

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2022

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

WLAQ's focus in the Strategic Plan 2015-2018 was:

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.

FOCUS 2020-2022

While continuing with the position established through the Strategic Plan 2015-2018, WLAQ will continue to progress its previous initiatives and focus on the following four key areas for 2020-2022:

1. To be the catalyst for inciting change for women in the profession, including addressing and providing suggested changes to, discriminatory practices.
2. To increase the representation of women in leadership roles in the profession by focusing on building the skills, networks and exposure of mid-level practitioners and raising awareness of the issue to the broader profession.

3. To engage with and increase focus for regional and minority (including culturally, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+) practitioners.
4. To increase WLAQ's presence as a leading resource for women at all stages of their career in the legal profession.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

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. 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 recognises that other challenges including access to supportive 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, we commit to the following objectives.

Objective 1: To be the catalyst for change for improvements in initiatives and deliverables for female lawyers in Queensland

In order to achieve this, we need to understand what issues that our members are facing and to develop targeted initiatives. This objective will be achieved through conducting specific surveys, utilising its Ambassadors and Advisors to better understand what resources are needed and developing a diverse range of resources.

WLAQ must maintain and build on existing relationships, including with Corporate Members, Award sponsors, Government bodies and other professional associations, including the Bar Association of Queensland, Queensland Law Society, Pride in Law, Asian Australian Lawyers Association and practice specific organisations such as Women in Insurance and Family Lawyers Practitioners Association.

Where a reform or commission relates to the objectives of WLAQ as set out in its Constitution, it will seek to respond on an informed, bipartisan and apolitical basis.

Objective 2: To be a leading resource for Queensland lawyers for all stages of their career

The members of WLAQ are at various stages of their careers and it is vital that WLAQ provides specific support appropriate to one's position.

WLAQ commits to relaunching the use of the Beryl Donkin Memorial Scholarship Fund to allow all members, on application, to seek funding to further their career in law. The WLAQ Mentoring Program will remain a focus for student and junior members, with a view to providing a career planning seminar and resources, through social media posts, for these members to access. The WLAQ Student Representative will be responsible for maintaining visibility for WLAQ on campuses throughout Queensland and the promotion of the Una Prentice Memorial Trust Award.

Prior to committing to a calendar of events, the FY Committee will review the membership base for that year to identify if there is a need to focus on networking events, or a combination of events which offer specialist knowledge to our members, such as a marketing and social media seminar for Barristers, life planning workshops for mid-career lawyers, and wellness workshops for criminal lawyers.

WLAQ launched the *Friends of WLAQ* initiative in February 2017, with the aim of supporting senior female practitioners, and will actively recruit more *Friends* to ensure a broad cross-section of the profession is available to provide assistance.

The In-Practice Queries Project commenced in 2017 will be finalised and reviewed by each Committee on a yearly basis to ensure that the information remains current. With the assistance of a law firm, WLAQ will deliver a template Paid Parental Leave Policy which will be offered to all firms in Queensland.

While the Flexible Working Group with the Queensland Law Society is no longer in operation, WLAQ will continue to deliver on stories and initiatives of professional women through the use of social media posts and the feature of a barrister and solicitor member in its newsletter.

Other resources WLAQ commits to providing to its members include the Maternity Robe (for use by Barristers while pregnant), timely social media posts with content that will enrich and inspire our members, delivering more online events and, where possible, streaming events through Facebook Live.

Objective 3: To increase the focus and support for minority and regional practitioners, including cultural minorities, English-second language practitioners, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+

To achieve this objective, WLAQ will increase its engagement with the appointment of Ambassadors and Advisors, including quarterly meetings with the Southern & Northern Regional Representatives of the Management Committee. This will enable two-way communication to ensure that WLAQ is briefed with information it needs regarding regional and minority members.

WLAQ will continue with its yearly Regional events calendar with a focus on addressing the region-specific issues our members face, and further promoting the regional WLAQ Facebook Groups.

A relationship with minority members will be achieved via our commitment to the endeavours of organisations such as the Asian Australian Lawyers Association and Pride in Law, and the appointment of a First Nations Advisor.

Continuing Objective: 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:

- (a) identify the challenges facing women in the law;
- (b) increase the visibility of women in the law;
- (c) provide mentoring and support to women as they progress through the legal profession;
- (d) foster strong professional networks and relationships;
- (e) provide high quality training and opportunities for personal and professional development;
- (f) promote flexible working arrangements, with flexible to be specific to each person's needs; and
- (g) 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 with its yearly Inspo List (released on International Women's Day), the publishing of the Female Barristers List (with a twice-yearly update), engaging with 'senior-junior' Counsel to encourage, where appropriate, applications for appointment as Queens Counsel and appearing, when appointed, on the Judicial Advisory Appointment Panel with a commitment to recommend practitioners on the basis of suitability for appointment, regardless of gender or personal characteristic.

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.

In recognition of the achievements of Queensland women, WLAQ will continue to consider appointments to Honorary membership at its AGM in June and Annual Awards in October. In 2014, WLAQ introduced the Woman of Excellence Award, being an award to recognise the outstanding efforts of a woman in law, at any stage of her career, and as decided by the Management Committee prior to the Awards, and in 2016 the Trailblazer of the Year Award, being an award nominee who the judging panel considers to be a trailblazer across the profession and not only for women in law. WLAQ commits to ensure that the Annual Awards continue to be the pinnacle Award for women in Queensland's legal profession.

Since the release of the Strategic Plan 2015-2018, WLAQ formalised its Advocate Membership, which is an appointment of a 'male champion' who has provided outstanding assistance and support to WLAQ and women in law. One person has been appointed as an Advocate Member, and WLAQ will continue to recognise the achievements of male champions of change in our profession.

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 WLAQ that calendar year.

This Strategic Plan was developed by members of the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 Management Committee. It is intended to be reviewed on an annual basis and used as a measurement of achievements and accountability of WLAQ.