



OWLS MID-YEAR NEWSLETTER 2019

Welcome to the OWLS mid-year newsletter, with updates on:

- Culture Change Symposium: report by committee member Katherine Neville-Lamb
- HerStory update: where we're at with the book on the history of OWLS
- Women You can Bank On: report by committee member Joy Liddicoat
- OWLETS update: report by OWLETS representative Grace Titter
- Marion Thomson Charitable Trust: information on the Trust and how to apply

Thank you for your continued support of OWLS and attending events this year. So far we've enjoyed bringing you a range of sessions - from the Ngai Tahu Law Centre lunch and learn, ILANZ (in-house lawyers) talk, cocktails with Justice French, a heritage building tour, a Women's Wellness seminar, mid-winter dinner, QCs lunch at Vault 21, and more....

Our upcoming events:

- 26 July: Kathryn Beck lunch event with the Otago Branch (1pm at Gallaway Cook Allan)
- 10 August: OCHO chocolate factory tour
- 13 August: Bystander Training with Bell Murphy (4pm at Gallaway Cook Allan)
- 20 August: Fundraising Quiz at the Kensington (open to all!)
- 19 September: Suffrage Day
- 24 October: Ethel Benjamin Address with Una Jagose QC (1pm at the Art Gallery)
- 6 December: Christmas lunch

CULTURE CHANGE SYMPOSIUM – MAY 2019 (Katherine Neville-Lamb)

I attended the Law Society Culture and Change Symposium in Wellington as the Otago Women's Lawyers' Society representative on 14 May 2019. The symposium was held at Pipitea Marae, and was a full day think tank dedicated to identifying, understanding, and taking steps to improve the culture of the law profession. It was organised and supported by the Working Group and facilitated by PWC. There were about 100 attendees from all over NZ, ranging from private practice solicitors, in-house counsel, barristers, HR staff, and law society staff.

Prior to symposium we were encouraged to read *Literature Review on Culture and Change in the Legal Profession*, which is report commissioned by the New Zealand Law Society. The report provides a comprehensive summary and analysis of the issues facing the profession, and review of the available literature on this topic. In short, it identifies competition, financial motivation, power imbalance and conformity as key cultural traits prevalent in the legal profession. The report acknowledges that the financial structure of the profession (budgets and billable hours) contribute significantly to the culture of our profession. It also discusses policies and interventions that may reduce harmful behaviours. Finally, the report compares jurisdictional responses that make for useful comparison.

The day started with an opening speech by Law Society President Tiana Epati, which is available here in full [here](#). Tiana's speech was empowering and inspirational and a great way to start the day. I'm excited for the mana wahine and perspective that she will bring to her presidency.

We then heard from Sir Brian Roche and leaders of some private and public organisations that have actively and successfully undergone culture change in recent years - Defence Force, Spark, the Department of Internal Affairs and Double Denim, a workplace 'gender intelligence organisation' that assists businesses with implementing changes. Dr Todd Bridgman also spoke about his research into the culture change within the NZ Police. The common thread for these speakers was recognising that leadership must be relentlessly committed to change, and there must be active, honest and regular engagement with staff. They also promoted the improvements in the workplace since implementing culture change initiatives, which include happier and more productive staff.

Late in the afternoon the Working Group shared their draft working vision for the profession, which was 'a legal community which is healthy, safe, just, and supportive'. They encouraged feedback from attendees and there was robust debate about the nuances of that definition.

We finished the day by identifying tangible actions that we could do tomorrow, and that the profession could do generally, to combat some of the cultural issues we had discussed. There were about 45 ideas in total, but popular ideas included young lawyers asserting themselves to bosses, compulsory CPD about bias and culture change, and the Law Society improving the regulatory framework to provide clear definitions for workplace harassment and bullying. However, there must also be buy in from partners and members of the judiciary.

It was encouraging to see so many people from the legal profession in one room committed to change. However, in my opinion and based on my interactions with attendees, most already knew what the issues were and anticipated the day would be set aside to problem solve them. In the end, only about an hour was spent doing that. In my view, the opportunity to have 100 minds spend one day starting to solve this issue was not fully maximised. I understand that the Working Group will be producing a report on their findings of the day. I look forward to reading that and moving to the next stage of improving the culture of the legal profession.

HERSTORY – AN UPDATE ON THE BOOK OF THE HISTORY OF OWLS

Committee members Katherine Neville-Lamb and Allie Cunningham are working hard to finalise details for the publishing of HerStory, and we're hoping to launch the book in November. The manuscript has been reviewed and particular items checked with records in the OWLS archives, plus we've sourced photographs for the book from our archives, members and the Otago Daily Times. Katherine and Allie have been getting in touch with members to clarify some details, and they are grateful for the assistance given to date.

If you or your firm have any photos from OWLS events, or any newspaper clippings or similar, please send them through to members.owls@gmail.com

We appreciate all the work done in previous years by Kate Fallow, Ruth Ballantyne and Kim Jarvis, and by author Janet November.

WOMEN YOU CAN BANK ON – JUNE 2019 (Joy Liddicoat)

WYCBO is a unique Dunedin event organised by Dunedin Venues and sponsored by Anderson-Lloyd. This year's theme was the Change Revolution and OWLS' Joy Liddicoat joined the after dinner panel on 20 June to share perspectives on the topic "Thriving in the future – Why businesses need gender, cultural and socioeconomic diversity to succeed".

Along with Sue Bidrose, Janine Kapa, Cheryl Andrews, and Zoe Hobson, Joy considered the implications of predicted workforce changes, gender and racial differences, the risks facing business if they do not diversify and the benefits of doing so now.

Zoe highlighted the important role of human resource departments in business in helping get the right gender, cultural and socioeconomic balance in a workplace: "HR is important for diversity, but leadership have to be involved, too. One of the biggest mistakes I see businesses make is treating diversity as JUST an HR issue, or an issue for a working group. Diversity isn't something you siphon off to deal with on the side, it's a core business issue, with core business results."

Cheryl picked up on this, challenging employers to "Stop hiring for cultural fit. Cultural fit is a licence to hire people who work like you, live like you, look like you, and think like you. Instead hire for values alignment or even better cultural add"

Janine Kapa, agreed, noting that by 2030, 50% of our population is projected to be brown: Māori, Pasifika and Asian (as a result of the fact that we are younger and reproducing more, but also as a result of migration – 16% growth compared with 13% for non-Māori). European and 'Other' will be the only ethnic groups to decrease. The Māori population in Otago at about 8% or 9% is lower than the national population at 15%. But again, the age profile is younger, which means we will have more people in the labour force in 10-20 years' time (e.g. the Māori workforce is projected to increase by 50% in 2038). Janine challenged businesses to ask themselves if they were ready and if the answer was no, to focus on getting ready now.

Joy spoke about the impact of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, on women. "Researchers predict an increase demand for, and jobs with, the skills which machines can't do and which women are good at such as creative skills and emotional, cultural and social intelligence," she said. But Joy sounded a cautionary note, saying that if the past can help to predict the future, then the present tells us we have good reason to doubt that AI will benefit women: "Women's work, especially unpaid work (cleaning, nursing, home care, care of the elderly, cultural and community work, workplace emotional labour) is already low paid and undervalued. I for one do not think demand for these skills will somehow suddenly flourish and change women's work into highly valued and well paid. The histories of women's occupational segregation bear this out. If we want to make change, we need to act deliberately and collectively"

Finally, Sue Bidrose spoke of her experience in seeing the benefits of more diversity improve local government decision-making and encouraging more women and diverse candidates to stand in local body elections. It was a thought provoking, fun evening!



OWLETS (Grace Titter)

OWLETS have had a very busy year so far. We started the semester by welcoming two new committee members; Keziah Lawes and Thulacksha Thayarooban. They are both brilliant additions to our team, especially when organising events. We have also been lucky enough for OWLS to give us support so we can run these events for our students.

Our first event was a get-together so our female law students can get to know one another and meet some of the OWLS committee members and get some inside advice on being a female in the workplace. Mid semester we had a coffee catch up where we offered coffee vouchers and a space to talk about how the semester and workload was going. There was a great turnout and we are considering having another catch up next semester. Our final event for the semester was a wellness breakfast panel where we had four amazing speakers on the panel; Professor Jessica Palmer, Anita Chan QC, Allie Cunningham and Brenda Thom. There was a wide array of experiences and ideas from the panellists, so we got a thorough understanding of the topic 'resilience in the workplace'. We greatly appreciate the support of the panellists and OWLS for helping us run the event.

Events coming up include; a legal competition panel which will promote more females competing; a mentoring programme to help students gain a greater understanding about the workplace and finally a 'speed-dating' event with law students and professionals.

Thank you once again to OWLS for the support, we really appreciate it!



MARION THOMSON CHARITABLE TRUST

Who was Marion Thomson?

Marion Thomson (1911-2007) is an inspiring role model for female lawyers in Otago. Marion graduated from Otago law school in 1937 as the only female graduate in her class and the 3rd ever female law graduate, and she won several academic prizes. She then married and had a family so did not practise law (although worked as a legal typist). In 1960, she was offered a position in a firm and was admitted to the bar, making her the fifth woman to be admitted in Dunedin, only two others having been admitted in the 24 years since Marion had graduated.

Marion was a life member of Otago Women Lawyers' Society (OWLS) and supported many OWLS events and initiatives. She was known for having great attention to detail, her capacity for dealing with clients, and her ability to solve tricky legal issues, particularly in the area of family law. Marion observed the challenge for women seeking to balance a professional career with the demands of raising a family.

The Marion Thomson Charitable Trust

The Marion Thomson Charitable Trust is a registered Charitable Trust and was established in 2009 with the assistance of OWLS. The Trust provides financial support to the wide range of professionals and those working in the community in the area of family law and the Family Court.

The charitable objectives of the Trust are to:

1. Benefit members of the public who are on legal aid and without substantial means to access justice in Otago and NZ by supporting:
 - a. People who are appointed by the Family Court to assist such members of the public; and/or
 - b. People who assist such members of the public to use the Family Court system
2. Advance education to provide scholarships and funding to students, researchers, lawyers and other professionals working in the area of family law or the Family Court in Otago, to attend conferences and education seminars, or to fund local educational seminars and conferences on family law issues.

The Trust can provide modest financial assistance (e.g. grants, loans, payments) to the wide range of professionals and others, as well as organisations, engaging in activities or initiatives in the Family Court. The Trust has discretion to make financial assistance available on such terms and conditions it thinks are appropriate.

Eligibility to apply: Applicants must be individuals or organisations based in Otago, have a Family Law or Family Court focus, and intend to engage in an activity which achieves the Trust's objects. Examples include: study as part of professional development, attending Law Society seminars and conferences, or funding local seminars and conferences on family law issues.

Applications: please complete the Application Form ([linked on the OWLS website](#)).

1. All applications must be received no later than 20 working days before the beginning of the course, seminar or other initiative/activity you would like to attend.
2. Successful applicants will need to provide a written report to the Trust on the outcomes gained as a result of the financial assistance. They may also be invited to give a presentation to members of the Otago Women Lawyers Society (OWLS).

Contact details: marionthomsoncharitabletrust@gmail.com

23RD ANNUAL NEW ZEALAND LAW FOUNDATION



Ethel Benjamin
COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS

The Otago Women Lawyers' Society continues the celebration of the achievements of women in law and is pleased to invite you to the annual New Zealand Law Foundation Ethel Benjamin Commemorative Address to be given by:

Una Jagose QC
Solicitor-General of New Zealand

Dunedin Public Art Gallery, The Octagon
Thursday 24 October 2019. The Address commences 1pm sharp.
Light refreshments will follow.

RSVP by 16 October 2019 to email:
members.owlis@gmail.com


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