

Australian Women Lawyers – National Launch

Australian Women Lawyers was launched at the Australian Legal Convention in Melbourne on 19 September 1997 by its Patron, Justice Mary Gaudron of the High Court of Australia.

Many legal and government dignitaries, along with approximately 700 guests, attended the launch to celebrate and recognise women's role in the legal process.

Justice Gaudron, who celebrates 10 years on the High Court Bench, launched Australian Women Lawyers at a lunch at the Grand Hyatt. Following the lunch Mick Dodson, Marie Andrews and Glenda Humes spoke on reconciliation and indigenous women as part of the afternoon program at the convention.

Merran Short, Sally Gearin, Samantha Miles, Law Society President Steve Southwood and CEO Jim Campbell all attended the lunch at the Hyatt and celebrated the occasion with all due enthusiasm.

Australian Women Lawyers (AWL) is a national group of women lawyers which has been formed with the following aims and objectives:

- to achieve justice and equality for all

women

- to further the understanding of and support for the legal rights of women
- to identify, highlight and eradicate discrimination against women in law and the legal system
- to create and enhance women's contribution to practise and develop the practise of the law.

Control of AWL is vested in a Board which consists of one delegate from each state and territory nominated by that state or territory's association.

The Board consists of the following members:

- **Ruth McColl SC** – Vice President (Women Lawyers' Association of New South Wales Inc)
- **Kay Ryan** and **Rhonda Penny** [co-opted] (Women Lawyers' Association of Queensland)
- **Gillian Braddock** and **Clare Thompson** [co-opted] (Women Lawyers of Western Australia)
- **Merran Short** – Treasurer and **Sally Gearin** [co-opted] (Northern Territory Women Lawyers' Association)
- **Alexandra Richards** – President and

Felicity Hampel QC [co-opted] (Victorian Women Barristers' Association

- **Deanne Weir** [co-opted] (Victorian Women Lawyers' Association)
- **Candida D'Arcy** (Women Lawyers' Association of South Australia Inc)
- **Audrey Mills** – Secretary (Women Lawyers' Association of Tasmania Inc)
- **Linda Crebbin** (Women Lawyers' Association of the Australian Capital Territory Inc).

"The Associations first concern is about achieving equality and justice for all women," AWL President Alexandra Richards said.

AWL is concerned about women's rights before the law and has already been part of submissions to the government in relation to the funding of Legal Aid and proposed changes in the Family Law Act allowing publication of identifying information in certain family law cases before the Court. AWL will continue to monitor all government policy which may affect women and will make appropriate submissions where necessary.

- Merran Short, Treasurer, AWL

Alice Springs Women Lawyers Mark the Event



Left to right: Ann-Sophie Deleflie, Kathy Perry, Nan Rogers, Annabelle Cartwright, Fiona Allison, Jodeen Carney, unknown, Nardine Davidson, Julie Franz, Ariel Couchman, Ruth Morely, Tiarni McNamee, Michelle Stevens, Pam ditton, Lorraine Liddle and Felicity Cain. Missing from the photograph are Caroline Scicluna, Katrina Budrikis, Freia Carlton, Mary Ridsdale, Victoria Sheils and Cathy Deland

Alice Springs boast a population of 23 women practitioners who comprise approximately 50% of the legal profession in that town.

Many of these gathered at the Law Courts to mark the launch of Australian Women Lawyers.

The occasion prompted collection of the following statistics from Alice Springs:

Dittons is an all female firm (Pam Ditton is the only female partner in Alice Springs, not including sole practitioners Annabelle Cartwright and Caroline Scicluna); Turner & Deane, McBride & Stirk, DPP, Poveys, NT Legal Aid each have one female lawyer, CAALAS has three; Martin & Partners is the only firm in Alice Springs who do not employ a female lawyer; the only female magistrate in the NT (Cathy Deland, SM) is based in Alice Springs. The oldest female practitioner is Mary Ridsdale who celebrated a half-century in the profession this year.

Balance thanks Nardine Davidson for the photograph and information.