

## **Justice Gaudron hands over patronage to Justice Bryant at inspirational ceremony**

The attendees at the Patron Cocktail Party on 20 February 2009 at the Law Society of NSW were delighted to hear the outgoing Patron Justice Mary Gaudron provide her views on the importance of the Women Lawyers Association of NSW (WLANSW) and the Australian Women Lawyers (AWL).

Celebrating the handover of the AWL Patronage from the Honourable Mary Gaudron QC to the Honourable Chief Justice Diana Bryant of the Family Court of Australia on Friday 20 February, Justice Gaudron highlighted that women's associations such as WLANSW and AWL are needed for friendship, advice and support.

On the concept of role models for female lawyers, Her Honour alluded to the words of Polonius spoke to his son Laertes in *Hamlet* – “This above all: to thine own self be true”.

“We need to be ourselves, to display our own characters with our own faults, not emulate old dinosaurs like me,” she said. ‘Being a professional lawyer is hard work. You don’t need the added burden of being someone who you are not.’”

Her Honour celebrated the great strides that have been made since the inception of AWL. There are now three women that have been appointed to the High Court, a female Governor General of Australia and a female judge sitting on every Supreme Court of each state and territory.

Her Honour emphasised that there are issues that still need to be tackled, including but not limited to:

- Working conditions for young lawyers; and
- Developing flexible working hours – however not in the Howard sense of flexible for the bosses.

In this light, Her Honour was delighted to hand over the patronage to Justice Bryant, who she believes is a “true feminist who believes in the rights of women”.

Accepting the patronage, and the AWL gift of cognac and a white diamond gold brooch, Justice Bryant recognised that you can still be yourself and have role models. Justice Bryant explained that for her this was her mother who had demonstrated a life long commitment to the law and to the audience’s delight the inspirational and modest Justice Gaudron.

Justice Bryant agreed with Justice Gaudron that we still have a long way to go for improving opportunities for women in the law, especially at the bar where overnight briefs are hard to accept with a young family at home. In presenting the handover, AWL President Georgia McMaster also echoed Justice Bryant’s call for breaking down the stereotypes.

“I hope Diana provides assistance and guidance over the coming years,” she said.

Please contact Lee-May Saw, Treasurer, Australian Women Lawyers, and Immediate Past President, Women Lawyers’ Association of New South Wales, on 0417 693 239 or [lmsaw@idx.com.au](mailto:lmsaw@idx.com.au) for further information and inquiries.