

Dame Roma: a beacon in the darkness



Obituary - Dame Roma Mitchell 1913 - 2000

Australia has lost a great person. Dame Roma Mitchell (known simply as Dame Roma to most South Australians) died on 5 March 2000 at 86 years of age.

Dame Roma was a champion of the potential of the law to promote human rights. This will be her lasting legacy.

I had the privilege of working closely with Dame Roma in 1988, while reviewing the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement in South Australia. The review committee travelled widely and met with many Aboriginal communities.

Dame Roma was recognised wherever we went. But it was the quality of the recognition which remains impressed in my memory. She was always met warmly. She left people with the firm belief that she would advance their concerns fairly and with vigour. People had enormous faith in her ability to deliver justice.

Since her death I have spoken with many people who have acknowledged the part that Dame Roma played in their lives. So, not only did she have a huge impact

on the public life of Australia, she also influenced and encouraged many individuals.

Dame Roma was a champion of the under privileged, a true reformer and a powerful advocate. Her preparedness to speak up for the disadvantaged in society made her a beacon in a sea of darkness. Her death saddens us but her life serves to remind us of what can be achieved in one lifetime. Viva Dame Roma.

East Timor

We have approached some non-government agencies in East Timor to find a project to support. We will keep members informed about this. If any members are interested in undertaking training please let myself or Britt Lardelli know and we will be in touch with our contact in East Timor.

Patrons reception

Our Patron Judge Thomas has kindly agreed to host another reception at the Supreme Court. The reception will be on 14 April 2000 at 5pm, on the Judges balcony. Keep an eye out for invitations.

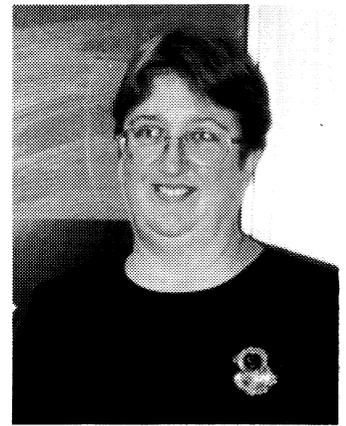
Lunchtime speaker

On 10 March 2000 Gail Humble of Cridlands spoke to WLA members about marketing in the legal profession. The event was well attended and provided us with some food for thought. There seems to be some interest in following up the issue with a seminar — let us know if you would be interested in attending.

Thanks to Gail Humble for speaking.

Australian Women Lawyers representative

Merran Short has indicated that she is to resign as the NT Representative on the AWL Board. We take this opportunity to thank Merran for her contribution to AWL and for her representation of NT women and issues for the past years. The new



Melanie Little, President of the NT Women Lawyers Association.

representative will be appointed by the committee in the near future.

Mandatory sentencing

The issue of mandatory sentencing has been in the national spotlight for some time now. The recent case in Alice Springs highlights a range of problems with mandatory sentencing including the opportunity for criminal charges, carrying the threat of imprisonment, to be used to escalate civil and family disputes. This is one of the offensive aspects of mandatory sentencing. If the legislation is not repealed soon, the criminal law will increasingly become used in this manner.

NTWLA logo

NTWLA will be holding a competition for a logo (with the winner to be announced for Law Week). While everyone is welcome to enter, we are targeting the design, graphic and art students from the NTU. If you would like to enter, let me know and I will forward you the details.

The Committee for 1999/2000 is :

Melanie Little - President
Janelle Martin - Vice President
Britt Lardelli - Secretary
Sharon Burnett - Treasurer
Cassandra Goldie
Jacqueline Presbury
Therese Austin
Kate Halliday

Melanie Little is President of the NT Women Lawyers Association and has her own practice, St Hilary Chambers.