

Union of Australian Women Newsletter



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October 2013

WHAT'S ON

Monday 7 October
12 noon

UAW Darebin Group meeting
Northcote Town Hall meeting room

Thursday 10 October
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Monday 14 October
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Organising Committee meeting
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Wednesday 16 October
12 noon

PUB LUNCH to celebrate the significant birthdays of Anne and Amy.
Royal Oak Hotel
444 Nicholson St North Fitzroy
Tram 96 from Bourke St, Stop 18

Saturday 19 October
11.00am – 2.00pm

UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN
Annual General Meeting

Speaker: MARY CROOKS
Director, Victorian Women's Trust

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

Queen Victoria Women's Centre,
4th floor
\$5 refreshments
RSVP for catering purposes by 14 October

Monday 28th October

UAW Film Group

STELLAR PERFORMANCE FROM CATHY MCGOWAN

By Anne Sgro

Probably like most of you I was well and truly over the electioneering that focussed almost totally on the two men in suits – Kevin and Tony – and their campaigns that were, in too many respects, a race to the bottom in terms of humanity, social justice and creating or even maintaining a civil society.

A major bright spot for me was **Cathy McGowan** in the North-East seat of Indi. Cathy, a UAW member, has lived in the north east all her life, has been a farmer, business woman, researcher, activist and is a highly respected member of her community. An Independent, she was backed by a grass roots movement called **Voice for Indi**, and, as Chairperson, only reluctantly agreed to be the candidate. People in the electorate were obviously tired of not having their lives and issues taken seriously and acted upon. Labor had little hope of winning a basically conservative seat and the Coalition apparently took people for granted.

Voice for Indi obviously struck a deep cord with voters. There were many community meetings, often around kitchen tables (remember the Victorian Women's Trust's advice about the value of that?) and the result has been breathtaking. <http://inside.org.au/from-little-margins-big-margins-grow>. Tony Windsor and Rob Oakshot have shown how good an independent can be if that person is connected to the community. At time of writing it is too early to call who has won the seat, but I would say that it has been a victory for the community.

What of the existence and achievements of Australia's first female Prime Minister? It was as if Julia Gillard had never been, had been erased. Kevin Rudd totally ignored the Gillard Government's considerable achievements. He refused to give "credit where credit was due", and his almost manic concession speech made me question his sanity. Perhaps, as Professor Marilyn Lake suggests (Age 10.9.13) *"he felt triumphant because in the struggle that really mattered, with the woman who had taken his position as prime minister, he had been victorious."*

And who knows what will now be Australia's focus as President of the UN Security Council? Julia Gillard had intended to champion the excessive burden on women in war zones, encouraging women to have a voice in peace negotiations and discussions about disarmament. Rudd had already changed that to small arms. What will Abbott do?

We have received a reply from Julia Gillard to our letter of thanks (See August Newsletter). She hopes *that my being Prime Minister has inspired women and girls to consider a life of leadership. It has not been an easy journey but it has been an incredibly worthwhile one. Please pass on my regards to the members of your organisation and thank them for supporting the Victorian Women's Trust Campaign.*

I'm not sure that women won't think twice before putting up their hands for leadership positions. That was a brutal example.

But it won't quite be business as usual for the boys in power, wherever they may be, or for a system that creates and maintains major inequalities and difficulties for women. The misogyny cat is out of the bag and will continue to be discussed and campaigned about.

In the immediate meantime, **Hooray for Cathy McGowan!**

ASYLUM SEEKERS NOT WANTED HERE- BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THAT! by Cath Morrison

All of us who have watched in disbelief and dismay as the major parties have raced each other to the bottom regarding refugee policy In Australia might feel a little uplifted in spirit by what is happening in Sweden at the moment.

Although it hasn't received much media coverage in Australia to speak of, Sweden has announced a virtual "open door policy" for refugees from the terrible conflict in Syria.

According to SBS News September 6, 2013, *"All Syrian asylum seekers who apply for asylum in Sweden will get it,"* Annie Hoernblad of Sweden's migration agency has announced and the *"vast majority of Syrian nationals who today have provisional status will apply for permanent status"*. Those granted permanent status will also be allowed to bring their families to Sweden. Since 2012, Sweden has taken in some 14,700 asylum seekers from Syria. It's not all roses in Sweden: Sweden has had problems with anti-Muslim protests this year and rising unemployment but even so, this small country with a population of around 10 million has now got refugee policies which make those of Australia with its obsession about 'border protection' look even more despicable than they did before.

The move came as the UN said the number of refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria had passed **two million**, which the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, called "the great tragedy of this century... What is appalling is that the first million fled Syria in two years. The second million fled Syria in six months." In total six million or nearly one-third of the country's pre-war population of 20 million has been forced to abandon their original homes since March 2011. Of those, over 4.25 million people have remained displaced inside Syria. This is an extraordinary humanitarian crisis.

Swedish Migration Minister Tobias Billstroem has called on other countries to help the Syrian refugees. Nothing I have read from either our former Labor government or from the incoming Liberal government leads me to believe that his call will be answered in Australia .

Dr Jonathan Bogais who is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Sydney's School of Social and Political Sciences doesn't think so either, and said that *"only days ago, Mr. Abbott said it was unlikely Australia would take in Syrian asylum seekers. According to Mr Abbott, people fleeing the Syrian conflict could go to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey or Iraq first. In any case, according to Mr Abbott, "Any person fleeing Syria and landing up in Australia would be in much the same position as the Hazaras and others who are coming by boat."*

I have this premonition that the incoming government will however heed the calls from the US to join them in bombing the Syrians, and thus of course help to create more refugees from that sad country.

It's very hard not to despair at the selfish and ostrich-like attitude of Australia to the worldwide refugee problem generally and to Syria in particular.

ONE STEP FORWARD FOR WOMEN IN TASMANIA...TWO STEPS BACK IN NSW! by Cath Morrison

Demonstrations outside abortion clinics hopefully to be banned in Tasmania.

If Tasmania's abortion reform laws are passed later this year, the State's women will have their rights protected in a way no other Australian women have with the introduction of exclusion zones around abortion clinics. Tasmania's Health Minister Michelle O'Byrne is standing firm on banning protests near abortion clinics. Ms O'Byrne says it is a significant clause and indicated she will not back down on imposing the protest bans." *I'm a protester from way back and I believe in the right to protest,"* the Minister said." *I also believe in the right for women to be able to access a termination without being harassed, intimidated or threatened and that's what that clause delivers."* Her bill includes fines of up to \$65,000 or 12 month in jail for people who protest within 150 metres of an abortion clinic.

Susan Fahey, managing solicitor at the Women's Legal Service of Tasmania, believes that this proposed law will not limit free speech or rights to demonstrate. While Victoria has already tried and failed at introducing similar abortion reforms, Ms Fahey believes if Tasmania gets the go-ahead, Victoria will try again with the ACT. The problem with most State laws regarding intimidation and harassment in their current form is that they are difficult to enforce as we know full well in Victoria.

As a practice manager of a clinic in Sydney wrote in [6 Minutes, September 3, 2013](#)

I hope that these reforms are passed in Tasmania as an example of laws that should be passed in all Australian states. Outside our clinic, women and their families are frequently stalked, intimidated, videotaped and harassed by protesters who are virtually immune from prosecution. Provided a protester doesn't block the clinic entrance or touch a patient, police are unable to take action.....It's purely intimidatory tactics aimed solely at individuals.

We in Victoria await future moves in Tasmania with interest as a blueprint for action here!

The Zoe Bill introduced into NSW parliament could criminalise abortion in that State.

The "Zoe" Bill, which aims to recognise a 20-week-old foetus, or a foetus weighing at least 400g as a living person under the Crimes Act, has now been introduced into the NSW Parliament last week by Fred Nile. The bill is named after a child who tragically died in a car accident.

This Bill has to criminalise harm done to an unborn child will instead punish pregnant women. Similar laws in the US have been a boon for anti-choice zealots, writes Cate Faehrmann, NSW Green MP, in New Matilda, March 1, 2013. *The "Zoe's Law" Crimes Amendment Bill, which seeks to "establish a separate offence for conduct causing serious harm to, or destruction of a child in utero" could see women in Australia guilty of a range of criminal offences. Although Zoe's law is nominally not anti-abortion legislation, its impact would be devastating for women's rights in a state where abortion is still criminal.*

Womens groups are mobilising against this Bill- WELA is working on opposing the bill with Family Planning NSW, Women's Health NSW, Domestic Violence NSW, Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia, the National Foundation for Australian Women, Reproductive Choice Australia and Children by Choice. Opposition has been growing to the bill with the NSW Bar Association and Australian Medical Association also voicing concerns.

Let's hope this Bill does not get the numbers as it will be a step back for women in Australia.

KEEPING WOMEN'S RECORDS IN VICTORIA FORUM

by Cath Morrison

On August 28, 2013 I represented the UAW Organising Committee at very interesting forum organized through the auspices of the League of Women Voters and chaired by Deborah Towns at the Old Treasury Museum. There were about 30 women in attendance. The discussion centred around how to best tackle the collecting, preserving and promoting knowledge of the cultural heritage of all women and particularly Victorian women and making this accessible to all Victorians including of course historians.

Dr Towns gave the background to the current forum and spoke of her realization of how little primary source materials existed on early feminists such as Vida Goldstein and how this had prompted her initial interest in the project.

There were four main speakers:

- Josefa Sobski, Chair of the Jessie Street National Women's Library in Sydney, spoke about Jessie Street herself and about the wonderful specialist collections of 2nd wave Australian feminism held in the Jessie Street subsidized library premises in Sydney. She emphasized the national nature of the collection then outlined the need of any Victorian library to specialize, to avoid duplication; and to be able to manage a large scale fund raising and membership drive. Ms Sobski referred to the need to recruit members for policy and administration, librarians, archivists, IT and web site specialists and the need to train volunteers.
- Barbary Clarke, Monash University, gave an enthusiastic presentation describing the women's libraries she had seen overseas including the Women's Library London which had cost \$4 million to establish, the Marguerite Durand Library in Paris and Atria in Amsterdam with 40 paid staff. All had wonderful buildings.
- Justine Heazlewood, of the Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV), spoke about the Government records including many pertaining to women held in the PROV archive in North Melbourne, and
- Winsome Roberts, University of Melbourne spoke about the value of local collections and her experience collecting material on women activists in North Melbourne.

There was considerable discussion regarding the high cost of establishing a discrete collection and housing it; and whether in fact the collection should be housed with another institution and if so which one. The point was made that with the growth of technology everything is now being digitized and with storage costs also rising the large physical collection is more costly than the "virtual" or electronic library which is now a reality in academe where there is a move away from print.

The issue of whether in fact distributed collections of ephemera and other material might be brought together by means of technology was discussed. One suggestion was that TROVE the online data base of the National Library might be utilized in some way to add information about items and to provide access to little known collections. There was certainly a feeling of enthusiasm among those attending although the future directions are still to be determined and there is lots to think and talk about.

Everyone left the meeting clearer about the issues and the potential pitfalls and benefits of a variety of approaches to improving access to women's records in Victoria.

Those attending the meeting will be kept informed by the LWV in terms of any further developments and I indicated the UAW's interest in being kept up to date.

ANNE SUMMERS: Feminism, Misogyny, power

by Carmen Green

On August 29th, I attended a keynote address given by Anne Summers at the Melbourne Writers' Festival. Anne Summers' event was chaired by writer and commentator, Monica Dux and held in Deakin Edge, the largest meeting area at Federation Square. The event was supported by the Queen Victoria Women's centre.

The advertising for this event stated that "despite 40 years on the political agenda, the issue of gender equality remains contentious and unresolved. Anne Summers points the finger at the misogyny factor, an entrenched institutionalized resistance to women's equality most spectacularly exhibited in the vilification of Australia's first female PM."

Summers started her address with a question "Why after 40 years have we not achieved equality in Australia?" She went on to say that in 1972 women assumed that everyone thought that women's equality was a good thing and that making progress meant that we were on the way to success. Summers asked what does success look like and how do we define it? She believes that there are 3 indicators of success: **Inclusion, Equality and Respect** and two principle objectives- **Financial Independence** and **Control of Fertility**. In order to have financial independence women need a good education, equal pay, and child care. They also need safe affordable access to contraception and abortion. Another principle is also needed: **Women need to be free from violence**.

Summer stresses that there is a global need to unlock the economic potential of women. Yet millions of women are still sidelined and many others confined to low positions. Women's ability to succeed is stymied by formal and informal forces in the workplace. We have made much progress but success has alluded us. In Australia, life long earnings of post graduate women are as follows: \$2.49 for women and \$3.78 for men, a penalty of \$1.3 million for being a woman.

As to women's inclusion women are under represented in all major institutions. In relation to respect, Julia Gillard is an example of what can happen to women who achieve leadership positions. Summers believes that if Gillard were an ordinary worker she would have a case for sex discrimination and sexual harassment. Women want to try and understand what happened to Julia Gillard as they see her as proxy for all women.

Summers believes that in 2013 women are not even close to achieving success and that the last few years have highlighted this notwithstanding that the PM, and Governor General were both women.

Anne Summers said that the reason for women's continuing inequality is the misogyny factor; hatred of women but also systemic beliefs and behavior that women do not have the same right to work outside the home as men do. The belief that once women are mothers they should stay home is still strong along side the belief that all women should be mothers. Summers also reminds us that misogynists can also be women.

Summers, however, is an optimist because she sees a growing sense of solidarity among women who are now standing up in protest and demanding an end to sexism and misogyny.

Try to get a copy of Anne Summers's book "The Misogyny Factor" it was published this year and is available at all bookshops for \$19.99. It can also be reserved at your local public library .It is a must read for anyone interested in the history of women's struggle for equality from 1972 to now and also outlines the "gross disrespect" shown to Australia's first female PM..

NOTES FROM THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE 9 SEPTEMBER 2013

by Anne Sgro

Carmen provided the **Draft Budget** for the current financial year which was accepted with thanks for her meticulous and considerable work. Generous bequests from former members in recent years have enabled the UAW to be reasonably “well off”.

Although over the next decade we will utilise these funds, the decision was made to make no increase in membership fees or function costs because the money was donated to enable the UAW’s voice to continue to be heard, and we should utilise these funds while Organising Committee members and others are active and energetic.

Congratulations to Sheila Byard, elected President of the National Council of Women Victoria, and to Pam Williams elected Secretary.

Jenny Stewart, UAW representative on the Ross House Committee of Management was asked to request discussion of the recent Consultant’s report on Ross House as a matter of urgency by the Committee, and that the report’s recommendations then be put to a special meeting of members, associate members and tenants.

Allie will check out an invitation for the UAW to join a **World Map of Feminists** and report back in October.

There was discussion about the dire situation of asylum seekers in Australia and the work of the **Asylum Seeker Resource Centre** to which the UAW recently donated \$200. Particular comparison was made to Sweden’s reaction to people fleeing Syria (see Cath Morrison’s article, Page 3).

In the past financial year the ASRC:

- Provided over **20,000 hot meals** through its Community Meals Program
- Supplied weekly groceries for **120 families** – over 75% who have no income
- Provided **7,490 metcards** – reducing social isolation and allowing clients to pick up their weekly food at the ASRC
- Secured over **200 employment and education opportunities** through its Employment Service and Catering social enterprise
- Legally assisted over **450 asylum seekers** from 56 countries – successfully representing 83% at the primary stage of the refugee process.

All of this has been achieved with minimal Government funding, with **more than 95%** of funding coming solely from the community, philanthropy and donations.

The **Annual General Meeting** is being held this month, Saturday 19 October, at the Queen Victoria Women’s Centre (See enclosed flyer invitation). We hope to see as many members as possible. **Mary Crooks**, Executive Director of the Victorian Women’s Trust has been confirmed as guest speaker.

You will find a **nomination form for the Organising Committee** on Page 8 of the Newsletter. Have you got some time, energy and a desire to be in good feminist company helping to “destroy and reconstruct the joint”? Please consider nominating. We would love to have you join us.

UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN VICTORIA INC.

NOMINATION FORM 2013

We.....and.....
(Proposer's Signature) (Seconder's Signature)

Hereby nominate:

For (position)

I ACCEPT THE NOMINATION:

Print Name:

Candidate's signature:

Date:

This form must be returned to Secretary, UAW Vic, by 4pm on Friday October 11th, 2013

All nominees and candidates must be financial members of the UAW.

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