

12 April 2013

**'Equality in the Legal Profession: the past, the present and the future'
Release of Career Intentions Survey Pilot Report**

Women Lawyers' Association of New South Wales (WLANSW) Patron and guest speaker, the Honourable Acting Justice Jane Mathews AO, formally launched the Career Intentions Survey Project at a cocktail event Thursday 11th April 2013 at the Union, University and Schools Club of Sydney, with her address *'Equality in the Legal Profession: the past, the present and the future'*. The launch also celebrated the release of the Pilot Toplines Report for the project pilot, and the distribution of the final survey questionnaire at all university law schools and the College of Law in NSW commencing early Semester 1 this year.

'I have lived through enormous changes in the profession since I first started as a law student over half a century ago, when there was only one law school in NSW and nearly all the students, and certainly all the lecturers, were men,' Justice Mathews recalled. 'By the early 1980's there was a very significant proportion of women studying law, and by the end of the decade they outnumbered the men and have continued to do so. It is what happens after University which remains the problem today, and this is what the survey is designed to address. We are well into the 21st century, and women are still significantly under-represented in most senior areas of the profession, such as partners in law firms, women at the bar and barristers taking silk, and most areas of the judiciary,' said Justice Mathews.

The Career Intentions Survey seeks to obtain data with a view to tracking and analysing the career paths and decisions of both female and male law graduates in NSW.

'The survey also promises to give us valuable information about a number of other significant issues, such as equality, racial and ethnic issues, and may well be very valuable in the future in promoting real equality of opportunity within the profession. The survey will also highlight any differences in the career aspirations of people from rural and metropolitan areas. And I am certain that it will also throw up information which will be extremely valuable in a number of other respects which we as yet haven't even thought about. It will be the first survey of its kind in this country, so it is a very important matter,' said Justice Mathews.

The launch was attended by distinguished guests including The Hon Chief Justice Tom Bathurst QC, The Hon Justice Margaret Beazley AO, President John Dobson and CEO Michael Tidball of The Law Society of NSW, President Greg Johnson of the NSW Young Lawyers Association, President Bernard Lankes of ACLA NSW, Deans of Law and representatives from the participating Universities, and President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Prof Gillian Triggs. The photo gallery from the event will be available on the WLANSW website.

The Toplines Report for the Career Intentions Survey pilot which took place in August to November last year is now available on the WLANSW website, together with the background information, on our Career Intentions Survey page under Workplace Practices <http://www.womenlawyersnsw.org.au/content/career-intentions-survey-0>

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The pilot results show that 66 percent of student participants propose to practise as a lawyer, while 7 percent do not. Of those intending to practise as a lawyer, 57 percent propose to practise as a solicitor, 42 percent as a government lawyer, 31 percent as a barrister, and 28 percent as an in house lawyer, as their long term ambition. The top three areas of practice in which participants would like to specialise are corporate and commercial law (39 percent), criminal law (38 percent) and family law (23 percent).

'The differences in the attitudes and career paths of male and female lawyers make it crucial that there is a good response rate to the survey from both male and female students, and we appreciate the support from the participating Universities in NSW and the College of Law,' says Margaret Holz, President of WLANSW. 'We thank the NSW Bar Association and Herbert Smith Freehills for their sponsorship of the Career Intentions Survey, and the Law Society of NSW for their Principal sponsorship of the Association.'

Opportunities for financial support and sponsorship to ensure the continuation and integrity of the survey project are available. Information about the project and the Sponsorship Proposal for the project can be found at <http://www.womenlawyersnsw.org.au/content/career-intentions-survey-0>.

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