

Union of Australian Women

Newsletter

JULY 2014 WHAT'S ON

- 1st week in July:** **NAIDOC Week**
Celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and recognition of the contributions that indigenous Australians make to our country and society
- Sunday 6 July:**
1.00 **Our Community Counts.**
March for a Fairer Australia.
Queen Victoria Gardens (Opposite the Arts Centre)
National protest organised by the trade union movement
- Monday 7 July**
12 noon **UAW Darebin Group**
Peacock Hotel, opposite Northcote Town Hall
Clare: 9481 2704
- Thursday 10 July**
10.30 – 12.30 **UAW Book Group**
2nd floor meeting room Ross House
- Monday 14 July**
10.00 – 12.00 **UAW Organising Committee meeting**
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Friday 25 July
UAW
10.30 COFFEE WITH A FOCUS
Guest Speaker: Anne O'Rourke
Topic: Australian Fair Trade Agreements
Morning tea \$5
RSVP: office@uaw.org.au; 9654 7409
(See attached flyer invitation and Page 7)

THE UAW 2014: STILL GOING STRONG!

by Carmen Green

At the June Organising Committee Meeting, we were discussing the AGM and the need to get more members (particularly those who are computer literate) to contribute to the running of the UAW by joining us on the Organising Committee. We also discussed the various activities of the UAW which from the feedback we receive from members –are successful and should be continued:

- 1 The monthly newsletter is a great success with our members & plays an important role in keeping members informed about important issues requiring political action.
- 2 The “Coffees with a focus” are also very popular and an important opportunity through good speakers to raise important issues, encourage action and meet up with UAW friends.
- 3 The AGM with a speaker and catered lunch is always very well attended & highly popular.
- 4 This year we have reprinted “Left Wing Ladies” which is selling well and also purchased more copies of ‘APRON Strings & Atom Bombs”. Next year we hope to finish updating “Taking Time”
- 5 The monthly Book Group is going well -9 members who spend half the meeting enthusiastically discussing the book & the other half discussing politics.
- 6 We are still in a good financial position due to some very generous donations from members. We have maintained our very low membership fees & can continue to do this into the foreseeable future. We also make annual donations to organisations such as the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre & one off donations to, for example, the Unitarian Church for the recently completed “Peoples’ Audit”.
- 7 The Southern Branch continues to provide informative & interesting meetings and opportunities to take action on crucial issues.
- 8 We continue to network with other groups on issues we consider important –for example the National Council of Women- Victoria, Equality Rights Alliance and the Refugee Advocacy Network.

And finally, the quarterly pub lunches have never been better attended perhaps because in these very conservative times it has never been more important for our members to be able to get together and discuss issues of concern.

If you are interested in joining us on the Organising Committee, you would be very welcome to attend one of our monthly meetings. Organising Committee meetings are held in the second floor meeting room at Ross House at 10 a.m. on the second Monday of each Month.

The meetings finish at 12 noon and members usually have lunch afterwards in one of the local coffee shops.

The future of the UAW depends on an efficient, enthusiastic and effective Organising Committee.

Given the current conservative backlash against everything that the UAW stands for our informed activism has never been more important. Please join with us to ensure that the UAW continues to have a strong voice on issues of concern.

If you would like further information please email the UAW Office [office\(at\)uaw.org.au](mailto:office(at)uaw.org.au).

INEQUALITY: THE BUDGET AND THE ATTACK ON THE FAIR GO Cath Morrison

Public criticism and debate about the latest Federal Budget is still raging and street demonstrations against the Budget are attracting ever growing numbers of participants widely drawn from our community. Why is this so? Criticism of the Budget by the opposition has been largely on the basis that the Government when in Opposition did not tell the voters what it intended to do and therefore has broken its promises. Some Liberals argue that that the Budget has just not been “sold” well and the debt crisis (what crisis?) needed harsh solutions.

I think there is a deeper concern behind the growing protests than broken promises or a poor sales job. Shaun Carney, now a Monash University academic, writing in *The Conversation* (21/6/2014) poses the question: *But what if the public’s apparent resentment is based not so much on perceived mendacity or bad PR as on common values? If so, that is a much deeper and more intractable problem for the government. Fairness is, it must be said, an elastic concept in our highly individualised and affluent age. Despite this, it’s a concept still supported by many Australians.*

Perhaps what so many of us think is wrong with this Budget is not only an elemental unfairness which takes from those who can least afford to pay, but something even more concerning for the future of Australian society in general- the shrinking of the role of government in our society. Hockey speaks of redressing the heavy burden of welfare imposed on taxpayers. But what are taxes for? Surely the mark of a civilised society is how we care for the sick and the elderly or those who cannot gain employment or who are disabled? Carney again asks: *Do today’s Australians, many of whom – rightly or wrongly – view their taxes as a form of down payment on an age pension and medical care in their retirement, think that contributing 8% of their wage to the nation’s welfare bill is so bad? The answer- if the public outcry is any guide-is: No, they don’t.*

As Carney also notes (*Conversation, May 16*) *Hockey’s language in his budget speech provides powerful pointers to the way he wants to portray government to voters. Government interferes. It regulates. It’s a burden. The smaller government is the better. By reducing the safety net for the unemployed and the sick, ending industry assistance, deregulating universities, effectively reducing pensions and family payments and dismantling climate change initiatives, this Government is about changing Australia in fundamental ways and about ideologically driven smaller government. For those of us who see government as absolutely critical in ensuring that inequality is addressed and safety nets provided for those who fall between the cracks, these ideas of ‘small government’ are disturbing. Small government is code for: ‘I’m alright Jack and I can’t be worried about you!’ Perhaps, if re-elected, the Government will see bottom line budget benefit in the return of the 19th century workhouses for the Hockey ‘leaners’ who will be recipients of voucher charity provided by the new breed of “lifters” in the Coalition’s pejorative language of division and derision. Notions of “deserving” and “undeserving” poor are not yet dead and buried in the 21st century and neither is inequality.*

The public policy debate has recently moved to discussions of increasing “inequality” and unfairness. I am reading with interest French economist Thomas Piketty whose research sets out in his massive book Capital in the 21st Century, how and why inequality has risen since the 80’s. In this context, Andrew Leigh, writing in the Monthly (June 2014) says: *If Australia continues to become more unequal – as Piketty’s capital theory suggests it might(A) veneer of fairness might persist, butwould be a poor substitute for the deeper egalitarianism that has traditionally characterised our nation. How much should we let inequality grow? There is no right answer to this question, but we should not shrink from asking (it).*

The importance of good government policy to redress imbalances in equality has never been greater in my opinion. This is not the time for small government. Social justice is about inclusion and lessening inequality and the UAW has always spoken for the so called ‘leaners’- now our strong voice for equality and social justice is more important than ever and must continue to be heard

VALE PHIL SLATTERY (7/12/1921 -07/06/2014) by Carmen Green

Phil Slattery had a charismatic personality and lived an amazing life by any standards. She was born in Fitzroy, married at 21 and had 8 children, 26 grandchildren and 39 great-grandchildren. Despite her busy family life, Phil was very engaged in outside activities. I lived in the City of Nunawading in the 60's and 70's and often heard about this amazing woman- Phil Slattery. This was because Phil was instrumental in starting in Nunawading one of the first Neighbourhood Houses in Victoria. The success of these early Neighbourhood Houses led to a rapidly expanding community movement throughout Australia.

As Fiona Smith, Chairperson Equal Opportunity Commission, 7 June 2005 said when talking about the Neighbourhood House Movement and the women who made it possible "*... the fantastic community houses or neighbourhood houses started by inspired leaders like Gwen Wesson and Phil Slattery. These leaders and others like them used their brain, their courage and their hearts to create the model of the community or neighbourhood houses to provide a genuine place for inclusion of everybody. In the seventies, when the neighbourhood house women leaders started the first houses, the focus was on women, who were at the time excluded from education and job opportunities. They were isolated, lonely and often quietly going mad alone at home. The houses provided a place for everyone, whatever their background, disability, or ethnicity, to come for a home away from home - a place for the house members to gain confidence, to learn new skills, and most importantly to have a sense of belonging, control, and hope that so that they could find their own internal leadership - their own place in the sun.*"

Phil wrote two books on the Nunawading North Neighbourhood House and its philosophy of caring and sharing. The first was "And now it flows: release of learning" in 1979 and the second "Nunawading North Neighbourhood Centre" in 1983.

In the mid 1980's, following her husband's death, Phil returned to live in Brunswick. Phil was later elected to the Council at the City of Brunswick and supported policies which enhanced community well-being and social justice.

I'm not sure when Phil first joined the UAW but it was long before I joined in 1998. Up until a year or so ago, she participated regularly in all UAW events, formal meetings as well as other activities such as the UAW Film Group. One of our most successful and memorable fund raisers was a cocktail party held at her house in Brunswick. Phil's many UAW friends will miss her. Cath Morrison and I were very pleased to be able to represent the UAW at her funeral.

Phil's funeral was held at *Our Lady Help of Christians Parish* in East Brunswick on Friday 13th June 2014. It was one of the largest funerals I have attended and a great celebration of Phil's life involving as it did her children and her grand-children. They spoke of a woman who was very involved in the lives of her large extended family who was committed to social justice, a feminist, an activist, a poet and a lover of music –particularly opera- as well as jewellery, big hats and colourful clothes.

Excerpts from the UAW letter to Lt. General David Morrison, Chief of Army

The UAW has noted with great interest the positive media coverage of your recent speech in London at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence and we are pleased at the outcome of the Summit with 155 countries signed up to a declaration to end impunity for rape in war. As an organisation which exists to promote equality for women we are also highly supportive of your attempts to make the Army a more inclusive space for those women who choose to enlist...We hope that your approach of absolute non-tolerance of sexual violence and harassment will become the norm in the Armed Forces in this country at least and brings about cultural change...

THE COALITION ATTACK ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Cath Morrison

Cuts, cuts, cuts:

Since it took office the Abbott Government has systematically gutted the agencies and government departments which advised the former government on climate change and also reduced or eliminated programs:

- The Climate Commission axed
- The Climate Change Authority and Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) to be abolished along with the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) which was set up to support new and emerging renewable technologies, also subject to repeal of the legislation in the Senate
- Not many climate and environment policies left to cut, but Hockey managed to find some according to David Twomey of Eco News (12/6). Climate spending will fall from \$5.27 billion in 2013-14 to \$1.25 billion in 2014-15. Axed programs include the National Solar Schools Plan, Energy Efficiency Programs, Energy Efficiency Information Grants, Low Carbon Communities, Ethanol Production Grants Program, and Cleaner Fuels Grants Scheme. \$125 million has been cut from the Clean Technology (Investment and Innovation) programs. 129 jobs are gone from the Environment Department. The budget abolishes the National Water Commission, and reduces funding to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. Landcare's funding has been cut by nearly 30%.
- Finally, the \$1 billion Million Solar Roofs program has been completely scrapped, and the promised \$100 million Solar Towns scheme cut and even the already inadequate Coalition Direct Action Plan (see below), had its first four years of funding more than halved.

Inadequacy of the Government's Direct Action Plan (ERF):

One of our members, Theresa Battaglia recently provided an excellent analysis of shortcomings of the Government's Direct Action Climate Plan as outlined in its White Paper and I have summarised her main points below **(for a copy of Theresa's full paper please email me at the UAW office.)**

- **The Direct Action Plan is incomplete.** It is very important that the proposed removal of penalties for polluting emissions will not allow these emissions to increase without check but the safeguard procedures are not yet decided. The safeguard procedures are scheduled to be published in July 2015. No penalties have yet been decided
- The Direct Action Plan will be costly. The central mechanism is payment for projects that will deliver emission abatement. Initiatives will be invited from existing polluters to bid at auction for tax payer funded payment to reduce their current facility emission levels. The Government proposes to repeal the Clean Energy Package, which was designed to assist those structural changes and support manufacturing industry, improvements in energy efficiency and research and development in low pollution technologies.
- **There are no incentives or education plan for the public** to reduce energy consumption. In effect, emissions reduction will be by contract between large businesses and the Government and by negotiation between large businesses and the Government. The only incentive offered is commercial gain to businesses who may contract with the Government for carbon abatement. **Direct Action is a short term, costly and retrograde policy**

Not surprising then that US Democrat Henry Waxman, told ABC1 TV program 7.30 recently that the Australian government's plan to repeal the carbon pricing scheme was a "mistake". Waxman said: **"As I understand it, Australia will go from being one of the great leaders in the world in tackling this problem, to one of the great laggards in addressing efforts to reducing the pollution that is threatening the planet that we're living on."**

What was that about lifters and leaners, Mr. Hockey? Should that be lifters and laggards?

SOUTHERN BRANCH REPORT JUNE 2014**By Mairi Neil**

On Saturday 21st June a small but enthusiastic group braved the cold winter solstice to hear Robyn Dale speak on Pay Equity. Before Robyn began her presentation Amy paid tribute to Phil Slattery who died recently. She also reminded everyone about the Rally for Refugees in the City on Sunday June 22nd. A rally the UAW sponsored with both Central and Southern donating \$250 each. Labor's Anna Burke MP for Chisholm would speak at the rally. Recently, Anna along with Melissa Parke MP for Fremantle asked for change to Labor's appalling Refugee Policy. They failed in their attempt but at least they had a go. Demonising "boat people" and ignoring our responsibilities under the Refugee Convention still drives policy decisions of both major parties.

Amy introduced our guest speaker Robyn Dale, who works part time in the office of Clare O'Neil MP but previously was the Director of the Union Research Centre on Organisation and Technology. (URCOT, Participation, Research, Innovation.) On 25 March, 2004, the Hon. Rob Hulls MP, Minister for Industrial Relations, announced the independent inquiry into pay equity in Victoria. URCOT's research examined the extent and causes of gender pay inequity in Victoria and identified a number of options for addressing the continuing pay differential between men and women. The Working Party's Report was presented to the Minister on International Women's Day, 8th March 2005 and can be read here:

<http://www.uncot.org.au/sites/default/files/Final%20Gender%20Pay%20Equity%20Research%20Report%2020%20Apr.pdf>

Gender pay equity is measured in terms of ratios, which convert female earnings into a proportion of male earnings. Eg. a gender pay ratio of 90 means that on whatever measure being considered, whether it be full-time ordinary hourly earnings, or weekly total earnings for all employees, or some other employment category, women are receiving 90% of the equivalent male rate. ie. comparable work not equal work.

In a series of slides made in 2009 for a parliamentary enquiry Robyn showed how gender pay ratio was 63%, 73%, 85% etc depending on the occupation and age of research participants. Gender had quite dramatic effects on career paths and although the slides were 'old' the gender pay rate has not substantially altered. Women's work is still undervalued, part time and casual work exacerbates the differences, men do better out of enterprise bargaining, there is a marked difference between education and workforce experiences, with women less likely to demand pay rises and more likely to pay for their own professional development in their own time. There are many more women in the lower rungs of the public service and this is replicated in other industries. Women's skills (such as those gained from caring and nurturing) are considered 'soft skills' and often go unrecognised and unrewarded.

We have one of the most sex segregated workplaces still, gender discrimination seems built in to the DNA of workplaces. When Robyn lectured at RMIT and in many of her negotiations, to get her points across and to get men onside she makes gender equity personal. Make it about their wives, sisters and daughters. Why should sons and daughters have different futures? The excellent postcard campaign suggesting girls should be paid less pocket money to prepare them for the workforce was an idea 'borrowed' from the UK and needs to be kept in the spotlight.

There are many more women at the lower rung of public service, there is a social expectation of women's caring role. Prior to Workchoices it was estimated it will take 73 years to close the gender gap *and there have been no real gains since Workchoices.* Cont. p7

SOUTHERN BRANCH REPORT JUNE 2014

Continued from Page 6

Women's pay has stagnated. E.g., the world of medicine may be changing and there are more female GPs but their pay has stagnated while fees of consultants (usually male) increase. Three years out from qualifying female lawyers still earn less. There is no evidence to suggest there is equality in the workplace even for engineers, the profession pinpointed in early days of seeking gender equity.

When Robyn first started to work part time she was not in a trade union. One day she went into work when others were on strike. The next day in the lift a unionist pinched her on the arm. When Robyn asked why, she replied, 'I'm picking the scab off.' Robyn asked what that meant and was told, 'Workers who work when others are on strike are scabs.' An incident Robyn never forgot and she has been a strong unionist ever since. Life is about fairness, justice and equity. Robyn suggested that everyone should be on part time work as a step forward for equity because most part timers are women and as happens in the majority of cases people are expected or put the expectations on themselves to achieve full time outcomes on part time hours.

Robyn has spent many years fighting for pay equity and exposing the gender bias in society and workplaces. She believes workers know best of what needs to change and what needs to be done—not by consultation but **participation** in the decisions and changes. But for change to happen women have to get angry and direct that anger to make change happen. It is ridiculous we are still struggling with this issue in the 21st century.

An excellent discussion followed with many people sharing their stories, agreeing with Robyn that this very important change is taking too long to occur. Robyn also shared a story about being talked over and constantly interrupted in meetings by men and asked if anyone had good strategies to deal with this. Eva suggested that next time this happens, Robyn stand up when speaking, which will change the dynamics in the room and also grab the attention of those who are bullying or talking over others. We all agreed this was a good technique when common courtesy, fails.

The meeting ended with lots of social banter and catching-up over the usual delicious refreshments.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS: CORPORATIONS OVER-RIDING DEMOCRACY

Anne Sgro

The topic for our July **Coffee with a Focus** sounds rather dry, but in the hands of our speaker Anne O'Rourke (immediate past vice-president of Liberty Victoria) it is riveting stuff! And scary.

These Agreements, to which the public has no access, give corporations the power to reign in democracy as governments become fearful of being sued. They don't bring economic benefit and they undermine the rule of law. They place investment rights over the rights of citizens, and over-ride the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Everything is defined as commercial, including health and education. Labour laws can also be affected.

Australia is about to enter agreements with Japan and South Korea. Perhaps there is more than one reason for the demise of the Australian automotive industry? Come and find out! See the enclosed flyer for details.

NOTES FROM THE JUNE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

by Anne Sgro

A donation of \$250 was made to the Refugee Advocacy Network to support a media project that aims to profile refugees in a humane manner as a way of countering the negative image that is constantly projected by the Australian Government. The project also aims to train refugees to take a prominent part. A further \$250 was added by the Southern Branch at their June meeting.

A donation of \$100 was made to Community Radio 3CR's Radiothon.

A letter has been sent to Lt. General David Morrison, applauding his stand on sexual violence. (See Page 4 for an excerpt)

The UAW will write to MPs Anna Burke and Melissa Parke supporting their attempt to change the Opposition's policy on offshore detention.

JULY 2014 INDEX

What's On	Page 1
The UAW 2014: still going strong!	Page 2
Inequality: the Budget and the attack on the Fair Go	Page 3
Vale Phil Slattery; letter to Lt.Gen. Morrison	Page 4
The Coalition attack on Climate Change	Page 5
Southern Branch Report June 2014	Pages 6 – 7
Free Trade Agreements: corporations over-riding democracy	Page 7
Notes from the June Organising Committee; July Index	Page 8

*Newsletter published by UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN (Vic)
Ross House, 2nd Floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000*

*Ph. /Fax 9654 7409 Email: office@uaw.org.au
Victoria Inc. A00021219R*