

# Union of Australian Women Newsletter



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March 2014

## WHAT'S ON

In March we celebrate International Women's Day.  
It is also Women's History Month and the UAW is celebrating both events  
with the launch of our updated history:

*Left-Wing Ladies. The UAW in Victoria 1950-2012.*

**Monday 3 March**  
12 noon

**UAW Darebin Group**  
Northcote Town Hall meeting room

**Sunday 9 March**  
11.00 – 4.00

**IWD Exhibition: Women of Glen Eira**  
1151 Glen Huntly Rd Glen Huntly  
Includes "Nothing on a Plate"  
Info: [cstals@internode.on.net](mailto:cstals@internode.on.net)

**Thursday 13 March**  
10.30 – 12.30

**UAW Book Group**  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room Ross House

**Monday 17 March**  
10.00 – 12.00

**UAW Organising Committee meeting**  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room Ross House

## UAW International Women's Day celebration

Launch of our updated history  
*Left-Wing Ladies. The UAW in Victoria 1950 – 2012*

Launched by **Judy Maddigan**  
First woman Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

### *The Importance of Women's History*

**When:** Tuesday 18 March  
10.30 – 12.30

**Where:** 4<sup>th</sup> floor meeting room  
Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane Melbourne

Join in the celebration, buy a book signed by the author (\$20) and take the  
opportunity to renew your membership if you haven't already done so. Great  
discussion, scrumptious morning tea \$5  
RSVP 9654 7409 email [uawv@vicnet.net.au](mailto:uawv@vicnet.net.au)

**EQUALITY RIGHTS ALLIANCE: Women's Voices for Gender Equality: Women and Housing – summarised by Carmen Green**

Equality Rights Alliance has prepared an excellent and detailed pre-budget submission to the Federal Government on Women and Housing. The submission details the growing crisis of women in housing stress and provides recommendations including funding options for overcoming the crisis.

**THE CRISIS:** We are probably all aware that we have a worsening housing affordability problem for mid to low income earners in Australia. Nearly 30% of Australians are now renting and it is estimated that there is a shortage of 539,000 rental properties that are affordable and available for low income earners. Housing affordability is a key factor in rising homelessness. The failure of successive Governments to provide sufficient public and community housing is a cause of both housing stress and homelessness.

ERA believes that as housing is a responsibility for all levels of government, a Federal led whole of Government approach is essential to deal with this crisis. ERA is concerned that current budgetary planning is focused only on current levels of demand for affordable housing when census figures make it clear that demand is likely to rise sharply in the future.

A lack of affordable housing has significant implications for women because of their economic disadvantage. More young women are homeless now than men and women led households now increasingly face homelessness. Single women over the age of 45 represent one of the most at risk groups for housing stress and homelessness.

“A growing body of evidence shows that we are on the verge of a tsunami of ageing women in housing stress and homelessness in Australia. Because the causes of housing stress for women are based on a lack of affordable rental housing and women's lower financial capacity to pay market rent or become house owners, any long term-approach to reducing housing stress for women must incorporate both increases in supply and improvements in financial gender equality.”

Women are at risk because they are over represented in key poverty indicators leading to housing stress and they are disproportionately affected by violence and other forms of abuse –domestic violence is the main cause of homelessness for women and children. Women sometimes remain in unsafe accommodation or enter into or continue relationships for the sake of accommodation. These unaccounted women make the situation for women even worse than the statistics indicate.

Single older women on low or moderate incomes are of particular concern given that their numbers are expected to rise dramatically over the next 15 years. The 2011 Census shows that there were 600,838 Australian women who were single, over 45 years of age, earned less than the medium income and didn't own their own home. In comparison there were 373,794 men in the same situation. Living alone and living in private rental are two of the key contributing factors to older women's housing stress. “As these women retire there will be an unprecedented demand for housing assistance, a demographic time bomb for which we are ill prepared.”

**ERA'S RECOMMENDATIONS:** These are aimed at increasing the supply of affordable rental housing and include the following: a surcharge of 10% on the super contributions of the top 12% of income earners; development of an affordable housing growth fund; reduction in the capital gains tax exemption and retention of the National Rental Affordability Scheme and increase in its funding.

ERA's submission proves that Australia can end the crisis in affordable housing if our Federal Government is prepared to give it the priority it deserves.

## Women of the Brighton Cemetery Walk

By Carol Stals

During a lull in the boisterous weather on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February, a large group of people gathered at the lovely Brighton Cemetery for the walk the Cemeterians (Friends group) had put on at my request for **International Women's Day**. We moved through the cemetery, on their comfortable paths and visited the graves of –

**Dame Marie Freda BREEN DBE OBE, 1902 – 1993.** A woman with a wide social justice profile. Amongst other things she was active in Family Planning, Overseas Students Assoc. and State President of the National Council of Women, Vic.

**Vera Elizabeth GILLAN 1893 – 1935.** She trained as a singer with Dame Nellie Melba and sang Opera with the Williamson Melba Opera Company.

**Selma FRIEDMANN 1874 – 1952.** The tragic story of a family's struggle in Germany under the Nazi regime. After surviving a concentration camp she eventually came to Australia in 1947, where she joined her three sons. Being in the Jewish section of the cemetery is a moving experience. It is the highest point of the cemetery.

**Elizabeth BEAZBY 1866 – 1947.** Daughter of Sir Thomas and Lady Elizabeth Bent, she became the first Lay Councillor of Brighton and the first female Justice of the Peace in Victoria. Her life was dedicated to service within her community.

**Annie BRIGHT 1840 – 1913.** Born in Nottingham and well educated but disillusioned with her life, she began helping factory girls. She married Rev. James Pillar and they migrated to Sydney where he took up his role with the freethought church. She began a school there, but when her husband was tragically killed that changed. She later married and again widowed moved to Melbourne where she became editor of the Harbinger of Light Journal.

**Martha BERKELEY 1813 – 1899** After experiencing family grief and displacement, she and her sister, both artists, went to live with their grandfather in Berkshire. After she married, the couple and her sister Teresa moved to South Australia. She was one of several early settlers who recorded early life in paintings and she particularly recorded the Aboriginal people. She often kept the family through her miniature painting skills. She appears later as a widow and working as matron of the Melbourne National Model and Training School. Her works are exhibited in major art galleries.

**Linda PHILLIPS OBE 1899 – 2002.** Born in Melbourne of Russian-Australian parentage she began writing verse and composing music at an early age. She enrolled in the University of Melbourne Conservatorium and her studies included piano. Widowed early with a young child to raise, she pursued her career. She became involved in the Kadima Theatre and the Jewish National Library, Carlton. She was co-adjudicator of the Sun Aria for nearly 30years.

**Lillias Margaret SKENE 1867 – 1957.** Born in Smythesdale and educated in Hamilton. She married in Caulfield in 1888 but when the financial crash came they lost their country property. After facing further drought and financial difficulties she moved to Melbourne and worked amongst the poor, initially through the Charity Organisation. She had a long and involved role in caring and social change, including the Lady Talbot Milk Institute, Women's Hospital committee board of Management. She was one of the first 7 women JP's in Victoria. Half way through the walk is the highlight, afternoon tea, served as a picnic on a huge old tree stump. A wonderful spread is presented while people stand, survey the views and chat. Beside is a group of very old giant trees. One year their whole picnic, cakes, asparagus rolls, drinks, Esky, tablecloths etc. was stolen and the mystery has never been solved.

**This walk was a great way to remember some of the women of the area.**

There are other walks available, including Artist Walks and Literary Walks.

## SOUTHERN BRANCH REPORT

By Mairi Neil

The first meeting of the year was well attended with 17 making the effort on a humid sticky Melbourne day. The ceiling fans fed by a breeze from Mordialloc foreshore worked overtime. Amy reminded members of the City of Kingston's invitation to an IWD function at Doyle's on 7th March, and to attend Ross House for a similar celebration on 18th March when Judy Maddigan will speak. Everyone was asked to wear suffragette colours of purple, green and white. Carol Stals has organised an IWD event in Glen Eira with U3A and the historical society hosting **Nothing On A Plate**. All are welcome on Sunday 9th March.

Mary Rimington was a last minute apology, and wished us well. It was wonderful to see Evelyn Grieg at the meeting after her health battles last year plus a couple of new faces and some familiar faces returned after absences. An indication perhaps we are galvanised to fight in these times when state and federal governments have abandoned social justice.

The guest speaker, Marion Harper from the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church is an activist in many progressive organisations and opened her talk with the quote '*if you educate women and they lead the show, things get done.*' She apologised that the information she would provide was serious, however as fighters for social justice we must be informed. There is a Unitarian Church in every state and they can also be found in the USA and UK. Although Christian based many are humanist, like the Melbourne church. They have no creed and do not believe in the Trinity, but seek the truth and serve humanity. They do not have party politics but take up political issues because they subscribe to social justice. All are welcome to attend their Sunday forums.

In August 2012, a meeting at the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) chaired by Andrew Bolt, had Tony Abbott, Rupert Murdoch and Gina Rinehart as keynote speakers. A wish list of 75 actions to radically reform Australia was provided to Tony Abbott by this radical right wing think tank and can be read here: <http://melbourneunitarian.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Beacon-Dec-Jan-2013-v4.pdf> It has been mentioned in previous newsletters.

Recent actions of an Abbott-led Coalition government, confirm they are implementing this wish list and their Commission of Audit's recommendations are a foregone conclusion, the Commission being led by Business Council of Australia president Tony Shepherd and includes Liberal Senator Amanda Vanstone and former bureaucrats Peter Boxall, Tony Cole and Robert Fisher. Greens Senator Richard di Natale said the Coalition was using the Commission as cover to justify the spending cuts it wanted to make. "The Abbott government has constructed very narrow terms of reference ... and hand-picked ideological allies ... so that it gets precisely the outcome it wants... Tony Abbott has ... written the rules so that the game was rigged before it even began." The interim report already delivered to the Treasurer, "represents 900 pages of wrong priorities and nasty cuts we weren't told about before the election," Labor's finance spokesman Tony Burke said. (eg. co-payments for Medicare, abandoning the car industry...)

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/rigged-commission-of-audit-should-be-broadened-richard-di-natale-20140219-330ft.html#ixzz2tkHdi7oE>

Marion spoke of her understanding of society when growing up. She assumed the taxes you paid were used by government to provide, hospitals, schools, postal and telephone services, roads, public transport, water, gas and electricity. In her lifetime she has seen most of these services privatised with some sold to overseas companies. What happens to our taxes now the government is not ensuring these services? Privatisation often equates to higher prices and lower service. What can we do to bring equity and justice back into society?

We need to discuss the existence of different classes - the whole idea divisions exist smothered when the Labor Party were in power. Their terminology was Middle Australia and Working Australia - omitting the word 'class'. So if you are not working where do you fit in?

**SOUTHERN GROUP REPORT** continued from Page 4

Now we are seeing a huge attack on the Trade Union Movement. There are corrupt people in all sections of society so you don't condemn a whole movement. Trade unions are working people's weapons. By all means weed out the abusers and corrupt officials but don't destroy the whole movement yet this is Abbott & Co's ideological aim.

We have to create public opinion - petitions, letters, contact media - and do it more efficiently than in the past because the fruit of Abbott's wish list will affect our children and grandchildren. This government is eroding all we hold dear.

Democracy is not just voting. We need access to those services Abbott wants whittled away: the ABC, SBS, CSIRO, Trade Unions, the Fair Work Act, Medicare, Australia Post, public Schools, public Housing... We must not be like the German citizens who turned their faces away, ignoring the trains heading for the gas chambers because action seemed too difficult!

Marion proposes a People's Commission of Audit to counter Abbott's razor gang. Build a movement around cuts that can be made and emphasising what is important to keep. The Australia Institute (the progressive one) is developing a nine page booklet on behalf of the Unitarian Church to distribute as far and wide as possible to stimulate discussion on what kind of society we need to have, what assets we need to protect and a plan to disseminate the booklet. \$15,000 has already been raised to produce the booklet, step one in a plan to build a social justice campaign along the lines of the successful Purple Sage Project and campaign for Indi. <http://vwt.org.au/1998/11/purple-sage/>

Marion is calling on groups in the community (including UAW) to adopt responsibility to bring people together to discuss what they want in areas such as welfare, Aboriginal affairs, health, schools, universities and TAFES, housing, employment, youth, refugees...

She welcomed suggestions on how to advertise the project such as using celebrities or well-known people to be sponsors of adverts in newspapers and radio. There were plenty of suggestions from the meeting and several people made a donation to the Peoples' Commission of Audit Project. Amy thanked the donors and said the UAW as an organisation will also donate.

Although the Murdoch and Fairfax media continue to give Abbott immunity from proper scrutiny some journalists are doing their job, particularly online and through social media. Mairi referenced an article in The Canberra Times: *Poor the Losers in Class War Hypocrisy*, <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/poor-the-losers-in-class-war-hypocrisy-20140214-32rm4.html> and here is an article in Overland, *Punitive Detention, How Much Worse Can It Get*, in response to the appalling events on Manus Island. <http://overland.org.au/2014/02/punitive-refugee-detention-how-much-worse-can-it-get/>

There was general agreement organisations such as GetUp were doing a better job at opposition than the Labor Party where quality leadership appears to be missing in action.

Amy thanked Marion and Marie for driving from Reservoir for the meeting and everyone continued their discussions and catch-ups over a delicious afternoon tea.

**A reminder our next meeting will now be on April 12th at Mordialloc Neighbourhood House to avoid clashes with Easter.**

## CORRESPONDENCE

We welcome feedback from members, and contributions to the debates.

### **Eureka.**

Just a brief note to say how much I appreciate and enjoy the wonderful reports on a wide range of topics in each UAW newsletter, especially the one on bees earlier in the year (very important), Julia Gillard, and more recently on The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka.

The latter one particularly interested me because my great grandfather was one of the miners in the Stockade and I am one of "Eureka's Children". Grandpa Perry returned to England about 1855 with quite a lump of gold which was made into a ring – now on display in the museum at Ballarat. He returned on the SS Great Britain in 1861 with his sister, who spent a couple of years on the gold fields, going down the mines and experiencing the rough and tumble of life at that time. Grandpa later settled at Creswick where he farmed.

Eureka's Children had their annual Xmas "do" at the Celtic Club 2 weeks ago at which Clare Wright launched her book and gave a great talk about her research and the story of Eureka. The new Museum for Democracy in Ballarat is superb, and very child friendly, too.

...all the very best for the future of the UAW!

**Pat Phair.**

December 2013

**From Brisbane** Thanks again for the great newsletter and all the hard work of the committee and volunteers.

Looking forward to the book club list again. Maybe with modern technology I can find a way to join the book club whilst still in Brisbane.

**Annie Cowling** January 2014

**Did you know?** Whilst reading the latest newsletter I wondered if UAW is aware that the archives department of the Women's Hospital has been axed, no doubt for cost efficiency as well as the floor space it was taking up.

Thanks for keeping a perspective in these challenging times.

**Rosalind Byass.** February 2014

**A Molly Hadfield Award**, was established in 2013 in recognition of a public or community housing tenant, or a group of tenants, who are making an outstanding contribution to support older tenants.

Announced by Housing Minister Wendy Lovell, the award honours the memory of late UAW member Molly Hadfield who *was a tireless and dedicated advocate for public housing in Victoria throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century... This award honours the important contribution she made to the public housing community.*

In 2006 Molly was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community across the areas of aged care, community health and youth. In the same year she was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women.

## NOTES FROM THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 2014

### MESSAGE TO MEMBERS: TAKE ACTION! SPEAK UP!

There was discussion around the issues of asylum seekers, attacks on the ABC, the future of manufacturing industries like SPC Ardmona, and continued attacks on wages and conditions. A letter was sent to Dr Sharman Stone, who stood up so strongly for her Shepparton constituents and called out the Prime Minister on his stated cause for the industry's difficulties i.e. workers' wages and conditions.

It is important, more than ever, to make our voices heard. We recommend not only that members support on-line action, e.g. GetUp, but that we email, telephone and write to our local Members of Parliament.

Since the Organising Committee meeting, tragic and violent events have unfolded in the detention centre on Manus Island. We have written to both Minister Scott Morrison and Shadow Minister Richard Marles.

#### **To the Minister for Immigration, Scott Morrison**

*Members of the Union of Australian Women are appalled at the government's inhumane treatment of asylum seekers. The death of a refugee on Manus Island and the injuries sustained by many others, are intolerable and a clear indication that we are in breach of our responsibilities under international law and the Refugee Convention.*

*We want an end to secrecy. It does not fit well with democracy, and your government was elected on a promise of transparency. We want to know what is happening in our name.*

*We want asylum seekers to be processed on Australian soil, not outsourced to countries with a dubious human rights record.*

*We want an end to the prolonged uncertainty and indefinite detention that causes such anguish and trauma to vulnerable people who are seeking our protection. There is no reason why claims for asylum cannot be processed quickly and efficiently.*

*We want a genuine, co-operative processing arrangement to be reached with neighbouring countries. Surely that cannot be beyond our ability as a democratic, wealthy nation?*

*And, as an organisation that has campaigned for human rights for over 60 years, we want an end to the bi-partisan moral bankruptcy that has dominated Australia's reaction to a world-wide phenomena for far too long.*

#### **And, to the Shadow Minister, Richard Marles, in part**

*We want the Opposition to stop the pretence that such harsh policy is to save people from drowning because of unscrupulous smugglers. It is, in fact, a policy that is condemning vulnerable people to the violence, trauma and illness that off-shore processing entails. ...*

*We believe that the Opposition has got it wrong. Asylum seekers should be processed on Australian soil, not outsourced to countries with a dubious human rights record...*

*(prolonged detention) is cruel, and unfitting for a country that has historically seen itself as the country of the fair go.*

We have also written to **Governor-General Quentin Bryce**:

*You have shown wonderful leadership and are an excellent role model for all Australians but particularly for Australian women. As Australia's first female Governor-General you have demonstrated that women can aspire to hold any position in our nation.*

*In particular we have appreciated you for your strong advocacy of a fairer Australia and your emphasis on human rights and equal opportunity for all. Your four Boyer lectures have made many Australians focus on the status of human rights in Australia and on what it means to be a good citizen. Your vision for a fairer Australia where all citizens have equal rights is an inspiration for all of us to have a voice in supporting attempts to eradicate inequality.*

*We also appreciated your strong support of marriage equality and a republic in your widely reported final Boyer lecture. Many Australians were heartened by your support of these two important issues.*

*We believe that you have done more to bring about positive change in Australia than any previous Governor-General and you have done it always with dignity, grace and style.*

We made a donation to support the work of ICAN in its anti-nuclear weapons campaign.

**Inaugural Molly Hadfield OAM Social Justice Oration, Thursday 6 March 2014, 6.00pm-8.00pm, Shire Hall 286 Gower St Preston.** Keynote speech to be delivered by Mary Crooks, Executive Director Victorian Women's Trust.

*Molly worked throughout her life to advance women's rights, public education, community health and peace, she led by example and was an inspiration for many in our (Darebin) community.* 8470 8630 or panil@darebin.vic.gov.au

## MARCH INDEX

What's On	Page 1
Equality Rights Alliance: Women's voices for gender equality: Women and Housing	Page 2
Women of the Brighton Cemetery Walk	Page 3
UAW Southern Branch Report	Pages 4-5
Correspondence	Page 6
Notes from the Organising Committee February 2014	Pages 7-8
Inaugural Molly Hadfield Oration; March Index	Page 8