

Union of Australian Women

NEWSLETTER

WHAT'S ON-AUGUST 2015

6 & 9 August

2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which claimed more than 200,000 lives either instantly or within a few months of the attacks. Many more people have died since then from the ongoing radiological impacts.

**Thursday 6 August
6.30 – 8.30**

Special screening of the extraordinary historical drama "Hiroshima" (1953)
\$15/\$25 <http://trybooking.com/IBYU>
Organised by ICAN

**Wednesday 12 August
10.30 – 12.30**

UAW Organising Committee
R1.3, first floor, Ross House

**Wednesday 12 August
7.30 - 9.30**

Peace in Australia, the untold story
Unitarian Peace Memorial Church
110 Grey St East Melbourne
Australia 1946-1976: from ANZAC to Vietnam:
Responses to Changing World
Understandings Moderated by the
Victorian Council of Churches

**Thursday 13 August
10.30 – 12.30**

UAW Book Group
R1.3, first floor, Ross House

**Saturday 15 August
2.00pm**

Refugees

UAW Southern Branch
Mordialloc Neighbourhood House
Main St Mordialloc
Speaker: Pauline Brown. Labor for

"REFUGEES: WHAT NOW?"
Amy: 9547 6167 Mairi 9587 8757

**Thursday 20 August
11.00 – 2.00pm**

UAW-Seniors Network Quarterly Meeting
4th floor Room 4.2

THE VOICES OF MID-LIFE WOMEN FACING HOMELESSNESS AND A PROPOSED MODEL THAT MIGHT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

by Anne Sgro

Dr Andrea Sharam, Research Fellow at Swinburne University provided much food for thought in her presentation at the Winter Coffee with a Focus. For some years she has been researching women and housing and has come up with a model that she, and others, believe will work. She gave some background to the reality many mid-life women encounter. She discovered, after research in 2008 with the women's housing group WISHIN, with which she has been involved for many years, that there are no specialist services set up for mid-life women apart from those escaping Family Violence.

After divorce, while men are likely to start a new relationship, stay employed and continue contributing to superannuation; this is not the case with women. Those with children are often out of the workforce, have little or no super, and when they do re-enter work are more likely to be in casual or part-time work. They are also more likely to have other caring roles, such as being responsible for elderly parents. Women are much less likely than men to repartner. So they don't recover as men do. While the women often get the house, it is rarely a fully owned asset and, not wanting to uproot their children, they make the decision to not move to a cheaper area. Andrea referred to her previous research: *Going it Alone* (women 35 – 65 years in housing insecurity), and *No Home at the End of the Road?* (a survey of women 40 plus years, done in conjunction with the Salvation Army). Many of the women interviewed were paying off a home, some were in rental accommodation, and none believed that they would do well in retirement.

They formed two groups:

Single parents took on a lot of debt. After that debt was paid, it was too late to earn enough to buy a house and they were often in severe housing stress.

Others, even earning well, didn't save because they didn't think that buying a house would be possible. So they lived for the day. But at retirement, or if they lost their job, a crisis would occur. They didn't believe that they had an option.

Andrea's latest research was with focus groups in Melbourne and Ballarat, of women in the 45 – 64 age group, and funded by the Victorian Women's Trust. *"They were women just like us – they could have been our sisters, friends, colleagues..."* There is a propensity for highly educated women to be divorced. Higher education should correlate to higher earnings. Single parents are held back by debt but also invested in education for the future. But earnings came too late to establish housing.

There are two factors involved:

The Housing Market. Since 2006 prices have risen considerably leaving no hope of purchase and rents have also risen, affecting the capacity to save.

The Labour Market. There is increased casualisation in the areas where women traditionally work – education, health and human services, retail. Hourly rates may be good but women are not getting full-term work. For example, in schools and tertiary education work is increasingly by contract per semester, then at 55 years of age, contracts stop and impoverishment begins.

"People need a partner to buy a house!"

2013 research on homeless families indicated that they are headed predominantly by single mothers who were mostly working to get an education e.g. as Aged Care workers, and saw education as the means out of poverty and homelessness. They were often sleeping in cars. Andrea stressed the importance of the Labour Market.

Public housing is not the answer: it is highly targeted, focusing on the most needy in society, and the number of public housing stock is declining.

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THE VOICES OF MID-LIFE WOMEN FACING HOMELESSNESS

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Andrea believes that we need a new model for affordable housing. These women are capable of paying off a house if that housing is moderately priced. They are earning enough to pay a mortgage. But if changes are not made they will cost the system later because they will be part of the needy.

Her proposed model is an **Equity Land Trust**. These Trusts have existed in the United States for 40 years and were among the few housing organisations/systems that came through the Global Financial Crisis in good health. They are also supported in the United Kingdom. A Trust, a legal body, can lease land at a peppercorn rent or take up land.

As ***No Home at the End of the Road?*** explains, an Equity Land Trust:

- Separates land ownership from dwelling ownership
- Assumes the land is provided at no cost
- Would have individual women purchase the dwelling through private mortgage finance

Andrea is frustrated by the lack of response to the proposal which is seen in Australia as a risk. The Trust would develop the land and sell apartments to eligible buyers who would pay a price that did not include the land. It is about the cost of supply rather than market price. The purchaser would have to agree not to take capital gains so that the apartment could be taken up by someone else in the scheme.

In response to a question as to whether Planning Minister Richard Wynne had been approached (he has a good record with public and social housing) Andrea thinks that trying to engage Federal and State governments is hopeless. There is no Federal Ministry of Housing, and State Minister Martin Foley juggles Housing with two other portfolios. I was reminded of a statement that the late UAW member Molly Hadfield made at the launch of the above document in October 2011 as part of Poverty Week – that Australia needs a national housing policy so that all levels of government can then work together. That, of course, is the ideal.

In the meantime, Andrea wants to focus on local government and some not-for-profit organisations that have land and assets. She has been working with her local council, Moreland, which, like many others has car parks and other land that could be put to a program to develop housing.

A St Kilda housing group has put a proposal to the Port Philip Council but it is for mixed Public Housing and Equity Land Trust, and Andrea was not so keen on that proposed model.

Another member raised the problem of the polarization of wealth in our cities. The wealthy live in inner city areas; the poorer you are the further out you need to go. As was recently documented, housing at reasonable costs for purchase or rent are on the margins of the city, far from services, jobs and transport. Policy settings need to change.

Another member wondered whether any of the women involved would be interested in becoming part of the lobby group that is clearly needed if movement is to occur. Certainly, Andrea felt that our institutions are too inert to make a move. They need a 'movement' to encourage them. She wants to establish a demonstration model to show what can be done. Land and key stakeholders are needed. As many local councils are increasingly concerned about housing, she suggested that UAW members could go to their Council meetings and start to ask questions. It is an idea that is worth exploring.

There is a dearth of policy in many areas at present. She suggests we can further our understanding by accessing Australian Policy Online at www.apo.org.au It was a good discussion which left many questions but engaged members present, giving us much to think about.

70 YEARS AFTER HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI, THE CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS CONTINUES

By Anne Sgro

There are 16,000 nuclear weapons in the world. A single one could create a humanitarian catastrophe. ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) is one organisation that is trying to do something about it, calling on all nations to agree to a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

Who has the weapons, and how many?

USA:	7,315. The first country to develop nuclear weapons and the only country to have used them in war.
Russia:	8,000. It has the largest arsenal and is investing heavily in the modernization of its warheads and delivery systems.
UK:	225. Has a fleet of 4 nuclear submarines in Scotland, each carrying 16 Trident missiles. It is considering whether to overhaul its nuclear forces or disarm.
France:	300. Most of its nuclear warheads are deployed on submarines.
China:	250. Does not appear to be increasing the size of its arsenal.
India:	90-100. Developed nuclear weapons in breach of non-proliferation commitments. It is steadily increasing the size of its nuclear arsenal and enhancing its delivery capabilities.
Israel:	88. Has a policy of ambiguity in relation to its arsenal, neither confirming nor denying its existence.
Pakistan:	100 – 120. Making improvements to its arsenal and increasing it.
North Korea:	fewer than 10. Has a fledgling nuclear weapons program.

The effects of nuclear weapons are impossible to control: the effects of a single detonation can wreak havoc on the environment and communities across borders and hundreds of miles away: radioactive fallout, contamination of soil, water and plant life. Thousands of nuclear weapons are on trigger alert, which means that they could be launched within minutes, and compared to the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, today's weapons are thousands of times stronger.

While banning nuclear weapons is not the same as eliminating them, it is a good starting point. This is why the UAW supports ICAN in its campaign. According to ICAN, most countries do not want nuclear weapons because they threaten rather than enhance national security. They also divert funds from education and health care. More than 100 countries have endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge, a commitment to work for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, the worst weapons ever created. The wide and growing international support for the Pledge sends a signal that the majority of the world's governments are ready to move forward, even if the nuclear weapons states are not ready to participate.

There has been much celebration over the agreement with Iran, which has committed to not developing weapons with their nuclear energy. It can only be seen as a cautious step forward.

ICAN is now asking that we write to our Foreign Minister expressing our concern about the threat that nuclear weapons pose to our health, global security and human survival, and urging her to 'do everything in her power to support the immediate start of negotiations for a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

Information taken from website: www.goodbyenuk.es

THE GREAT DIVIDE- INEQUALITY AND DISADVANTAGE ENTRENCHED IN AUSTRALIA by Cath Morrison

An ever-increasing number of books and articles are highlighting the fact that inequality is entrenched in the world and becoming so in Australia. Economists Thomas Picketty (*Capital*) and now Joseph Stiglitz (*The Great Divide*) have highlighted growing inequality in the Western world and Stiglitz also the futility of austerity policies in Europe. The consequences of growing inequality for social fragmentation- and human misery- are incalculable and only Government can provide social and economic policies to 'level the playing field' for the disadvantaged. It is now accepted by all but extremely conservative economists that generally inequality leads to poorer economic outcomes. There is also compelling evidence to show that more unequal societies offer more limited life chances for poorer citizens. *Those with lower incomes generally die younger than the rich in all societies and enjoy worse health throughout their lives. In more equal societies, however, the gap in health outcomes and life expectancy is much narrower* (David Coats-Chifley Research Centre)

Australia is not immune. Once Australia could boast of its equality: this is now NOT the case. The Chifley Research Centre, (CRC www.chifley.org.au) says inequality in Australia is on the rise, and structural inequality puts a drag on economic growth. Also highlighted by the CRC is the widening gender pay gap evidenced since the mid-2000s. *"Of concern for Australia is that since mid-2000, the gender pay gap has increased significantly...Several factors contributing to this gap include: female dominated industries and jobs tending to attract lower wages; relatively fewer women in senior positions; workforce absences due to caring responsibilities; and discrimination."* Gender-based economic inequality feeds political and social inequality. Low incomes and unregulated casual work makes women more dependent and places them at greater risk of impoverishment and domestic violence.

According to ACOSS, top earners in Australia are now earning in five times as much as those at the bottom and the wealthiest have 70 times the assets of the poorest. The wealth of the top 20% rose by 28% from 2004 to 2012, while the wealth of the bottom rose by just 3%. *"If left unchecked it risks splintering our social fabric,"* ACOSS says, as reported by Lenore Taylor writing in the Guardian (22/6). ACOSS is pushing for changes to tax policy, including a reduction in tax breaks for superannuation and negative gearing noting that: *the top 20% of the wealth distribution owns over 80% of wealth in shares and investment in real estate and over 60% of superannuation."*

The recent *Dropping off the Edge* report brings inequality very close to home. Published by Catholic and Jesuit Social Services, the report tracked 667 Victorian postcodes across 22 indicators of disadvantage, including internet access, income, literacy and numeracy, long-term unemployment, juvenile offending and criminal convictions. The worst postcodes had been shown as similarly disadvantaged in reports over the past 15 years. There is an urgent need for Government action to help families in these areas break out of the cycle of poverty and disadvantage. Unfortunately, there was no help in the second Abbott budget. NATSEM modelling proved that families on the lowest incomes will lose the most (up to \$118 per week), while high income families will see their disposable incomes increase slightly over the next four years. Not much of an advance in breaking the poverty cycle!

The interest of the great and powerful in economic inequality is a recent phenomenon, and when the IMF identifies the growing gap between rich and poor as a problem then it is clear the terms of the debate have changed.

As David Coats writing for the CRC says somewhat trenchantly: *One might read this as a recognition that the crunch of peasants' feet on the aristocrats' gravel drive is an increasingly likely prospect if the status quo continues. Self-preservation is a powerful motivator for a change of elite minds.*

Let us hope that this Government will find self-preservation to be a motivator for a change of policies in terms of redressing disadvantage. To assist in this process UAW members must continue to make our voices heard on this issue of critical importance to help ensure that there is a change in policies.

SOUTHERN BRANCH REPORT – June 2015 FAMILY VIOLENCE Part 2

By Mairi Neil The first part of Mairi's report was published in the July Newsletter.

The cause of family violence is a bad attitude towards women and gender inequality. When males treat females as inferior, or limit their capacity to live their lives the way they choose, it encourages some men to be bullies, using physical power to dominate and control.

There is hope the royal commission will encourage the resourcing to stop family violence and create a world class prevention system in Victoria.

- there's been an 82% increase in family violence since 2010, but the data is based on crime statistics so this is an incomplete picture
- high risk groups(aboriginal, rural, CALD) are not receiving the necessary services
- the cost nationally anticipated to \$15.6 billion by 2021
- family violence a factor in 50% of substantiated child protection cases
- family violence connected to 35% of homelessness services
- family violence is 40% of Victoria Police work in crimes against a person
- 284% increase in intervention order breach cases in courts over 3 years

Already these 10 gaps identified:

1. poor data collection of the scale and breadth of problem
2. lack of consistent and sufficiently resourced prevention frameworks and programs
3. limited understanding of the short and long term impact on children and youth
4. poorly resourced and underinvestment in responses as demand for services grows
5. inconsistent and poorly tailored responses for high risk groups and specific cohorts, including failure to be culturally responsive
6. weak legal consequences failing to hold perpetrators to account
7. an inaccessible and complex justice system; victims don't always feel safe
8. lack of integrated response model; insufficiently robust governance structures
9. barriers to sharing information
10. challenges to working with the Commonwealth Government

The Federal Government spent \$30 million on an advertising campaign and wanted half of that from Victoria, but Andrews Government's royal commission of more benefit. The needs are:

- talking about issues and solutions and changing attitudes
- integrated services, and better training for those responding, effective governance making systematic use of data to support decision making, sharing information to support early intervention, crisis response and perpetrator accountability
- a one-stop entire for victims with access to multi-disciplinary professionals and services - strengthening and rolling out common risk assessment tools - entire workforce in family violence system trained to identify and manage risk in a similar way
- reform of court system so victim and perpetrator don't use same door, same waiting area - innovative justice actively avoiding the re-traumatisation of victims
- affordable housing, public and private, strategies for emergency accommodation - victims must be able to leave violent situations quickly. opportunities to use legislation to ensure third party organisations overlay hardship criteria and policies with a family violence lens.
- make perpetrators more visible and accountable, have early intervention strategies that converge policing, health and legal services for perpetrators. Strengthen and follow up compliance with orders.

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- shine a light on bureaucrats, professionals lay cards on table - ensure responses are not public servants covering their own arse
- a whole new approach, not just more money and resources - a whole of government family violence education agenda - integrated community care model, high quality specialist family violence expertise
- good decent men have to speak up and challenge the misbehaviour and appalling attitudes of other men in their circle - community education program for prevention - schools, workplaces, health centres, community sports centres...
- acknowledgement of the spectrum of disrespect for women and that discriminatory societies breed family violence

No more defending the status quo! The Government's aware this is not working and will refuse to shy away from the problem - a bright light will be shone and solutions will be found. The Royal Commission's task to provide practical recommendations to overcome failures in the system.

- there are gaps to be addressed and opportunities to improve
- currently the focus is on response to victims, not enough on holding perpetrators accountable and stopping them repeating violence
- focus now on legal lens - but the impact is often to compound pain, trauma and fear
- currently not using technology to its fullest capacity (warning systems etc)
- more needs to be done to free victims financially and lessen impact of bureaucracy
- delivery of a tailored response
- currently victims bearing the burden of complex system - ease of navigation must be improved
- need to mobilise the many loving decent men to change collective behaviour
- educate men in ways to stop the violence
- gender equality at heart of family violence solutions
- there must be a change in behaviour and attitude - crude sexist remarks against women one end of spectrum, family violence at the other
- international evidence shows that societies that have inequality built into their laws and cultural norms will have higher levels of violence against women and children women living in fear in their own homes.

"Daniel Valerio's bruised, sad, little face gave us mandatory reporting in Victoria. Rosie Batty gave family violence a voice. We must now examine our broken system and put forward practical measures to end the violence."

The meeting was stunned by many of the statistics Janice shared and questions and discussion followed. This is an issue the UAW have consistently raised and thought about. Members praised the Andrews Government for the decision to have a royal commission and voiced optimism that at last we may see the current broken system, fixed.

COMMENT: WHAT IS MARRIAGE?**By Mary Owen**

I am sick to death of pundits and others telling us their version of what they think marriage means and-according to one on recent TV-has meant for thousands of years. I give you the version of the Oxford Dictionary which, until our Australian English language was taken over by the Yanks, was the ultimate authority for the meaning of English taught in schools.

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary (1973) gives the following definition of marriage. *1. The relation between married persons; wedlock. 2. The action, or an act, of marrying; the ceremony by which two persons are made husband and wife; a wedding feast. 3. A particular matrimonial union-1473...*

There is no mention of men or women – only persons. There is no suggestion that the purpose of marriage is to produce children. This has become a matter of presumption. In fact, until about 300 years ago few lower-class folk were formally married. It was only the upper class who owned property who insisted on a legal arrangement to try and ensure that property went to the children (usually the eldest son) of the property-owner. Of course men could not be sure that they were the fathers of children born to their partners.

Hence the Jewish custom that property is inherited via the mother. How sensible.

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