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Spotlight shining on gender bias and access to justice in time for International Women's Day 2015

Today Women Lawyers of Western Australia Inc. (WLWA) released the Executive Summary to the 20th Anniversary Review of the 1994 Chief Justice's Gender Bias Taskforce Report (2014 Review Report) making this important report even more accessible. The Executive Summary highlights some of the important recommendations for each of the nine chapters in combating gender bias and access to justice.

"Gender bias in the law leads to gender inequity and inequality. Our report found this leads to legal, educational, political, and correctional systems being unfair to women. One of the most concerning ramifications of gender inequality is the community epidemic of domestic and family violence. We have a responsibility to address all of these issues.

Why is combating gender bias in the profession important? Because providing access to justice is the responsibility of both the government and the legal profession. Because retaining talented women in the legal profession is a community issue. To retain those women, the profession needs to eliminate discrimination and unconscious bias as well as implementing the recommended changes. To do that, change needs to be implemented from the top, collectively. This is your responsibility. Review your business cases, look at the research: women are good for business. I encourage you to ask yourselves, if not me, who? If not now, when? If not, why not?" said Tina McAulay, President, WLWA.

WLWA encourages you look at the recommendations that affect you and start implementing the changes. The 2014 Review Report was published in September 2014 and provides 197 recommendations to government agencies, organisations and groups, including the Law Society and the Western Australian Bar Association. WLWA will be consulting with all of the organisations mentioned in the recommendations.

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Note: On 13th March 2015, the WLWA Honours Dinner 2015 will be held. This important annual event recognises all women who have been appointed as Judicial officers from all Courts and Tribunals in WA. It also announces the 2015 winners of “Women Lawyer of the Year”, “Senior Woman Lawyer of the Year”, “Junior Woman Lawyer of the Year” and “Rural and Regional Woman Lawyer of the Year” and the recipient of the Aboriginal Women’s Legal Education Trust scholarship. For further information please visit the website: www.wlwa.asn.au.