

Union of Australian Women(Vic.) Newsletter

WHAT'S ON-JULY 2015

Wednesday 8 July
10.30 – 12.30

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

Thursday 9 July
10.30 – 12.30

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

Friday 17 July
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Coffee with a Focus
Fourth floor meeting room Ross House
Speaker: Dr Andrea Sharam
Swinburne University
THE VOICES OF MID-LIFE WOMEN FACING HOMELESSNESS
See attached flyer invitation \$5

Saturday 25 July
12 noon

Rally to Change Labor's refugee policy
ALP National Conference
Melbourne Convention Centre
1 Convention Centre Place, South Wharf
(Organised by Refugee Action Collective)

UAW Update

-Letter of support to Professor Gillian Triggs, Australian Commissioner for Human Rights, for her determined defence of democracy and the rule of law. **See Page 8**

-UAW submission to the Royal Commission on Family Violence **Page 8**

-Letter to Fiona Richardson, Minister for Women, seeking support for the proposed Victorian Women's Heritage Centre

-Letter to Peter Dutton, Minister for Immigration, in support of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre's bid to have young babies returned to Australia from Nauru, and to release all children from detention. The world is in the grip of a refugee crisis not seen since World War 2. The United Nations says that 60 million people have been driven from their homes with an increase of 8 million in the last year alone. UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres calls it "*an age of unprecedented mass displacement, we need an unprecedented humanitarian response*". (Age 21.6.15). **And what is Australia doing?**

CLIMATE CHANGE: A UNITING CHURCH PERSPECTIVE

By Morag Loh

On the afternoon of Sunday May 24 a crowd of mainly middle-aged to elderly men and women met at Wesley Church in Lonsdale St to hear five speakers and participate in discussion about climate change. The Uniting Church had made it clear that it regarded this issue as part of its interest in working for human rights and justice for all, a perspective not often mentioned in mainstream debate in Australia. David Karoly, Professor of Climate Science at Melbourne University, opened discussion by remarking that the church in which we had gathered was a sustainable building, as solid, spacious and beautiful as the day it was completed and still fulfilling the purpose for which it was built. I was not the only one whose thoughts immediately turned to the reports of new, shoddily built high rise towers in other parts of the city with their inflammable cladding, windows receiving no direct sunlight and cramped rooms with no windows at all, built first for profit, dangerous to live in and already in need of repair.

Professor Karoly stressed that climate change affects all people and that changes already set in train will affect humanity for hundreds of years. We are experiencing more bushfires, more very hot days, storms and rising sea levels that cost money and suffering and we must reduce emissions as soon as possible. This will involve questions of ethics because those who have least responsibility for the changes may well suffer the most. The sooner we begin reducing emissions, the cheaper the repair will be. He estimated that if we started right now we would not end up less rich but it would take us many months longer to reach our present level of wealth.

The Rev. Selarosa Carroll, a theologian, was concerned about how Christians in the Pacific were reacting to the enormity of the problems they are facing and which they played no part in causing. Some believe that God is punishing them for their sins; others that He will rescue them. Her response has been to tell them that their home is also God's home and that we must manage its resources. She emphasised that it was important for us to give emotional, psychological and spiritual support to Pacific Island communities, to advocate for their resettlement and for justice for them.

Susie Richards spoke of the effects of climate change on the least well off Australians, those who already had problems enough clothing, feeding and housing their families. Their accommodation – houses and schools – usually provided little comfortable shelter for work or play on days of high temperatures and she urged the development of places and programs where children could live, learn and play safely. Soon after our discussion came alarming reports of deaths of the very young, the old and construction workers in India because of excessive heat night and day.

Alexander Tzelepis, a VCE student from Wesley College, one of the few young people present, spoke of the attitudes of his peers. Most were online and so had access to many sources of information, but these sometimes differed or were conflicting and it was often hard to be sure which were important and which were not. It was easy to feel the problems were insurmountable and that there was no easy solution. Besides, there was so much going on in their lives with school and homework, sport and friends and they had not much been affected by climate change. He felt he was a minority among his peers and thought the most important thing he could do was to be well informed.

Ellen Sandell, MLA (Greens) for Melbourne remembered the day when, as a teenager in Mildura, she realised with a shock that the region's prolonged drought 'could be the future.' As a tertiary student and later a worker within government departments she became aware of pressures

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Climate Change: a Uniting Church Perspective

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from vested interests which side lined consideration of climate change and successfully lobbied to have policy altered. She emphasised that reduction of emissions would happen only when the community demanded it and urged support for the Victorian Government's aim to establish its own renewable energy target. She noted that Bill Shorten had not yet pushed for a change to Federal law that would allow this to happen.

It was an enjoyable and constructive afternoon of discussion and one which suggested action. For instance should we be working to ensure that environmental and human rights organisations develop closer contact in order to make clearer the consequences to humanity of lack of action to reduce emissions? I am going to write to Bill Shorten to find out what if anything Federal Labor is doing to support Victoria's aim to set its own renewable energy targets in enterprises within its jurisdiction. And to Lily D'Ambrosio, Victoria's Minister for the Environment, supporting the government's policy and asking what we can do to help achieve state targets. I'll keep you posted.

SOUTHERN BRANCH REPORT - June 2015**By Mairi Neil**

Janice Munt, former member for Mordialloc, and now advisor to the Hon Fiona Richardson MP, Minister for Women and the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, addressed a dozen members on Saturday, June 20th. at Mordialloc Neighbourhood House. Our numbers reduced because a cold snap breaking records this winter is already taking its toll. However Sue's sister Trish, and the return of Robyn Dale helped boost the audience as we sat around the table to hear a sobering informative speech about family violence and what the current government is doing about this seemingly perennial and definitely tragic issue.

Janice's introduction said it all - it will not be a light and fluffy speech - rather a plethora of facts and information, particularly newly released statistics from police. She quite rightly referred to family violence as the 'most pressing, urgent and pervasive scourge' that our community faces and we are well beyond crisis point, the system having failed too many women, too many children, too many families.

Fortunately, since the Andrews Government announced the Royal Commission into Family Violence the minister and her team have been working like women possessed consulting and researching people and groups touched by family violence or in the large chain of public authorities impacted by family violence: hospitals, courts, schools, and all associated departments.

Janice shared the following shocking statistics from the Victorian Police:

- 68,134 family violence incidents attended by Victorian Police in 2014
- Children were present at 34% of family violence incidents attended police in 2013-4
- Family violence incidents have increased by 8% between 2013 and 2014.
- Since 2010, family violence incidents have increased by 72%
- In 2014, there were 29 family violence incident-related homicides in Victoria.
- In 2013-4, family violence incidents represented 41.7% of all crimes against the person offences in Victoria
- Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death and disability and ill health for Victorian women aged between 15 and 44 years.

Women are more likely than men to have experienced emotional abuse by a partner since the age of 15 (25% of women compared to 14% of men).

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Statistics for the City of Kingston (the local refuge for this area the largest in Victoria) are just as frightening:

2011:	865	Family Violence offences
2012:	1025	Family Violence offences
2013:	1229	Family Violence offences
2014:	1331	Family Violence offences
2015:	1297	Family Violence offences

The National Community Attitudes Survey of 2013 indicated that attitudes which justify, excuse and minimise violence against women persist in a significant proportion of our community.

- nearly 1 in 5 believe a woman is partly responsible if she is sexually assaulted while drunk or affected by drugs
- more than 1 in 5 believe the violence can be excused if the perpetrator later regrets it
- up to 1 in 5 believe there are circumstances where women bear some responsibility for the violence
- nearly 8 in 10 agree it's hard to understand why women stay in a violent relationship

The same survey measured community attitudes towards gender equality:

- up to 1 in 4 believe women prefer a man to be in charge of a relationship
- up to 1 in 4 believe men make better political leaders than women
- up to 28% of Australians endorse attitudes supportive of male dominance of decision-making in relationships, a dynamic identified as a risk factor for violence against women and children

In 2009, the annual cost to Victoria's economy of violence against women and children was estimated at \$3.4 billion.(an estimate based on the national cost of \$13.6 billion!) This cost includes all the associated services: police, courts, hospitals, refuges, counselling, relocation, housing...

In Australia, on average women suffer a 19% pay gap and as we heard from Robyn Dale at a previous meeting, this is rising. Finances are commonly used to exert dependence therefore women risk and fear homelessness and destitution if they leave the family home.

The National personal Safety Survey of 2012 indicated:

- 1 in 3 (34%) of Australian women have experienced physical violence
- 1 in 5 (19%) Australian women have experienced sexual violence
- 403,200 women (aged over 18 years) experienced physical violence in the last 12 months
- 102,400 women (aged over 18 years) experienced sexual violence in the last 12 months.
- 1 in 4 Australian women had experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner
- A woman is killed in Australia almost every week by a partner or ex-partner.

In 2013-14, Victorian women comprised over half(52.9%) of all victims of crimes against the person, 79.2% of sex (non-rape) offence victims and 90% of rape victims.

female victims of crime against the person increased by 4% in 2013-14, whereas male victims decreased by 1.5% in the same period. the increase of crimes against the person (females) since 2012-13 includes:

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SOUTHERN BRANCH REPORT

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- 6.8% increase in homicide
- 3.4% increase in sexual assaults (non-rape)
- 7.9% increase in rape
- 4.2% increase in assaults
- women more likely than men to have experienced partner violence: 16.9% cf 4.5% men

And the shocking statistic that an estimated 67% of women have NOT been in contact with the police after their most recent incident of physical assault by a male. Plus the horrific statistic that 27% of women who present to the Royal Women's Hospital are currently being abused by their partner, many for the first time while they are pregnant. Women are particularly vulnerable when they are pregnant!

Gender inequality is recognised as the leading cause of violence against women - the evidence base developed by the Victorian Health Promotion in 2007 and supported by the World Health Organisation, underpins approaches to violence prevention by governments and agencies in Victoria and nationally.

Janice dispelled some of the myths and misunderstandings around family violence by explaining:

- It is women and children who bear the heaviest burden and it is men who are overwhelmingly the perpetrators. Women are usually the victims, many of the statistics for men come from same sex relationships. Pets are at great risk too!
- Gender inequality and poor gender stereotypes are the fundamental drivers of family violence. Countries (particularly Scandinavia and Northern Europe) with greater equality have less rates of family violence.
- Victims don't leave because they are fearful of their lives, fearful for their children, and statistically are at the most risk when they leave a relationship.
- We need to ask why perpetrator is not held to account, what will be done to stop causing harm, and if behaviour won't change then he should leave.
- Family violence thrives under cloud of shame and secrecy - it needs a bright light like the spotlight on the RC church and abuse of children - we must believe not blame the victim!
- The tragic death of a woman at the hands of her partner needs to be treated in the same way as the tragic death at the hands of a stranger - it is murder.
- Our societal attitudes towards women and children and our cultural attitudes towards violence contribute to our national shame. Our culture must change, not just the laws.

We all have a role - not just those who suffer or have suffered.

The Andrews Government has put in place the Royal Commission to conduct a root and branch examination of our system. There is \$40 million, set aside to hear from victims and service providers and a commitment to implement all recommendations. Already hundreds of people and organisations have put in submissions and Janice encouraged those present to do so, or spread the word to others.

Extra emergency funding has been made available for duty lawyers, children's counsellors, crisis accommodation and transport, service providers, crisis lines and support agencies. A Family Violence Index has been announced working like the Consumer Price Index. All indicators will be examined: police reports, hospital admission reports, impact on children from education reports, data about homelessness, court costs, working days lost, police referrals to family violence services....**Cont p8**

REPORT ON NCWV AND ERA BY UAW REPRESENTATIVE by CARMEN GREEN

The June meeting of the **National Council of Women Victoria** was attended by 40 plus women –some individual members but most like me representing women’s organisations. **Janene Blanchfield Brown the Coordinator of Trusts Foundations and Bequests at Monash Health Foundation** spoke at the meeting. Her topic was “The spirit of the Queen Victoria Hospital –very much alive & well.”

Janene said that there were 10,000 items of national significance in the Monash collection including artefacts, photos and records relating to Victoria. Improved access to the collection is needed but obtaining the funds necessary is difficult. So they had focused a fund raiser on the role of Queen Vic nurses during the 1st WW. They were given an \$80,000 grant for this project and have made 2 videos – one of which was shown at the meeting. It was a very impressive video called “Anzac Nurses paving the way –in their own words”. It highlighted the courage of the nurses who volunteered to go to the war.

Janene reminded us that we needed to remember just how patriarchal Australia was in those days. Every obstacle possible was put in the way of these nurses. They had to pay for their own fares, uniforms and learnt on the job –often the front line- when they got to Europe. Despite the opposition, there were 68 nurses from the QV hospital who made their way to Europe. They nursed men with the most horrific injuries often under appalling conditions.

So how were the nurses treated when they got back to Australia? They were pretty much ignored and forbidden to march in the ANZAC parade until 1983! Many of them didn’t get married largely because of the loss of men in the war and so had to work as nurses to support themselves. Their pay and conditions were appalling. They worked incredibly long hours –sometimes up to 16 hours a day
The contribution of these WW1 nurses will be honoured in a special exhibition to be held at the Artspace at Monash Medical Centre for 3 months commencing in November 2015. The exhibition is called “Our Anzac Nurses –Commemorating Service and Sacrifice”.

The UAW will organise a trip to the Exhibition in November- December this year so see the “What’s On” pages in the October UAW newsletter for details.

EQUALITY RIGHTS ALLIANCE (ERA)

I reported on ERA for the last newsletter focusing on the Paid Parental Leave Campaign led by Marie Coleman from the National Foundation of Australian Women (NFAW). The campaign was started in opposition to the Abbott Government’s proposed budget changes to PPL.

Under this proposal women would no longer be able to receive the present Government’s parental leave payment (18 weeks) as well as her award entitlements for paid parental leave –“double dipping” was the term the government used.

It is likely that the Government will introduce its proposed changes to paid parental leave as soon as possible. The Greens and the ALP will oppose the changes and probably some of the cross-bench Senators so we are now hopeful that they will be defeated.

The NFAW with the YWCA and Union Groups have agreed on an alternative approach which would support the principle of 26 weeks paid leave as the desired objective. The UAW has supported this approach as it our preferred option for working women and their babies.

World War One In Caulfield And Beyond. An exhibition curated by the Glen Eira Historical Society and shown at the Prahran Mechanics Institute Library during April and May. By Morag Loh

I found this exhibition of photographs, post cards, letters, newspaper articles, posters and other memorabilia thought provoking. It presented the concerns of a hundred years ago in another Australia, showed the importance of civilian volunteers to aspects of the war effort and highlighted the contributions of women.

I was born into an immigrant family, still in Scotland in 1915, which opposed the war and evidence of the intensity of recruiting campaigns here was a shock. Identification with Britain was integral to being Australian. Posters proclaimed 'Save Our Empire,' and 'Australia has promised Britain 50,000 more men' and reported the satisfaction of enlisting. To prove that not all was earnest however, an intriguing small banner stated that Germans spelt culture with a 'k' because the British navy ruled the seas.

Glen Eira, a mansion homestead, was made available to the Commonwealth Government and became the Caulfield Military Hospital, to where all invalided men were sent. I was astounded to learn from Carol Stals, a UAW member and part of the exhibition team, that the army did not supply food for the hospital. That task fell to women of the Red Cross, volunteers who collected money and donations of produce to feed patients and staff, a monumental task. Many women working as nurses were not paid either but put in long hours providing the less 'skilled' aspects of nursing care such as bathing, cleaning, changing linen. Some of the fully trained staff who supervised them went on to become matrons post-war. One of them was Margaret Looker, a youthful face in a group photograph of 24 uniformed personnel, four of whom were nurses in their traditional veils. A report describing tasks undertaken in the operating theatre listed gouging bone out of gunshot wounds, repairing disfiguring injuries and 'taking additional slices off amputated stumps.' Red Cross women volunteers then provided activities for the convalescing men in a special rest facility with a piano, books, and games from snooker to cards. They also made sure there were some visitors to keep them company. Some volunteers made special gloves so men could propel themselves in wheel chairs without injuring their hands. Others mended clothes. A local tradesman built a special wheeled bed for a patient who could not sit up; it enabled him to be easily taken outdoors to enjoy the sun.

Farmers' daughters raised money to care for and commemorate horses which served in the war and inaugurated the Purple Cross, an award for horses. These women were active, riding side saddle in parades, symbols perhaps of a time when Australia was a predominately agrarian country and horses were part of a family working unit.

Letters, postcards and photographs give glimpses into what was being communicated between men at war and families at home – snatches of information. One set relates something of a friendship which developed between a Belgian man and an Australian serviceman. Apart from references to the planting of avenues of honour however there is little of the darker side of the war. That is not surprising. Grief and hardship are often the most private of pains, and no more so than at a time when victory is celebrated. Men who did not cope could become objects of shame or pity. I thought of founders of the UAW who so opposed war. Alma Morton was one who recorded her memories for publication. 'Dad came home after 1918....a disaster....shell-shocked, mustard gassed, he had turns....he hit Mum.' Alma's mother was forced to leave her war-damaged husband, place her children in a home and work to support her family. Alma became a life-long activist for peace.

Congratulations to the Glen Eira Historical Society and the Prahran Mechanics Institute Library for an exhibition that offered interesting information and insights.

SUPPORT FOR PROFESSOR GILLIAN TRIGGS

The UAW president has sent a letter of support to Professor Gillian Triggs, Australian Commissioner for Human Rights, in the face of extraordinary attacks made on her by various members of the Abbott government.

I write on behalf of the UAW to commend and thank you for your defence of human rights and the rule of law in the face of appalling, vicious personal attacks by government ministers who seem intent on diminishing our democratic rights.

We admire your calm, dignified and resolute demeanour in the face of such bullying tactics.

The Union of Australian Women is this year celebrating 65 years of campaigning for the status and well-being of women, peace, social justice and human rights. We are so glad that we have in you, and your Commission, people and an organisation that is determined to safeguard and stand up for democratic principles and the rule of law.

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and the variation of community attitudes to family violence. A base line will be established, the true cost to the Victorian economy and ministers can go to Treasury and get funding for the important programs.

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.

The second part of Mairi's comprehensive report will be printed in the August Newsletter.

The UAW has sent a submission to the Royal Commission on Family Violence. Many thanks again to Carmen Green who built on the initial work done by Morag Loh, and in consultation with the Organising Committee members.

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

Website: uaw.org.au

Ph. /Fax 9654 7409 Email: office@uaw.org.au

Victoria Inc. A00021219R