



2023 NSW WOMEN LAWYERS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

2023

GALA PRESENTATION DINNER

4 AUGUST 2023

DOLTONE HOUSE, PYRMONT

THANKS TO OUR AWARDS SPONSORS



**CARROLL
& O'DEA
LAWYERS**



**COLLEGE
OF LAW**

David Talintyre



The Women Lawyers Association of New South Wales Incorporated ('WLANSW') is the peak professional body representing women lawyers in NSW. We are committed to improving the status and working conditions of women lawyers since before our incorporation in 1952.

Since our inaugural awards dinner in 1995, the Awards recognise the outstanding women lawyers, mentors and firms who have not only achieved excellence in legal practise but have advanced the opportunities for women in the law.

IN 2023, THE WLANSW WILL PRESENT THE AWARDS IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

WOMEN LAWYER OF THE YEAR

WOMEN LAWYER OF THE YEAR (UNDER FIVE PQE)

BARRISTER OF THE YEAR

PRIVATE PRACTICE LAWYER OF THE YEAR

REGIONAL LAWYER OF THE YEAR

CORPORATE COUNSEL (IN HOUSE) OF THE YEAR

GOVERNMENT LAWYER OF THE YEAR

COMMUNITY LAWYER OF THE YEAR

LEGAL ACADEMIC OF THE YEAR

MENTOR OF THE YEAR

OUTSTANDING LAW FIRM / LEGAL PRACTICE OF THE YEAR

IN THEIR RESPECTIVE CATEGORY, EACH CANDIDATE WAS REQUIRED TO MEET AT LEAST FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- Eligibility to enter: Apart from the category 'Woman Lawyer of the Year', Nominees need not be current members of the WLANSW but must be eligible for membership and work in NSW.
- The achievement of a high level of professional skill, recognition and/or excellence in her chosen field.
- An outstanding contribution to the achievement of women within the legal profession through leadership and example;
- Encouragement of and influence on other women to pursue a legal career.
- The establishment of fair systems of work, equitable and transparent remuneration policies, innovative diversity programs, removal of barriers to entry or promotion of women and adoption and reporting on Equitable briefing.
- Advocacy and support for the establishment of flexible work practices and innovative diversity programs, and/or for the removal of barriers to entry or promotion and/or role modelling the effective balancing of family and work commitments.
- Participation in a professional community organisation, especially those involving women.
- Advocacy and/or support for the legal rights of all women including the promotion of access to justice and the rule of law, and equality for all women, and/or the identification, exposure, and eradication of all forms of discrimination against women.

Tonight, a Life Achievement award will be presented along with the award of life membership.
Thank you for supporting the WLANSW and being here to celebrate our talented women lawyers.

Kind regards,



Justine Anderson
President

GUEST SPEAKER: TEELA REID



Teela Reid is a proud Wiradjuri and Wailwan woman, lawyer, essayist, storyteller, co-organiser of Rebellious Lawyers Australia and co-founder of @blackfulla_bookclub, a platform that honours First Nation's Ancestors as the original Storytellers. Currently, Teela is a Sydney-based Senior Solicitor practicing in Aboriginal Land Rights litigation and is the current Practitioner in residence at Sydney Law School. She is also a campaigner for the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Teela has an impressive career thus far, including a number of published essays, being called upon for her opinion by a variety of media outlets including ABC, Sydney Morning Herald, Washington Post, Bloomberg, The Guardian, Marie Claire and The National Indigenous Times.

OUR JUDGES



Justine Anderson
President
Women Lawyers
Association of NSW



Cassandra Banks
President
Law Society of NSW



Teresa Cleary
National Vice President
Association of Corporate
Counsel Australia



Lida Kaban
Director
Legal Services Branch
NSW Department of
Attorney General and Justice



Vanessa Whittaker
SC
Barrister
NSW Bar
Association

WLANSW PATRON: THE HONOURABLE VIRGINIA BELL AO



The Honourable Justice Bell joined the High Court of Australia in 2009, having previously served as a judge in the Supreme Court of New South Wales since 1999. She graduated with a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Sydney in 1977 and became a senior counsel in 1997 after being admitted to the New South Wales Bar in 1984.

During her career, Justice Bell worked as a public defender from 1986 to 1989 and played a significant role as counsel assisting the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service from 1994 to 1997. She also served as president of the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration from 2006 to 2008 and acted as a part-time Commissioner of the NSW Law Reform Commission from 1998 to 1999.

In recognition of her exceptional contributions to the judiciary and the law, particularly in criminal law reform and public policy development, as well as her advocacy for the economically and socially disadvantaged, Justice Bell was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia on 26 January 2012. Additionally, in 2019, she was honored as the patron of WLANSW, further highlighting her commitment to empowering women in the legal field.



AWARDS FINALISTS

WOMAN LAWYER OF THE YEAR

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**CARROLL
& O'DEA
LAWYERS**



Jeannette Fahd

Principal Lawyer
Just Defence Lawyers



Karen Iles

Director & Principal
Solicitor
Violet Co Legal &
Consulting



Sally McCausland

Principal Solicitor
NSW Department
of Communities &
Justice



Lori Middlehurst

Senior Director
Salesforce



Carmel Mulhern

Group General Counsel
& Group Executive,
Legal & Group
Secretariat
Commonwealth Bank of
Australia

WOMAN LAWYER OF THE YEAR (UNDER 5 PQE)

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 **COLLEGE
OF LAW**



Tara Dhanushkoti

Associate
Maddocks



Taylah Gray

Lawyer & PhD candidate



Susanne Rakoczy

Associate
Maddocks



Taylah Spirovski

Solicitor
HWL Ebsworth Lawyers

BARRISTER OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY



NEW SOUTH WALES
BAR ASSOCIATION



Talitha Fishburn

Barrister
Black Chambers



Kerrie Leotta

Barrister



Naomi Sharp SC

Barrister
6 Selborne Wentworth Chambers

PRIVATE PRACTICE OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY

 **Legalwise**



Alison Battisson

Director Principal
Human Rights for All



Tanja Djokic

Principal Solicitor
TD Migration Consulting



Karen Iles

Director & Principal Solicitor
Violet Co Legal & Consulting



Mia Pantechis

Principal
Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

AWARDS FINALISTS

REGIONAL LAWYER OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY



Kristal Naividi
Principal Solicitor
Coastal Lawyers



Georgiena Ryan
Principal
Regional Business Lawyers



Clarissa Sempel
Solicitor
Our Lawyers

CORPORATE COUNSEL (IN HOUSE) LAWYER OF THE YEAR



Navaneetha Dilipumakanth
Head of Legal & Company
Secretary
Consumer Healthcare



Gemma Piper
General Counsel & Company
Secretary
NRMA



Lori Middlehurst
Senior Director
Salesforce



Marina Mitrevski
General Counsel & Company
Secretary
THE ICONIC

GOVERNMENT LAWYER OF THE YEAR



Julie O'Brien
General Counsel
Australian Human Rights
Commission

COMMUNITY LAWYER OF THE YEAR



Sharmilla Bargon
Senior Solicitor
Redfern Legal Centre



Samantha Lee
Senior Solicitor
Redfern Legal Centre



Jasmine Opdam
Acting Team Leader,
Financial Abuse
Redfern Legal Centre

AWARD KINDLY SPONSORED BY



LEGAL ACADEMIC OF THE YEAR



Karina Murray
Senior Lecturer
University of Wollongong



Associate Professor Linda Steele
Senior Lecturer
University of Technology Sydney



AWARD CATEGORY FINALISTS

MENTOR OF THE YEAR

AWARD KINDLY SPONSORED BY **David Talintyre**



**Amanda
Alassad-Bruun**

Director
Property Development &
Transactions
NSW Dept of Planning and
Environment



Sharmilla Bargon
Senior Solicitor
Redfern Legal Centre



Talitha Fishburn
Barrister
Black Chambers



Jeannette Fahd
Principal Lawyer
Just Defence Lawyers

OUTSTANDING LAW FIRM / LEGAL PRACTICE

AWARD KINDLY SPONSORED BY



Hall & Wilcox Lawyers



Terri Janke & Company



Landers & Rogers



Workdynamic Australia

WHO ARE THE FINALISTS?



Karen Iles

Director & Principal
Solicitor
Violet Co Legal &
Consulting

Karen Iles is a lawyer, consultant, board director, sexual assault survivor and Dharug Aboriginal woman. She is the Founder and Principal Solicitor of Violet Co Legal & Consulting - a woman-led, Indigenous-led, social enterprise. Violet Co's purpose is to create radical solutions and just outcomes for women and First Nations people.

- Karen has led a powerful campaign for change that would see a duty of care imposed on police when investigating serious crimes.
- Karen has dedicated a wealth of time to pro bono matters and volunteer committees within in the legal industry.
- Karen has also been active in broader social justice community work, particularly focused on First Nations women, First Nations people and women.
- Karen's practice, through her extensive pro bono work as a Employment lawyer, has seen her advocate for women's rights in the workplace, particularly when they have suffered from racial and gender discrimination in the workplace. She has been an advocate for stronger applications of rights to work for women in the work place.



Jeannette Fahd
Principal Lawyer
Just Defence Lawyers

- Jeannette's story is a testament of grit, talent, and integrity in law. Rising from the ranks as a solicitor in a boutique law firm, she learned the ropes of criminal law in a way that not only shaped her into a formidable lawyer but also reshaped her worldview forever.
- Jeannette is an exceptional leader, balancing high-profile criminal cases with nurturing an all-female team. With a steadfast commitment to justice and compassion for her clients, Jeannette consistently delivers exceptional results. An inspiring role model, she balances a high-pressure career with motherhood, demonstrating that professional success and personal commitments can coexist.
- Beyond her remarkable professional acumen, Jeannette is an advocate for women in law. Dedicating her time to mentoring young female lawyers, Jeannette has made significant strides for diversity and gender equality in the field. Jeannette's tireless dedication and prolific influence make her an ideal candidate for this award.
- Beyond her courtroom triumphs, Jeannette continues to inspire the next generation of legal professionals, encouraging them to embrace their passion for criminal law. Her mentorship engagements over the past two years include judging for Diverse Women Lawyers' Witness Examination, participating as a panel speaker for 'Careers in Criminal Defence' at The University of NSW, and speaking on the 'Criminal Law Panel' for The University of Sydney Law Society. Jeannette also proudly sponsors and judges The University of Sydney's Law Society Criminal Law Moot, alongside the Honourable Justice Mark Lacey and Carol Webster SC, demonstrating her commitment to nurturing young talent in her field.



Lori Middlehurst
Senior Director
Salesforce

- Lori is an exemplary women legal leader who has made significant contribution to the achievement of women within the legal profession through her leadership role at the Association of Corporate Counsel;
- Mentoring of many female lawyers throughout her career as she inspires them to be the best versions of themselves in legal and community work;
- Lori has provided thought leadership of DEI & flexible work; and made outstanding contributions to various community organisations, including as the ACC representative to the Respect@work inquiry.
- Lori also engages heavily in the pro bono space, donating her time to Australian Lawyers for Human Rights – Women and Girls subcommittee, Redfern Legal Services, and the Law Council of Australia – Business and Human Rights subcommittee.



Carmel Mulhern
Group General Counsel
& Group Executive, Legal &
Group Secretariat
Commonwealth Bank of
Australia

- Carmel Mulhern joined the Commonwealth Bank in January 2020.
- Prior to joining the Commonwealth Bank, Carmel was the Group General Counsel and Group Executive Legal and Corporate Affairs at Telstra.
- Throughout her distinguished career Carmel Mulhern has made progress championing fair and efficient resolutions of legal matters, the value of diversity, inclusion and equality and genuine care for others.
- Carmel has always been a supporter of flexible working and supporting those returning to the office after being on extended leave.
- Carmel is the Co-Chair of the CBA Group Inclusion and Diversity Forum representing almost 50,000 people and ensured that CBA was the first Bank to become a signatory to the General Counsel for Diversity & Inclusion (GCD&I). Carmel is generous with her time mentoring junior lawyers, supporting their development and seeking opportunities for them to excel and she is regularly called upon by industry organisations to share her leadership perspectives.



Sally McCausland
Principal Solicitor
NSW Department
of Communities & Justice

- Sally has achieved a high level of professional skill, recognition and excellence in intellectual property and copyright law. She has made an outstanding contribution to the achievement of women within the legal profession through her leadership as a Principal Solicitor for Legal within the New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice. In her role, she encourages and influences other women to pursue a legal career.
- She has also, through her work for the Department, demonstrated support for the legal rights of all women including the promotion of access to justice and the rule of law, and equality for all women. Examples include: developing a unique informed consent filming protocol for inmates at a women's correctional centre for an externally produced national television program. Developing copyright guidelines for the commissioning of artworks from persons in the youth justice and adult correctional systems.



Tara Dhanushkoti

Associate, Maddocks

- A 3PQE Lawyer, she has demonstrated she is a natural future leader, committed to bring about change in the legal profession and beyond.
- Tara is widely regarded as a recognised expert in her chosen field of privacy, data and technology where she has contributed to thought leadership pieces and podcasts and also authored several chapters for Lexis Nexis.
- Tara is engaged in a number of new initiatives including: Breaking new ground in the D&I space with a firm wide roll-out of an audio email tool which promotes correct pronunciation of names, Developing an innovative digital app for privacy and data reviews and Securing a \$20,000 grant for the charity the Pyjama Foundation which promotes the love of learning in young foster children.
- Tara is a passionate advocate for fostering diversity and strongly believes there are enormous benefits from celebrating diversity. Tara is committed to mentoring and passionate about advocating for the legal rights of all women having contributed to organisations such as Human and Hope Cambodia, Homeless Persons' Legal Service and many others.



Taylah Gray

Lawyer & PhD candidate

- Taylah is a proud Wiradjuri woman and young lawyer who previously worked at the Aboriginal Legal Service before beginning a career as a civil lawyer. Taylah is also the first Aboriginal student and woman to undertake a PhD in law at the University of Newcastle with a focus on Native Title and economic theories, which seeks to increase economic growth and land reform for First Nations communities.
- In 2020, Taylah oversaw the Black Lives Matter protest in Newcastle which saw 1000 Novocastrians march to address racial inequality, including black deaths in custody. Attempts by police to shut down multiple Black Lives Matter protests – due to COVID concerns – were being seen as an effort to silence the movement. Believing strongly in the right to peacefully protest, Taylah took the matter to the High Court of NSW.
- Through her developing profile, Taylah has appeared on Q&A, the Drum and was invited to present a TedX Talk about her work and PhD.
- Taylah is a tireless advocate and young professional working in the social justice space, focused on increasing access to justice for First Nations women and communities and she has committed her early career to this goal.



Susanne Rakoczy,

Associate, Maddocks

- Susanne joined Maddocks as a lawyer in 2019, having previously worked as a qualified archaeologist and anthropologist, specialising in Indigenous engagement, cultural heritage and native title. Her unique skills and experience have led the team to bolster their brand and profile as experts in native title law – leading to their 2022 ranking in Legal 500 Asia Pacific for Native Title.
- Susanne has worked across Australia and has experience managing state agreements, regulatory approvals and agreements, land access, native title, landowner and heritage approvals. She has developed and implemented land access approvals systems for mines in WA, and negotiated, drafted and implemented regional-wide native title agreements, cultural heritage management plans and mine closure plans.
- Susanne has demonstrated exceptional leadership-skills and serves as an inspiring example for women in the legal profession. She encourages and influences other women to pursue their legal-careers, particularly those, who like Susanne, are from diverse-backgrounds.
- Susanne actively engages with junior team members, offering invaluable advice and guidance on excelling in their careers. Her hands-on approach to mentoring, and deep cultural awareness, creates a supportive environment for her team.



Taylah Spirovski

Solicitor, HWL Ebsworth
Lawyers

- Taylah has an unwavering passion for human rights and community advocacy and has demonstrated this at every opportunity through her leadership of grassroots action as CEO of Voices of Influence Australia, as well as her various roles in the NSW Law Society, NSW Young Lawyers, and Women Illawarra.
- Taylah was published in the ASEAN-Australia Strategic Youth Partnership Review 2021 under the Economic Cooperation chapter. Her article was titled 'A Feminist Economic Analysis of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific'. This article focused on extrapolating the way humanitarian emergencies exacerbate existing gender gaps, with a specific focus on the way COVID-19 has impacted women's work, economic independence and security, and the increasing demand for unpaid care work.



Talitha Fishburn

Barrister, Black
Chambers

- Taylah is the CEO of Voices of Influence Australia, where she leads a board of directors who are all women. Taylah is the youngest board member of Women Illawarra, where she is involved in not only strategic goal setting and financial monitoring, but a range of community advocacy. Most notably, Taylah is leading a call to action on domestic violence policing in NSW.
- Following a recent submission on sexual consent laws, Taylah (representing Voices of Influence) has been invited to appear in the Inquiry into Current and Proposed Sexual Consent Laws in Australia by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee.

- Called to the bar in 2012 after an impressive career as a solicitor, Talitha is a natural born leader and committed to the advancement of women in the legal profession. Talitha dedicates much of her personal time to mentoring women (law students and solicitors) and supporting others in the legal profession. Talitha is involved a number of volunteer committees which champion women and drive to foster change.
- Talitha is a committed and active mentor in both the NSW Young Lawyers Mentoring Program and the NSW Bar Association Mentoring Scheme. In addition, she invites women who might be interested in studying law or becoming a lawyer or barrister to reach out to her.
- Talitha regularly provides pro bono advice including volunteering at the Manly Legal Community Service, a service that often assists female victims of domestic violence.
- Talitha is a founding Board Member of "Diverse Women in Law" which highlights her commitment to diversity programs at the bar.
- Talitha is a leader within her chambers, actively involved in mentoring/networking lunches with her female colleagues and other female law students/lawyers and is one of two "Respectful Relations Officers" who aim to promote appropriate conduct including minimising sexual harassment at work.



Kerrie Leotta

Barrister

- As President and Secretary of the WLANSW, Kerrie was monumental in establishing the now much loved WLANSW fixtures such as the Janet Coombs Lunch for New Women Barristers and annual celebrations for newly appointed Women Silks which are attended by judges, barristers and solicitors, the celebration of appointed Women Judges and Judicial officers, the establishment of the first WLANSW Awards night and arranging the first Australian Women Lawyers (AWL) conference and assisting in establishing the AWL.
- Kerrie has also been a member of the Women Barristers Forum, providing her support to the WBF by Treasurer and member, Compilation of the WBF Alumnae history of all women admitted to the bar in NSW. Kerrie engaged in research regarding the reasons for the retirement and of all those voluntarily leaving the Bar in NSW.
- At the request of WBF (NSW) Kerrie mentored 4 junior barristers facing the difficulty of remaining at the Bar. Assisting them to progress and remain at the NSW Bar.
- In 2019, Kerrie assisted in creating a short film about pioneering lawyers in NSW.



Naomi Sharp SC

Barrister, 6 Selborne
Wentworth Chambers

- Naomi's impressive start in law commenced by completing an associateship with Justice Gaudron at the High Court of Australia and lecturing in public law, Naomi was admitted as a solicitor in 1998 and called to the Bar in 2002. Naomi was appointed Senior Counsel in 2017.
- As the Chair of the Human Rights Committee at the Bar from August 2018 to mid-2021, Naomi has also been a fierce advocate for the legal rights of all women.
- Naomi is the current Chair of the Women Barristers Forum.
- Naomi has been a committed advocate for the establishment of flexible work practices and innovative diversity programs, especially during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- With a career marked by remarkable professional skill and significant impact on the advancement of women in the field, Naomi is as an inspiration to her peers and females in the legal industry. Her wide-ranging expertise, demonstrated through her involvement in high-profile inquiries and her leadership in promoting gender equality.



Alison Battisson

Director Principal,
Human Rights for All

- Alison founded Human Rights for all in 2016.
- Before establishing HR4A, Alison worked as a corporate lawyer for top tier firms in Australia, and has worked with various volunteer organisations in Zimbabwe, Australia and the UK.
- In 2015, Alison realised that there was a lack of access to legal services for refugees, stateless and indigenous people in immigration detention. Human Rights for All organically grew out of this realisation. Since 2016, HR4A lead by Alison has taken on some of the hardest human rights cases in Australia; including those which challenged the imprisonment of refugees in the Park Hotel. Finally in 2021, HR4A assisted in the evacuation of over 110 Afghans from Kabul. This work continues.
- Alison leads HR4A as a strong and compassionate advocate for the rights of some of the most vulnerable people in the world. In recognition of the particular vulnerabilities of women in detention and displaced Afghan women, Alison has ensured that HR4A focuses on such people. Alison ensures that any female clients are visited in places of detention, by female lawyers, due to the prevalence of a history of sexual and other violence perpetrated against such women. Alison also guides the team to engage with the families of male detainees, as their mothers / partners / sisters often struggle to understand the legal system keeping their male family members detained.
- Alison mentors female law students and PLT students through placement with HR4A. Allison is a strong supporter of flexible work.



Tanja Djokic

Principal Solicitor, TD
Migration Consulting

- Tanja Djokic is a Principal Solicitor of TD Migration Consulting. She has been practicing law, and specializing in immigration law since 2014.
- Tanja is a mentor to female law students and graduates alike sharing her experiences and guiding the students as they develop their professional and academic selves whilst transitioning from University to the legal profession.
- Tanja has also made a difference in thousands of people's lives in Australian community through securing permanent residency to work in Australia or reuniting family members.
- Tanja has taken part in Law Society of NSW mentorship program and is currently taking a part in the UTS LSS Beyond Corporate Mentoring Program 2022, acting as a Mentor for female students seeking a career in immigration law: guiding the students as they develop their professional and academic selves and provide insights to the mentees regarding the day-to-day responsibilities of a lawyer, networking tips, and how to successfully transition from university to the legal profession
- Tanja provides practical legal training to female law students seeking to practice in immigration law and training them in the best practice standards before entering the legal profession.
- Tanja also does a lot of pro-bono work in the community assisting migrant women who are experiencing domestic violence secure permanent residency in Australia as well as providing assistance to vulnerable female members of her local community



Mia Pantechis

Principal, Maurice
Blackburn Lawyers

- Mia was admitted as a solicitor in August 2012. Since 2013, Mia has had a meteoric rise at Maurice Blackburn, becoming an Associate in July 2015, a Senior Associate in July 2017 and a Principle of the NSW Employment Law practice in January 2021. Mia presently leads the NSW Employment Law practice.
- Between 2021 and 2023, she has been rated by the Doyle's Guide as a leading employment lawyer for employees, and was recognised as a top female legal professional in the Lawyers Weekly Women in Law awards in 2020.
- Mia is a strong advocate for law reform and a leading force for social justice for women. She presently running a test case before the Federal Court of Australia in which she has asked the court to reassess community standards and increase damages awards for sexual harassment victim-survivors
- Mia has played a key role in the respect@work reforms, drafting submissions and displaying thought leadership and advocacy in the current review into cost-models in discrimination matters. Mia has also collaborated with the Power2Prevent coalition on this issue.



Kristal Naividi

Principal Solicitor,
Coastal lawyers

- Mia is a champion of flexible work arrangements.
- Through her involvement in the WLANSW, Mia has sought to address the gender pay gap by delivering multiple seminars aimed at arming women in law with the tools to negotiate their pay, conditions and employment contracts.
- Mia is recognised by her direct reports as an effective and trusted mentor. She has closely mentored and supported Penny Parker, who has excelled in her legal career and was promoted from Associate to Senior Associate within a year, and recognised by Doyle's Guide 2023 as a rising star

- Kristal is the owner and founder of Coastal Lawyers.
- Having worked for 13 years with NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP). Kristal has a strong background in criminal prosecutions.
- Kristal is currently undertaking her Masters Degree in Family Law.
- Kristal is a compassionate and understanding family lawyer with a Masters in Family Law.
- Growing up in public housing herself, Kristal has a strong understanding of the difficulties faced by individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds and is passionate about presenting the best case for her clients and guiding them through the legal maze.
- Kristal mentors women in the Legal Profession and has been nominated for the WLANSW Women's mentor of the Year in 2021.
- Kristal has a long history of briefing women both as a prosecutor at the DPP and in private practice. Kristal ensures access to justice for regional people that need help - she adopts out-of-court approaches to solving disputes rather than put her clients to the stress and expense of court proceedings.
- Kristal was nominated as Terrigal's business woman of the year in 2022. Kristal is very involved in her local community and this is evident by the number of nominations she's had from them.
- Kristal is also a mother, as well as being a founder of a successful law firm on the Central Coast. Kristal balances her family life with work exceptionally well and this is clearly evidenced by the success of both her career but also her family.



Georgiena Ryan

Principal, Regional
Business Lawyers

- Georgiena is unequivocally the champion of regional law and rural issues. She founded Regional Business Lawyers driven to stem the flow of regional clients seeking advice from city-based firms.
- Her aim is to build recognition of the skills of regional lawyers to handle complex commercial matters and deliver advisory outcomes. Georgiena runs a busy practice and volunteers with the NSW Law Society participating in the Climate Change working group, Elder Law, Capacity & Succession Committee, and the Rural Issues Committee (Chair). Georgiena's practice is 100% female which has been instrumental in advancing women in the provision of quality legal services.
- Georgiena is a strong and respected female voice in regional and rural NSW. Given her unique mix of academic achievement, her Graduate Diploma of Tax law, this puts her in a unique position to provide complex tax advice. Georgiena is often approached to chair and speak at seminars.
- Georgiena volunteers extensively within the legal profession but also with organisations based regionally.
- She takes time away from business to lead and progress discussion around issues impacting the legal profession and regional Australia.
- Regional Business Lawyers was established after a long corporate career, to enable her to have the flexibility necessary for women lawyers who are mothers and have other competing interests (in her case, farming enterprises). Regional Business Lawyers are keen supporters of remote and flexible working.



Clarissa Sempel

Solicitor, Our Lawyers

- Clarissa's involvement in law commenced in 2016 working as a personal assistant in the dispute resolution and commercial litigation team in the regional area of Wollongong whilst studying Law.
- Following her admission in August 2019, Clarissa was promoted to solicitor in the commercial law team, and was again promoted to Associate (managing a small team of law clerks) 18 months later in early 2021. Clarissa took a leap and moved to Our Lawyers (based in Mittagong and Picton) as a solicitor working within commercial law, dispute resolution, and employment law.
- Clarissa exemplifies the experience of many who have overcome difficult circumstances to follow her study and career plans. She is passionate about providing quality legal advice to support successful outcomes for clients and drives positive change within the community. Clarissa always strives to act with integrity and initiative, which includes continual self-development through seminars and training qualifications, being a mentor and constructively contributing development of brand identity within the legal industry and the community we work within. Clarissa is a resilient young woman who connects with different people and community organisations in alliance with her personal goals and values.
- Clarissa has been recognised through her status as a finalist 5 times in a number of prestigious legal awards programs, which are the benchmark for excellence, celebrating and recognising the outstanding women influencing the Australian legal profession. Clarissa was 1 of 10 national finalists in a category which "recognising outstanding performance by an individual who has recently commenced her legal career".
- In addition to her legal career, Clarissa is dedicated to supporting others through her association with Junior Chamber International (JCI) - a global, non-profit organisation for young people to develop leadership skills, and make an impact in local communities through volunteerism aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Clarissa has progressed from membership and leadership roles in her local branch to being on the seven-member National Board. In 2023, Clarissa leads JCI Australia as National president, which involves representing the organisation at International events.
- Clarissa is also involved in a local not-for-profit organisation delivering NDIS services in the Macarthur region.



**Navaneetha
Dilipumakanth**

Head of Legal &
Company Secretary,
Consumer Healthcare

- Navaneetha (Neetha) has been the Head of Legal and Company Secretary, Consumer Healthcare - Australia and New Zealand at Haleon Australia Pty Ltd since July 2018 when the company was formed from a merger of GSK and Pfizer's consumer healthcare businesses. Prior to her current role, Neetha was Head of Legal and Company Secretary, Consumer Healthcare - Australia and New Zealand at GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare and held that role for over 8 years.
- Neetha is a trusted advisor of the business and a highly committed, respected and diligent individual who is an excellent role model. Neetha runs a legal internship program for final year university students at GSK/Haleon through which she has mentored and supported numerous young lawyers, particularly young women starting out their legal career. Neetha is very committed to the advancement of justice, equality and diversity within the legal profession.
- Being on the leadership team at Haleon/GSK, Neetha is also integral to business' establishment of fair policies and systems of work, transparent policies and innovative diversity programs. In working with Bird & Bird including on numerous court cases, she has participated in Equitable briefing which is a policy that Bird & Bird has signed up to.
- Neetha is an advocate and supporter of flexible work practices and innovative diversity programs, being a woman of Tamil background and mother of two. She models these aspects of her identity through her involvement with her children's schooling and participates in traditional Tamil dancing while effectively balancing of family and work commitments. Her traditional Tamil dancing group is also an example of her participation in a professional community organisation involving women.



Gemma Piper

General Counsel &
Company Secretary,
NRMA

- From 1998 until 2006, Gemma practiced at Hogan Lovells in London, specialising in M&A, private equity and joint ventures and worked on many cross-border transactions. In 2007, Gemma made the move to Allens Linklaters in Sydney, continuing her practice in M&A, private equity and joint ventures until 2010. It was during this time that she began managing Allens' Company Secretariat function. Gemma then began her admirable 13 year career with NRMA. Since 2018, Gemma's role has been General Counsel and Company Secretary, where she leads an impressive team of legal, governance and compliance professionals.
- Gemma has achieved remarkable success in her role as General Counsel and Company Secretary, at the NRMA. Under her leadership, the team has seen significant growth, with diverse and talented legal and non-legal staff. She implemented an efficient operating model, facilitated major acquisitions, helped establish NRMA's new car rental brand and drove major changes to the NRMA constitution. Gemma has shown a commitment to gender diversity, career development and mentoring throughout her leadership. She advocates for work-life balance, fosters inclusivity, and champions flexible and efficient practices.
- Gemma's personal commitment to professional growth is evident through her graduation from the Australian Institute of Company Directors' program. She serves as a role model for other females within her team and the organization, emphasizing the importance of career and professional development.



Marina Mitrevski

General Counsel &
Company Secretary, THE
ICONIC.

- Marina has been the General Counsel & Company Secretary at THE ICONIC since 2018 when she joined the then 6 year old start up as the only lawyer in the company. She has since built up a high functioning team charged with delivering the full ambit of THE ICONIC's Legal, Governance, Regulatory, Compliance, Legal Operations and Company Secretariat services.
- Marina is committed to mentoring, sharing learnings and facilitating experiences for the next generation of lawyers. Since 2018, Marina and her team have committed to hosting one to two vocational placements with Law schools and are signed up to the Associations of Corporate Counsel's In-House Legal Clerkship in Australia.
- During her time a General Counsel at THE ICONIC, Marina has lead a team of predominantly female legal counsels and paralegals. She encourages her team to adopt flexible work arrangements to meet their personal circumstances and needs. Marina is also passionate about mentoring young lawyers and legal students and has provided practical legal training, work experience and helped to facilitate external opportunities for her mentees.
- Marina oversaw the establishment of THE ICONIC's partnership with First Nations Fashion + Design for the establishment of their Incubator Program to help Indigenous designers to launch their brands.



Julie O'Brien

General Counsel,
Australian Human Rights
Commission

- Admitted to practice as a solicitor in 1999, after a period in private practice, Julie moved to the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) in 2004.
- Julie O'Brien is an outstanding Government Lawyer as a leader in advancing human rights, with 19 years at the AHRC, and as General Counsel for 14. She has been a champion of flexible work practices and has co-written Federal Discrimination Law, a landmark publication for lawyers, businesses and individuals. Julie's advice has been absolutely central to the Commission's submissions on human rights and discrimination law and our intervention work. For 6 months she was Interim CEO during a period of navigating a dire financial crisis, providing absolutely instrumental support to the President and the Commission as a whole.
- Julie has achieved a high level of professional skill and excellence in the field of human rights – leading the AHRC's engagement with Courts, Parliamentary Committees and the broader legal community on key human rights matters. Julie led the legal work on the Commission's National Inquiries, including Respect@Work National Inquiry into sexual harassment in the workplace,



Sharmilla Bargon
Senior Solicitor, Redfern
Legal Centre

- and the implementation of key human rights reforms including the positive duty to eliminate sexual harassment and the new regulatory functions of the AHRC.
- Julie's leadership contribution extends to supporting the achievement of other women within the legal profession through her participation in the UTS Law Women's Mentoring Program.
- For almost 20 years Julie has been a strong advocate for flexible work practices and diversity programs and led on advocacy for family violence leave. Julie has been instrumental in the establishment of the AHRC's policies relating to paid parental leave, breastfeeding-friendly workplace accreditation, and hybrid working policies.
- Julie has championed these policies and pioneered flexible work practices with her team of lawyers, and been a personal role model for them, leading to lawyers within the Commission returning to work following maternity leave and being promoted to senior roles while managing both work and caring commitments.
- Julie has ensured that the Commission has an equitable briefing policy and reports on the number and value of briefs to counsel.

- Sharmilla studied law as a second degree after studying a Bachelor of Science. Prior to joining the Redfern Legal Centre, Sharmilla worked at Gilbert + Tobin for 10 years, and one year at the AAT and then moved to Redfern Legal Centre where she has worked for the last 5 years.
- As a Senior Solicitor at Redfern Legal Centre, Sharmilla leads the Employment Rights Legal Service – a statewide employment rights service in NSW. She is passionate about justice for migrant workers and victim-survivors. Sharmilla has a passion for mentoring.
- Sharmilla is a very well respected lawyer in the community legal sector. Her pragmatism and passion for collaboration, coupled with her strategic advocacy skills renders her an effective change maker. Her law reform and advocacy on the barriers for accessing justice are relied upon regularly at government roundtable discussions and reports.
- Her contributions to the submission #MeToo: Legal Responses to Sexual Harassment at Work as informed by her casework has contributed to greater discussion in the space on sexual harassment work. This is recognised by the University of Sydney selecting Sharmilla in their first Social Justice Academic in Residency Program to research non-disclosure agreement usage in sexual harassment settlements in the hope to advocate for greater transparency around sexual harassment reform. Sharmilla's endless encouragement and her fearless support of women in law has been to the profession's betterment. She fosters strong relationships with lawyers, PLTs and volunteers to form inclusive practice for women in the industry, including CALD and LGBTIQ lawyers.
- Sharmilla co-chairs the Employment and Discrimination Law Network – a collective group of lawyers from community legal centres on issues relating to employment law and discrimination law.
- She also acts as a 'phone-a-friend' to many smaller CLCs to consults other solicitors on casework strategy.
- Sharmilla is passionate about eliminating systems of oppression for women and specifically, women experiencing multiple intersections of disadvantage. She is attuned to the snowball effects of disadvantage and advocates for stronger workplace protections and equality for women with disabilities, migrant worker women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.



Samantha Lee
Senior Solicitor
Redfern Legal Centre

- Prior to Samantha moving to Redfern Legal Centre she has worked for NSW Health, and in various positions within Legal Aid NSW.
- Samantha Lee has led reform in the area of police accountability, having a significant impact on many lives, especially those who are disproportionately over policed. Samantha heads up the police accountability law practice at Redfern Legal Centre. She was the lawyer behind the win in the NSW Supreme Court that saw 33,000 invalid COVID fines withdrawn.
- Samantha is now working with other organisations such as, Aboriginal Legal Service and Public Interest Advocacy Centre, on improving the fine system for children in NSW.
- Ms Lee has worked with the law firm Slater and Gordon to file a class action against NSW Police for unlawful strip searches. Samantha gathered statistics on the number of young women who were subject to strip searches in NSW and exposed the harm caused by such a practice. Samantha has highlighted the harms caused by such a practice, especially when it comes to women and children.



Jasmine Opdam

Acting Team Leader
Financial abuse
Redfern Legal Centre

- Jasmine is committed to social justice and working with the community since she began her studies – volunteering with Redfern Legal Centre, the UNSW Australian Human Rights Centre, and interning in the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, while she was at university.
- Prior to joining the Redfern Legal Center, Jasmine worked at Herbert Smith Freehills for 3 years as a lawyer, and in that time was involved in Extensive pro bono and community involvement including: coordinator of the Centre 360 Youth Mentoring Program in partnership with St Francis Social Services; member of the Gender Equity Matters Network at Herbert Smith Freehills; volunteer solicitor in the Asylum Seeker Clinic in partnership with the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) and pro bono assistance with victims compensation matters through The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre.
- In October 2019 Jasmine joined Redfern Legal Centre's Financial Abuse Service, the first specialist state-wide service of its kind in NSW.
- Jasmine has shown exceptional leadership and mentoring to the many corporate lawyers she is responsible for training and supervising in weekly advice clinics.
- In 2020, Jasmine was integral to moving these clinics from face-to-face to online in order to continue to utilise volunteers and provide vital assistance to family and domestic violence victim survivors throughout the pandemic. She is consistently developing and refining systems and resources to provide the best possible service to clients.
- Jasmine is passionate about using her legal skills to achieve change beyond an individual case. She is an exceptionally hard worker but still finds time to provide unlimited support to her colleagues



Katrina Murray

Senior Lecturer
University of Wollongong

- Karina is a dedicated academic and advocate for women in law. As well as being an inspiration to her students because of her expertise and excellence in teaching, she has been an active and supportive member of the NSW Women Lawyers' Association Wollongong, and was a founding member of the subcommittee.
- Each year, since 2016, she has hosted the annual Law Week 'Speed Networking' event, providing law students with the opportunity to meet and make contact with local lawyers. She has been an important connection between our students and WLANSW Wollongong, facilitating connections and professional development.
- Karina predominantly publishes in the area of legal ethics and is a co-author of Lawyers in Australia (Federation Press, 4th ed, 2019, being the latest edition).
- Karina joined the University of Wollongong in 2006 and has coordinated a range of subjects, including Ethics and Professional Responsibility, Foundations of Law, and Interpreting Legal Texts. Between 2017-2020 Karina was the Academic Program Director and Discipline Leader for the School of Law.
- In 2013, Karina was awarded the Vice Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning (OCTAL) as part of the First Year Law Integration Team, having already received an individual OCTAL award in 2011.
- Then in 2015, she was awarded the Australian Award for University Teaching as a member of the UOW First Year Law Integration Team.



Associate Professor Linda Steele

Senior Lecturer,
University of Technology
Sydney

- Dr Linda Steele is an inspirational academic, an expert in disability law and in the rights of women to access the law. Her research and advocacy in law reform is pioneering and tangible with a reach to women with diverse backgrounds. Dr Steele's expertise and achievements are grounded in her passion for the law as an instrument of change. This passion influences her female colleagues and students to join with her in facilitating access to the law for vulnerable individuals and groups. The core of this work benefits women through her leadership and expertise in law and social policy reform.
- Her work centres on matters that effect women: violence, institutionalisation and segregation on the basis of disability, sterilisation and menstrual suppression, and criminal justice incarceration.
- As an outstanding academic lawyer with a passion for social justice, Dr Steele applies her research, teaching and engagement to strengthen and sustain her practice as an academic for the benefit of women.



Amanda Alassad-Bruun

Director, Property Development & transactions, NSW Department of Planning and Environment



- Of note is Dr Steele's example of empowerment for students with a disability. Through challenging discriminatory approaches to disability, including mental illness, in legal doctrine and practice and including guest lectures by lawyers and advocates with disability, Dr Steele creates an inclusive and empowering learning experience for students with disability.
 - In the subject, Law and Mental Health, which Dr Steele designed, students learn from women with lived experience of institutionalisation through an immersion at the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct's 'site of conscience'; this approach has been revered by students taking this course.
 - Dr Steele is partnering with Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) on the exploration of redress for reproductive violence against women and girls with disability. She has also collaborated with WWDA on four submissions to the Royal Commission on Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, including one on sexual and reproductive rights.
 - Dr Steele led the project 'Redressing Neglect and Abuse of People Living with Dementia in Residential Aged Care' in collaboration with Kate Swaffer (an activist with dementia), Dementia Alliance International and People with Disabilities Australia.
 - Dr Steele's objective to work for and with women in their empowerment and in access to the law is successfully realised in her advocacy and law and policy reform work.
-
- Amanda brings a wealth of knowledge, with a broad range of experience covering: across the following areas of law: property, development, commercial, procurement, probity, risk management, advisory, compliance and governance gained in both private and government sectors.
 - Before moving to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, Amanda worked for private law firms including: Abbott Tout, HWL Ebsworth, PwC Legal, and McCabes.
 - Amanda works on LAHC's medium to large scale redevelopments, precinct renewals and complex market processes, such as the Waterloo Estate which is one of the largest mixed tenure developments in Australia which will deliver over 6000 private, affordable and social homes, as well as retail and community outcomes.
 - Over the course of her career, Amanda has developed high-performing teams while devoting time to mentoring and supporting junior colleagues; new Directors; Indigenous colleagues; and she has a passion for assisting women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, being herself the daughter of Egyptian migrants. Amanda is also an accredited career coach (through Executive Central).
 - Amanda was recently a panel member on a DPE Governance & Legal panel (300
 - Amanda Alassad-Bruun is an exceptionally talented mentor and has made it her mission to develop future women leaders in the legal profession. Amanda is passionate about teaching a service model of leadership by providing mentoring to junior lawyers addressing gender bias and cultural diversity barriers. Her end goal is to develop women to become better mentors and leaders themselves.
-
- Is focused on gender diversity is about empowering all our people by actively addressing barriers to gender equality to create an inclusive culture and environment for everyone.
 - Hall & Wilcox has been recognised as an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). In the words of our Chair of Partners, Emma Woolley, 'Hall & Wilcox has a long history of inclusion and a celebrated culture of supportive, talented people who encourage each other to succeed'. '[W]e will continue to drive progress towards gender equality.'
 - Hall & Wilcox are committed to flexible work, promotion equality and reducing the gender pay gap. An active approach is taken to review and address any gender pay gaps.
 - Internally, Hall & Wilcox runs a highly regarded Women in Leadership program, upholds the Charter for the Advancement of Women in the Legal Profession, continues to endorse the Law Council of Australia's Gender Equitable Briefing Policy and is a signatory both the Law Society of NSW's and the Law Institute of Victoria's Charter for the Advancement of Women in the Legal Profession.

- With a number of flexible initiatives in place, the following policies assist our staff in feeling supported: changes to definition of 'personal leave', flexible public holiday leave policy, increased parental leave to 26 weeks, introduction of pregnancy loss pre-20 weeks, leave for fertility treatment and increased co-parent leave.
- We provide pro bono legal assistance for numerous organisations with a gender focus, such as the Women's Homeless Prevention Service, Top End Women's Legal Service and Afghan Women on the Move and we also partner with not-for-profits that empower women, including Fitted for Work which helps women prepare to re-enter the workforce after time out of paid employment.
- As of July 2023 Lander & Rogers' partnership is 49% female — a significant milestone for a firm already established as one of Australia's most gender-diverse. With a female Chief Executive Partner, Chair of Board and Chair of Partners, a gender-balanced C-suite and 50% of its practice groups led by women, Lander & Rogers champions gender equality and creates a supportive environment for all of the firm's people to thrive through targeted initiatives focusing on pay equity, flexible work practices and tools, gender neutral parental leave opportunities, inclusive leadership and ensuring a diverse pipeline of strong female talent.
- Diversity and inclusion are a pillar of Lander & Rogers' 2025 Strategy and led from the top, with a focus on: Flexibility, talent, pay equity and inclusive leadership. Lander & Rogers is a strong supporter of flexible work, noting the firm has a fully hybrid and flexible work policy, with no days or number of days in the office mandated, to empower people to work in a way that suits them best, manage personal responsibilities and still prioritise team and client imperatives.
- They support their staff through mentoring, leadership and development programs.
- Lander & Rogers is proud to have a female Chief Executive Partner, Chair of Board, Chair of Partners, a gender-balanced C-suite and four out of eight practice groups led by women.
- Lander & Rogers removed pay secrecy clauses from its employment contracts in 2019, conducts rigorous annual pay gap analyses each year and sets specific action plans where required to maintain pay equity.
- Lander & Rogers' gender-neutral parental leave policy offers 26 weeks of paid parental leave; superannuation on unpaid leave; paid leave accessible within 18 months of birth/adoption to encourage access by secondary carers; specialised coaching and reduced targets for parents upon return to work.
- Lander & Rogers operates a no-bystanders policy on sexual harassment and a complementary policy on personal relationships in the workplace that may raise an actual or perceived conflict.
- As a signatory to the Law Council of Australia's Equitable Briefing Policy, the firm tracks and exceeds targets for briefing female counsel through a custom-built eCounsel app.
- Lander & Rogers also promotes diversity in tech and innovation by supporting female-led startups through the firm's LawTech Hub program
- Founded in 2000, Terri Janke and Company (TJC) is an outstanding 100% Indigenous owned and run company that is a leader in IP/ICIP and a focal point, empowering legal professionals, businesses, and government agencies.
- As well as expert legal advice, TJC's workshops have supported businesses understanding of IP and ICIP issues, building knowledge in this field.
- TJC is always considered the go-to company for ICIP and IP. TJC has led the way on drafting ICIP protocols for the public and private sector and have drafted ICIP protocols for Screen Australia, the University of Newcastle, Australia Council for the Arts, Breville, NSW Department of Planning and Environment, the CSIRO and the Powerhouse.
- TJC is a female-led law firm which goes above and beyond in supporting and empowering female employees who make up over 75% of staff.
- TJC has a strong mentorship culture, our intake of law students as paralegals, provides them with practical experience and valuable insights into the legal profession. This allows aspiring lawyers to gain hands-on experience and also serves as a gateway to their careers.
- Encouraging professional development is key to TJC culture. This commitment to ongoing growth, and the endorsement of staff working in their specialised areas empowers female staff members to excel in their chosen fields.

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- TJC sets an inspiring example for other firms in how to support and uplift women in the legal profession, contributing to their excellence and achievements.
- A number of TJC lawyers have been recognised for their excellence including: Laura Curtis, finalised in Rising Star of the Year (Women in Law Awards 2022); Anita Valenti, Senior Associate was shortlisted for six awards over the past three years; winning Senior Associate of the Year (Australian Law Awards) in 2022.
- TJC have a strong track record of supporting female creatives by providing legal expertise and advice in order to ensure their legal rights are recognised and their IP and ICIP are protected. In 2022 TJC worked with Kmart and Judith Young in a collaboration. In this collaboration TJC created an Art Commission and Licence Agreement.

WORKDYNAMIC
AUSTRALIA

- Workdynamic was founded in 2013 with the principle of flexibility at its core. Over the past decade this has not changed, and continues to provide flexible working conditions to 43 team members. This allows retention of the most talented professionals, and allows the team to achieve all of their goals. Their flat-structure and approachable management create a culture of mentorship, warmth and encouragement, and instils pride in every colleague
- Over the last 10 years a team of 3 has grown into 43 lawyers and support staff: 93% of whom are women and 83% of whom are working parents.
- 4 out of 5 of Workdynamic directors are women.
- Flexible work is at the heart of Workdynamic with comprehensive utilisation.
- Workdynamic is engaged for: Cultural reviews of workplaces, performing workplace investigations into allegations of discrimination, sexual harassment, misconduct, bullying and assault.
- Workdynamic invests heavily in recruitment processes to ensure team members contribute to a discussion around their remuneration, conditions, and expectations. Salaries are based on experience and merit, such that no gender pay gap exists in our organisation.



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AND THOSE WHO TOOK THE TIME AND CARE TO
NOMINATE YOUR COLLEAGUES, MENTORS AND
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