



MEDIA RELEASE: Women Lawyers Association recognises 11 female appointments to the Bench, 27 February 2014

On 27 February 2014, the Women Lawyers Association of NSW, the peak body representing women lawyers in NSW, celebrated the appointments of 11 women to the judiciary in a glittering evening attended by judges, magistrates, senior counsel and the cream of the Sydney legal profession. The biennial event pays tribute to those women who have successfully reached the pinnacle of their legal careers with appointments to the Supreme, Federal, District and Local Courts. Only since 1980 have women appeared on the benches of the State's courts, with the first appointment to both the District and the Supreme Courts, being the Association's Patron, the Honourable Acting Justice Jane Mathews AO.

Before an audience that included High Court Justice Virginia Bell, Chief Justice of the Federal Court Justice James Allsop, Chief Justice of the NSW Supreme Court Justice Tom Bathurst, Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court Justice Brian Preston, President of the Industrial Relations Commission Justice Michael Walton, President of the Human Rights Commission Professor Gillian Triggs, President of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Justice Duncan Kerr, President of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal Justice Robertson Wright, Justice Mathews congratulated the recent appointees with WLANSW President Natasha Walls, and introduced guest speaker Justice Ruth McColl of the NSW Court of Appeal.

This year the following appointments were celebrated:

- The Hon Justice Margaret Beazley AO, President of the Court of Appeal
- The Hon Justice Julie Ward, Court of Appeal
- The Hon Justice Kathleen Farrell, Federal Court of Australia
- The Hon Justice Melissa Perry, Federal Court of Australia
- Judge Sharron Norton, District Court of NSW
- Judge Sarah Huggett, District Court of NSW
- Magistrate Carolyn Huntsman
- Magistrate Karen Robinson
- Magistrate Katherine Thompson

Recently appointed Chief Justice of the ACT Supreme Court Justice Helen Murrell and Judge Alexandra Harland of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia were unable to be in attendance. Both practised in Sydney prior to their appointments interstate.

In her address, Guest Speaker Justice Ruth McColl AO referred to the struggle of women for equality in the law over the years and discussed the judicial process, and in closing said.....

'The final message for the evening is of course to celebrate what tonight's distinguished guests have achieved. In doing so we should never forget the battles many, including I am sure our guests, have fought to get to where we are today. But, we should not lose sight of the fact that there are still battles to be fought to ensure we don't go backwards, don't just maintain but improve what has been achieved. We might have come a long way, but there's still a long way to go.

We must be ever vigilant. We will know we have reached the end of the journey when we share the freedom our male colleagues enjoy of being able to pursuing our legal career knowing that our gender is irrelevant to our success.' She said.

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