

News and updates

Bronwyn Haack

President, Darwin

NTWLA



NORTHERN TERRITORY WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION (NTWLA)

It is my great pleasure to have become president of the NTWLA in late 2017 and I look forward to the year ahead. We have a great executive and a large, enthusiastic committee who work in a diverse range of legal practices from Darwin to Alice Springs. As many of you will be aware, the main purposes of the NTWLA are to:

- provide a common meeting ground for women lawyers;
- to make suggestions and work for the reform of the law and the administration of law, particularly as affecting women and children;
- to work for the advancement of women and children; and
- to participate as a body in matters of interest to the legal profession.

Our patron is Justice Blokland and we are happy to receive the continuing support of the Hon. Natasha Fyles Attorney-General and Minister for Justice who has been our special guest at our last two Christmas parties.

We are excited and optimistic about building on the work of the NTWLA over previous years for a busy year to come. While some of the barriers to entry, success and happiness of women in the law appear to have been ameliorated with the increase in numbers of women participating in the legal profession, many of them and are still frequently reported as having challenges.

In January the NTWLA Committee made written submissions into the review of the *Anti-Discrimination Act*. Thank you to the Committee members that made such extensive submissions and we also wish thank Sally Sievers, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, for seeking to consult with NTWLA on this important area of reform.

In February, the NTWLA adopted some of the great practices I learnt through involvement on the Board of Australian Women Lawyers and held a planning day to focus our priorities and goals for the year to come with the new committee. The planning day was held on a Sunday in February and kindly hosted by Halfpenny Lawyers in their lovely new offices, with Alice Springs members joining by telephone.

It was wonderful to meet with a new Committee who are so full of enthusiasm for the coming year and we have now set the following key priorities for the 2018:

- Continuing with the many great events established over previous years such as Patron's Drinks and our Christmas Party.
- To provide continuing professional development activities for members, with key issues raised such as career pathway advice, pay inequality, the reality of flexible work arrangements, judicial bullying and sexual harassment (#me too) in the legal realm.

News from Alice Springs

- Continued or improved opportunities for networking or mentoring at a variety of levels in careers.
- The need to address issues of about flexible work practices with employers and for lawyers who appear as advocates in the courts.

To ensure regional coverage we held events in both Katherine and Alice Springs in March.

Katherine impromptu women lawyers lunch

In Katherine we held an impromptu Women Lawyer's lunch at the Finch Café which was attended by lawyers and paralegals from NAAJA, Katherine Women's Legal Service, NT Legal Aid Commission's Katherine office and NAAFLS. It was wonderful to meet lawyers new to Katherine and those committed, hard working practitioners who have been practicing in the region for a number of years. These practitioners all work in very busy work environments and the work they do every day with many disadvantaged and vulnerable clients is work to be admired.



Sal Forrest

Vice-President
NTWLA, Alice Springs

NTWLA in Alice Springs joined the NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner for lunch on Wednesday 28 March to discuss the #metoo campaign and how the progress of this movement depends on our engagement with our workplaces and communities.

Commissioner Sievers addressed the gathering on the challenges and opportunities we face in supporting the evolution of this campaign beyond a trending hashtag, and the ensuing conversation between practitioners and the Commissioner quickly got down to practical details.

Practitioners discussed the challenges to their raising and pursuing sexual harassment complaints in the workplace, including:

- General ignorance of types, degrees and nuances of sexual harassment that constitute grounds for complaint.
- A lack of familiarity with external complaint avenues, such as the Anti-Discrimination Commission and NT Working Women's Centre.