

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing about today's article in the Sydney Morning Herald in which the President of the Bar Association, Jane Needham, has spoken on the record about the election of the NSW Bar Council. The article is at the following link:
<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/i-wouldnt-do-it-again-jane-needham-sc-steps-down-as-nsw-bar-association-president-20151023-gkh6il.html>

It can hardly be surprising, in light of the tenor of the President's comments, that this article has run on the front page of today's Sydney Morning Herald and that it is embarrassing for our profession.

The President's decision to go into the media exemplifies the things the Political Neutrality ticket is determined to change about the Bar Association. This particular media article is deliberate. It draws un-favourable media attention to the NSW Bar Association, in circumstances of controversy, while also volunteering public criticism of members of our profession. The article is also replete with the sort of insinuations that have become all too common in public comments by office-bearers of the Bar Association; namely, that the NSW Bar is in some way a sexist place, and inhospitable to women.

The Political Neutrality ticket has taken no steps to draw media attention to these elections to NSW Bar Council. We believe the internal processes of the NSW Bar, wherever possible, should be a private matter for our profession. We oppose all and any attempts to draw unnecessary and negative public attention to our profession.

In the article the President asserts that election material disseminated by the Political Neutrality ticket contains factual inaccuracies. These assertions are not correct. I invite any colleague who has concerns about this to email me at this address, and I will provide a point-by-point response to the President's assertions in the article.

Sincerely,

Jeff Phillips SC
Denman Chambers