

# magistrates 'Engage the blokes' call

ting, who's defending



**Alex Boxsell**

New president of Australian Women Lawyers Kate Ashmor says she will focus on improving retention, attrition and flexible work practices in the legal profession, and she believes the secret may lie in "engaging the blokes".

Given she was caring for her first baby and would soon return to work, Mrs Ashmor said she was "living and breathing the No. 1 issue for women at the moment, which is retention and flexible work practices".

"The key is engaging the blokes," she said. "There is not going to be flexible work unless the blokes are flexible too and we know that a lot of dads want to be able to help at home and have flexible hours.

"It's an issue for all lawyers. It's not solely a mothers' issue."

Large law firms had come a long way in embracing technology and more flexible work practices to help women, in particular, juggle work and home life, she said.

Mrs Ashmor, a commercial lawyer at Public Transport Victoria and former convenor of Victorian Women Lawyers, was elected to replace Rebecca Lee at a Women Lawyers meeting on Sunday.

Women Lawyers will use the next federal election to push for better policies on in-home care, including for nannies and other carers, to provide parents with alternatives to childcare centres, Mrs Ashmor said.

It will also work with the Law Council of Australia to research the rates at which female lawyers leave the profession and fail to return once they have children.

At the Women Lawyers meeting, Elizabeth Heenan was given an award for her contribution to the profession as president of the Law Society of Western Australia and law firms Minter Ellison and Marks & Sands.

## Big Tobacco counts cost

The fat cats at mammoth tobacco companies lost a few million dollars along with their legal argument when the High Court shut down their attempt to challenge plain packaging laws.

The court ordered Big Tobacco to pick up the government's legal tab, too.

Along with the substantial fees generated by the tobacco litigators at Allens, Corrs Chamber Westgarth, Johnson Winter Slattery and King & Wood Mallesons and the money sunk in a blanket advertising campaign, the whole thing has been a costly exercise.

Problem is, there's plenty more money where that came from. What is still unclear is just how close Big Tobacco got to winning. According to the High Court's summary, "at least a majority" found for the government. It will be a few weeks before we see which judge or judges thought otherwise.

Edited by Alex Boxsell

## All the laws

you attorneys Greg Smith and Robert Clark respectively.

In the past month both the ACT and Queensland Law Society resolved to support the adoption of the proposed national regime.

The ball now lies firmly in the courts of Queensland Attorney-General Jarrod Bleijie and the



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