

Union of Australian Women

Newsletter

What's on- March 2015

Monday 2 March
12 noon

UAW Darebin Group
Peacock Hotel Northcote Clare: 9481 2704

Wednesday 4 March
10.00

Day of Action. National Rally on wages and conditions. Victorian Trades Hall.

Thursday 5 March
6.00 – 8.00pm

Molly Hadfield Social Justice Oration
Preston Shire Hall
284 Gower St Preston
Speaker: Tasneem Chopra, Human Rights Advocate.

Register for UAW table: 84708888; www.mollyhadfieldoration.eventbrite.com.au

Sunday 8 March
1.00pm

IWD Rally and March.
State Library, Swanston St

Wednesday 11 March
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Organising Committee meeting
First floor meeting room 1.3, Ross House

Thursday 12 March
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Book Group
First floor meeting room 1.3, Ross House

Saturday 14 March
2.00 – 4.00pm

Eileen Capocchi's 90th birthday celebration
Jika Jika Community Centre
Cnr Plant & Union Sts Northcote
No presents, plate to share

UAW's International Women's Day Celebration
Wednesday 18 March 10.30 – 1230
4th floor meeting room Ross House
Speaker: Fiona McCormack, CEO Domestic Violence Victoria
Topic: TAKING ACTION ON FAMILY VIOLENCE
See attached flyer

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE IN VICTORIA by Carmen Green

During the February 5th meeting of the National Council of Women-Victoria, the meeting broke up into several small groups to discuss possible matters for inclusion in a NCWV submission to the Royal Commission on Family Violence.

I represented the Union of Australian Women at the meeting and took the following notes at the meeting of the group that I led.

NCWV Group Discussion on the topic of: FINDING FAULT/ BLAMING THE VICTIM

Our group started by discussing the Rosie Batty case and the enormous impact that she has had on making family violence an important political issue. This has been not only in Victoria -where she has received significant support from Victorian Police Commissioner Ken Lay -but also federally where she was made Australian of the Year for 2015.

We were all aware that she also has been on the receiving end of totally unjustified “blaming the victim” criticism i.e. that she should have protected her son from his father and “that it takes two to tango”.

In trying to understand why this happens we discussed the following:

- Family violence is still widely unreported and there are still many Australians who are not aware of the widespread nature of this problem and therefore tend to understate it.
- Women who believe that family violence won't happen to women like them.
- People without understanding or empathy think that a woman should just leave a violent relationship and if she stays it is her fault.
- Media reports are still often sensationalised.
- Women are often blamed if they don't appear to be grieving “appropriately” e.g. Lindy Chamberlain and in Rosie Batty's case because she gave a TV interview within 24 hours of Luke's death.
- Mothers invariably share at least part of the blame in society's eyes when violent men harm their children
- We live in a society where women are still expected to take on most of the caring roles and so therefore are often economically dependent on men especially when they have young children. This economic dependency makes these women very vulnerable if they are married to a violent, controlling man.
- The view that women should somehow learn how not to trigger men who can't control their anger and if men don't/ can't do this it is the woman's fault.

We also discussed how society needs to change in order to prevent family violence and to eradicate the “blaming the victim” attitudes:

- Governments –both Federal and State- need to lead the change and provide the funding necessary to provide appropriate services e.g. refuges, legal services, courts, specialised police services, family counselling and intervention orders that safeguard women and children.

- Governments must provide the necessary nationwide statistics on family violence so necessary if we are to have an appropriate response.
- We need greater understanding of the role that drugs and alcohol play in family violence and also of the impact of violence on the internet
- Long term campaigns to give women greater financial power (e.g. Equal Pay) which will lead to greater independence.
- Schools to provide education from kindergarten onwards on how to live in a society based on respect for each other.
- Influential community groups e.g. :
 - Religious leaders,
 - The scouting and guide movement and
 - Sports leaders must also be involved in changing these deep seated attitudes
- A national advertising campaign (such as the successful anti-smoking campaign) should be initiated and displayed on all forms of media and on trams, trains and buses.
- Change the wording of the citizenship test to emphasise respectful relationships between men and women and finally
- Good things being done by employers to tackle this issue need to be highlighted e.g. employers providing counselling and special leave to family violence victims.

In conclusion, our group believed that we need to support the victims of family violence and to fundamentally change attitudes if we are to become a nation based on respect for each other. This will take many years –some people believe generations. It will only succeed if it is endorsed, supported and funded by all levels of government and all levels of Australian society.

On the 22nd February, the *Victorian Government Gazette* outlined the setting up of the Royal Commission, the background and terms of reference.

Included in the information provided in the background was the following alarming statistic: in 2013 there were 44 family violence related deaths **in Victoria alone**. These deaths show that the real threat of violence in Australia is not from terrorism but from violence within the family.

The Royal Commission on Family Violence in Victoria is an important way to start to identify the causes, issues to be tackled and potential solutions given the widespread and shocking incidence of this problem.

The Commission has been required to report its findings and recommendations no later than 29 February 2016.

The UAW has written to the Premier congratulating him on providing leadership to the rest of Australia on this fundamental human rights issue. As members are aware, the UAW has for many decades lobbied politicians on the need for action on family violence and the connection between family violence and gender inequality. Many of our older members were also involved in setting up refuges for women in the 1970's.

We will, of course, forward our own UAW submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Southern Branch Report - February 2015**by Mairi Neil**

What a day for our first meeting of the year! Saturday 21st February — a scorching 38 degrees with unrelenting sun and humidity. Thank you to the dozen or so members who ventured out, especially Sue and her friend from Mornington, grateful to have air conditioning in their car! Mordialloc Neighbourhood House air-conditioned too with water and orange juice more in demand than tea and coffee.

Tim Richardson, the new member for Mordialloc our guest speaker, along with his wife Lauren. He introduced himself, his values and his priorities as part of the Andrews' Labor Government. He shared his background: raised by a single mum in the Eastern suburbs, from 5 years old, until she remarried when he was in high school. His mother worked 2-3 jobs to support Tim and his sister. There were childcare barriers, no flexibility in the law offices where she worked. His experiences and observations led to a firm belief in gender equality, equal pay and a passion for education. You must try your best, but the system has to be fundamentally equitable and fair. GONSKI funding reforms are vital.

Tim answered questions and engaged in meaningful conversation about a host of issues:

- development and the Green Wedge - sustainable living - Kingston will grow 20% this decade
- proliferation of bottle shops and liquor outlets - 'law and order' issues
- public transport, or lack thereof - weaning people from their love of the car
- Removing train crossings - traffic management and safety, the Bay Trail
- social housing, family violence, health services, **public** education especially TAFE

Forewarned we were activists of long-standing, Tim stated at the outset, he entered parliament motivated by a belief that government can be a force for good and effect change to improve our quality of life. The Andrews Government has a positive agenda after spending time listening to local service providers.

The ambulance crisis resolved, but still a need for equality in rostering - 14 hour shifts must change. After two nightshifts ambos are expected to go home and cope with family. An audit is currently looking at how to change the rostering system.

Mary Rimmington reported that since the closure of the iconic Mentone Hotel on Beach Road, their regular band has relocated to the Kingston Sporting Club, which although on the highway is surrounded by residential properties. The hotel has breached noise laws by allowing the band to play amplified music on an open verandah well after the regulatory 11pm. Patrons scream and yell, sometimes till 4am.

Tim promised to pursue residents' grievances. If the plans to develop Melbourne encourage high density in 'activity nodes', nearby residents will be increasingly subjected to activity they may not necessarily like. Lauren, a town planner with the City of Casey, advised that the EPA (Environmental Protection Authority) should be contacted. They can be called 24 hours a day on 1300 372 842 or 1300 EPA VIC. They will install meters, measure the noise level and can actually arrange a device limiting the noise output, as well as fine the hotel owners. Tim said high-rise development in Moorabbin, Highett and Cheltenham has caused concern in Kingston and he sought advice about boundaries and permanent restrictions on urban growth from Brian Tee who was Shadow Minister for Planning and Shadow Minister for Sustainable Growth.

Tim met with local police and discussed law and order issues for the area. Bottle shops are a big concern, but police are strict on breaches of the law and meet regularly with traders. They reported that family violence uses more than 50% of their resources, followed by drug abuse - Ice plus others, then traffic crimes and thefts from unlocked vehicles. Train violence despite people's perceptions is low, however the government is committed to retaining the PSOs, but may use them more on trains than railway stations, considering low usage on some stations.

He hopes the Royal Commission into Family Violence will change attitudes and achieve real outcomes and end victim blaming, forcing perpetrators to accept individual responsibility. He mentioned a group Dad's in Distress, <http://www.frankston.net/separatedmen.htm>, that offers support to men dealing with family trauma and who work to change male behaviour. Taskforce Alexis, run out of Moorabbin Police Station is dedicated to tackling family violence. <http://www.theweeklyreviewbayside.com.au/story/1831804/family-violence-police-taskforce-cracks-down-in-bayside/> Communities must have an open, honest and inclusive conversation now.

Improving access to, and encouraging more use of public transport is a major platform of the government. Work has already started removing dangerous rail crossings. The Frankston line built on an historical sand dune and near the water table provides a challenging, but not impossible project! The Melbourne Metro Rail Tunnel will be an asset, but he wants 'trip wires' to ensure independent reports keep the project on track.

Tim wants to change the school culture - encouraging park and ride and ride and walk to school and has had discussions with local principals. More Smart buses with better signage and integration of timetables are needed. Many ideas on the table, especially to ensure people can use public transport across the city where the train lines don't run. Improved facilities at local stations will be installed - especially toilets. In this electorate 1 in 9 people catch the train, 1 in 9 other forms of public transport. The plan to build self-cleaning toilets on stations needs to be negotiated - consumer feedback not positive about this advancement in technology.

The Green Wedge is a constant topic of conversation in Kingston and pressure on Council to honour their commitments has to be maintained. Tim has contacted Planning Minister Richard Wynne to intervene and Environment Minister Lisa Neville, regarding unnecessary removal of vegetation for the Bay Trail. His aim is for certainty and accountability of government, plus consistency and transparency.

The afternoon ended with our usual delectable refreshments with Tim remaining to engage about various issues with those present who took advantage for one on one discussions. It was an interesting afternoon, an impressive performance by a young enthusiastic person determined to work for his community and effect change. Before Tim arrived Mary Rimmington mentioned that commercial television stations have applied to alter the times for restricted viewing for shows with sex, nudity and swearing to allow M-rated material from 7.30pm and MA rated material after 8.30pm. Exceptionally violent shows rated AV will be absorbed into the MA classification.

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/tv-and-radio/the-times-for-m-and-marated-content-are-achanging-if-tv-stations-have-their-way-20150220-13kdev.html>

A copy of the proposed code and the review documents are available from freetv.com.au. The closing date for public submissions April 3.

We signed letters prepared by Mairi Neil, requesting bipartisan support to release the children we imprison in detention and to heed the Australian Human Rights Commission Report : **The Forgotten Children - the report of the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention 2014!** <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/publications/forgotten-children-national-inquiry-children>

Notes from the Organising Committee February 2015**by Anne Sgro**

Family Violence. The UAW has written to the Premier, Daniel Andrews, to congratulate him on the establishment of a Royal Commission on Family Violence. *"...we welcome your decision, a clear indication that the government is serious about coming to grips with this blight on society."* The National Council of Women Victoria will be making a submission to the Commission, and it was decided that the UAW would do likewise.

We also congratulated the Premier on the appointment of Linda Dessau as the next term governor – *"we are delighted at the recognition given to an esteemed woman."*

Children in detention. The recently released report of the Human Rights Commission investigation into children in detention makes very distressing reading. It told us what we already know – detention causes serious psychiatric and physical harm to children. The UAW has signed the petition organised by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, GetUp, Amnesty International and other organisations calling for the release of all children and their families from mainland and offshore immigration detention facilities. We have also signed a joint statement for organisations and community groups organised by the Refugee Council of Australia that calls, among other things, for legislative change to ensure that children are not subjected to immigration detention in the future. The Prime Minister's extraordinary attack on Professor Gillian Triggs, Chair of the HRC, is a clear indication of his government's unwillingness to accept the reality of the dreadful harm its policies are causing.

Southern Branch has written to both Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Shadow Minister Tanya Plibersek, commending their pleas for clemency for Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukamaran but asking them to extend their compassion to detained asylum seeker children and refugees detained in inhumane conditions on Manus Island.

We are Australian mothers and grandmothers and expect our politicians and governments to value all human life, be consistent in their compassion and their dispensation of social justice. We never support the breach of federal human rights and anti-discrimination laws. Laws designed to protect the most vulnerable.

We look forward to a time when immigration and the global refugee crisis is discussed in a mature manner with an aim that Australia is part of the answer not part of the problem, to ensure desperate people seeking asylum are treated with respect and dignity. We look forward to mature bipartisan discussions and more decent decisions in the future.

Reconciliation and the "indigenous disadvantage gap". UAW member Ros Byass recently had the following letter published in the Age (14.2.15). *Not until we, as comfortable Australians, can comprehend the difference between "belonging to country" rather than owning it, do we have any hope of closing the gap on indigenous disadvantage (The gap becomes a gulf, the Age, 12/2). After participating in a cross-cultural awareness training day for nurses back in the 1990s, I began to realize why my best efforts had been resisted. Later, whilst at Jabiluka, living and abiding by a seriously different law for a short time, I understood. Respect and understanding is needed for both cultures.*

Greetings from NSW member Heather O'Connor: *Thanks for all your work – I love the newsletter – it makes me feel I'm still connected! A peaceful new year to all.* We love to hear from members and receive your feedback and information/ideas.

Outings. At the well-attended pub lunch in January it was suggested that we organise a number of outings, giving members the opportunity to meet socially and enjoy each other's company. So we have swung into action, with a series of visits to art galleries in the pipeline, beginning with Bendigo, 25 March – see What's On.

“Women of Substance”: Tour of Brighton Cemetery 15/02/2015 Part 1 **by Carol Stals**

This is a new tour introduced by the folk of the Brighton Cemetery. The women featured were:

1. **Dame Annie Jean MacNamara.** Beechworth born, attended Malvern State School then won a scholarship to PLC and a prize for general excellence. She graduated from University in 1922 and became resident medical officer at the Royal Melbourne Hospital after which she went into private practice with an emphasis on Poliomyelitis. Her research results were reported in British Medical journals and she is acknowledged as taking a step towards the Salk vaccine. She travelled overseas on scholarships and widened her remarkable medical capacity and thinking on treatments. She married in 1934 and had two children. Her heart was in the land and she was involved in combating the Myxomatosis in rabbits. She was a plain speaking woman who rolled her own cigarettes and had a smoker's cough. Her ashes were buried as requested, under a mossy rock in Beechworth, but the memorial to her is on her family grave.

2. **Johanna Wilhelmine Weigel nee Astmann.** Born in Bromberg Stadt, Prussia in 1847. She went to New York to work as a designer with McCall's Fashion House and was regarded as an expert fashion cutter. She met and married Robert Weigel. They travelled to Melbourne, where they began a thriving fashion and clothing pattern business which was famous internationally. It made the making of interesting clothes by people with average skills, a reality. Oscar died in 1915 and Johanna in 1940.

3. **Eveline Winifred Syme** born Surrey, England, daughter of Joseph Cowen and Laura Blair Syme. She came to Australia as a young child and grew up in the family mansion in St. Kilda. She was the granddaughter of Ebenezer Syme, co-founder of "The Age". Family wealth provided for a privileged but independent life. She was a life-long friend of artist Ethel Spowers and Eveline forged a name as painter, printmaker, and apostle of modern art in Melbourne. She was involved in the formation of the Contemporary Art Society in 1938 and was active in artistic and educational areas. Eveline died in Richmond in 1961 aged 75.

4. **Elly Lukas.** Born on the island of Ithaca, Greece, third youngest daughter of Andreas and Joanna Lekatsas. At the outbreak of WW11 her schooling ended and she began work in the family hotel. Her family shifted to Athens and Elly resumed her education, where she studied English and Italian. In November 1946 she set sail for Australia but the trip was interrupted by political upheavals in Egypt where they were stranded. She met Alexander Zotos in Cairo and here began a 7-year engagement. He eventually came to Melbourne where they married in 1953. She had a wide and varied career in fashion and beauty prior to becoming a top fashion model, including working for Dior. In 1954 she and her husband opened the Elly Lukas School of Elegance and this business became legendary. Elly passed away on 4th July 1999.

5. **May Butler George** was born Matilda George at Drouin On 2nd May 1881, daughter of George and Mary Jane May *nee* Butler. May Butler George was a talented artist and worked in miniature, fan and easel painting plus sculpture. She was virtually untrained but the showing of her miniatures at the Australian Artists' exhibition in Melbourne helped pay for her trip to England in 1912. She was commissioned to paint miniature portraits on ivory of Lord Kitchener, Princess Henry of Battenberg plus many other society people. In June 1914 she was presented at court to King George V and Queen Mary. She returned to Australia in 1920 and established a studio at the Drill Hall, Chapel Street, Prahran. She exhibited mainly war related work in a variety of styles at the Athenaeum Hall. Her large panels for the AIF monument were completed by 1925. Her designs were created in her studio then were cast in Paris. Arthritis ended her painting career but she also wrote many poems and notes. May died on 11th April 1973 aged 92.

Part 2 in April Newsletter.

WHAT'S ON- MARCH 2015 contd. From p.1**Wednesday 25 March 10 am****UAW Outing to Bendigo Art Gallery.**

Remain in Light: photography from the Museum of Contemporary Art collection. 70 works from 1960s to today. 10.15 train to Bendigo.

Meet Southern Cross Station near ticket office 10.00

Sunday 29 March 1.30 pm**Palm Sunday Rally: Walk for Justice for Refugees**

State Library, Swanston St speeches

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