



Traci Keys

Director of Conciliation, Policy, and Law and Registrar of the ADC



By: Jared Sharp
Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission

enjoys the sunsets. Darwin is also closely connected culturally and

geographically with parts of Asia. This is important as from time-to-time Olivia flies overseas to visit family.

On the role of women in the profession Olivia recognises that women lawyers and in particular graduates and those in their first years of practice must have guidance and support from those around them, and this is key to the issue of the retention of young women lawyers. Those in the profession also have to remain vigilant to ensure that we achieve and maintain gender equality.

Olivia looks forward to continuing her role as Co-President of NTYL throughout 2012, and continuing as an active member of the profession, and of the community. ●

How did you get into the law?

Law was not my first career choice. I trained to be a professional ballet dancer and was studying dance at Adelaide University when a fellow dance colleague and flatmate was arrested for shop lifting. She asked me to come to court with her. This was my first time ever in a court room and I was fascinated by the process. A year later I enrolled in law school.

Tell us about your current role?

I work for the Anti-Discrimination Commission as the Director of Conciliation Policy and Law. It is a very broad role that encompasses managing the complaints area, acting as Registrar for our Hearings, representing the Commission in appeals, providing legal and policy advice to the Commissioner and acting as Commissioner in the Commissioner's absence.

What are the most satisfying aspects of your role?

It is really satisfying when I get a quick, effective outcome that works for all parties. I also derive great satisfaction out of progressing access issues for vulnerable members of the community. Access to fair process, information

and justice is something that very much drives me as a lawyer.

What are some of the challenges facing women in the law?

I think law is a less challenging career today for women than it was 20 years ago thanks to the ground work of many other women who had it much tougher. I think, however, challenges remain.

Managing a career and children remains one of the big challenges for female lawyers. Increasingly employers are seeing the benefits of accommodating staff with children (male or female) and seeing the long term benefits for organisations of flexible workplace practices. I am extremely lucky to have a very accommodating boss and for this I am very appreciative. However, it remains difficult for women to meet work and home pressures and to know when and how long they can afford to take career breaks.

What are you currently reading?

Talking about Jane Austen in Baghdad, which shares emails between a UK journalist and an English Literature lecturer in Iraq. It reveals the harsh realities of life in Baghdad particularly for women and religious minority groups. ●