



**NSW REGIONAL  
WOMEN LAWYERS**

# **ARMIDALE CONFERENCE**

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**FRIDAY 1 MARCH 2024**

**8.45AM-5:00PM**

**COLLECT 5 CPD POINTS**

**University of New England**

J P Belshaw Lecture Theatre, Building No W040,  
Room No 5.518, Elm Ave, Armidale NSW

**REGISTER NOW**

[www.nrwl.org.au](http://www.nrwl.org.au) | [secretary@nrwl.org.au](mailto:secretary@nrwl.org.au)

## NSW REGIONAL WOMEN LAWYERS CONFERENCE

NSW Regional Women Lawyers Inc ('NRWL') was established in 2023 by a group of energetic regional women lawyers who are working to ensure that those practising in regional, rural and remote (RRR) NSW have the same benefits and opportunities as their city colleagues. NRWL has established representation in the Central West, the Far West, the Illawarra, the Southern Highlands, the Hunter, the Central Coast and Western Sydney and many of the RRR areas.

This conference on the 1 March 2024 in the New England High Country at beautiful Armidale, offers a great environment for networking and an opportunity to top up your CPD points. Our dynamic and diverse program includes some amazing speakers and well-known lawyers who are experts in their field.

### JOIN US FOR DISCUSSIONS ON:

- **The Indigenous List in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia**
- **How women in the regions can achieve the same benefits and opportunities as their city colleagues when working in the law.**
- **Transforming sexual harassment culture in rural and regional areas**
- **Climate Change litigation and careers in environmental law**
- **Multi-party disputes and the Design and Building Practitioners Act**
- **Costs Assessments - what, when, why, how?**
- **Blockchain in rural and regional legal practice**
- **Financials of running a regional law firm**
- **Recruitment and retention of lawyers in regional legal practice**
- **Career pathways - from the bar and bench for regional women lawyers**

### TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION

Situated within a day's drive or short flight from Sydney and Brisbane, getting to Armidale is easier than you may think. Trains stop daily at Armidale, and the journey from Sydney takes around six hours. You can also fly into Armidale Airport and hire a car to explore the region.

The Armidale region boasts spectacular waterfalls, gorges, world-heritage national parks, cool-climate vineyards and a fascinating and diverse cultural heritage.

Accommodation in Armidale suits various budgets and ranges from camping and holiday parks to relaxing hotels.

- Visit <https://www.visitarmidale.com.au>

### THURSDAY NIGHT NETWORKING DINNER

**DATE** Thursday 29 February 2024

**TIME** 5.30pm drinks for 6.30pm dinner

**PLACE** Rydges, 31 Marsh St, Armidale

**COST** \$70 per person for 2 courses - drinks available for purchase

Dinner guests receive a 10% discount on accommodation at Rydges Armidale.

## IN-PERSON AND ONLINE EVENT COLLECT CPD POINTS

If this particular educational activity extends your knowledge and skills in areas that are relevant to your practice needs or professional development, then you should claim one (1) "unit" for each hour of attendance. Refreshment breaks not included.

• **\$295 MEMBERS** • **\$345 NON-MEMBERS** • **\$50 STUDENTS + BF VIA HUMANITIX**

Registration cost includes attendance and catering for lunch and afternoon tea.

## SPEAKERS



### JUDGE JANE COSTIGAN

#### **Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia – Division 2, Newcastle Registry**

Judge Costigan was appointed to the Newcastle Registry of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia on 7 September 2017.

She was educated at Sydney University and admitted in the Supreme Court of NSW in 1986 and to the roll of solicitors in England and Wales in 1992. She practised as a solicitor in Goulburn, Sydney, Tunbridge Wells & Tonbridge in England, and Gosford. In 2001 she left private practice to join Legal Aid NSW working in family law and care and protection. In 2015 she was appointed as the Solicitor in Charge of the Gosford Office of Legal Aid.



### JUDGE ROBYN TUPMAN

#### **District Court of New South Wales**

Robyn Tupman was appointed to the NSW District Court 28 years ago in January 1996. She was a solicitor and barrister in private practice in Sydney from 1978, with a broad practice including representation of government departments, family and child welfare law and criminal law. She currently sits mainly in the criminal jurisdiction of the NSW District Court largely presiding over jury trials in Sydney and regional NSW, involving both NSW and Commonwealth offences.

In the early 2000s Judge Tupman was involved introducing special procedures to the District Court for trials and hearings of sexual assault charges. In 2016, at the request of the then NSW Attorney General, she set up the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Pilot in the District Court, which introduced full prerecording for children's evidence and intermediaries for children. The Pilot has recently been extended to all courts throughout New South Wales.

In 2015 she was honoured as a life member of the Women Lawyers' Association of NSW and supports and assists the NSW Women Barristers Forum. She was President of the Australian Association of Women Judges (AAWJ) from 2014 to 2021, an Asia Pacific Board member of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) from 2016 and the IAWJ Secretary Treasurer from 2021 to the present.

Since March 2021 she has been part of an IAWJ Committee of 7 international women Judges established to assist Afghan women Judges, initially to re-establish and re-affiliate with the IAWJ and then, following the takeover of the Taliban in August 2021, to assist with evacuation from Afghanistan and resettlement in countries throughout the world including to Australia which is now home for 19 Afghan women Judges and their families.



### SKYE CHARRY

#### **Associate Professor, University of New England**

Associate Professor Skye Charry works in the UNE Law School and has practiced, researched and consulted on issues of workplace sex discrimination for almost 20 years. Skye founded 'S.A.C. Consulting' which offers bespoke gender equity programs to government, industry, the legal profession and the education sector to transform workplace culture on the ground. Skye's book 'Whispers from the Bush- The Workplace Sexual Harassment of Australian Rural Women' has been recognised as having situated the complexities of sexual harassment in rural workplaces on the national agenda and she is a passionate and tireless advocate in this area. The Victorian Women's Trust has produced a documentary film called 'Grace Under Fire' based on Skye's research.

In 2022, Skye partnered with Australian Women in Seafood on a successful Commonwealth grant application for the renewal of sexual harassment culture in the seafood industry and she is currently leading the national gender equity review over a three year project. She also recently reviewed the culture for NSW Forestry Corporation and consults for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry on gender equity. Skye was selected as a civilian delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women for YWCA Australia and was awarded the UC Chancellor's Distinguished Young Alumni Award. Skye's recent service roles have included Chair of the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council for Women, Vice President of the YWCA Canberra and she is an Associate at Insight Exchange Australia (which is an organisation dedicated to acknowledging and amplifying the expertise of domestic violence and sexual harassment survivors). Skye also sits on the Australia New Zealand Mental Health Association Committee.



### **LISA COATES**

#### **Principal/Director Lodestone Law & Lecturer in Law, Charles Sturt University**

Lisa Coates is the Principal/ Director of Lodestone Business Law, established primarily as an online law firm in Bathurst NSW. She was admitted as a legal practitioner in the Australian Capital Territory Supreme Court and the High Court in 2001. Lisa has extensive experience in Canberra and Melbourne in global and boutique law firms. She is also a part-time lecturer in law and a founding member of the Centre for Law and Justice at Charles Sturt University since 2016.



### **KIRSTY RUDDOCK**

#### **Managing Lawyer, Environmental Defenders Office Safe Climate Corporate & Commercial team**

Kirsty Ruddock is the Managing Lawyer for EDO's Safe Climate Corporate & Commercial team. Kirsty is an experienced climate lawyer and litigator, having been involved in representing and advising clients on a range of environmental law issues. Kirsty and her team work with clients to tackle climate greenwashing and use corporate and consumer law to run groundbreaking litigation, holding Australia's biggest companies to account for their promises on climate action



### **NICOLE ARMITAGE**

#### **Principal Solicitor, eConveyancing NSW**

Nicole has practiced as a solicitor for over 22 years having graduated with a Bachelor of Laws in 1999. Nicole is the award-winning solicitor director of firm eConveyancing NSW which has been operating since 2012 and is an accredited electronic conveyancing practitioner.

Prior to establishing E-Conveyancing NSW, Nicole was a costs specialist and in 2014, Nicole was appointed a costs assessor by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of NSW.

Prior to specialising in legal costs, and, in the year before graduating from her law degree, Nicole worked as a paralegal and finished her law degree whilst working full time. Prior to specialising in legal costs, Nicole worked in the area of personal injuries litigation and later, in superannuation litigation and administrative law.



### **HEATHER MCKINNON**

#### **Partner, Bryant McKinnon Lawyers | Accredited Family Law Specialist**

Heather McKinnon is the founder and senior partner at Bryant McKinnon Lawyers in Coffs Harbour, NSW. She has built a formidable reputation over three decades practising family law in the Mid North Coast region. She has become one of the leading Family Law authorities in the country, but her focus has always remained on helping people in her own community to achieve the best possible outcomes in often difficult and traumatic times.

Exceptionally qualified, Heather not only has a Specialist Family Lawyer accreditation, she is also one of the region's only private sector qualified Independent Children's Lawyers and has qualified as an Arbitrator under the Family Law Act Regulations.

Heather's style is frank and solutions-focused. Not one to put people on a process-driven treadmill, she works to understand her client's individual circumstances and guide them through complex family transitions.

A believer in the value of community, Heather is active in both her professional and local spheres. Over the years she has participated in a number of advisory legal committees and has worked tirelessly on local development projects including the National Marine Science Centre, Warina Women's Refuge, the Mid North Coast Development Board and the Friends of the Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery.



### **CHARLOTTE EGAN**

#### **Principal Solicitor/Director, Booth Brown Legal**

Charlotte is a Principal Solicitor/Director at Booth Brown Legal in Dubbo, a small, regional law firm. Charlotte practises in commercial, property and rural succession law almost exclusively. After growing up in Dubbo, Charlotte obtained her Bachelor of Law/Arts from the University of New England and has since obtained a Masters of Law (Property Law) from the College of Law. After completing her studies, she returned home to Dubbo and has continued to assist her very broad range of clients in a primarily regional law space.

Charlotte wears many hats including as a volunteer mentor to local Dubbo students with an interest in the legal profession, and Secretary of the Trangie Tigers Rugby Union Club.

Charlotte is a keen advocate for young women in the profession and is acutely aware of both the benefits and challenges of rural and regional legal practice – having lived it herself. She is keen to assist young women in seeking career progression opportunities, all whilst balancing life as well.



### **HALEY MCEWEN**

#### **Senior Solicitor, Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre**

Haley McEwen is a Senior Solicitor with the Mid North Coast Legal Centre and Senior Lecturer and Head of Discipline in Law for Charles Sturt University.

Haley has a passion for social justice and bridging the gap between academic theory and legal practice. Her areas of interest include reflective practice, clinical legal education, regional, rural and remote access to justice and mental health.

Haley is Co-Chair of the National 4Rs Community Legal Network and in her downtime loves to enjoy the beautiful beaches and coffee spots Port Macquarie has to offer.



### **JUDY HARRISON**

#### **Senior Lecturer, ANU College of Law**

Judy is lawyer, senior lecturer, legal policy and legal service consultant who has taught at the ANU College of Law since 1995. Admitted to legal practice in 1981, she was Assistant Director (Family Law) with ACT Legal Aid and a similar position in the NT (1988-1993) and held tribunal and law reform appointments in both jurisdictions.

She co-convened the Australian Children's Contact Services Association (1994-2003), convened the National Women's Justice Coalition (1995-2003) and led the Australian Virtual Centre for Women and the Law (1999-2005). In 2009-2010 about 20 ANU law graduates undertook 20-80 day legal practice experience in regional, rural and remote (RRR) Community Legal Centres around Australia. Judy managed this project, connected to the recruitment and retention of lawyers in RRR Australia for the ANU Legal Workshop in partnership with the National Association of Community Legal Centres.



### **LAINA CHAN**

#### **Barrister, 2 Selborne Chambers**

Laina is an award winning barrister. She is the 2021 Lawyers Weekly Women in Law Barrister of the Year. She has also recently been named as a Top 100 Woman in Construction. Laina is an appellate advocate with a significant appellate practice. Recognised as the leading expert in Australia on the interplay between construction and insurance law, Laina is a learned and fearless advocate.

Laina works on complex disputes with an emphasis in construction, property and insurance law. She specialises in professional indemnity claims, property law and complex commercial dispute resolution.



### **MICHELLE MEARES**

#### **Barrister and President NSW Regional Women Lawyers**

Michelle is a barrister at 2 Selborne Chambers and accepts briefs in equity and property, commercial law (building and construction), insurance disputes and family law. Michelle has extensive civil litigation experience and has appeared in the Supreme Court, Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, District Court and various tribunals. Michelle sits on the NSW Bar Association Legal Aid Committee and the Media Information and Technology Committee.

Michelle was the Secretary of the Central Coast Regional Law Society from 2019-2022 and has enjoyed mentoring young lawyers. She was a member of the Council of Law Reporting for NSW and volunteers with the Central Coast Community Legal Centre. In 2019, she was a Finalist for WLANSW Regional Lawyer of the Year.

## PROGRAM

<b>9.00am</b>	<b>OPENING</b> Mark Perry, University of New England, Head of Law School
<b>9.15am</b>	<b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THE SPECIALIST INDIGENOUS LIST</b> Judge Jane Costigan, Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia
<b>9.45am</b>	<b>SESSION 1: WORKING WITH PERSPECTIVE TO TRANSFORM SEXUAL HARASSMENT CULTURE IN RURAL &amp; REGIONAL AREAS</b> Associate Professor Skye Charry, University of New England
<b>10.30am</b>	<b>SESSION 2: CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATION - CAREERS IN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW</b> Kirsty Ruddock, Managing Lawyer Environmental Defenders Office Safe Climate Corporate & Commercial team
<b>11.00am</b>	<b>MORNING TEA</b>
<b>11.30am</b>	<b>SESSION 3: COSTS ASSESSMENT - WHEN, WHY, HOW</b> Nicole Armitage, Principal Solicitor eConveyancing NSW
<b>12.00pm</b>	<b>SESSION 4: BLOCKCHAIN IN RURAL AND REGIONAL LEGAL PRACTICE: A WINDOW INTO THE FUTURE</b> Lisa Coates, Principal/Director Lodestone Law & Lecturer in Law, Charles Sturt University
<b>12.30pm</b>	<b>SESSION 5: WOMEN IN LAW - INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE COURT ROOM - FROM AFGHANISTAN TO AUSTRALIA</b> Judge Robyn Tupman, District Court NSW
<b>1.00pm</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
<b>2.30pm</b>	<b>SESSION 6: FINANCIALS OF RUNNING A REGIONAL LAW FIRM</b> Heather McKinnon, Partner Bryant McKinnon Lawyers and Charlotte Egan, Director Booth Brown Legal
<b>3.15pm</b>	<b>SESSION 7: EXTENDING THE REACH OF THE LAW OF NEGLIGENCE: MULTI PARTY DISPUTES AND THE DESIGN BUILDING PRACTITIONERS ACT</b> Laina Chan, Barrister, 2 Selborne Chambers
<b>4.00pm</b>	<b>SESSION 8: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF LAWYERS IN REGIONAL AND RURAL NSW</b> Haley McEwen, Senior Solicitor, Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre and Judith Harrison, Senior Lecturer ANU College of Law
<b>4.30pm</b>	<b>CLOSING</b> Michelle Meares, President of NRWL and Barrister, 2 Selborne Chambers

*NRWL acknowledges and thanks our major sponsors for their substantial contributions and support.*







**NSW REGIONAL  
WOMEN LAWYERS**

If you share our goal of working to ensure that women lawyers practising in regional, rural and remote NSW have the same benefits and opportunities as their city colleagues, become a member via our website.

Lawyers \$55, Students/Associates \$22 valid to 30 June 2024

Diversity | Inclusion | Support | Empowerment  
...for women lawyers right across NSW

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