



2024

WLAQ | WOMEN LAWYERS
ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC

Annual Report

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www.wlaq.com.au

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WLAQ Committee

FY2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT | Jessica McClymont KC, Inns of Court

VICE-PRESIDENT | Leanne McDonald, Special Counsel, Kennedy Spanner Lawyers

VICE-PRESIDENT | Sarah Ford, Senior Counsel Assisting, Coroners Court of Queensland

SECRETARY | Daiana Yoon, Lawyer, Clayton Utz

TREASURER | Amie Mish-Wills, Assistant Director – Legal and Specialist Advice - the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT | Catherine Cheek, Special Counsel, Kennedy Spanner Lawyers

FY2024 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Jillian Barrett, Principal Lawyer, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

Rachel Black, Assistant Public Defender, Legal Aid Queensland

Emma Davidson, Special Counsel - Richardson & Lyons

Kerala Drew, Barrister, Holmes Chambers

Rachel Varshney, Barrister, Level 16 - Inns of Court

Peta Willoughby, Barrister, Level 16 - Inns of Court

Hannah Wordsworth, Associate Solicitor, Transitional Legal

Shelley Williams, Partner, Kingston Reid

Katia Ricco, QUT Student (Student Member Representative)



WLAQ Committee

FY2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT | Sarah Ford, Senior Counsel Assisting, Coroners Court of Queensland

VICE-PRESIDENT | Kerala Drew, Barrister, Holmes Chambers

VICE-PRESIDENT | Rachel Varshney, Barrister, Level 16 - Inns of Court

SECRETARY | Daiana Yoon, Lawyer, Clayton Utz

TREASURER | Amie Mish-Wills, Assistant Director – Legal and Specialist Advice - the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT | Jessica McClymont KC, Inns of Court

FY2025 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Jillian Barrett, Principal Lawyer, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

Rachel Black, Assistant Public Defender, Legal Aid Queensland

Emma Davis, Clerk to Senior Member of the Bar, Inns of Court

Sarah Lane, Barrister, 35 West Chambers

Valeria Leo, Lawyer, Cranston McEachern Lawyers

Georgina Morgan, Barrister, Holmes Chambers

Kimia Zarei, Associate, Barry Nilsson Lawyers

Catherine Cheek, Special Counsel, Kennedy Spanner Lawyers

Priya Virdee-Hero (Student Member Representative)

The committee also wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Shelley Williams, Partner, Kingston Reid and Emma Davidson, Special Counsel - Richardson & Lyons who were committee members for a portion of the FY2025 year.



President's Report

SARAH FORD

WLAQ President

Senior Counsel Assisting, Coroners Court of Queensland

At the outset, I take this opportunity to thank the 2023 - 2024 and 2024 - 2025 WLAQ management committees for their enthusiasm, dedication, and time invested in our Association. The committee is the backbone of the Association and without those volunteers, the WLAQ would not exist.

I also, on behalf of WLAQ, extend our sincere gratitude to the Association's members, advisors, ambassadors and supporters. Your engagement and support have allowed the Association to thrive.

2024 had a strong start to the year with the management committee's Annual Planning Day. Each committee member shared their vision and goals for the year, as well as their reflections on the previous year. Two key objectives for 2024 were proposed: (1) To be the catalyst for change for improvements in initiatives and deliverables for female lawyers in Queensland and (2) To be a leading resource for Queensland lawyers for all stages of their career. Reflecting on the year that's passed, both committees should be immensely proud of the work they've done to solidify and implement these objectives. A mere snapshot of that work is below.

In early 2024, WLAQ collaborated with Holding Redlich to present a 'Women in Law' panel event with the aim of empowering women. The panellists, all of whom had unique backgrounds, shared their experiences, insights and advice about building confidence and resilience, finding mentors, addressing gender pay gap issues and improving female representation in leadership roles.

Shortly thereafter, and with the assistance of Kingston Reid, WLAQ launched its parental leave template policy and factsheet. These resources, which feature on our website, provide WLAQ members with guidance in relation to parental leave entitlements and other benefits. It is hoped that these resources will not only assist members in navigating discussions about their entitlements and benefits but also provide law firms with the tools needed to develop internal parental leave policies.

The launch of these resources was announced in May at an event titled 'Navigating Parenthood in the Legal Profession' - at which, a panel of employment experts discussed the impact of legislative changes on parental leave entitlements, recent industry trends and case studies, and practical guidance for lawyers with parental responsibilities.

Thanks to Jessica McClymont KC (who was President at the time), 2024 also saw WLAQ's Breakfast Club adopt a monthly theme or special guest - sparking a new tradition and a substantial increase in engagement and attendance. Themes and guests in 2024 included female silks, Magistrates (which has now become an annual breakfast), LawSuits, Judges' Associates, and law graduates.

Of course, WLAQ's annual programs and events such as the Awards Dinner, Ladder Mentoring Program, Una Prentice Awards, and Beryl Donkin Scholarship also featured in 2024. Due to the ongoing efforts of management committees and an increase in the profession's support of WLAQ, these initiatives continue to flourish.

As for the first half of 2025, the management committee undertook the considerable exercise of revising WLAQ's constitution for the first time in 10 years. The proposed amendments, which were passed at a general meeting, were made to reflect the significant and positive shifts in community attitudes, standards, and expectations over recent years - particularly in relation to diversity, equality, and inclusion.

Another memorable part of the last few months is the relationship the WLAQ has forged with the newly established Solomon Islands Women Lawyers Association (SIWLA). To this end, in May 2025, Vice President Kerala Drew and I met with representatives from the Solomon Islands Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs and SIWLA to provide guidance on and support for their wonderful (and first of its kind) initiative. The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs has since requested a formal working partnership between our two associations. This demonstrates how far-reaching and globally relevant the WLAQ and its initiatives can be.

As mentioned earlier in this report, this is but a mere snapshot of the WLAQ's activities since the start of 2024, and we look forward to another energetic and prosperous year.

Secretary's Report

DAIANA YOON

WLAQ Secretary

Clayton Utz

Under the terms of the WLAQ Constitution (Version 1), the financial year of the Association concluded on the last day of December in each year.

However, by way of a special resolution passed at a General Meeting on 6 May 2025, the Association revised and amended its Constitution to align the financial year with the last day of June each year. This amendment is reflected in clause 48 of the Constitution (Version 2), which became effective on 30 May 2025.

In accordance with the new Constitution, the date of the 2025 AGM (10 July 2025) was scheduled to take place within six months after the conclusion of the Association's reportable financial year (i.e., 30 June).

In line with the regulatory requirements under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981, I confirm that the Association will fulfill its obligations to lodge annual returns with the Office of Fair Trading and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. This will include returns for the financial year ending 31 December 2024, as well as for the transitional six-month period from 1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025. These lodgements will occur immediately following the adoption of the financial records at the 2025 AGM.

Throughout 2024, the Association held twelve committee meetings, including our Annual Planning Day, at each of which we had enough committee members attend to reach quorum. An agenda was compiled through contributions from committee members each month and circulated prior to each meeting. Minutes of those meetings were recorded and circulated at the following committee meeting for approval.

Acknowledgements

We remain deeply grateful for the ongoing support of our Corporate Members. In 2024, our Corporate Members were:

- Maurice Blackburn Lawyers
- Legal Aid Queensland
- Clayton Utz

- McInnes Wilson
- Hemmant's List
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
- Office of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor
- Shine Lawyers
- King & Wood Mallesons
- Gilshenan & Luton Legal Practice
- Travis Schultz & Partners

We also extend our sincere thanks to the Queensland Law Society, The University of Queensland TC Beirne School of Law, Hall & Wilcox, Aspect Chambers, Griffith Law School (Griffith University), Holmes Chambers, Year 101: Women in Law, Women's Legal Service QLD, Shadforth, 31 Sturt Chambers, Kingston Reid, and McCullough Robertson. Their continued support and contributions were instrumental to the success of our flagship events throughout the year.

Constitution (version 2)

As highlighted in the President's report, the Association revised and amended its Constitution for the first time in ten years. This marks a significant milestone and represents a meaningful step forward in advancing our purpose as an association.

A copy of the new Constitution can be found [here](#) and it is also available on the Governance page of the WLAQ's website at www.wlaq.com.au/governance.

Treasurer's Report

AMIE MISH-WILLS

WLAQ Treasurer

**Assistant Director, Legal and Specialist Advice at the
Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman**

WLAQ Financial Reports

In addition to the WLAQ General Account, WLAQ is trustee of the Una Prentice Memorial Trust Award, and operates the Beryl Donkin Memorial Award Trust.

Summaries of the WLAQ's financial position for 2024 and the first half of 2025 are below and we confirm that WLAQ has complied with all legislative and accounting reporting requirements. As the WLAQ is a small association for the purposes of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Qld), it is not required to appoint a certified accountant or registered auditor to audit its financial statements. In accordance with its obligations as a small association, the President and Treasurer have undertaken an extensive review and verification of the accounts controlled by the WLAQ and have provided a signed written statement below. Monthly account reports are also reviewed and ratified by the Management Committee at each monthly committee meeting.

WLAQ Financial Commentary

The WLAQ has continued to maintain a strong financial position in 2024, and this has enabled the WLAQ to continue to support women in law directly and indirectly by:

- investing in events all across the state of Queensland as highlighted in this annual report;
- generously donating \$2,500 to the Women's Legal Service Queensland;
- celebrating the achievements of women in law through the gifting of the WLAQ orchid in celebration and recognition of all female judicial appointments and elevations to silk in Queensland;
- investing in much needed advancements to the WLAQ's website to better support the WLAQ's members, events and initiatives;
- supporting other organisations through financial membership with the Australian Women Lawyers Association and the National Council of Women of Queensland;
- raising and donating \$1,635 to the Una Prentice Awards fund and \$10,000 to the Beryl Donkin Memorial Scholarship fund.

The Management Committee have also resolved to vary the WLAQ's membership categories and membership prices from 1 July 2025 as outlined in this report. WLAQ membership prices have not changed for a significant number of years and the modest increase in prices will assist the WLAQ with meeting its objectives into the future.

Financial statements

The association's financial records show the association keeps adequate financial records that correctly record and explain transactions and enable a true and fair financial statement to be prepared.



Amie Mish-Wills - Treasurer



Sarah Ford - President

Beryl Donkin Financial Statement as at 30 June 2025			
	1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025	1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024	1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023
Current Assets			
Beryl Donkin – Bank Australia	31,794	31,599	21,260
Total current assets	31,794	31,599	21,260
Total assets	31,794	31,599	21,260
Total liabilities	-	-	-
Net assets	31,794	31,599	21,260
Equity			
Retained earnings	31,794	31,599	21,260
Total equity	31,794	31,599	21,260

Beryl Donkin Profit and Loss Statement as at 30 June 2025			
	1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025	1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024	1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023
INCOME			
Interest Income	195	389	282
Contributions from WLAQ	0	16,000	13,050
Total Income	195	16,389	13,332
EXPENSES			
Scholarships paid	0	6,050	12,225
Total Expenses	0	6,050	12,225
Profit (loss) for period	195	10,339	1,107
Closing Balance	31,794	31,599	21,260

Una Prentice Financial Statement as at 30 June 2025			
	1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025	1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024	1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023
Current Assets			
Una Prentice – Bank Australia	5,156	6,139	5,350
Total current assets	5,156	6,139	5,350
Total assets	5,156	6,139	5,350
Total liabilities	-	-	-
Net assets	5,156	6,139	5,350
Equity			
Retained earnings	5,156	6,139	5,350
Total equity	5,156	6,139	5,350

Una Prentice Profit and Loss Statement as at 30 June 2025			
	1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025	1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024	1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023
INCOME			
Contributions from WLAQ	0	1,635	0
Total Income	0	1,635	0
EXPENSES			
Awards expenses	982	846	767
Total Expenses	982	846	767
Profit (loss) for period	(982)	789	(767)
Closing Balance	5,156	6,139	5,350

Other WLAQ Accounts as at 30 June 2025			
	1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025	1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024	1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023
Current Assets			
General – Bank Australia	45,932	38,662	36,339
PayPal	2,156	3,080	70
Petty Cash Account – Bank Australia	4,093	5,988	1,268
Expenses to be reimbursed	-	-	-
Total current assets	52,181	47,730	37,677
Total assets	52,181	47,730	37,677
Total liabilities	-	-	-
Net assets	52,181	47,730	37,677
Equity			
Retained earnings	52,181	47,730	37,677
Total equity	52,181	47,730	37,677

WLAQ Full Profit and loss statement

Account	1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025	1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024	1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023
Trading Income			
Memberships (replacing New/Renewing accounting codes)	4,697.88	0.00	0.00
Miscellaneous Income	0.00	457.88	2.17
Social Function Registrations	5,352.65	36,539.43	42,136.00
Sponsorship Income	0.00	47,588.30	35,222.13
Subscriptions -New	4,090.00	7,335.00	9,727.53
Subscriptions -Renewing	4,215.00	17,263.40	11,217.60
Total Trading Income	21,913.73	109,184.01	98,305.43
Gross Profit			
	21,913.73	109,184.01	98,305.43
Other Income			
Beryl Donkin Scholarship			
Donation from WLAQ	0.00	16,000.00	13,049.47
Donation to Beryl Donkin Memorial Fund	0.00	(16,000.00)	(13,049.47)
Total Beryl Donkin Scholarship	0.00	0.00	0.00
Donations	0.00	2.00	0.00
Interest Income	357.39	770.49	426.37
Overpayments returned to WLAQ	0.00	500.00	0.00
Raffle Proceeds	613.18	10,814.63	13,049.47
Total Other Income	970.57	12,087.12	13,475.84
Operating Expenses			
Accounting expenses	540.00	1,045.92	939.15
Bank fees	11.52	0.00	0.00
Capitation fees	0.00	2,000.63	1,228.51
CPD Event Expenses	2,200.00	0.00	0.00
Donation	0.00	2,500.00	6,163.55
Dues & Subscriptions	1,544.60	2,837.87	2,616.65
Gifts	643.95	1,306.40	1,239.49
Insurance	1,608.16	1,593.55	1,388.29
PayPal transaction fee on deposits	184.88	784.32	916.24
Photocopying/Printing (pull up banners)	1,085.67	0.00	0.00
Post Office Box	424.00	408.00	358.00
Postage	0.00	65.79	33.40
Refunds	75.00	1,533.50	2.00
Registration Fees for OFT	23.45	0.00	0.00
Registration Fees for Ext Even	0.00	0.00	640.00
Scholarship Disbursement	0.00	6,050.00	12,225.00
Social Function Costs	3,911.45	59,481.79	64,554.80
Sponsorship	500.00	850.00	800.00
Stripe Fees	67.26	165.81	0.00
Travel Expenses	40.00	991.71	994.53
Web Site Costs	1,708.06	7,355.03	4,166.04
WooCommerce Fees	0.00	0.00	17.08
Total Operating Expenses	16,533.80	88,970.32	98,282.73
Net Profit			
	6,350.50	32,300.81	13,498.54

From 1 July 2025, the WLAQ's membership categories and prices were varied as follows:

Membership Category	Price pre-1 July 2025	Price post 1 July 2025
Corporate (more than 15 FTE)	\$1000	\$1500
Corporate (less than 15 FTE)	\$850	\$900
General (more than 15 FTE)	\$75	\$80 -- remove reference to "more than 15 FTE"
General (less than 15 FTE)	\$55	N/A - category removed
Judicial	\$55	\$80
Barristers	\$75	\$80
Regional	\$55	\$60
CLC & NFP	\$55	\$60
Government (more than 15 FTE)	\$75	\$80 - remove reference to "more than 15 FTE"
Government (less than 15 FTE)	\$55	N/A - category removed
Junior (under 3 PAE)	\$55	\$60
Retired	\$35	\$40
Students	\$35	\$40
Allies [NEW] ** for those who do not identify as female, qualified for admission/will qualify for admission. Required to pay irrespective of whether their employer is corporate member	n/a	\$80 - new category

AWL Report

JESSICA MCCLYMONT KC

Immediate Past President & AWL representative King's Counsel, Inns of Court

AWL is the peak representative body for women lawyers, constituted by each of the State women lawyers associations, with its stated goal to be “a justice and equity champion, advancing women within the legal progression and beyond”. The association provides submissions to federal government on gender equity matters and commentary to media on matters affecting women. Members of WLAQ are automatically members of AWL.

During 2024, the focus of AWL was its biennial national conference, held this year in Canberra from 18 to 19 October. The conference theme was “Leading the Way”.

The AWL National Conference is the premier conference for women lawyers, thought leaders, change champions, students, and professionals in the Australian legal profession. In 2024, the Keynote Speaker was **Jennifer Robinson**, Australian human rights lawyer and barrister. AWL was also joined by its Patron the **Hon Justice Jacqueline Gleeson** of the High Court of Australia, Sex Discrimination Commissioner **Anna Cody**, Privacy Commissioner **Carly Kind**, Deputy Chair of ASIC **Sarah Court**, Barrister and immediate past winner of the AWL Award **Kate Eastman AM SC**, Chair of NATSILS **Karly Warner**, and many more eminent speakers from the legal sector.

The AWL National Conference is also notable for conferral of the Australian Women Lawyers Award, recognising women who have provided long term leadership and commitment in the support and advancement of women in the legal profession and recognises women that have made an outstanding contribution to the legal profession in Australia. In 2024, at the National Conference Gala Dinner, WLAQ’s nominee for the AWL Award, the Honourable Fleur Kingham, was the recipient of this prestigious Award.

Ms Kingham has been involved in countless initiatives to support women such as co-founding the Queensland Women’s Legal Service, mentoring women lawyers at all stages, supporting women judges in Australia and internationally through leadership of the Australian Association of Women Judges and undertaking countless hours of pro bono services, and committee and advocacy work on state and national gender equality initiatives. Currently, Ms Kingham continues her work in justice and law reform for all, in her role as Chair of the [Queensland Law Reform Commission](#).

WLAQ's former President and current committee member, Catherine Cheek, served as AWL Representative and Treasurer until our current Immediate Past President, Jessica McClymont, was appointed as a Committee member at the AWL AGM on 29 November 2024. WLAQ acknowledges Ms Cheek's significant service in this demanding role, and in particular, her tireless efforts in making the AWL National Conference a resounding success.

The **current AWL Board** comprises the following:

- Renee Bianchi (President) (NSW)
- Emma Luck (Vice-President) (WA)
- Alinta Robinson-Herbert (Secretary) (Tas)
- Shelley O'Connell (Treasurer) (SA)
- Josie Short (NT)
- Kylie Weston-Scheuber (Vic Bar)
- Sophie Lefebvre (Vic)
- Danielle Mildren (ACT)
- Jessica McClymont KC (Qld)
- Astrid Haban-Ber (Immediate Past President) (Vic)

Special Projects

JILLIAN BARRETT

Special Projects Chair

Principal lawyer, Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

SARAH LANE

Special Projects Chair

Barrister, Holmes Chambers

Una Prentice Awards

The Una Prentice Awards celebrate the remarkable achievements of female law graduates from each law school in Queensland. These awards are named in honour of Una Prentice. Mrs Prentice was the first person to graduate from the Faculty of Law at the University of Queensland (UQ) in 1938, the first female barrister admitted in Queensland, and the first female prosecutor for the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor.

The Una Prentice Awards are possible thanks to the generous bequest of Mrs Prentice, and each year, WLAQ honours and celebrates her memory by recognising the achievements of the highest graduating female law student at each of the law schools across Queensland.

The Honourable Justice Mullins AO is the Patron of the Una Prentice Trust Fund, and Her Honour attended the awards evening and presented the awards. Justice Mullins was a past recipient of the award.

The recipients of the Una Prentice awards for the 2023 Graduating Class (presented in 2024) were:

- **University of Queensland** | Matisse Reed
- **Queensland University of Technology** | Julie Dalling
- **Bond University** | Jessica Wood
- **James Cook University** | Michelé Du Buisson
- **Griffith University** | Anna Stirling
- **University of Southern Queensland** | Jessica McGregor
- **Central Queensland University** | Izzie Forsyth
- **University of the Sunshine Coast** | Aesha Ziad
- **Southern Cross University** | Sara Aramini

Congratulations to all of the award recipients and we thank College of Law for their continued support in hosting the event.

Beryl Donkin Memorial Scholarship

The Beryl Donkin Memorial Scholarship continues to honour the legacy of one Queensland's pioneering women in law by supporting the professional development of WLAQ members. The scholarship reflects WLAQ's commitment to fostering excellence and accessibility in the legal profession. It provides an avenue for women lawyers to access opportunities that enhance their careers and enables them to contribute meaningfully to the legal community.

In 2024, the scholarship provided targeted financial assistance to three recipients pursuing diverse legal pathways - from international arbitration and pro bono externships to the bar practice course. The successful applicants in 2024 were:

- Isabelle Murray in the amount of \$1,550 to complete the Introduction to International Arbitration course by the Chartered Institute of Arbitration, including miscellaneous travel costs;
- Ciara Furlong, in the amount of \$3,000 to complete the Bar Practice Course (partial support); and
- Tilie Alleluia, in the amount of \$1,500 for flights and costs for externship in Thailand to participate in volunteer pro-bono work for local communities (Transnational Perspectives in Law subject).

Ladder Mentoring Program

The WLAQ Ladder Mentoring Program is an initiative designed to support and nurture women in the early stages of their legal careers. The program pairs law students and lawyers with less than five years post-admission experience with experienced women in the profession who provide guidance, encouragement and career insight. The program continues to foster meaningful professional relationships across Queensland with a strong focus on regional matching and shared areas of interest.

This year a significant number of women applied to be a mentee in WLAQ's ladder mentoring program. We are continuing to see a year-on-year increase.

Advocacy Report

RACHEL VARSHNEY

Advocacy Chair

Barrister, Level 16 - Inns of Court

2024 was another successful year in which the WLAQ supported and advocated for its members, and the important role women lawyers play in the profession.

Our advocacy efforts continue to be shaped by the needs of our members. Over the 2023/2024 year, the WLAQ received over 15 calls for submissions in respect of matters of importance for the legal community and the community at large. While the WLAQ made the decision not to provide submissions in relation to those calls, each submission call was presented to the committee and considered in line with our guiding principles. The WLAQ is proud that it is regularly consulted and is considered an important stakeholder from whom input is sought on a variety of issues that affect the profession.

In November 2024 WLAQ hosted its annual women at the bar event, sponsored by Hemmant's List and held at its mediation centre. The evening attracted approximately 30 attendees from across the profession, including barristers, solicitors, in house counsel and law students. Our keynote speaker was Jessica McClymont KC (appointed silk in November 2023), Immediate Past President of the WLAQ. She spoke eloquently about her career and her hopes for more women to be appointed to senior positions at the bar. The event was both warm and collegiate and allowed our members who were present to reconnect and share conversations over refreshments. We express our sincere thanks to Jessica McClymont for her generous time and thoughtful insights, and we thank the attendees who contributed to the success of the evening.

Last year we announced that the number of practising women barristers had risen to 30% of the Queensland Bar. We are excited to see that with the most recent bar practice course, that percentage has risen to 38%.

Diversity Report

KERALA DREW

Diversity Chair

Barrister, Holmes Chambers

2024 saw us expanding our reach to junior lawyers by providing them with an opportunity to practice their advocacy in a safe space. A fantastic evening session was held with advocacy wizard Jane Fitzgerald, during which, advocates were taught invaluable skills and tips to develop and hone their advocacy skills and abilities. The session received brilliant feedback, including the following:

"It was just so nice to be in a room full of female advocates and listening to their shared experiences (even before the actual workshop). It was awesome to meet Jane as well. The hour was long enough to gain some great tips but also not too long that everyone was exhausted from a big week/zoning out."

Continuing with our focus on young professionals, we also hosted a very popular "Meet the Associates" Breakfast in November. This involved 13 current District and Supreme Court judges associates attending our popular Breakfast Club to meet with students or graduates at the start of their legal careers, and to provide them with insight and advice on the application process.

WLAQ also contributed to the University of Queensland Law Society Diversity Newsletter - a newsletter distributed across the legal profession (firms, barristers, organisations, academics and students). Here is just a snippet of our submission, written by Priya Verde-Hero, our Student Ambassador.

Marian Wright Edelman said that "You can't be what you can't see" and while that is only a step in the direction of diversity inclusion, it is an excellent start. One way to affect this change is to focus on leadership and influence in the sector.

Events and Socials Report

EMMA DAVIS

Events and Socials Chair

Clerk to senior member of the Bar, Inns of Court

VALERIA LEO

Events and Socials Chair

Lawyer, Cranston McEachern Lawyers

[Social media Report](#)

WLAQ continued to maintain a relationship with QLS Proctor, who published various newsarticles in relation to WLAQ-related events. WLAQ would like to particularly thank QLS Proctor for publishing articles in respect of the Una Prentice Awards, as well as the announcement highlighting the commencement of our largest annual project, the Ladder Mentoring Program. The ongoing relationship between WLAQ and QLS is highly valued, and we look forward to continuing that relationship in the future.

As for social media accounts, WLAQ has continued to engage with our members on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. As of June 2025, WLAQ has about 7.16K followers on LinkedIn, 4.6K followers on Facebook, and 240 followers on Instagram. If you are not currently following our social media accounts, we encourage you do so:



Women Lawyers Association of Queensland (WLAQ)



Women Lawyers Association of Queensland Inc.



@wlaq.inc

WLAQ utilises social media to engage with members in respect of upcoming events, as well as sharing important information from various organisations that directly impact our members.

Our committee members continue to engage with WLAQ predominantly through LinkedIn, but the Facebook and Instagram pages are becoming more popular with time. Over the past 12 months, WLAQ has gained an additional 550 followers, with engagement peaking in February and April 2025, which is perhaps indicative of the excitement of the launch of our Ladder Mentoring Program.

It is clear that our social media accounts are reaching all members throughout Queensland, however, a significant portion of our members are located in Brisbane. For example, 52.1% of followers on LinkedIn are based in Brisbane, with 7.3% on the Gold Coast, 2.8% on the Sunshine Coast, 1.7% in Cairns, 1.5% in Townsville, 1.4% in Toowoomba, and less than 1%, in Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Darwin, Hervey Bay and Dalby. The remainder of WLAQ's followers are interstate and overseas. WLAQ will continue to use this data to attempt to increase engagement with our members in the regional areas of Queensland.

The WLAQ Facebook and Instagram pages also continue to grow, with the 'views', 'reach' and 'content interactions' increasing exponentially each year. WLAQ has continued to utilise our social media accounts to promote events, and we thank all members who have provided us with photographs to share.

Events

WLAQ has continued to offer a variety of networking and special projects events throughout the 2024 calendar year.

Of particular importance, WLAQ is pleased to report that in October 2024, the 46th Annual Awards Night was a grand success. For the first time, the event was held at Cloudland in Brisbane which was well-received by attendees. WLAQ would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors again for their generosity:

- Diamond Sponsors: Hall & Wilcox, Aspect Chambers, Legal Aid Queensland, Clayton Utz, Travis Schultz and Partners, Kingston Reid, and Holmes Chambers
- Gold Sponsors: McCullough Robertson Lawyers, Queensland Law Society, and Shadforth
- Award Sponsors: UQ TC Beirne School of Law, 31 Sturt Chambers, Griffith University, and Year 101: Women in Law

WLAQ has continued to offer a monthly Breakfast Club in Brisbane to provide members with an opportunity to network in a less formal environment. The monthly breakfasts generally occurred on the last Thursday of each month and were very well attended. At the invitation of WLAQ, a special guest or guests would attend with a view to inspiring our members in various practice areas. For example, we had the privilege of welcoming several female Magistrates, the Crown Solicitor, several judges' associates, recent law graduates, and many more. WLAQ thanks each of our special guests for generously sharing their time with our members.

The events extended beyond Brisbane and reached regional areas such as Cairns, Sunshine Coast, and Toowoomba. We are particularly proud to have co-hosted an International Women's Day Breakfast with Far North Queensland Law Association (FNQLA), for the second year in a row. WLAQ's continued engagement in the regional areas is reflective in the increased following on social media.

Due to the encouragement from our members, WLAQ has hosted multiple events with a focus on advocacy. In particular, WLAQ hosted an advocacy workshop led by Jane Fitzgerald, renowned advocacy coach. The feedback from our members was overwhelmingly positive. Apart from that, our annual Women at the Bar event for barristers and aspiring barristers was particularly well-attended in 2024. Our very own Jessica McClymont KC was the guest of honour, having been elevated to King's Counsel in 2023.

In light of the success arising from WLAQ's screening of the Barbie movie, WLAQ held another fundraising 'night at the cinema' for a screening of Wicked (Part 1). The event was well attended, with excellent feedback from our members as to the venue. WLAQ was able to raise \$3,319.68 which would not have been possible without our generous sponsors, including Clayton Utz, Maurice Blackburn, Level 18 Inns of Court, and Dr Kelly McClymont. We also extend our thanks to Libertine Parfumerie, Vanilla Pod, Avid Reader and Samantha Ogilvie for their generous donations which helped raise money through raffle tickets.

As reported by the Special Projects Team, events of particular importance included the Una Prentice Awards and the Ladder Mentoring Program. WLAQ is pleased to report that the Ladder Mentoring program continues to be well-received by our members, with yet another increase in the number of participants. This program provides our members with an opportunity to engage with one-another through a self-managed mentoring relationship.

On behalf of the WLAQ Committee, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our members, colleagues, and the profession for their ongoing support throughout 2024. The event calendar would not have been possible without the contributions of those who volunteered their time, donated their money, and dedicated their resources. The overwhelming support continues to ensure WLAQ can provide engaging events, content and benefits for our members.

Regional Report

RACHEL BLACK

Northern Regional Chair

ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER, LEGAL AID QLD

Northern Region

WLAQ continues to have a strong presence in the north, with members enjoying a number of events sponsored by the association, and supporting key initiatives, including the ladder mentoring program.

In Cairns, WLAQ and FNQLA co-hosted a sold-out breakfast event on Imposter Syndrome. Attendees at the breakfast enjoyed a Q&A discussion between Beth Rolton of Travis Schultz and Partners, and WLAQ Northern Chair, Rachel Black, on Beth's journey from being a single mother and art teacher, to Partner at one of Queensland's leading and fastest-growing personal injury firms.

WLAQ sponsored the 2025 International Women's Day breakfast, hosted by the FNQLA. This event continues to be a highlight on the profession's annual social calendar, attracting over 80 attendees, including judicial officers from the Supreme, District and Magistrates Courts. Rachel Black spoke about the many achievements of female practitioners over the year, and chaired an insightful and entertaining panel consisting of Magistrate Kellie Walker, 2023 WLAQ Regional Woman Lawyer of the Year Jerry Tucker, and Rhiannon Saunders, the first female Managing Partner of WGC Lawyers.

In Townsville, WLAQ ambassadors Merissa Martinez and Jessica Shuttleworth continue to promote the association and its objectives. In May, the WLAQ sponsored the coffees at the Court of Appeal Northern Sittings' breakfast. The event was well attended and commended by the visiting Court of Appeal Judges, including President Mullins.

Female practitioners in the north were again well represented at the annual awards night. Hayley Fox of Legal Aid Queensland in Cairns was the worthy recipient of the Emergent Woman Lawyer of the Year award, and Monique Sheppard of the ODPP in Townsville named a finalist in the Regional Woman Lawyer of the Year category.

In 2024, we also welcomed Elspeth Ledwy as our new ambassador in Mackay. We look forward to working with Elspeth in promoting the benefits and objectives of WLAQ in this region.

Darling Downs

The WLAQ continued its long-standing support of the Ladies in Law Luncheon and once again joined as a sponsor for the 2024 event which was held on Friday 20 September 2024. The sold-out event brought together over 120 female practitioners from across all areas of law to network, celebrate the achievements of their colleagues and to support local charities. The event was also strongly supported by members of the Judiciary and the Bar.

The event also welcomed Dr Kellie Rose who, in an interactive session, shared insights on the current landscape of burnout and wellbeing for professional women and equipped attendees with the knowledge and tools to identify and deal with the signs of stress and burnout in themselves and others to cultivate sustainable health and performance.

WLAQ Criminal Lawyers Sub- Committee Report

GEORGINA MORGAN

Chair, Criminal Lawyers Sub-Committee

Barrister, Holmes Chambers

As this is the inaugural report for the Criminal Lawyers Sub-Committee (CLSC) in the WLAQ Annual Report, I would like to start by acknowledging the work of Sarah Ford, who led the CLSC as Chair since it began in 2019. It is a privilege to take on the role as Chair after your leadership of the CLSC, and I am grateful to have worked with you as a committee member since 2020.

Since it began, the CLSC has championed education opportunities for female criminal lawyers, and opportunities for female criminal lawyers to share their experiences particularly with respect to issues that are unique to criminal lawyers.

Our flagship event, run bi-annually, has been the 'Career & Family as a Criminal Lawyer' CPD and in the last 18 months, we have hosted the following CPD and social events:

- Committal Applications and Hearings CPD – 20 February 2024
- Judiciary Drinks: An Evening of Networking for Criminal Practitioners – 17 June 2024
- Seminar Series – Coroners Court Proceedings in Queensland (Part 1) – 5 December 2024
- Advocacy Workshop with Jane Fitzgerald – 13 February 2025
- Youth Justice Panel – 24 June 2025

I was also pleased to join with McInnes Wilson in their CPD on 'Dealing with Difficult Clients: Tips, Strategies, and Scripts to Navigate' as a presenter on behalf of the CLSC, which was held on 27 February 2025.

Our second CPD in the Coroners Court series was due to take place in March 2025, but due to Cyclone Alfred, it has been rescheduled to 21 October 2025.

A massive thank you must go to the Bar Association of Queensland, who has joined with us in hosting several of the above CPDs. Your support is greatly appreciated.

This year has also been a year of change for the CLSC. In addition to Sarah becoming the WLAQ President, we have said farewell to two of our members, Sophie Harburg and Rachel Black. Sophie and Rachel have both stepped down after several years of serving as part of the CLSC. Sophie had been part of the CLSC since its inception, and I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Sophie for all her hard work and dedication over the years. Similarly, the CLSC has benefitted significantly from the involvement of Rachel as our Regional Member in Cairns and I also want to thank Rachel for all her work and commitment to the CLSC.

With their departure, the CLSC was able to call for applications for new members. We were overwhelmed with the high calibre of applicants who expressed interest in joining the CLSC. All members of the CLSC considered it was important to ensure that our sub-committee is reflective of the criminal law profession, and that we are representative of our members. To that end, we have also made some amendments this year to the CLSC Rules which are aimed at facilitating a wider participation from members in the CLSC.

After careful consideration, the CLSC is pleased to welcome three new members: Liz Kelso – Consultant Crown Prosecutor at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) in Brisbane; Aleksandra Nikolic – Principal Lawyer in the DNA Forensic Review Team at the ODPP in Brisbane; and Jessica Shuttleworth – Legal Officer at the ODPP in Townsville.

We are very proud of the work the CLSC has done in the past year, particularly in the space of education for our members and the profession more broadly. I would like to extend my thanks to all members of the CLSC for their ongoing work and commitment to the CLSC. It is so very much appreciated.

Students Report

PRIYA VIRDEE-HERO

STUDENT MEMBER REPRESENTATIVE

The WLAQ delivered many highly successful and collaborative student-based events during 2024. As the WLAQ Student Representative, it has been an absolute pleasure to learn from and be supported by the WLAQ executive; they are a truly inspiring team of lawyers.

Through annual initiatives such as the Ladder Mentoring Program and Una Prentice Awards, the WLAQ continued to enhance its engagement with numerous law schools and law societies across Queensland, ensuring that more female students attend our events and feel valued within the legal sector.

The WLAQ Breakfast Clubs have been an important way for young female students to engage with our association and network within the profession, allowing for natural mentorship and collegiality.

Breakfasts inviting magistrates, barristers, judges, judges' associates, and young women in the profession were targeted towards student engagement and support. The breakfasts provide a unique experience where young women have access to female leaders within the profession, and can ask questions, learn, and form important professional relationships.

Our marketing, connections within law schools, and growing community of engaged law students have also contributed to the increase in students attending these breakfasts and other WLAQ events.

WLAQ plans to initiate further collaborative opportunities with law students in the upcoming year and is eager to see the student portfolio expand. In the spirit of welcoming and initiating the requests of law students with particular interest areas, a panel of judges' associates is planned for later this year.

WLAQ has also forged an important relationship with the National Council of Women of Queensland, offering to host a workshop within their inaugural conference later this year. NCWQ provides numerous opportunities to women across Queensland, writing submissions to the government to further gender equity, and running a bursary program providing thousands of dollars to further women's development. Most relevantly, several of these bursaries support female law students.

Holding the WLAQ Student Representative role this year has been an invaluable experience, getting my first look at the camaraderie of women within the legal profession and their belief in our value, passions and drive. It is such an important association that gives women the tools to thrive in a profession that has not always held space for us. WLAQ reaches out its hand to young women, leading them down a professional path forged by trailblazing lawyers of the gender equity movement.

46th Annual Awards Night









WLAQ

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ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC

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2024