

Union of Australian Women Newsletter



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July 2013

WHAT'S ON

Monday 1 July
12 noon
UAW Darebin Group meeting
Northcote Town Hall meeting room

Monday 8 July
10.30 – 12.30
UAW Organising Committee
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Thursday 11 July
10.30 – 12.30
UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Wednesday 17 July
10.30 – 12.30
UAW COFFEE WITH A FOCUS
ASYLUM SEEKERS: WHAT NOW?
Speaker: Claire Nicholls
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
4th floor meeting room Ross House
247 Flinders Lane Melbourne
\$5
RSVP 9654 7409; email
uawv@vicnet.net.au
See enclosed flyer

Monday 22 July
UAW Film Group
A small group of members and friends meets, usually at the Nova, around mid-day. Contact the office if you would like to be notified of the film and the time.

SCIENTISTS' CONSENSUS ON MAINTAINING HUMANITY'S LIFE SUPPORT

Carmen Green

Peter Murphy from the **Search Foundation (the Social Education, Action and Research Concerning Humanity Foundation)** <http://www.search.org.au/> has forwarded an important statement on climate change to the UAW for our endorsement with the following comment:

Dear Climate network friends,

This Scientists' consensus statement is now open for scientists and any members of the public to voice their support. It brings together scientific reasoning on climate change and other pressures on our planet, and it would be great to have Australian voices supporting it.

At our June meeting, the UAW's Organising Committee discussed the Scientist's consensus statement on climate change and encourages members to endorse this vital statement. As an extra encouragement to take action on this issue, remember that according to the World Health Organisation global warming will increase the numbers of deaths from already major killers such as diarrhoeal diseases, malnutrition, malaria and dengue fever. It is also clear that extremely high temperatures are contributing directly to deaths from cardiovascular and respiratory disease particularly among elderly people.

Scientists' Consensus on Maintaining Humanity's Life Support

The statement was launched May 23, 2013, with a joint presentation by participating scientists with an announcement in Nature on May 30.

"By the time today's children reach middle age, it is extremely likely that Earth's life-support systems, critical for human prosperity and existence, will be irretrievably damaged by the magnitude, global extent, and combination of these human-caused environmental stressors"

As of May 21st, the statement had been signed by more than 520 prominent scientists from 44 countries that cover most of the world, including dozens of members of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and equivalent scientific bodies from other countries. The next goals are to deliver the statement to President Obama, all members of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Senate, and all state governors, and ultimately to leaders throughout the world in both government and business.

For the consensus statement to have an impact, it will need strong endorsement by thousands of scientists and at least tens of thousands of members of the general public. Since the launch on May 23 when we opened signing to everyone, we have received hundreds of new signatures per day, and have added citizens of more than 10 additional countries. The response has been remarkable! We will carry on with our work, but you can continue to help as well.

Please help to get the word out to family, friends, business leaders, politicians, other scientists. The document is now open for all global citizens to sign.

The statement is available to download and sign at <http://mahb.stanford.edu/endorse-the-message-to-world-leaders/>

Thank you for your help.

Elizabeth A. Hadly, on behalf of the Consensus authors.

AND SO IT ENDS: AUSTRALIA'S FIRST FEMALE PM Anne Sgro

Like so many of you, I was gripped and felt gutted by the unfolding drama of the end of a Prime Minister. Julia Gillard had contended with a relentless media campaign against her, and with relentless undermining from Kevin Rudd and his supporters within her government. I felt rage and sadness that it had come to this. Julia Gillard was a tough, resilient woman who responded with dignity and grace.

The achievements of the Gillard Government were considerable: an economy the envy of the western world; health reforms including the world first of taking on the tobacco companies; the Murray-Darling Basin reforms; national broadband; education reforms; a carbon price ; paid parental leave and many more. All impacted on the ability to create a fairer, more sustainable society. Which is not to ignore the dreadful policies: treatment of asylum seekers; shifting single parents, mainly women, onto Newstart thereby ensuring their poverty; intransigence on gay marriage; and a number of other poor policy decisions.

But as a society we must deal with the fact that respect for the person and the position was happily trashed. Gender and misogyny have been major issues to the detriment of a fair and civil society. Ego, power and self-interest have too often been dominant.

So where does that leave politics in Australia? Maybe a Rudd Government will do better at the polls. One would certainly hope so. But where does it leave the participation of women? What message does it send to women and girls?

I have always followed the old adage: Put the Liberals last. But can I vote for Labor now? I will be checking out the quality of the Green and Independent candidates. Maybe that is where the future lies, with people who answer to their communities as well as having progressive policies?

CATHY MCGOWAN: INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE FOR INDI

UAW member Cathy McGowan is standing as an Independent in the Federal election for the seat of Indi. Cathy is convenor of community group Voice for Indi, which was set up by residents who share a common goal of strengthening the relationship between community and policy matters. Cathy believes that there is need for a real change that genuinely reflects the voice of the people.

Cathy grew up in North East Victoria and began her career in rural Victoria teaching in Wangaratta. In the 1980s she bought a farm in the Indigo Valley and established a rural consulting business working with communities and farming families on issues such as Home and Community Care, child care, and care for people with cancer. She volunteers extensively in her community, and has worked as an academic, researcher and company director. Cathy has been recognised for her work with a number of awards, including the Order of Australia.

We wish her well and hope that she can defeat the Coalition's Sophie Mirabella. For more information, and how to support Cathy, go to www.voiceforindi.com and www.cathymcgowan.com.au

THE ABC AND ITS FUTURE

SOUTHERN BRANCH REPORT JUNE 2013

Mairi Neil

Fifteen members braved the winter chill breezing off the sea at Mordialloc to hear Morag Loh discuss the ABC and its future. We were not disappointed with Morag's succinct and thorough presentation of why our publicly funded broadcaster is under threat if the Coalition wins in September and agreed we must start lobbying now to prevent the break-up and sale of this important asset. Some members of The Liberal Party make no secret they would like to be rid of the ABC, and the Victorian branch have recently put it forward as policy.

Morag explained that the ABC has a charter, which states they are to inform, entertain and educate. They are funded by our taxes and are answerable to taxpayers. Commercial broadcasters exist to make a profit for their shareholders. In Australia commercial media is mainly Murdoch media.

"Rupert Murdoch controls 130 newspapers, owns 50% of 16 others, has digital media sites for most of them and publishes some 30 magazine titles throughout Australia. He also has interests in the news agency Australian Associated Press (AAP), FoxTel, NewsPol, Festival Records, film production and distribution, DVD production and two National Rugby League teams. In Australia, control is exercised through News Limited, wholly owned by News Corporation Limited, an international media giant completely dominated by Murdoch. His son Lachlan is a non-executive chairman of Ten Network Holdings Limited, with TV stations in five State capital cities."

<http://truthinmediaresourcecentre.wordpress.com/2013/01/07/murdochs-media-monster/>

Gina Rinehart bought into Fairfax, which owns the remaining newspapers, television and radio stations. 'The traditional justification for journalism has been that it can act as a watchdog on powerful government and corporations. What is now occurring is that representatives of one of the most powerful sectors in Australian society, the mining industry, are seeking to dominate one of the important accountability mechanisms in a democracy.' David McKnight writing online for The Conversation, <http://theconversation.com/why-does-gina-rinehart-want-control-of-fairfax-7774>

The media monopolies ensure the rich ease of access to express their points of view. The ABC is a much needed independent voice because so far community radio and television are too weak to make much of an impact.

The Coalition have been bleating about the left-wing bias of the ABC for years and use this as a reason for privatisation. Left-wing bias translates as being critical of business, especially big business! Morag pointed out that investigative journalism can only be done if the money and funding is made available to pay for the weeks of necessary digging. The editors of the Guardian newspaper, which has years of quality investigative journalism to its credit have expressed a concern about this issue if newspaper's go online.

Federal Minister, Stephen Conroy made sure any appointments to the ABC board and chairmanship were at arm's length from the government. A committee including Gonski and Fels provided short lists and suggestions during the overhaul. Conroy introduced and increased triennial funding and reaffirmed there would be no adverts -although for online it is 'no ads on principal websites'.

The ABC Board and chairman Mark Scott need to know we want the broadcaster to remain in public hands, and advert free. Remember it was John Howard who sold Radio Australia to a born again Christian group.

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THE ABC AND ITS FUTURE *Continued from Page 4*

The funding to the ABC is still not enough to do quality Australian drama hence so many imports from the BBC. And although we may love these British imports they too will disappear because the BBC have sold their drama department to Murdoch!

We must remember the value and achievements of the ABC like Chris Masters investigations for Four Corners: Big League (1983) sent the chief magistrate of NSW to prison, Moonlight State (1987) exposed and ended the corrupt rule of Bjelke Petersen in Queensland, and French Connections revealed the French Government's deliberate sinking of The Rainbow Warrior making headlines throughout the world. The contribution of SBS too has informed and educated by broadcasts such as the amazing documentary about disastrous economic and ecological effects of the oil spill by BP in the Gulf of Mexico, which ruined towns and livelihoods. The documentary revealed BP's long history of stuffing up: 2003 their cost cutting meant old machinery not replaced, 2005 machinery over 70 years old produced disaster at a Texas oil refinery, and a huge spill in Alaska in 2006. Workers were told to remain silent or they'd not get compensation. Only publicly funded news provides this much detail.

Only the ABC published information about the effectiveness of a carbon tax in 17 areas including Scandinavian countries and large provinces in USA and Canada and quoted esteemed British scientist Steven Hopper that 'to plant a tree is the biggest personal contribution anyone can make to alleviate climate change. Every street should be an avenue.' A message you will not hear on commercial networks.

Chief of CSIRO (1992-2002), Graham Pearman, an international expert on climate change left the CSIRO in 2004 because the Howard Government refused to listen to his concerns and make long range plans to cope with migrants from the flooded Pacific Islands. If the Coalition gets their way a privatised ABC will no longer bring us important documentaries or news.

Morag displayed pieces from an exhibition she produced for the Friends of the ABC to show how important the ABC, especially radio, is to our diverse and eclectic population. A farmer explained how vital to his business ABC market reports were, how the stories of country life made him feel part of the community. Another farmer said how she listened to important news about fire threats and emergency service movements during natural disasters. A young Somali girl considered the ABC fair in its treatment of minorities giving different groups an opportunity to voice their opinions, fulfilling the charter to inform and educate.

A scientist loves the fact the science shows facilitate debate about issues such as climate change on radio, television and online. A young woman appreciated that ABC radio plays different genres and promotes new musicians plus promoting Australian comedy. Many artists first exposure on the ABC.

Morag finished by encouraging us to sign a prepared letter to Malcolm Turnbull asking for commitment to keep 'our ABC'. She stressed the importance of talking more about the importance of the ABC - as well as writing and letting the ABC Board and the politicians know. An interesting discussion ensued with everyone agreeing the ABC falls into the category of 'some things should never be sold'. But sadly there seems to be a drop in standards and pro-Liberal bias under Mark Scott's chairmanship.(Amanda Vanstones program Counterpoint is seen as a rightwing rant.)

Carol Stals recommended the 5.30pm news on SBS3, the new Indigenous free-to-air television channel plus a curriculum-based online educational program for young children called Splash. Mary Rimmington and Morag recommended BBC World News, on the dial near Radio National.

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THE ABC AND ITS FUTURE *Continued from Page 5*

Mary Rimmington tabled an extract from the Unitarian Church's newsletter, *The Beacon*, revealing a Wish List compiled by the Institute of Public Affairs after a conference last year with keynote speakers: Tony Abbott, Rupert Murdoch and Gina Rinehart, and MC, Andrew Bolt! The distressing 75 points includes: break-up the ABC and put individual functions out to tender, privatise SBS, CSIRO, Australia Post, the Australian Institute of Sport and Medibank. Means test Medicare, repeal Fair Work Act, end local content requirements for television, abolish the Office for Film and Literature classification, the Australian Competition and Consumer Competition, close the Office for Youth, eliminate media ownership restrictions ... and the horror list continues.

Mary also talked about the privatisation of national parks by the Victorian Government. They want to introduce/increase mining, hunting and other damaging activity. Environment Victoria is targeting marginal Liberal seats, including Mordialloc, Carrum and Frankston because of the state government's appalling record.

Councillor Rosemary West spoke about the council's change of direction regarding aged care facilities in the City of Kingston, and updated us on developments since December. There is concern the council has changed position and there will be a loss of badly needed parkland when a new site is chosen to build an updated aged care facility. Other council operated facilities are also in need of upgrading to fit best practice. We should get involved now to ensure the council's decisions are in the best interests of the community.

Rosemary is concerned that after spending \$340,000 on consultation regarding the Green Wedge, the State Government's new planning laws and several councillors pro-development stance, will encourage inappropriate urban buildings like petrol stations, medical centres and restaurants on land the community want designated for parks and recreation. The new planning zones also encourage more supermarkets and large retail shops which will suck the life out of the shopping centres. The new residential zone allows council to set height limits under nine metres and the community should insist they do this.

Afternoon tea was most welcome after this intake of politics and pondering what needs to be done to keep social justice issues on the agenda of decision-makers - and with Amy back on deck the table groaned with scrumptious delights! At our next meeting in August we will be firing up for the September election.

VALE JEAN MELZER 1926 - 2013

We were saddened to hear of the recent death of member Jean Melzer. She was a woman who campaigned for the disadvantaged, peace and nuclear disarmament, and the rights of women.

Jean represented the Australian Labor Party in the Senate from 1974 - 1981, when she was defeated because factional dealings put her third on the ticket. She then stood unsuccessfully for the Nuclear Disarmament Party in 1984.

She was actively involved in promoting continuing education through the U3A, and was President of the U3A Network in Victoria for some time. After she moved to Cape Patterson in Gippsland, she became involved with coastal environment protection. And she was active in COTA (Council of the Ageing). She was listed on the Victorian Honour Roll of women in 2006.

Jean was a community activist and reached out to many people. She had a good sense of humour and made a real contribution.

NOTES FROM THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE JULY 2013

Anne Sgro

- There was discussion about the UAW photographic collection. Carmen has put a selection of relatively recent photographs on disc and will display them on photo frame at the Coffee with a Focus 17 July.
- We donated \$200 to the 3CR Radiothon in recognition of the importance of an independent and community accessible voice on the airwaves.
- We have ordered more copies of the UAW history DVD *Apron Strings and Atom Bombs*. We were alerted to the fact that we had run out by a request from Port Adelaide TAFE, which has found it invaluable in its Women's Studies Program. We will promote the DVD to secondary colleges and tertiary institutions, and let our members know when it will again be available.

In early June we sent the following letter to the Minister for Women's Affairs, Heidi Victoria, and are looking forward to a response from her and from colleague the Minister for Crime Prevention to whom we wrote in April.

In the last two months there have been headlines in the press expressing alarm at the level of family violence in the community – the Chief Commissioner (Age 22.4.13) and the Age editorial yesterday

It is therefore disturbing to hear that a coronial program to reduce the deaths related to family violence may end. The Family Violence Deaths Review suffered cuts in 2010 and did not have funding renewed in 2011. Under the Coroners Court restructure, none of the positions in a renamed unit will be dedicated to family violence.

What is happening? VicHealth's 2004 data showing that intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to disease, disability and death for women aged 18 – 44 years is as shocking and relevant nearly ten years on. Currently, family violence accounts for 84 percent of the rise in recorded assaults.

We seek an assurance from you that family violence will not only continue to be treated as a serious crime, but that funding will be made available as a priority to ensure that police and the courts can combat it, and that there will be programs to prevent violence and support its victims.

Mail Bag

We do so appreciate your feedback about the Newsletter whether it be verbal or emailed. We love to hear from you. Thanks to following members:

Pauline Cross: *Once again I am moved to write to congratulate all those involved in the June production. I have just read it for the first time and must read again to take in all the info. Thank you. It keeps those outside the City precincts in touch.*

Sheila Byard: *Just sat with my mother Merle Martin to look thru the latest newsletter that came in this arvo's post. She does so enjoy the sense of being in the company of like-minded women...not that she can get to Southern Group to hear Morag but love the thought that someone is speaking out for the ABC. Merle, by the way, is in her late 90s.*

Cathy McGowan: *As a country member I do appreciate getting the regular newsletter – and wanted to say a sincere and warm thanks to all the people who put it together – copy it and post it out. Thank YOU.*

WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

Carol Stals

On Monday 3rd June the UAW Organising Committee went to view the “**Women Making History**” exhibition at the Johnston Collection Gallery in East Melbourne.

Unfortunately they have a group limit of 10 people so it was impossible to open it to the full membership. Their routine is to meet in the Hilton Hotel foyer and convey you to the house by mini bus. The gallery is in the house beside “Fairhall,” where the actual Johnston Collection is displayed.

The regular voluntary guide was ill so we gained Dr. Angela Hesson, who just happened to be the curator of the exhibition. What a bonus! The displays and the items were small and I thought it would only take a short time to view them all. Angela explained the significance of each item in great depth. There were ceramics designed for collection by working class families featuring strong working women, an image I had not expected.

It was a fascinating overview of how women, both domestic and women in history, were portrayed in the 18th and 19th century through statues, paintings, literature etc. She had obtained many etchings from the Bailleau Library at Melbourne University, apparently known for their works on paper. These added a very interesting dimension to the display. Jane Austen’s works were represented in lovely old editions and a bow was included from the popular archery activity women enjoyed at Ripponlea Estate in Elsternwick.

We were all charmed by the collection and display and really pleased with the background information Angela was able to provide on the works, their social responses and why she chose them. Lunch was our usual chatty affair. The laughter of woman is a good sound.

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