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CEO APPOINTMENT

Women's Legal Service WA appoints inaugural CEO

The Women's Legal Service Western Australia (WLSWA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Gillian Booth-Yudelman as our inaugural Chief Executive Officer.

Dr Booth-Yudelman will help position WLSWA as a sustainable, thriving and resilient State-wide legal service solely for women.

WLSWA Board Chair Zoe Henham said Dr Booth-Yudelman was already applying her extensive experience in corporate, not-for-profit and philanthropic sectors to bring significant value to WLSWA.

"It is a challenging time for WLSWA in this current environment as levels of domestic violence against women are escalating globally," Ms Henham said.

"With Dr Booth-Yudelman at the helm, who has had significant experience in leading human service organisations, we are confident that our impact and reach will expand to help meet the unmet legal needs and deliver justice for more Western Australian women.

"Dr Booth-Yudelman is passionate about women's issues, gender equality and the rights of women and their children. And importantly, brings the strategic, innovative, business development and leadership skills required to drive this important organisation to achieve its vision."

Research tells us (and our experience confirms):

- More than 65,000 women in Western Australia have unmet legal needs
- Less than 40% of legal aid applications are granted to women
- 72% of Community Legal Centres (of which we are one) are unable to meet demand
- 60% of separated women experience financial hardship
- And family law is the number one unmet legal need for pro bono services in WA

Dr Booth-Yudelman said the WLSWA was an amazing organisation of dedicated people providing a unique, trauma-informed service to deliver legal advice, support and education for women in crisis or facing disadvantage.

"We are currently experiencing an increase in demand for legal services due to social and financial changes that are having a major impact on our clients," Dr Booth-Yudelman said.

“Research shows that COVID-19 is having an unprecedented impact on the increase of domestic violence in the home.

“In Australia, search engines such as Google are seeing the highest magnitude of searched for domestic violence help in the past five years and we are hearing reports of people using COVID-19 as a psychological weapon against their partners.

“So, now, more than ever, it is imperative that we assist and empower women to make informed legal choices and find the courage and determination to create a more positive future for themselves and their children.”

Dr Booth-Yudelman said although the recently introduced laws to protect Western Australian family violence victims during the COVID-19 pandemic were a welcome move, more funding was urgently needed.

“The news laws will help the justice system respond to the heightened risk of family and domestic violence due to the enforced isolation of women and children from family and the community,” she said.

“But we are urging the WA Government to provide urgently-needed funding to help us meet the increased demand for our services.

“We desperately need more lawyers to help women in this time of crisis - last week alone, we saw more than a 120 per cent increase in calls to our service.

“WA is the only state/territory that doesn’t currently have any State Government funding for a legal service catering solely to women in crisis, and we are calling on the McGowan Government to urgently rectify this situation.”

WLSWA’s confidential services are being provided remotely to women throughout Western Australia during the current coronavirus pandemic.

Dr Booth-Yudelman’s appointment with WLSWA follows her success in the business development, relationship and fundraising work of UnitingCare West and Women & Infants Research Foundation.

Ends

For more information, interview and photo/filming opportunities with Dr Booth-Yudelman, please contact: Louise Merrillees 0422 018 522 / louise@wlswa.org.au

ABOUT DR BOOTH-YUDELMAN

Dr Gillian Booth-Yudelman is the inaugural Chief Executive Officer of the Women’s Legal Service WA. With 20 years of international experience in the business, not-for-profit and community sectors, Gillian has a depth of experience in strategy, leadership and philanthropy.

A delegate to the United Nations in New York for the annual meeting on the status of women and girls, Gillian is passionate about women’s issues, gender equality and the

rights of women and their children. Gillian has held numerous board positions, has been a speaker at the International Rotary Conference in Seoul, South Korea and is a mentor for the Office of Multicultural Interests.

Gillian has an MA from the University of the Witwatersrand and a PHD from the University of South Africa

ABOUT WLSWA

As a specialist not-for-profit Community Legal Centre, WLSWA is the only standalone Women's Legal Service in WA. WLSWA provides accessible legal services on a non-discriminatory and equitable basis to women facing disadvantage in Western Australia.

From a gender equality perspective, we work to redress inequalities in the legal system that adversely and disproportionately affect vulnerable women. This is particularly in respect of victim/survivors of domestic and family violence who need expert assistance in family law, child protection and compensation for criminal injuries. We advocate for clients and educate stakeholders about these issues, operating holistically to empower and assist women with the common legal issues that they face.

WLSWA is at a critical stage of a strategic sustainability journey. Our 2019-2023 strategic plan includes plans for growth of services to meet our clients' needs and increasing client demand, securing alternative and sustainable sources of funding, realising efficiencies in our operations as well as expanding our volunteer program to expand our service delivery. We do all of this in the pursuit of making a difference to women in WA and to ensure we are advocating for an equal and just future for women in WA.