

FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN LAWYERS

I regret – indeed, I am sorely disappointed – that I cannot be with you tonight to celebrate the 15th birthday of Australian Women Lawyers.

The last 15 years have passed all too quickly for me, but they have marked significant changes for Australian women generally and, also, for Australian women lawyers. There are now three women on the High Court of Australia, women who are heads of jurisdiction and women judges in all jurisdictions. In some respects, the most inspiring change for me has been the increase in the number and profile of women silks, that being a barrier that traditionally has been hard to breach. In large part, these advances have been due to the work of Australian Women Lawyers and its affiliated State organizations. I should like to acknowledge the efforts of the several Presidents who have worked tirelessly to improve the status of and opportunities for women lawyers throughout the country.

Of course, recent events have provided proof – as if proof were necessary – that the position of women in Australian society is far from perfect. And until that changes, it is inevitable that the same will be true for women lawyers. And that means that there will continue to be an important role for Australian Women Lawyers and much to be done by its office bearers.

I wish Australian Women Lawyers “Happy Birthday”, congratulate it on the work it has already done and wish it well in its future endeavours. And may I say “Hello” to the many good friends who, I know will be celebrating tonight, and remind them of the good times and the good champagne we have enjoyed together. Finally, I wish you all a very pleasant evening. I shall raise a glass to you all while you celebrate.

Mary Gaudron