024 at the National Wine Centre, co-hosted by the Law Society. Since the inaugural event on 5 April 2013, this lunch continues to be a sellout event each year with the opportunity to hear from an amazing speaker.

This year was no different with her Honour Judge Emily Telfer of the District Court of South Australia speaking to over 300 attendees. The lunch was emceed by Kristy Zander and Marissa Mackie had the pleasure of interviewing Judge Telfer at the lunch.

Judge Telfer made Marissa's job relatively easy as her Honour spoke freely and candidly about her journey to becoming a lawyer and then a judge. Judge Telfer's career pathway to becoming a judge wasn't a 'typical' one (if there is such a thing as a typical pathway) in that there were no family background or connections in the law and, against the somewhat stereotypical and somewhat 'biased' odds, she attended a public high school. Her Honour did not aspire to become a lawyer as a child, alluding to one aspiration of becoming a hairdresser, and when she did eventually become a lawyer, she was not initially interested in trial work and was generally daunted by public speaking. Something that many readers can likely relate to.

Judge Telfer referenced an article about mentoring in her discussion and commended it to us ([Link to article](#)). Her Honour stressed the importance of mentoring and the difference it made in her life and career. She was an Associate to Margaret Nyland and recounted the ways in which Margaret had mentored, supported and sponsored her whilst she was her Associate and long after. Her Honour also had other mentors, her colleagues at the Legal Services Commission, the DPP and the Bar.

Judge Telfer was very candid and relatable, sharing the highlights of her career, and some of the low points, reminding us that even when we feel like we have made a mistake and it feels like the end of the world, we can recover from it.

All in all, it was a most enjoyable and memorable lunch. We had a great speaker, delicious food paired perfectly with delectable wine but all of that would not have been possible without the generous support from our major sponsors, LK Law and PKF Adelaide. LK Law have been long time sponsors of the event and both the Law Society and WLASA thank it for its unwavering support of such a popular event. PKF Adelaide are first time sponsors, and we look forward to this year's event marking the start of a long association with them.

### **Adeline Lim, Chair (Events), Members & Events Sub-Committee**

## **Members**

The Sub-Committee continued to focus on 'behind the scenes' work during the year to ensure that we support the interests and needs of individual and corporate members. We have been pleased to welcome many returning individual and corporate members.

In particular, the Sub-Committee provided input to the Website and Social Media Sub-Committee to finalise the relaunch of the Association's website, including streamlining the recognition of corporate members on the website and revamping the 'Find A Woman Lawyer' Directory. To complement the relaunch, we have continued to prepare advertising campaigns to raise more awareness about the Directory with the general public and designed new merchandise. We hope that the Directory continues to be an effective mechanism to profile the work of the members listed in it.

The implementation of the 'Charter for the Advancement of Women in the Profession' remains an ongoing focus of the Sub-Committee. We urge more organisations to sign up as signatories to the Charter, and further details can be found on the Association's website.

The Subcommittee also collaborated with the WLASA President and InDaily on an article recognising the achievements of the Association in its 25 years, which included the Directory and the Charter. You can read the article here: <https://www.indaily.com.au/news/sponsored-content/2024/03/13/all-rise-ensuring-equality-for-women-within-the-legal-system>.

We look forward to bringing new initiatives and informal networking opportunities to members in the coming months and, as always, welcome all suggestions that our members may have.

### **Courtney Chow, Chair (Members), Members & Events Sub-Committee**



# POLICY & EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

## Policy

In 2023/24, WLASA and the Policy Sub-Committee has continued working on issues affecting women in the legal profession and law reform in areas that affect women.

### **2024 Review of Harassment in the Legal Profession (SA)**

We made a submission to the 2024 Review of Harassment in the Legal Profession undertaken by the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, Jodeen Carney, and Assistant Commissioner, Colin Marsh. We also encouraged members to complete the survey in relation to the effectiveness or otherwise of the implementation of the 2021 recommendations and to describe any harassment they may have experienced in the last three years. In that context, WLASA representatives have also attended meetings of the Respectful Behaviour working group convened by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of South Australia.

### **Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence**

WLASA is preparing an initial submission to the Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. We have invited our members to provide any feedback or comments in relation to the Issues Paper, including an invitation to share their experience in relation to the issues.

### **Senior counsel appointments**

We collaborated with the Women Lawyers Committee of the Law Society to research and prepare a submission on senior counsel appointments, including considering appointments and decision making in other states. The submission was provided to the Attorney-General to be considered for the silk appointment process in 2024.

A WLASA representative was also consulted regarding senior counsel applications in August 2024.

### **Admission Ceremonies**

We wrote to the South Australian Attorney-General, the Honourable Kyam Maher MLC and the Chief Justice in relation to representation of women Judges sitting on the bench for admission ceremonies.

### **Letter to the Minister for Women**

We wrote to the Minister for Women, the Honourable Katrine Hildyard MP in relation to a report on mother and infant facilities at the Adelaide Women's Prison, the Loss of Foetus Bill, and decriminalisation of sex work.

### **Meeting with the Attorney-General**

Throughout the past year, WLASA representatives have regularly met with the Attorney-General.

In November 2023, we provided feedback with respect to the proposed amendments to the *Judicial Conduct Commissioner Act 2015 (SA)*. In particular, we discussed the competing considerations involved for victims in respect of resignation of an alleged perpetrator prior to the conclusion of an investigation.

### **Criminal Law Consolidation (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2023 – Consultation**

A WLASA representative attended a roundtable consultation with the Minister for Women, the Honourable Katrine Hildyard MP and other stakeholders with respect to the proposed legislation to criminalise coercive control.

## Education

The Education Sub-Committee's focus is delivering CPDs for our members that address issues related to women in the law as well as CPDs that are substantive law topics delivered by brilliant women in our profession.

On 14 May 2024, we held a CPD on disability and discrimination in the Legal Profession, which was presented by Danielle Gilby. The CPD provided valuable insight into the legislative and policy frameworks

around disability and disability discrimination for both practitioners and clients in legal practice and key considerations for practitioners in reducing instances of disability discrimination.

We are in the process of organising a CPD regarding pathways to the law, which will be held on 19 September 2024.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for a CPD in the coming year, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

**Margaret Cusenza, Chair, Policy & Education Sub-committee**



Picture: Disability and Discrimination in the Legal Profession CPD presented by Danielle Gilby of Dentons

## SOCIAL MEDIA & WEBSITE SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

The Social Media & Website Sub-Committee has been working on a new website, which is set to go live in September/October of this year. The revamped platform will enhance our online presence allowing us to deliver an improve experience for our members, capture the breadth of the Association's activities, document our history and continue to evolve to meet our member's needs.

In addition, our social media channels continue to build, with our Facebook following growing to 2,034, LinkedIn to 1,036 , and Instagram to 131.

We appreciate the support from our members and look forward to leveraging these updates to better engage with our community and reach new audiences.

**Jessie Murphy-Allen, Chair, Social Media & Website Sub-Committee**

## ANNUAL NOMINATED CHARITY REPORT

Each financial year, the WLASA nominates a charity for which we raise money. The charities chosen are always charities that work to promote and support women. A list of the charities we have raised money for in the past is available on the WLASA website.

This year, our chosen charity was the Zahra Foundation. Zahra Foundation is a not-for-profit that lights a path forward for women impacted by domestic abuse, providing free programs, services, education and grants promoting economic wellbeing and empowering participants to build a life that is free from poverty and abuse. The Zahra Foundations work is particularly topical at present in light of Australia's domestic violence crisis and the upcoming South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence.

We were honoured to have Arman Abrahamzadeh (Zahra's son) and board member Genevieve Lewis attend the 2023 'Drinks with the Judiciary' as representatives of the Zahra Foundation to share Zahra's personal story and to give us a further insight into the important work of the Foundation. This year our 'Drinks with the Judiciary' event raised \$3,000 for the Zahra Foundation.

If you would like to find out more about the work of the Zahra Foundation, we encourage you to visit their website at: [zahrafoundation@org.au](mailto:zahrafoundation@org.au).



Pictured: Arman Abrahamzadeh speaking on behalf of the Zahra Foundation at our 2023 Christmas Drinks with the Judiciary event



Pictured: WLASA President Marissa Mackie and committee member Shelley O'Connell with the Honourable Katrine Hildyard MP at the Zahra Foundation's Women on the Run 2024 event



## 2023 DR ROBYN LAYTON AO KC AWARD

The WLASA is delighted to be able to acknowledge the outstanding work of women practitioners through the WLASA's Dr Robyn Layton AO KC Award. This is awarded each calendar year to a woman practitioner in South Australia, who, like Dr Layton AO KC has made an outstanding contribution to her field.

The winner of the 2023 Dr Robyn Layton AO KC Award was Zainab Alsweedy.

Zainab is lawyer specialising in immigration and wills and estates, who herself arrived in Australia as a child refugee after a harrowing seven-day voyage along with her parents and two brothers. It was her experiences in a detention centre that inspired her to study law and help others. She works closely with Arab and Iraqi communities, focusing in particular on helping educate women in those communities about Australian laws and rights.

In 2023, Zainab was also the joint winner of the Law Society of South Australia's Young Lawyer of the Year Award.

We congratulate Zainab and thank her for her significant contribution to our profession and empowering vulnerable women in our community.

Zainab was presented with her award by Dr Layton AO KC at the WLASA's 'Drinks with the Judiciary' event in November 2023.



Pictured: Zainab Alsweedy with her 2023 Dr Robyn Layton AO KC Award



## CORPORATE MEMBERS

WLASA sincerely thanks its Corporate Members for their continued support and we look forward to providing further benefits for all members in the year ahead. Corporate Memberships allow the WLASA to continue its work including but not limited to promoting women lawyers through our Find a Woman Lawyer Directory, and by hosting CPD and networking events for women in the profession.

		 ClelandsLawyers
		
		
		
		
		
		

We encourage potential Corporate Members, and previous Corporate Members who would like to renew their membership, to visit our website or enquire with the WLASA committee for more information.

