

Union of Australian Women

Newsletter

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2014

Monday 6 October
12 noon

UAW Darebin Group
Peacock Hotel, opposite Northcote Town Hall
Clare: 9481 2704

Thursday 9 October
10.30-12.30

UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Saturday 11 October
2.00pm

Rally: Stop the War on Refugees
State Library, Cnr Swanston & Latrobe

Wednesday 22 October
10.30-12.30

UAW Organising Committee meeting
Meeting room 1.2, 1st floor Ross House

NB changed date, time and venue for Organising Committee meeting

NOVEMBER

Union of Australian Women
Annual General Meeting

10.30-12.30

Friday 28 November 4th floor meeting room, Ross House

Speaker: Anna Burke MP for Chisholm
ASYLUM SEEKER POLICY AND OTHER MATTERS

\$5

See enclosed flyer invitation

VALE BERYL CARTER and LILA RATCLIFFE.

see page 7

THE PM BEATS THE DRUMS OF WAR, BUT IS MISSING ON CLIMATE CHANGE.**By Anne Sgro**

Tony Abbott virtually pre-empted America's request for support in the Middle East in his rush to send fighter jets and 600 military personnel to northern Iraq. There has been no recourse to the United Nations. There is no time-line beyond "it may take some time", no clear goals of how we will defeat Islamic State. Labor Opposition Leader Bill Shorten declares that he is united with the Coalition, seemingly pleased to be invited to the party.

IS or ISIL commits horrific acts but Western nations sending in armed forces and conducting bombing raids with no clear objective and no end in sight will not bring peace or stability. Howard, Blair and Bush have been there and done that; they are largely responsible for the many thousands of dead soldiers and civilians, the chaos and destruction, and the void that followed their intervention. Howard feels "embarrassed" that his information was wrong but shows no sense of remorse or culpability for what occurred.

The UAW has supported the Greens' call for a vote in Parliament before Australian troops are sent into conflict. Debate and approval are needed. We would also echo the statement from WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom).

WILPF Australia is dismayed by the news that Australia's involvement in the Middle East is being ramped up with extra troops being sent to the war zone.

We ask for a public debate including a debate in Parliament about what is a very complex situation fraught with danger for our personnel and, most importantly, for those living in the conflict area.

We know from experience that arming the participants and adding external forces is not a solution for moderating violence, nor for achieving a peaceable outcome.

We call on the Australian government and Parliament to pursue more constructive efforts to engage with those who have a stake in the future of the Middle East and whose lives are at risk.

Meanwhile, the supposed threats of terrorism on our own doorstep have been ramped up, with the media saturated by sensationalism, paranoia and speculation. All are designed to enable further draconian, antidemocratic powers to be given to ASIO and other security authorities, and to create fear and division within our community by fostering suspicion of 'the other'.

But it certainly takes the focus off climate change and the unpopularity of the government's Budget measures. It was no surprise that Abbott could not make it to the UN Climate Summit. He was conspicuous by his absence and Australia demeaned by our lack of action. The situation in the Middle East is dire. It is heartbreaking to see thousands of people fleeing, their faces reflecting their incomprehension, fear and loss. But gung-ho military intervention is not the way to resolve the conflict or help obtain peace. And ignoring climate change is reprehensible and goes against world action.

AGE PENSIONS IN AUSTRALIA- TIME FOR RADICAL REFORM? -35% of retired Australians at risk of poverty.
By Cath Morrison

A former Treasury official, Patricia Pascuzzo, has just surveyed comparisons of global pension schemes by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Monetary Fund, NATSEM, and other rankings of pension systems. Her report, *An International Comparison of Pension System Performance in Delivering Adequate Retirement Incomes*, will be handed to the federal government's financial system inquiry. The report was commissioned by Challenger Limited, a major financial services company.

Pascuzzo says Australia's combined superannuation and pension system ranks relatively well on fiscal sustainability, but very poorly on the level of income it is delivering to retirees. Australia has one of the highest poverty rates among over-65s in the OECD -35 per cent of its retirees are "at risk of poverty". The only country with a worse record is Korea, at 47 per cent, according to Gareth Hutchens, *The Age* 6/9.

This is an appalling outcome, and is partly due to Australia's late start (1992) in superannuation. Given that most women have little or very low superannuation, a survey of women's incomes in retirement would find much higher levels of poverty than those of the population overall. According to the article by Hutchens, Pascuzzo implies that the solution lies in forcing retirees with super to take a lifetime income stream instead of a lump sum or raising the age at which super can be accessed (currently 55).

The Australia Institute (a progressive independent public policy think tank) has suggested a much more radical solution which is to make the pension universal. This proposal has some appealing benefits for the vast majority of women who are at the greatest risk of poverty in old age.

Pensions currently cost around \$40 billion per annum. Surprisingly so do super tax concessions- which only benefit the relatively well off - and Treasury has estimated that these concessions will cost more than the age pension by 2016. The Australia Institute proposes a cost neutral National Superannuation Scheme similar to that in New Zealand whereby the age pension would be universal - free of means test, and paid for by abolishing super tax concessions. David Ingles of the Australia Institute (*New Matilda* 8/9) says that: *...on the Treasury's conservative figures - to raise the base pension rate by 25 per cent,most people gained more on the pension side than they would lose on the tax side. On our estimates, 80 per cent of the population would benefit. Particular benefits would flow to people, largely women, who had spent time out of work and therefore not been able to save over their working life...It simplifies, and makes more equitable, the whole system. To my mind this is a simple, but brilliant solution* which simplifies the administration of both age pensions and superannuation and there must be savings there. A whole army of Centrelink staff would be freed up to help job seekers find work rather than assessing income and assets for the pension, for starters.

Everyone, but specially women, would be the winners in such a simple scheme. But, is it too simple for those who control our financial services systems to allow it to see the light of day?

THE AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS IN THE GREAT WAR

by Carol Stals

**A display at the Royal Historical Society, Cnr. William and A'Beckett Streets, Melbourne.
Opposite the Flagstaff Park. Open Monday – Friday until December.**

The Red Cross has put on a very interesting exhibition to coincide with the Centenary of WW1. Even if you know the story, it is touching to see it.

They played a hugely important role in WW1 both at home and away.

It was a group mainly undertaken by women. Women were the organisers, they were the local force behind things happening and they raised the money and undertook the tasks of money collecting, food and clothing collection, making and distribution and the endless knitting, bandage rolling and packing of biscuit tins of goods, which included, soap, tobacco, fruit cakes and other thoughtful and homely gestures, to be sent to all soldiers overseas.

The work of the Red Cross Groups spread right across Australia and the women worked tirelessly. They provided entertainments to raise money and spirits, had carnivals and displays and all of these huge undertakings were done with such professionalism.

In Caulfield at the GMH 11, The Caulfield Military Hospital in Koornang Road, Caulfield, which had been the mansion Glen Eira, between 2000 and 3000 men were treated. The local Red Cross built a Rest Home there. Many rest homes were built around Australia to support the soldiers who were convalescing and the men were provided with meals and afternoon tea at cheap rates, and could also purchase teas for their visitors at a slightly higher rate.

Groups of VAD's staffed these places, and provided company, wrote letters, mended clothing etc. for the men. Caulfield Rest Home had a piano, billiard tables and a library. Companionship and support was one of the greatest things offered. Many of the men were still attending clinics at the main hospital. It was situated in the restful, beautiful park- like grounds of the mansion.

Vera Deakin is featured in the exhibition, as she and Winifred Johnson travelled to Cairo and opened the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau there on 21 October 1915. She withstood attempts by the Red Cross to replace her with a man and remained until 1919, and was awarded an OBE for outstanding humanitarian service.

Prior to leaving Australia she had strong opposition from her father, Alfred Deakin.

Included in the exhibition are photos and artifacts and many posters for activities run by different branches of the Red Cross for a variety of equipment for the men at the front. Of course the Red Cross Nurses are well represented.

FOREIGN AID TIED TO GENDER EQUALITY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST EXTREMISM

By Cath Morrison

Australia has disgracefully reduced foreign aid over recent years, but is at least now leading the way internationally in requiring that 80 per cent of that reduced foreign aid has a gender component. The Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, recently wrote in an article in *The Age* (4/9/14) that the struggle for women's rights and gender equality is today's great struggle for justice, comparable to the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa and that gender initiatives in foreign aid such as those by Australia are important.

Ms Mlambo-Ngcuka is currently visiting Australia and is well qualified to comment on the issue of gender equality and poverty. From 2005 to 2008, Ms Mlambo-Ngcuka served as Deputy President of South Africa, overseeing programmes to combat poverty and bring the advantages of a growing economy to the poor, with a particular focus on women. Prior to this, she served as Minister of Minerals and Energy from 1999 to 2005 and Deputy Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry from 1996 to 1999. She was a Member of Parliament from 1994 to 1996 as part of South Africa's first democratic government.

UN Women is supported by the Australian Government, and has been working at 'street level' to empower women in an initiative called Safe Cities now operating in 17 cities. Ms Mlambo-Ngcuka says: *Every city should be safe; but worldwide, a pandemic of violence affects one in three women and girls - rich and poor alike. Women and girls are concentrated in vulnerable employment, make up two-thirds of the world's illiterate and remain poorly represented in decision-making institutions. This is what gender inequality looks like, and it's a colossal failure of leadership on a global scale.*

Ms Mlambo-Ngcuka provided as an example of the work of UN Women the case of Pauline James who sells fruit and vegetables in Port Moresby, like many other market stall holders, of whom 75 per cent are women. As she says: *The margins are low and the hours are long, but they earn money for their families. It's hazardous. More than half the women and girls have experienced sexual violence in the poorly lit and serviced marketplaces. Supported by the Australian government, UN Women has worked with market vendors, local authorities and a bank, for a practical and sustainable solution. New police units patrol markets, effectively ending the attacks. Pauline and her fellow stallholders now have secure bank accounts, receive financial training, and use a mobile fee payment system... New vendors' associations give women like Pauline a voice.* Such initiatives are now more important than ever with the current wave of extremism undermining rights for women in many parts of the world. *"Extremists first seek to limit women's and girls' access to education and health services, and to restrict their participation in economic and political life. In conflict, they are deliberately targeted with sexual violence, slavery and trafficking"* As Ms Mlambo-Ngcuka concludes: *Women's participation also brings better chances for peace and security. It is no coincidence that societies with greater gender equality are less vulnerable to radicalism.*

As Chair of the G20 this year, Australia has a wonderful opportunity to push an agenda of economic opportunity for women around the world to reduce poverty and inequality which falls most heavily on women and girls. Investing in women's empowerment and girls' education must be an essential component of our response to terrorism and violent extremism.

GRANDMOTHERS DEMAND THAT CHILDREN BE FREED

By Anne Sgro

There were many UAW members among the grandmothers and friends who rallied on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral to launch the organisation Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children on 6 September. "Every unaccompanied child under 18 years; every child with their family --every child in detention must be freed" said spokeswoman Dr Gwenda Davey." What if it was our grandchildren in these hopeless, unhealthy places? Our hearts would break". Children are being confined in appalling conditions within Australia, and even more disgraceful circumstances in detention camps in Christmas Island and Nauru. "Children in detention are being robbed of their names and identities to become mere numbers; their human rights of security, safety, education and health are being stolen. Children are being robbed of hope" she said.

The Grandmothers have since organised into Federal electoral groups to lobby their local members, have published a striking flyer, and are encouraging members to express opposition to Scott Morrison's decision to sign a deal with Cambodia to take refugees from Manus Island and Nauru. Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection statistics show that in July 2014, 895 children were locked in Australia's secure immigration detention facilities. Despite the Minister's August announcement that 150 children and families will be released from mainland detention, there are still 148 children on Christmas Island and 183 on Nauru. The remainder are in 'alternative places of detention' on the mainland. They should be freed immediately into the community.

The devastating psychological impacts of detention on children are well-known and have been widely discussed for more than a decade. No one can reasonably argue that a locked detention facility is a suitable place for a child, particularly one who has already been damaged by conflict, war or persecution. *Refugee Council of Australia Media Release 2 February 2014.*

Children being held in immigration detention on Christmas Island have told a Human Rights Commission inquiry it is like 'hell' in the centre. The overwhelming sense is of enormous anxiety, depression, mental illness; but particularly developmental retardation. *HRC President Gillian Triggs.* The children are stopping talking. You can see a little girl come up to you and she is just staring at you but won't communicate. *ABC The World Today, 24 March 2014.* Infants are not thriving in detention. Babies aren't learning to crawl, because the ground isn't safe for them to crawl around. *Professor Louise Newman, 17 August 2014*

You can contact the Grandmothers at grandmothersref@gmail.com, check the website www.grandmothersadrc.org

Cambodia. Minister Scott Morrison has signed the agreement with Cambodia for that impoverished country to take asylum seekers from Nauru and Manus Island. Many millions of dollars will disappear into private hands; Cambodian children and women are malnourished; local people do not want the unfair burden. The Abbott government is morally bankrupt to even consider such a deplorable deal, and will stand condemned by the international community for its abrogation of United Nations agreements.

VALE: BERYL CARTER and LILA RATCLIFFE

Members of the UAW are saddened at the passing of two well-respected long-time members.

Beryl Carter, 89, died peacefully on 14 September after a long illness.

Lila Ratcliffe, 95, died peacefully on 25 September.

Both were members of the Organising Committee for very many years and were instrumental, with the late Selma Kimpton, in establishing the Preston Group of the UAW. They were active in their local community, regularly raised funds for the UAW through street stalls, and were the backbone of catering for UAW lunches: Lila was also famous for her pikelets and knitted bedsocks (which must have kept thousand of feet warm), Beryl for her Christmas cakes.

They were totally steadfast in their political views. They were both quiet women who never wavered in their support for women, peace and social justice.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. When will the culture change?

We were shocked some years ago when VicHealth established that intimate partner violence was the leading preventable cause of death, disability and illness for Australian women aged 15 – 44 years.

In mid-September VicHealth released its third National Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women Survey, and the results are alarming, to say the least.

17,500 Australians were surveyed.

78% can't understand why women stay in violent relationships

68% believe that violence results from men being unable to control their anger

43% think men rape women because they can't control their sexual urges

One woman a week dies at the hands of a current or ex-partner. The annual cost to the economy of domestic violence in Australia 2002 03 was estimated by Access Economics to be \$8.1billion (Age 28.9.14).

So where is the outrage? Marg D'Arcy nailed it recently when she compared the response to this violence with the reaction to perceived terror threats from Islamists and points out where the real terror is. She asks: "Where are the phone taps? Where is the surveillance? Where are the police raids? The confiscation of weapons? Can we ask the Minister for Women to treat this threat to the safety of Australians as seriously as he does the threat of terrorist attacks?"

Some work has been done to prevent violence against women, but this survey makes clear that a huge amount still needs to be done, not just to change perceptions but to change the culture.

TAKE ACTION. WRITE A LETTER

By Carol Stals

On Monday 15th September a few members gathered to write letters on a variety of causes. Quite a few members had contacted us to apologise that they wouldn't be able to attend, so there was interest.

In case you would like to follow up by writing your own letters, the points and contact details are attached. Write in your own name and please include your address. One page is best. Only write about one issue, but several points if you wish.

Peter Greste; Write to – Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Dr. Hassan El-Laithy
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt,
1 Darwin Avenue, Yarralumla, Canberra ACT, 2600

And a copy to The Hon. Julie Bishop,
Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600

- Is an award winning Australian journalist serving a seven-year sentence in Egypt.
- He was accused of falsifying news, damaging Egypt's security and reputation and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.
- No evidence supporting these charges was produced at his trial, so there was an international outcry about his sentence, including from the UN High Commission for Human Rights, which called for his release.
- Ask that the government of Egypt reconsider its harsh sentence and release Peter Greste.

Climate Change: Write to The Minister for Environment,
The Hon Greg Hunt,
Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600

- More world wide extreme weather events, costing lives, livestock, resources, depleting environment, housing and employment. Additional health risks.
- Renewable energy and advances technology the safe way, wind, wave and solar energy to be developed.
- Australia going backwards in their acceptance and support for the environment and the rest of the world is surging forward.
- Coal to India, a dirty business both ends. We should be helping them invest in solar and clean energy, not introduce and old and dirty resource.

Protect Medicare: The Hon. Peter Dutton, Minister for Health,
Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600

- Medicare deserves to be maintained and even extended.
- Health care in appalling situation where the very ill, the frail and the elderly suffer from a less than top level medical support
- Remove costs for visiting GPs

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TAKE ACTION. WRITE A LETTER cont.

Protect the Great Barrier Reef:

The Hon. Greg Hunt, Minister for the Environment, Parliament. As other addresses and copy.

- Great threat to the World Heritage status. This will impact on the environment, species, and tourism.
- Threat from mining, dredging, toxic spills, over use of the area
- It is the world's largest living entity and it is essential that the balance of nature remains intact. We do not want it to die much less in our lifetime.

Support the ABC from funding cuts – and SBS

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, Minister for Communications, Parliament House, (see above)

- Give support for ABC radio and TV and also SBS, which provides diversity for listeners.
- The ABC has been a wonderful training ground for local drama, music, actors, directors and other staff. We deserve to retain this resource.
- Wide political opinions should be embraced.
- Many people spend their whole day and night with ABC; it is an education, an entertainment and a pleasure.
- Keep ads off ABC

Refugees:

The Hon. Scott Morrison, Immigration and Border Protection, see address as above.

- No offshore detainment of refugees
- People need to be processed and resettled promptly.
- We are causing stress and anxiety, which may render them unable to take the place in our community that they would want to. They have much to offer.
- Children and families should be settled ASAP to give them security, access to education and have a settled family life. We want people to have good mental and physical health, not to create problems.
- All people should be treated in a humane way, best medical treatment accessible immediately, language classes readily available and not treated as criminals.

These are just some ideas. Please expand on them as you see fit.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING- UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN (Vic)

The annual general meeting of the UAW will be held in Ross House on Friday 28th November, 2014 commencing at 10.30 a.m.

Nominations for Committee Members for the UAW’s Organising Committee are invited from interested members. As well as the 4 Office Holders (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer), there are also a number of Ordinary Committee members required.

According to our Constitution we need a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 10 ordinary members. We do hope that some members will consider nominating for these positions as the more Committee members we have the better we are able to carry out the work of the UAW.

If you would like to stand please fill out and sign the nomination form below, get it signed by two UAW members (Proposer and Seconder) and return it to the Office by the 21st November.

UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN VICTORIA INC. NOMINATION FORM 2014

We..... (Proposer’s Signature)

and..... (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 4 p.m. on Friday
November 21st, 2014.**

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

For reasons beyond our control we have needed to combine the October and November Newsletter. Keep this page for November's What's On, and we look forward to seeing as many members as possible at the AGM.

WHAT'S ON- NOVEMBER 2014

Monday 3 November 12 noon	UAW Darebin Group Peacock Hotel, opposite Northcote Town Hall
Monday 10 November 10.00-12.00	UAW Organising Committee meeting 2nd floor meeting room Ross House
Thursday 13 November 10.30-12.30	UAW Book Group 2nd floor meeting room Ross House
Tuesday 25 November	White Ribbon Day. Men Against Violence Against Women
Thursday 20 November 11.00-2.00	UAW-Seniors Network 4th floor meeting room 2 Ross House
Friday 28 November 10.30 12.30	UAW Annual General Meeting 4th floor meeting room Ross House Speaker: Anna Burke MP Asylum Seeker Policy and Other Matters <i>See enclosed flyer</i>

MEMBERSHIP PAYMENTS FOR 2015 - PAY CASH AT THE AGM IF CONVENIENT

The AGM will be held on Friday November 28th this year at Ross House. While memberships are not due to be paid until January 1st, 2015, some members may find it convenient to pay their \$20 concession/ \$30 non-concessional membership dues for 2015 at the meeting. We will take cash payments and provide a receipt on the day if members want to pay ahead in cash rather than send a cheque.

Members are also reminded that membership may be paid by internet bank transfer.

Our bank details are: National, **BSB 083 004- Account number 515107210**

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