

# *Union of Australian Women*

## **Newsletter**

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### **WHAT'S ON-APRIL 2015**

2015 marks the centenary of Anzac. It is also the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the oldest international women's peace movement in the world. We have dedicated space in this issue to voices against war from that time, and look at the aftermath of war and what it means for ordinary people.

**Wednesday 8 April**  
10.30 - 12.30

**UAW Organising Committee meeting**  
First floor meeting room 1.1, Ross House

**Thursday 9 April**  
10.30 – 12.30

**UAW Book Group**  
First floor meeting room 1.3, Ross House

**Wednesday 15 April**

**Outing to National Wool Museum Geelong**  
*Women of Empire 1914 – 1918*  
26 Moorabool St Geelong.  
Meet Southern Cross Station Waiting Room  
10.30, to catch 11.00 train  
See review Page 2

**Saturday 18 April**  
2.00pm

**UAW Southern Branch meeting**  
Speaker to be confirmed  
Mordialloc Neighbourhood House  
Main St Mordialloc  
Amy: 9547 6167; Mairi: 9587 8757

**Wednesday 22 April**  
12 noon

**UAW Pub Lunch**  
Royal Oak Hotel  
444 Nicholson St North Fitzroy  
Tram 86 in Bourke St, Stop 18

**WOMEN OF EMPIRE 1914 – 1918**

By Anne Sgro

23 February – 17 May National Wool Museum Geelong

This exhibition is a tribute to some extraordinary women. It draws on the experiences of Australian and New Zealand women during the First World War. Their photographs and stories are matched with original costumes and accessories from the Dressing Australia Museum of Costume collection. And what diversity of women – those in new roles of ambulance drivers, farmers, doctors as well as those who campaigned for peace, mothers whose sons were slaughtered, artists, nurses. The costumes are of women in uniform, working women, women campaigning against conscription, women fundraising, women supporting Red Cross – the Women of Empire.

**Dr Elsie Dalyell:** through the Scottish Women's Hospital, she and other doctors set up their own system to participate and use their skills.

**Dr Phoebe Chapple:** received the first military medal for a female doctor.

**Nurses and indomitable matrons,** such as those who set up a hospital on the island of Lemnos with *"no water, no proper equipment and unco-operative, dismissive officers."*

**Mary Elizabeth Maud Chomley:** secretary of the Australian Red Cross Prisoner of War Branch in London, who contacted many men who had been taken prisoner, and assured that they were not forgotten.

**Vida Goldstein:** the Women's Peace Army campaigned against war – We War Against War. The costume matching her story has the original badge stating: Fight as freemen, not as conscripts. VOTE NO.

**Jane Sam:** she had defied convention and married Chinese cook Ah Sam in 1873. She had 16 children – 5 sons and 2 grandsons fought in the war.

**Mary Keid:** a mother whose 6 sons went to war, one having been sent a white feather. Four died and one was severely damaged.

**Elizabeth Britomarte James:** an organiser and activist who advocated for soldier settlers' wives and campaigned for funding for cottage hospitals.

These women are just a few of those whose lives are featured. There were also artists and performers.

Some of the costumes are exquisite, others are the workday clothes or uniforms worn by women of the time. I was fascinated by the shoes, which were so small and some of which reminded me of my grandmothers. There are handkerchiefs, pieces of embroidery, letters, postcards, jewellery. And on the far wall is a splash of red, a display of poppies crafted by local women – knitted, stitched, painted – which frame a well-known poem by John McCrae (1872 – 1918), a Canadian medical officer., who wrote it in 1915 at Ypres, Belgium.

**In Flanders Fields**

**In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.  
We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, fell down, saw sunsets glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.**

Heartbreaking! The exhibition reflects on women's lives and the stupidity of war. At least, that's the way I saw it. It is well worth visiting.

**“Women of Substance”: Tour of Brighton Cemetery 15/02/2015 -Part 2****By Carol Stals**

Continued from March Newsletter

6. **Ann Rabell.** Born in Somerset in 1833 into a large family, who were involved in the mills. Children over 10 were expected to work, sitting on high chairs to work the machines or do other menial tasks for long hours. She remembered being tied to several other children and walking together through the snow to work. Her father was educated and taught her to read and write, an unusual thing in those days. She migrated to Australia for better opportunities and gained many new skills. Anne married Frederick Robbins and had 7 children. Only 4 survived. Frederick died young, so she had to support them. She set up a bakery, which later burnt down but money was raised within the community and it was rebuilt. She married again but it was an unhappy relationship and he moved out of her life. Ann shifted to the city and lived with each of her children in turn until she died in 1941 at 81.

7. **Janet Smith McKinley** was born in Ayrshire, Scotland c.1849, daughter of Gilbert Smith and Elizabeth Mitchell. Her father was a veterinary surgeon to the Marquis of Bute. When she was 4 years old the family moved to Victoria after the death of the Marquis. Janet attended Miss Stone's school in East Melbourne then 2 years at a training college. In 1877 she married James McKinley and had 3 sons. Janet was active in volunteer work and initiated the first gymnastic class in connection with Sunday schools throughout Victoria and also the Brighton Ladies Swimming Club. She was a tireless worker with the Red Cross during WW1 and frequently travelled as Matron in charge of nurses on the special fitted hospital trains, which took the S.A. and N.S.W. wounded soldiers home on their arrival at Port Melbourne. She died in 1919 aged 70.

8. **Anne Pennington**, born April 1831 in Ceres, Scotland, daughter of John Timewell. In 1851 she was working as a servant in Fife and in 1853 she travelled on an assisted passage to Port Phillip. Anne married Harold Pennington in March 1854. They walked with a handcart to the Caulfield area and there eventually built a substantial house with attic rooms and refugee spaces in the walls, for personal safety. They were early pioneers of the area. A hard working farming couple, they did not have children. Very community spirited, they threw their energies into the developing community and Harold is known as the “Grandfather of Caulfield”. He was the backbone of the establishment of a Roads Board, which eventually became the Caulfield Council. For a long time Council meetings were held at their home and parties given in a marquee in their yard. They were later reimbursed 10 pounds per annum to cover candles and refreshments. Equal efforts went into their work at St Mary's Church of England, where they were key supporters of the congregation. They had several nieces and nephews and had a loving family around them. When Harold died his estate included their fairly basic house, farming tools, a horse and a cart. Anne died in 1913, 5 years after Harold. They lived good and simple lives. They are buried in an unmarked, dirt grave.

9. **Margaret Marie Browne** born April 1837. Her father was killed in an accident in 1836 leaving his pregnant wife with 2 small children. Her mother, Honoria died when Margaret was 2 years old. The 3 children went to live with an aunt, near Sydney, who already had 15 children. Margaret grew up with a love of gardens and flowers. In August 1861 she married Thomas Alexander Browne, who was a Police Magistrate and Commissioner of the Gulong Gold Field, NSW. Thomas wrote under the name Rolf Boldrewood. They had 5 daughters and 3 sons. The family lived in a variety of areas and Margaret tried to establish gardens wherever they were, with great climatic challenges. When they moved to Albury she established her major garden, with vines, fruit trees, lawns and flowerbeds.

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**TAKING ACTION ON FAMILY VIOLENCE**

Notes by Anne Sgro

**Family violence is a huge issue.** In Australia, a woman is killed every week by her current or former partner. In 2013, in Victoria, 29 women and 8 children were killed. Now, in 2015, 17 women across the country have died in the first 11 weeks of the year - that is, **2 a week**. Last year in Victoria there were 65,000 police attendances, double that of 2009, and this reflects only 50% of the violence, most of which is not reported. If it were terrorism we would have had summits, focus groups, consolidation of action. Family violence has huge repercussions right across the community, and while much good work has been done, there have also been decisions to cut funding for support. To take us up to date, the UAW invited Fiona McCormack, CEO of Domestic Violence Victoria, to speak at our International Women's Day event.

**Why the violence?** There are two major factors:

**Gender Equity** in Australia is not good and in fact is deteriorating. When women call for pay equity, increased numbers of CEOs, greater representation on boards, in parliaments, etc, it is assumed that it is for parity's sake. That's one aspect, but the reality is that in communities where there is greater equity there is less violence – compare the Nordic countries where there is greater gender equity and much less violence with countries where women have few rights and violence is rife. We can focus on alcohol, childhood abuse, drugs: but these are contributory factors. **The causes of violence are gendered.** Status of women is the issue, particularly for women with fewer options – women with a disability, indigenous women who may suffer the loss of children, women of non-English speaking background. Men take advantage of lack of options.

**Gender roles/stereotyping.** We still have strict ideas about gender roles and we bolster the stereotypes all the time in community attitudes. A recent community survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that a majority of people believed that women used the Family Court to punish husbands. We tolerate everyday sexism. Violence is all about control of women – it is not all physical; it can be undermining of parenting, disrupting the mother-child relationship; financial abuse; damaging work situations by constant phoning and texting, and so on. Communities where men kill their wife and children before killing themselves are perplexed and unbelieving as to how such an everyday man could act this way. It does not matter how disaffected a man may be, he has no right to kill, and it is obviously not necessarily out of character.

There is, however, a growing profile to the issue of violence. Rosie Batty has been powerful. She has given credibility to women affected by violence. She has challenged many perceptions so that the issue can no longer be pushed under the carpet.

**Housing security** is a major factor in women and children being able to leave abusive situations. 44% of homelessness in Australia is caused by family violence. A shortage of suitable housing has meant that many women go back to an abusive situation because they have few options. The high cost of living and increased competition for scarce resources has put pressure on social housing to the point that women and children are often housed in motels or other unsuitable places when they leave refuges.

**What is happening?** At Federal level there is a national committee and funding for a campaign – but we do not need more awareness raising. The causes of violence need action and they are gendered. The Budget proposal to cut support for unemployment to the young for six months assumes that all young people, and women in particular, have a safe home and support. In reality, they will have fewer options. The Federal Government intended to cut funding to the National Partnership on Homelessness, established by Kevin Rudd- there has been an 11<sup>th</sup> hour reprieve by Minister Scott Morrison (Age 23.3.15).

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**TAKING ACTION ON FAMILY VIOLENCE (CONTD.)**

“Safe at Home” funding in Victoria, if cut, would remove a significant ability to respond because women are often unable to live financially independently. The Attorney-General, George Brandis, no longer wants to fund community legal advocacy and aims to cut services, one consequence of which is that women will have to represent themselves in court and face their abuser. One third of Legal Aid clients seek help with family violence. Women are most at risk when they leave, and need support. There is also uncertainty about future funding for housing and support for men, Aboriginal men and women, and after-hours funding. Scott Morrison said to wait until the Budget but a media campaign, about to begin as there are only 100 days until the funding runs out, is obviously having an effect.

**Family violence costs.** It costs the Victorian economy \$3.5 billion each year. It costs the Australian economy \$13.6 billion. To say nothing of the human cost.

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence is welcome. We need to focus on women and children and we need to interrupt the cycle of violence. We need a systematic approach to containing violent men. They are costing the economy, damaging and killing and we have not wanted to admit the gender mode of this behavior. **Men need to feel the consequences of their behavior.** Choking has now been upgraded to a felony not a misdemeanor. And in decisions about family the safety of women and children must be put above the rights of men to have access to their children. A legal report from RMIT’s Centre for Innovative Justice, which is headed by former Victorian Attorney-General Rob Hulls, has recommended “On the spot incarceration for family violence offenders who do not stick to court orders and a “one judge, one family” scheme’ among a range of recommendations(Age 20.3.15). The report was launched by Rosie Batty on the same day as our meeting.

In Victoria there are meetings of relevant groups in one committee, e.g. police, child protection, to deal with fragmentation of information and services. Different models need to be tried, such as removing men and containing them until the danger is managed (see above).

Fiona recognized the work that Christine Nixon did as Commissioner of Police, work that was carried on by Simon Overland and Ken Lay. This week the Acting Police Commissioner appointed an Assistant Commissioner as the country’s first leader of a family violence command unit. There has been a significant cultural shift at Victoria Police so that victims of family violence are more confident that they will be believed, and there is greater awareness in the community. But it is also true to say that the severity of the violence and level of risk to women and children have also increased.

Top risk factors for family violence, as quoted in the Age 21.3.15:

Harmed or threatened to harm victim: 82%	Controlling behavior: 79%
Obsessive/jealous behavior towards victim: 59%	Threatened to kill victim: 49%
Tried to choke victim: 40%	

It is appalling, and raises many questions about a culture that has allowed this to happen. **Economic ,political and social policy are needed** to combat this. And adequate, safe housing must be provided.

Fiona was a terrific speaker. Interesting discussion followed, and she urged all present to make a submission to the Royal Commission. The UAW will certainly do that, as will the National Council of Women Victoria. And we will discuss further action that we can take as a women’s organisation in collaboration with others.

**THE ANZAC CENTENARY PEACE COALITION**

Report from Anne Sgro

There has been a great deal of talk about and commemoration of the First World War and the centenary of the landing at Gallipoli. **The Anzac Centenary Peace Coalition**, consisting of churches, Quakers, peace and other groups, is holding a number of discussions and presentations that are emphasizing the true cost of war and contesting the Anzac Centenary. I attended one such discussion at the Unitarian Church 16 March.

**Professor Joy Damousi** (Melbourne University) questioned the current story that 1915 and Gallipoli gave birth to our nation through blood and sacrifice, pointing out that Australia, white Australia, was at the forefront of social reform and democratic action, and gave us much to celebrate:

1901: Federation            1902: Female suffrage in Commonwealth elections

1856: the 8 hour day set a national and international standard

1907 the Harvester Judgment established the Basic Wage on the basis of what was fair and reasonable remuneration to sustain a family

1909: Age Pension – a world leader            1910: Invalid Pension

1912: Maternity Allowance

In 1911, in increasing anxiety about invasion about Australia's isolation, boys of 12 upwards could be conscripted for military training. But there was fierce opposition to it. And she emphasized that most men did not sign up to go to WW1.

**Dr Val Noone** (Melbourne University) spoke about the Australian Peace Movement 1914-1918. He celebrated the activists and organisations that campaigned against the war. Vida Goldstein and the Women's Peace Army; Celia John, who sang the banned song "I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier" at huge rallies; the International Workers of the World (IWW, known as Wobblies); the women's peace group that formed into WILPF, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom – and many more. Australians voted NO to conscription twice – 1916 and 1917, which he feels needs its own memorial. He noted that the forerunner of ASIO was formed after people pelted the Prime Minister Billy Hughes with tomatoes during a gathering in Queensland. But he asked us, as people did then:

**Whose interests do wars serve?**

**Professor Bruce Scates** (Monash University) spoke about the aftermath of war and the selective nature of war memories. The National Archives only tell a clean part of the story, with photographs of soldiers in uniform, undamaged. That is why we need to look at the **Repatriation Files**, which are not sanitized and give a full account of ethnicity, illness, disfigurement that led to unemployment, damage that made life unbearable for men and their families. We gain information about the Soldier Settler Scheme which pushed men and families on marginal land that could rarely be sustainably worked. It is not just the soldiers in uniform who bear the cost of war. **We need to look beyond the national narrative to look at the appalling suffering.**

Monash University is at the forefront of showing how to discover a new perspective of Anzac and the Great War. **World War 1: A History in 100 Stories** is a free online course from Monash commencing 13 April. *It will take you on a virtual tour of World War 1 battlefields, recover the lost voices of the Anzac experience, and give you a better understanding of how the Great War changed us all. The stories are told in a language everyone can understand and are based on archives only just opened to historians.*

*Each week, starting Monday 13 April 2015 we'll examine a different topic, including the physical and psychological wounds of war – shell shock, disability and trauma; women's mobilization both at home and in the field; and what we've called "the other Anzac": indigenous soldiers too often ignored in our history.*

*Amongst the cast of the 100 stories are not just soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses, but parents who lost their sons, wives who struggled with husbands suffering shell shock, and children who never knew their fathers.*    **Registration is free: [Futurelearn.com/courses/ww1-stories](http://Futurelearn.com/courses/ww1-stories)**

**100 YEARS: WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM**

This year WILPF celebrates its centenary of campaigning for peace. There will be international and Australian celebrations, and WILPF Australia has published a great little booklet: 110 Years. Here are some snippets:

**25 March 1915**, 30 women met at the Australian Church in Melbourne to form the **Sisterhood of International Peace** with the motto '**Justice, Friendship and Arbitration**'. As Australian white women, they had the right to vote. They were confident that they had an important role to play in working for peace through negotiation.

**28 April 1915**. As the British Army, including Anzacs, was invading Turkey more than 1000 women from both warring and neutral nations met in The Hague for the International Congress of Women. These women were ambitious suffragists and peace activists with a vision to eliminate the causes of war. The resolutions they passed at this Congress laid the basis for the formation of the League of Nations and later, the United Nations, determining that international conflict should be resolved by negotiation in a council of all nations, in which men and women should be equally represented. The vision of these women was to banish militarism, and build institutions dedicated to preventing war and upholding principles of economic and social justice and opposing discrimination of all kinds. They named themselves the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace.

**15 July** The Women's Peace Army was established in Melbourne to mobilize the women in Australia who opposed all war. Vida Goldstein was its leading force. Both the WPA and the Sisterhood affiliated with the international committee. During 1916-1917 both organisations campaigned vigorously against conscription for overseas service. They spoke out publicly, wrote and distributed their own pamphlets.

**1920**. The Sisterhood became the Australian Section of WILPF and was based in Melbourne. The WPA disbanded in early 1920 and many of its members joined WILPF.

WILPF has an exhibition on at the Canberra Museum and Gallery, 21 February-31 May: **Women's Power to Stop War. 1915-2015**. It tells the story of how WILPF women in Australia have worked to achieve their vision. WILPF now has national sections in 30 countries, and consultative status as an NGO with the United Nations.

Since WW11, WILPF women have protested against nuclear armaments. In 1947 they protested against the establishment of the Woomera Rocket Range, against nuclear testing at Maralinga and elsewhere, against US bases, and for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific. They opposed the Vietnam War and conscription, exposed the dangers of chemical and biological warfare.

WILPF joins with other organisations to campaign for peace, and as members of other organisations – UNAA, Women in Black, UNWomen... UAW members, the late Fleur Finnie and, more recently, the late Hellen Cooke, were great activists. Doris Blackburn, the first Victorian woman elected to Federal Parliament, was also a member and was the only MP in 1947 to speak against the Labor Government's Defence Projects Protection Act which imposed heavy penalties for public criticism of these projects.

Internationally WILPF works tenaciously to persuade international leaders to act on UN Resolutions to bring leaders of women's groups in war-ravaged countries – Syria, Iraq, Ukraine – to the peace table. In April, women from all over the world will gather again in the Hague to promote women's power to stop and prevent wars.

[www.wilpf.org.au](http://www.wilpf.org.au); [www.wilpfinternational.org](http://www.wilpfinternational.org); [www.womenstopwar.org](http://www.womenstopwar.org)

**“Women of Substance”**

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She entered floral competitions in the area and won many prizes and much recognition for her plants and blooms. In 1895 they retired to Toorak. After 50 years of gardening Margaret wrote a gardening book, but her publishers suggested she use the name *Mrs. Rolf Bolderwood*, which certainly increased sales. She was the first woman in Australia to write a gardening book. She died in 1917 two years after her beloved husband.

This diverse and interesting collection of women reflects the spirit of those who went before us.

Elly Lukas was the cousin of UAW member Rosa McColl who supplied the background notes. My research into both Anne Pennington and Margaret Brown was used for their stories. Several years ago I went to the unveiling of the renewed gravestone for Rolf Bolderwood, where Margaret is buried with him, Her story only recently come to our attention, a very satisfactory outcome.

We know women of all classes worked and contributed but others need to be reminded.

Each time these walks are taken there are many men in the group, interested to learn the stories.

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Ross House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000

**Website: [uaw.org.au](http://uaw.org.au)**

Ph. /Fax 9654 7409 Email: [office@uaw.org.au](mailto:office@uaw.org.au)

Victoria Inc. A00021219R