

## **INTRODUCTION**

**Dame Augusta Wallace**  
**(retired District Court Judge)**

To celebrate the centenary of Women's Suffrage in New Zealand the Auckland University Law Review is producing this symposium of articles on issues relating to Women and the Law.

For me, it is an honour to be invited to write this introduction. The range of topics indicates the many areas in which, in 1993, law impacts upon women and vice versa. It brought to my mind the fact that until the Married Women's Property Act of 1884 such women had no right to own property. Husband and wife were regarded as one entity represented by the husband. It is wise to remember that fact when assessing the progress, advancement and recognition of women's rights in New Zealand over the past 100 years.

I accept that there still remain areas where full equality has yet to evolve or be achieved. In my own professional life I took the simple minded view that no barriers existed, either in practice or on the Bench, and I found this to be so. Nevertheless, I was always ready to challenge perceived barriers on behalf of clients and by application of law and logic usually achieved success.

It is forty years since I graduated from the Auckland Law School and so I belong to the earlier generation of law students for whom academic education was more limited than it is now. During the working hours of the day we toiled in law offices serving our practical apprenticeship. We attended lectures in the early morning and the evening to learn the law. Our learning in Law School was of much more limited range and depth than that of the modern student as is evidenced by the contributions to this symposium. However our practical apprenticeship taught us to apply the law to the realities of human problems. It is for that reason that in my years of practice and later on the Bench I was always aware of progressive social changes and of the need for the law to recognise those changes and to adapt to meet them. It is perhaps elementary to say so, but the law represents the rules by which a society is regulated. As the needs and aspirations of a society change so must the law adapt or alter.

In essence, that is what the contributions to this symposium address.

I congratulate the contributors and express admiration and some envy at the breadth and depth of their thoughts and writing.