



**President's Report 2025 Year
Presented at the AGM, Sydney NSW and online – 29 November**

It has been a great honour to serve as the President of Australian Women Lawyers (AWL) this year. The year has flown by as I, and the other new members of the executive, settled into our new roles.

I thank the following directors for giving up their time to represent their respective constituent body on the AWL Board:

- Emma Luck, Vice President (Women Lawyers of Western Australia)
- Shelley O'Connell, Treasurer (Women Lawyers Association of South Australia)
- Alinta Robinson-Herbert, Secretary (Tasmanian Women Lawyers)
- Jessica McClymont KC (Women Lawyers Association of Queensland)
- Amanda Garside (Women Lawyers Association ACT)
- Dr Kylie Weston-Scheuber (Women Barristers' Association)
- Sophie Lefebvre (Victorian Women Lawyers)
- Josie Hullick (Northern Territory Women Lawyers Association)

I would also like to thank Danielle Mildren who was the director for Women Lawyers Association ACT for part of this year.

I offer my biggest thanks to Astrid Haban-Ber who this year stepped into the role of Immediate Past President, after two years as AWL President, and co-opted, non-voting director. It certainly made my first year in this role a little easier, having Astrid and her corporate knowledge of AWL at hand. Thank you for, I think, your seven years on the AWL Board. I know that your work on the issues of diversity and inclusion will not end here and I look forward to seeing where you go next. Thank you for your leadership, dedication and commitment.

This year, with a new executive and not being a conference year, gave us an opportunity to look at our governance, policies and procedures. We started the year with a strategic planning day and introduced a new three-year strategic plan. We want a sustainable organisation; one that will be here for many years to come. When considering this, our mind has turned to how we do our work as AWL and what we should be focusing our attention on. AWL is nothing without its constituent bodies and one of the main priorities for me during my presidency is to ensure better and regular communication between AWL and its constituent bodies. During the 2025 financial year, we had a virtual town hall meeting, and I will be looking to implement these in a more regular fashion, bringing together representatives of each of the constituent bodies. Visits were also had throughout the year to WA, NSW and ACT. I look forward to catching up with members in our constituent bodies in 2026.

During the 2025 year, the AWL board has also looked at ways we can diversify our income – whether that be through such funding streams as government funding and/or sponsorship. In this regard, I would like to say a huge thank you to Shelley O’Connell, treasurer, who has put in many hours as part of the audit process. Through this year’s experience, Shelley and I anticipate proposing that the constitution be amended at the next AGM to remove the burden of the audit process.

In looking at what opportunities AWL can offer members, which is one of the key priorities of the new strategic plan, I held meetings with Women in Leadership Australia, Women with Disabilities Australia, Institute of Community Directors Australia, Future Females, and Dr Anna Cody, Sex Discrimination Commissioner.

During the 2025 year, I was also invited to the launch of the Working Women’s Centre NSW as well as participate in the ALRC roundtable on justice responses to sexual violence.

On behalf of AWL, I attended the Australian Legal Convention held in late November at the High Court of Australia. This Convention, organised by the Council of Chief Justices, discussed such topics as legitimacy, artificial intelligence, family and sexual violence, institutional wellbeing, First Nations justice, access to justice, and legal education and training. I look forward to seeing what comes of this convention, and how AWL can play a part.

AWL continued to have representation on a number of external bodies:

- I represented AWL on the Law Council of Australia Equal Opportunity Committee;

- Australian Gender Equality Council – Harriet Boothman;
- Workplace Gender Equality Australia – Emma Luck; and
- Respect @ Work Council – Josie Hullick.

AWL was a supporter of the submission to Safe Work Australia, being the National Joint Submission to Best Practice Review - Safety Regulation for Primary Prevention of Gendered Violence. This submission was driven by VWL member, Sapphire Parsons, who brought together many women's organisations from across the country. This follows on from the AWL submission to the Government's *Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches to Gender-Based Violence* in 2024. Thank you, Sapphire, for continuing to be a changemaker.

AWL also plays an active role in the Power to Prevent Coalition.

The AWL Board is in the early stages of planning the conference for 2026, which will be held in Tasmania for the first time. I ask that you keep your eye out for further details (which can be found on our various social media accounts and website).

Finally, I thank the AWL Board and the Boards/executive committees of our constituent bodies. Without you, the work of AWL would not be possible. As we have seen in recent months, the issue of diversity and inclusion is incredibly important, though others seek to silence such discussions. There is still work to be done in this space and I look forward to working with you in 2026.

Renée Bianchi

President, Australian Women Lawyers

28 November 2025

