

Women Lawyers Association

Presidents Report

It has been a generally busy year for the Northern Territory Women Lawyers. We have covered topics ranging from judicial appointments to abortion. The committee has worked hard to consolidate NTWL's standing and membership base and this is reflected in the recognition the Association enjoys.

In January I attended the Women's Constitutional Convention (WCC) in Canberra as a board member and delegate of Australia Women Lawyers (AWL) representing NTWL. NTWL sent a letter enclosing the outcomes from the WCC to each of the delegates of the NT Statehood Convention. From that followed an invitation for me to speak at the Territory Women's Conference organised by the YMCA during the NT Statehood Convention, which I accepted and was well received.

A paper on Mandatory Sentencing was written and presented by Jenny Hardy to the AWL Board. AWL in turn issued a national press release, a follow up release remains on the AWL agenda. You will see a summary of that paper with some additional material reproduced in THEMIS the first AWL publication.

We moved to a very busy time in May when the association scripted and presented "Trials Through Time" as part of Law Week. We received several letters of congratulations on the production and NTWL can be proud of this event. A special thank you to all those members and friends who put so much time and effort into the script and production. In particular Barbara Tiffin, Tracey Reeves, Melanie Little and those who performed on the night.

We had our first meeting on abortion to which all members were invited. The issue arose as a result of the changes in Western Australia. It was resolved that NTWL would press for abortion to be treated as a health issue rather than a criminal issue. This will be an ongoing issue and anybody interested in becoming involved should let the new committee know.

Throughout the year NTWL in association with NT Young Lawyers have been working towards the launching of a Mentoring scheme. The launch will be Friday 2nd October 1998 with a dinner at the Rock Climbing Centre. Special thanks and recog-

nition must go to Samantha Miles who has worked tirelessly to make the scheme a reality. Along with the scheme we also hosted a very successful evening on mentoring with Di Feldman as our guest speaker. Thanks to Melanie Little for arranging that event and assisting Samantha to organise the launch of the Mentoring scheme.

AWL has taken on the task of encouraging more women to be appointed to judicial positions. In line with this NTWL has corresponded with the NT Government to enquire as to their criteria in nominating judicial appointments. It should be an ongoing project to urge the NT Government to consider appointing qualified women to judicial positions in the NT.

During the year the current committee had a strategic planning session to look at the strengths and weaknesses of NTWL in the hope of ensuring NTWL's continued growth into the year 2000 and beyond. Networking and communications with members was identified among other things as being essential. One of the initiatives to encourage this was to introduce social drinks which are held on the third Thursday at Kitty O'Sheas. All members and friends are welcome. This is a great way to network and meet new members and we encourage everybody to attend.

A lunch was organised to commemorate the "Freedom of Information Act" which was held at Raymonds Restaurant with Ombudsman, Mr Peter Boyce as our guest speaker. This was very informative and enjoyable lunch, thank you to Robin Dyll who organised this function.

NTWL endorsed the National Women's Justice Coalition (NWJC) submission to Federal Government on the Child Support Legislation Amendment Bill effectively requesting that the Government postpone the Bill to allow modelling to be undertaken, published and debated due to the numerous unsatisfactory elements within the Bill. The NWJC submitted that the Bill would disadvantage women and children by reducing child support paid by a non residential parent and make it harder for the career parent to collect child support.

NTWL also endorsed the NWJC's submission which called for the Federal Government to adopt the optional protocol CEDAW

(Convention of the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women).

NTWL made submissions in our own right to the NT Government on the proposed amendments to the Crimes (Victims Assistance) Act 1992. Thank you to Tracey Reeves and Kate Halliday for those comprehensive submissions.

We were greatly saddened by the death of Jane Mahoney, she was a friend and colleague. Jane generated happiness and was always willing to assist others, she was a credit to the profession and her family.

On 19 September 1998 I attended the AWL AGM in Melbourne. I was re-elected Treasurer of AWL.

A new NTWL committee has been elected, the new members are:

President

Melanie Little

Vice President

Janelle Martin

Secretary

Britt Lardelli

Treasurer & Public Officer

Margaret Orwin

Committee Members

Therese Austin, Kate Halliday,
Cassandra Goldie and Barbara Tiffin

Finally I would like to thank the outgoing committee Tracey Reeves, Barbara Tiffin, Sally Gearin, Kate Halliday, Melanie Little, Samantha Miles and Robin Dyll for their support and enthusiasm and willingness to work hard this year to consolidate NTWL's position. I urge members to continue to support NTWL through your ongoing membership and attendances at functions.

I have been associated with NTWL for some four years now and have found it a very rewarding experience. As I did not stand again, I take this opportunity of personally thanking all members and committee both past and present for their support over the last four years.

Merran Short
President