

## Strategic Plan 2015-2018

*To provide an avenue and be the catalyst for change*

*To encourage an increase in the representation of women in leadership roles in the legal profession*

### **MISSION**

To facilitate the success and leadership of women in the legal profession.

### **VISION**

As Queensland's leading peak professional body for women in the legal profession, the core vision of WLAQ is to support and promote the full participation of women at all levels of the legal profession, including taking active steps to increase the representation of women in leadership roles. This will be achieved by taking deliberate steps to facilitate the full participation of women in the legal profession by taking advantage of WLAQ's unique position in Queensland, and capitalising on relationships within private practice, the bar, in-house, government and the judiciary.

A key element of this vision is continuing to provide high quality mentoring, networking and educational opportunities and recognising the achievements and success of women in the legal profession.

WLAQ will continue to strive for equality and diversity in the legal profession and ensure all activities are aligned with its objectives as expressed in its Constitution.

In doing so, WLAQ will remain committed to its core values of *Visibility, Engagement, Courage and Confidence*.

### **FOCUS 2015-2018**

1. To position WLAQ as a leading resource for women at all stages of their career in the legal profession.
2. To increase the status of WLAQ as the peak body representing women in the legal profession and offer a resource and partner for the judiciary and executive by actively consulting with the profession, government and other professional bodies on issues affecting women in the legal profession.
3. To maintain an apolitical and bipartisan approach to all events, papers, articles, submissions and other such documentation bearing WLAQ's endorsement.

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### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Partnerships for women in law remain relatively elusive, with statistics proving there is a lack of equality in private practice and the judiciary which is not restricted to Queensland. Challenges to the progression of women in the legal profession stem from more than issues of unconscious and gender bias. WLAQ seeks to bring awareness to systemic issues facing women at all stages of their career, to assist and support women in the legal profession and to be an advocate for positive change.

Recognition of other challenges including access to flexible working arrangements and mental health issues also need to be addressed as women work to maintain a demanding career in law with their personal life, whether it be for family, cultural or other reasons.

In order to maintain the focus and vision of WLAQ moving forward, the following objectives and strategies will be implemented.

#### **Objective 1: Take active steps to increase the representation of women in leadership roles**

The promotion of women to leadership positions in the law will come through recognition of individual talent and success. WLAQ does not seek to comment on whether or not promotion should be based on merit or quotas, or both. However, WLAQ recognises that an evidence based approach is required to address the current issues hindering the equal representation of women in leadership positions in the law. This can be achieved through taking deliberate action and capitalising on relationships to:

- identify the challenges facing women in the law;
- increase the visibility of women in the law;
- provide mentoring and support to women as they progress through the legal profession;
- to foster strong professional networks and relationships;
- to provide high quality training and opportunities for personal and professional development; and
- to provide opportunities for information exchange and collaboration to address the issues facing women in the legal profession.

In order to achieve this, WLAQ intends to continue to support initiatives such as the Law Council of Australia Model Equitable Briefing Policy for Female Barristers and Advocates, which was wholly endorsed by the 2013/2014 committee. In developing a continuing a relationship with the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland, the peak legal professional bodies in Queensland, WLAQ will continue, as far as resources allow, with the Flexible Work Group and providing opportunities for women to discuss their experiences. This will no doubt assist and encourage other women as they return to work in the legal profession.

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WLAQ will commit to engaging with firms, including those who have an established gender diversity program. WLAQ will commit to working cooperatively with firms to establish and build effective gender diversity programs by capitalising on its unique knowledge, experience and reputation. WLAQ will look to strengthen its relationships with firms and organisations, including seeking their endorsement of WLAQ as an association through financial and in-kind sponsorship.

In recognition of the guidance that all levels of women in the law require, not only in support of advancement of their career but also in personal issues facing professional women, WLAQ will engage with all members in providing an Executive and Management Committee who can guide members in finding role models who can actively take steps to guide and assist their career. This will be done through the mentoring program, and by any ad hoc assistance a Committee member may want to provide.

In recognition of the achievements of Queensland women. WLAQ commits to developing a guideline for the awarding of Honorary membership as provided in its Constitution, by the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala Awards to be held in 2015.

The promotion of women to the position of Queens Counsel, Special Counsel, Partner or Director as the case may be, will be recognised formally through a letter of recognition from the President. Other outstanding achievements, such as elevation to a position in the judiciary or the appointment to the Order of Australia for women associated with the legal profession in Queensland will also be recognised through a letter of recognition from the President.

WLAQ remains open to forming a relationship with a "male champion", who could assist WLAQ in meeting its objectives. No firm commitment has been made to formalising this plan and it will be for ongoing discussion provided it meets the overall objectives of WLAQ.

### **Objective 2: Providing networking, educational and mentoring opportunities**

WLAQ itself faces challenges with ensuring that all levels of women in the legal profession are catered for and makes a commitment to actively interact with women in all facets of the law.

In order to provide networking, education and mentoring opportunities for students studying law, to young and early career lawyers, mid-level lawyers, special counsel and partners, barristers, government and in-house lawyers in CBD, suburban and regional areas; WLAQ commits to provide an annual calendar of events detailed at Appendix 1 (for 2015) and released on a 12 monthly basis from January each year (ideally released in December of the year immediately preceding its commencement). This will assist both the membership base and the Management Committee in understanding the plan for each 12 months and is intended to assist incoming Presidents with planning for their elected term.

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The flagship events and programs of WLAQ will continue, on a yearly basis, to be:

- Yearly launch incorporating recognition of International Womens' Day/Month (March)
- QLS Expo (March)
- Una Prentice Awards (April)
- AGM (June)
- Women at the Bar Networking Event (August)
- Mentoring Program (September)
- Annual Awards (October)
- President, Partners and Special Counsel Boardroom Lunch

Separate to this, the Management Committee will ensure that the WLAQ continues to deliver a variety of CPD events for all members, including those in regional areas. The support of local firms in each regional area will be sought for each event prior to approaching local businesses.

Delivery of the Berryl Donkin Memorial award will be reintroduced and may be appropriately coupled with the Una Prentice Award.

### **Objective 3: Deliberately take steps to increase membership and visibility in the legal profession**

Historically, WLAQ was consulted by the Attorney-General with respect to judicial appointments. Deliberate steps have been taken to re-establish the relationship with the office of the Attorney-General on an apolitical and bipartisan basis. In order to continue this relationship, WLAQ will request an annual meeting with the Attorney-General to be attended by the president and a vice-president on each occasion. For accountability purposes, a report will be tabled at the Management Committee meeting following the meeting.

A standing sub-committee will be convened on an annual basis and comprised of the President, Vice-President(s), and two members of the Management Committee to consider proposals that may be put to the Attorney-General regarding the way in which Government can assist with the promotion / advancement of women in the law.

The WLAQ has established relationships with the Bar Association of Queensland, Queensland Law Society, College of Law Queensland and Australian Women Lawyers Association. In order to meet this objective, WLAQ will actively maintain these relationships and will take steps at an Executive level to develop and maintain a relationship with other women lawyers associations.

Effective 2015, dependent on cost and timing, WLAQ will provide flyers to law schools detailing membership costs for student members and the benefits of student membership. Further to Objective 3, WLAQ will request an invitation to speak to university students regarding student membership and the benefits of student membership.

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The President, Partners and Special Counsel Boardroom Lunch will continue to be held annually in order to provide a forum for senior members of the legal profession an opportunity to interact in an intimate and open environment regarding issues affecting women in the law. This luncheon is also an opportunity for the President to generate support from senior female legal practitioners and their firms for the overall betterment of WLAQ.

The Women at the Bar event is to remain a flagship event with the aim to provide a networking opportunity for solicitors and barristers, but also provide visibility for WLAQ to broader members of the legal profession.

Through the implementation of Objective 2, WLAQ will also satisfy its objective in increasing membership and visibility in the legal profession.

Membership numbers must be maintained and increased in order to ensure the sustainability and viability of WLAQ. WLAQ will adopt as part of the Secretary's Report at each Annual General Meeting, a statistical summary of the WLAQ membership basis, including total number of:

- members
- student members
- regional members (defined as any member not within a 50km radius of Brisbane CBD).

This report will provide an analysis of membership increases (or decrease as the case may be), so the incoming Management Committee can implement any processes required to increase membership.

### Annual Initiatives

In delivering the above objectives, the WLAQ committee will meet in January of each year at a planning day to determine the initiatives for the ensuing 12 month period. The initiatives and discussions arising from the planning day will be presented and endorsed at the first meeting of the committee for the year, to be held in February. The initiative profile will form the basis of the guidance of the association for the ensuing 12 months. The proposed initiatives for 2015 are included at Appendix 2.

*This Strategic Plan was developed by members of the 2014/2015 Executive Committee in consultation with the Management Committee. It is intended to be reviewed on an annual basis and used as a measurement of achievements and accountability of WLAQ.*

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### APPENDIX 1 - 2015 Calendar of Events

	Proposed event	Date - 2015
January		
February	WLAQ Committee Planning Day	1 February
March	International Womens' Day Networking Evening	26 March
	QLS Expo	9 March
April	Una Prentice Awards	28 April
	President, Partners and Special Counsel Boardroom Lunch	9 April
May	WLAQ / WLS Corporate Closet Clearout	22 May
June	Annual General Meeting with CPD Seminar and Networking Event	19 June
July	CPD – Cairns Luncheon	23 July or 30 July
August	Women at the Bar: Barristers & Solicitors Networking Event	6 August
September	Mentoring Program (Drinks and Launch)	2 Sept
October	Annual Awards	23 Oct
November	President, Partners and Special Counsel Boardroom Lunch	19 Nov
December		

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### APPENDIX 2 – 2014/2015 Initiatives

Initiatives of the 2014/2015 Management Committee include:

- Delivery of interesting and engaging newsletter content.
- “Thrive” – WLAQ Wellness Program – to be delivered through the Newsletter.
- Partnering with QLS to deliver the Flexible Work Arrangements Program. Initiative lead by Natalia Wuth.
- Regional Practitioners CPD program. The delivery of CPD programs in Toowoomba, Gold Coast, Cairns, Roma, Chinchilla, Dalby, Emerald, Rockhampton and Townsville. This will be done by both live streaming (partnering with law firms/QLS/BAQ) and attending the venue directly.
- Delivery of a half day conference to be held bi-annually (on the years that AWL are not held) and on the same day as the AGM to be followed by a networking event.
- First Annual International Women’s Month Networking Event.
- Partnering with Bond University to deliver a 3 day ‘Women and Leadership’ conference in 2015. Bond are presently preparing the proposal with WLAQ as a co-organiser and endorser.
- Working with government to consider ways in which they can assist women in the law.
- Partnering with Women & Leadership Australia to deliver two scholarships (valued at \$11,000 each) for women to attend leadership training sessions.
- Law Career Expo – we will again have a stand at the career expo in March to promote the interests of women in the law. Shared with WLS.
- Creation of a working group to consider ‘best practice maternity leave policies’.
- Partnering with Griffith University to deliver a program specifically for students in 2015. No financial contribution required from WLAQ.
- Partnering with the Medico Legal Insurance Group (MLIG) and DKM Group (accountants) to deliver sessions to early/mid career lawyers regarding strategic planning of finance and insurance etc for maternity leave and family planning.