



3 November 2022

Ms Danielle Mildren
President
WLA Association ACT

Email: contact@wlaact.org.au and dmildren@claytonutz.com

Dear Danielle,

On behalf of the ACT Bar Association, I am writing to you in relation to the Women Lawyers' Association Gala Dinner held on Friday 21 October 2022.

The ACT Bar Association is proud of its long-standing association with WLA and its sponsorship of the Gala Dinner. We are committed to increasing the role, acknowledgment, and presence of women at the Bar and to partnering with WLA in this work. It was very pleasing to see how many people attended the Gala Dinner. We were delighted that so many of our own members attended to support the common cause of women in the law. The organisation of the event was a great credit to the organising committee.

Unfortunately, a significant number of our members who attended were deeply offended and distressed by the speech given by Ms Louise Milligan. I am aware that several members of the Association have written to the WLA in their individual capacities expressing their concerns. I have been asked by the Bar Council to draw the Council's concerns to your attention.

In the view of the Bar Council, Ms Milligan's speech was insensitive and polemical. She demonstrated no understanding of the difficult and vital work done by barristers of all genders in both criminal law and other areas of the law, nor of key aspects of that work (and indeed of our justice system), including the "cab rank rule" and the requirements of the rule in *Browne v Dunn*. Ms Milligan seemed to generalise that all barristers who acted for defendants in sexual assault matters were "part of the problem". Ms Milligan was also impliedly critical of those members of the Association who are employed by the DPP and undertake the difficult work of prosecution of serious offences.

There were other significant problems with Ms Milligan's speech. She seemed to encourage lawyers to run cases in the media, and promoted misconceptions concerning the criminal justice system. Most damaging, her speech was divisive of the community that had gathered to celebrate women in the law.



I wanted to let you know that the Council will shortly be writing to members of the Association disassociating itself from the views expressed by Ms Milligan, and sending a message of support — particularly to our members who practise in criminal law.

We continue to value our relationship with WLA, and look forward to working in a positive and effective way towards our common goals.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Curran'.

Rebecca Curran
President