

Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

Newsletter

WHAT'S ON-APRIL 2016

Wednesday 13 April
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Organising Committee
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Thursday 14 April
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room Ross House
NB Note change of venue

Thursday 21 April
7.00pm

TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership) Public Forum
Don't sell out people for corporate profits
Lower Melbourne Town Hall
Speakers include: Ged Kearney, Dr Deborah Gleeson, Kelvin Thomson MP

Saturday 23 April
2.30

UAW Southern Branch meeting
The Upcoming Federal Election
Speaker: Cr Stefanie Perri
Mayor of Monash; Candidate for Chisholm
Mordialloc Neighbourhood House
Main St Mordialloc
Amy: 0422 885 801; Mairi: 0403 900 585
Cost: \$5

Saturday 30 April
2.00 – 4.00

Dyke Books Inc and Jean Taylor
Launch of Lesbians Ignite!
In Victoria in the 1990s
Launched by Lou Bennett
Entertainment by Performing Older Women's Circus
Brunswick Neighbourhood House
Warr Park, 43a De Carle St Brunswick
Tram 19, Elizabeth St, Stop 2

HONOURABLE HEALERS: PIONEERING WOMEN DOCTORS by Carmen Green

The author of this book, Dr Merrilyn Murnane, spoke at the National Council of Women Victoria's March meeting about her recently published book "Honourable Healers". Dr Murnane is a retired paediatrician living in Melbourne. For her services to paediatrics she was made a member of the Order of Australia in 2003. She retired at 67 and began working with communities in Papua New Guinea where she and her husband have also established a mobile health service.

When Dr Murnane did her medical degree in the 1950's, only 10% of medical students were women. Today; however, the majority of the medical students are women and Dr Murnane said that this has only been achieved as a result of a long and difficult battle which began 160 years ago in America and was then taken up in the United Kingdom and Australia. The credit for this should be given to three women in particular: Elizabeth Blackwell living in the U.S. (1821- 1910), Elizabeth Garrett born in England (1836-1917) and Australian Constance Stone (1856-1902). Dr Murnane became interested in Constance Stone and then discovered the other two women doctors when she retired and decided to write this book.

The three pioneering women profiled may have lived in different places and at different times but according to Dr Murnane, they had much in common. They lived in the mid-nineteenth century when women were expected to stay at home as wives and mothers. Then teaching was the only acceptable profession even nursing was frowned upon. It was said to be unladylike to study medicine and that they were sensation seekers. Women didn't even have the vote and yet these three remarkable women overcome immense obstacles by becoming doctors.

They had much in common with each other: they were all intelligent, courageous and importantly had the ability to survive repeated setbacks from medical schools without giving up. They were also all Christians and they were all feminists active in women's suffrage. They were also all interested in diet, sanitation, and exercise for women and education for girls. Two of them, Elizabeth Garrett and Constance Stone married and combined the rearing of children with their medical profession. After they graduated they all set up outpatient clinics in poor areas for women and children which later became teaching hospitals for women medical students. They also all gave lectures encouraging young women to take up medicine.

Elizabeth Blackwell was the pioneer and fought the most difficult battle in the United States. After obtaining her degree however she travelled to England and then Paris to obtain more experience. In England, Elizabeth Garrett attended several of Dr Blackwell's lectures and was inspired to be a doctor.

Constance Stone was the daughter of a Hobart contractor and organ builder. She overcame class barriers and became first a medical student and then in 1890 the first woman doctor in Australia. She launched the Queen Victoria Hospital in Melbourne and died very young of TB.

Through their work these women had a profound impact on the medical profession and influenced medical education for young women across the English speaking world. Dr Murnane has brought their lives together in one book so that their stories can become more widely known especially for women. An integral part of their story is women's continuing struggle for equal rights with men.

It is an inspiring book to read. Buy it or borrow it from your local public library.#

UAW SUBMISSION TO VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON GENDER EQUITY**by Cath Morrison**

We have sent a submission to the Andrews Government in response to their request for input into how the Government might improve the current state of gender inequality. The following is a summary of the submission.

The UAW submission congratulated the Andrews' Government on its leadership in establishing the Gender Equality Consultation process while noting that gender inequity is still deeply entrenched in Australian society. Pay inequity is still significant in Australia.

Domestic violence is a major scourge. Most women retire in relative poverty (60% of women have no super at all). There is so much evidence available that much more needs to be done to improve the position of women. Taxation reform, inadequate superannuation and retirement incomes need to be addressed at the Federal level but there is much which can be done at State level to address gender inequity.

Firstly, policies at all levels of Government should be subject to gender analysis and the impacts of any new policy upon women must be made clear. Any negative impacts must be highlighted and the policy reframed.

Domestic violence: The State Government must implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission in full and without delay.

The State Government can increase security for women through affordable housing- a lack of secure housing is a major barrier for women who wish to leave violent partners. Similarly, older women with low retirement incomes must have secure housing available to avoid living in abject poverty or homelessness.

In the workplace -the State Government is a major employer and can do the following:

- provide leadership in improving flexibility for men as well as women to care for children through better paternity leave provisions, and to ensure women workers are not discriminated against because of family responsibilities.
- provide domestic violence leave,
- ensure that women in the public service are not over represented in part time or contract and casual work
- support and mentor women into leadership positions
- make sexual harassment totally unacceptable in the workplace

We commended the Government on its policy that 50% of Board members must be female.

The Government can fund and encourage programs in schools to raise awareness of gender inequity issues. We support the Safe Schools program.

Women in sport: the government can fund programs to encourage young women to compete in sport and particularly in the AFL in Victoria in the new women's football program

In our seven page submission we could only cover issues of major concern to the UAW. Obviously there will be many submissions from women's organisations and community groups, and hopefully, all matters raised will be considered by Government. **UAW members who would like a copy of the Submission are welcome to contact the office and arrange for a copy to be emailed.#**

THE POWER OF A VOICE IN PARLIAMENT: Speaker: FIONA PATTEN MLC

by Carmen Green

This year UAW members celebrated International Women's Day at a meeting in Ross House on Tuesday 22 March. The speaker at the well-attended meeting was Fiona Patten, MLC, Leader of the Australian Sex Party. Anne Sgro', the President of UAW Victoria, introduced Ms Patten and said that while much has been achieved since the first IWD in 1975 there is much still to be fought for before women can claim to have achieved equality with men. Anne said that an important question for all members when electing politicians is who can we trust to implement the policies we want? Many independents have been wonderful- for example Tony Windsor and Cathy McGowan in the federal Parliament. In the Victorian Parliament, Fiona Patten has been actively pursuing and achieving significant reform in several areas of importance to the UAW.

Fiona started her talk by saying that IWD was an important celebration as there was still so much yet to be achieved for women- for example; we still have not got equal pay or equal representation in parliament. Emily's List has been important in achieving greater representation of women in the ALP but Parliament is still a boys' club. The Liberal Party needs to give more women safe seats. In her opinion, to join one of the major parties you have to sell your soul at the door and vote the way you are told to vote. She believes that she can be effective as an independent in Parliament particularly when government doesn't have the balance of power. Independents enable better legislation which is more representative of the broader community. She is able to negotiate well with the Andrew's Government which is progressive on issues such as the Safe Schools Programme.

Fiona referred to an article by Beth Wilson former Health Services Commissioner in the Herald Sun that day called "It's taking too long to act on clinic exclusion zones". The following quote is taken from that article: "*Recently I walked past the East Melbourne Fertility Control Clinic and there they were, Helpers of God's Precious Infants, shoving their blood-spattered images into the faces of women trying to enter the clinic to avail themselves of lawful and much needed health services. I thought to myself "Hang on. Didn't parliament pass a safe access law last year?"*" Beth also said in her article that Fiona Patten did a great service to Victorian women in introducing a safe access bill and the Victorian Government did great work in getting the legislation passed. Fiona said that her efforts in supporting the Safe Access Bill were a great learning experience. She was supported by women from the Greens, the Liberals and the ALP. She needed the support of the Government in the Lower House and the women MPs in the ALP were significant backers of the bill. However Fiona said that while the Safe Access Zone Bill had been passed last November, it still hasn't been implemented and she believes that this delay is totally unnecessary and, like Beth Wilson, believes that it is time the law was implemented and that women were able to attend these health services without harassment and intimidation.

Fiona believes that women work together on issues more effectively than men. She said that this was illustrated in the Safe Access Zone Bill and also in the 2008 Abortion Bill. Anything to do with abortion brings fear to politicians in the major parties because of the deluge of emails and harassment – sometimes violent - that follows. This is, therefore, an area where independents like her can play an important role.

Fiona is also a supporter of end of life choices -that is voluntary euthanasia- which is also supported by the majority of Australians although opposed by the Australian Christian Lobby and the Catholic Church. Fiona has initiated a parliamentary enquiry into end of life choices – 1200 submissions have been forwarded overwhelmingly in support of euthanasia. Fiona said that while euthanasia is opposed by only 4% of Australians this is a very significant number for politicians because they can lose their seats by a 4% swing against them. Victoria also needs to decriminalise sex work and carry out drug reform but again politicians are fearful of the 4%.

Contd. On P.8

OUR PROGRESSIVE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT LEADS THE WAY: in tackling domestic violence and homophobic bullying . **by Cath Morrison**

These two items of very good news last week got very little publicity in the Melbourne print media.

SAFE SCHOOLS PROGRAM TO CONTINUE IN VICTORIA:

On the ABC's Q&A program on March 21, 2016, during a debate-which unfortunately foreshadowed the nastiness of the forthcoming plebiscite debate over same sex marriage-Daniel Andrews proudly confirmed that Victoria will continue to fund the Safe Schools program, even if the Federal government withdraws funding.

As reported on the ABC website The Drum, Premier Andrews described the program, which was launched in Victoria in 2010 before it was rolled out nationally in 2014, as: *"...brilliantly effective...We'll lock that funding in at a state level - because if it saves just one life, it's worth it,"....Safe Schools is officially saved in Victoria, and it will have a place in our schools long after Cory Bernardi and the rest of his dinosaurs eventually disappear from the Senate".* The Safe Schools program has 251 member schools in Victoria - 162 of them are Government secondary colleges. Victorian Education Minister James Merlino told 774 ABC Melbourne the Government had made an election commitment to roll it out to all public high schools in the state because it "saved lives". He labelled the campaign to axe the program by some Federal Government MPs as "homophobic" and said it had been devastating to LGBTI students. *"This has never been about the welfare of young people in our schools in Victoria or Australia, this has all been about a nasty internal campaign within the Liberal Party."*The suicide rate among young LGBTI students is horrific and anything that can be done to reduce this terrible toll is to be applauded, as is Premier Andrews for his progressive and enlightened approach on this matter.

ROSIE BATTY APPOINTED TO LEAD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVISORY COUNCIL AND FUNDING BOOST ANNOUNCED:

On March 23, 2016, Premier Andrews announced a \$10m funding boost to family violence service providers and that the 2015 Australian of the Year and anti-family violence campaigner, [Rosie Batty](#), will lead a new Victorian victim and survivors' advisory council. A family violence steering committee had also been formed to implement each of the royal commission's recommendations. The Royal Commission will report on March 29. *"The cabinet will consider those recommendations in detail and they will be publicly released. This is a document that belongs to the Victorian community because this challenge, this problem, this crisis, belongs to every single Victorian."* Andrews said the extra funding was necessary because of an expected immediate increase in demand for family violence services that would come in the lead-up to the royal commission's findings being made public.

The immediate \$10m in funding includes \$6m for crisis accommodation, counselling, women's health, behaviour change programs and services working with Aboriginal survivors.

The steering committee will comprise members of government, family violence experts and representatives from family violence organisations and will be responsible for guiding reform to the system, Andrews said.

Thanks to Melissa Davey and the Guardian Australia for the comprehensive coverage of this funding announcement which only merited a paragraph in other news media.#

GRANDMOTHERS: THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

Anne Sgro

Grandmothers Against the Detention of Refugee Children went to Canberra in mid-March, with the message to politicians to Free the Children. Over 200 women boarded buses and cars, decorated with purple, for a well-organised visit that included stop-overs along the way – notably in Wangaratta, where they met with Cathy McGowan’s office, and were interviewed and photographed by local media. The UAW’s Amy Duncan was one of the participants. *It was wonderful. Such wonderful women and such terrific organisation. There were constant interviews with the media – radio and newspapers. I was amazed at the skills these women had. They delegated well, organizing the buses, t-shirts, interviews at Parliament. At the exit, we burst into song, totally bewildering the security guards. The grandmothers were organised and kind, younger women helping those who were older. To see women taking action to that degree was out of this world. Such a success! Excellent!*

Excerpts from speech made by Dr Gwenda Davey, Chairperson, at Canberra 16 March

I am proud to be speaking here today on behalf of Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children. Proud of our group which has grown in less than two years to nearly 2,000 grandmothers and friends. We’ve come from almost every State and Territory, united in our passionate opposition to the detention of asylum seeker and refugee children.

I want to acknowledge, first of all, the traditional owners and custodians of this land, and pay our respect to their elders, past and present.

We grandmothers too, are elders in OUR communities, and we DEMAND to be listened to. We have listened to the words of our Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, when in February last year he said that ‘even one child in detention is one child too many’. We now DEMAND, Prime Minister, that you put those words into action, and free all children and their families from detention in Australia and on Nauru...

We have placed on the lawns in front of Parliament House 1,000 cutouts of children. The cutouts are to remind us of those children who have suffered in their attempts to find a place of safety, in their failed attempts to find sanctuary in Australia...

We stand here today in front of this magnificent building, the Parliament of the Australian Commonwealth, and of the Australian people. We should be so proud. But we are not. Instead we are deeply ashamed. Ashamed that our country is so cruelly treating innocent people who have tried to find safe haven here, in Australia. Ashamed that Australia is flouting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which in Article 3 states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. Ashamed that we are flouting the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child. Australia is a signatory to both of these conventions.

Australia’s refugee policies are rotten to the core. We need to START AGAIN...

We cry SHAME upon those members of this parliament who support the brutal regime known as our border protection policy... We say SHAME on those members of this parliament who have abandoned all the traditional values of our Australian society, who have abandoned the notion of the Good Samaritan, who have abandoned the deep-rooted concept of the fair go...By contrast, we thank those brave parliamentarians, Members and Senators, who have spoken out for asylum seekers so courageously.

...we can’t forget the young men imprisoned INDEFINITELY on Manus Island, many of whom were still legally children or unaccompanied minors when they arrived in Australia...We salute the brave doctors...(and) all their brave helpers...FREE THE CHILDREN

Nationally, there was a blackout of television reporting, the Canberra ABC preferring to air footage of the PM meeting a few Harmony Day musicians to showing footage of the impressive demonstration outside. But the campaign continues, with plans for action for the coming election.

www.grandmothersadrc.org or email grandmothersref@gmail.com. Let’s continue the action!#

UAW UPDATE

Anne Sgro

Mairi Neil honoured as Kingston Citizen of the Year

Congratulations to Mairi, who also delivered the keynote speech at Kingston Council's International Women's Day celebration. It was a terrific speech, celebrating the power of words and stories. Mairi paid tribute, among others, to the UAW... *for early kindergartens and libraries, child care centres, improved roads and parks and even bus routes.*

*In Kingston we have a history of hard-working females: councilors, managers of neighbourhood houses, school principals and leaders and activists in countless volunteer organisations. We heard from inspirational **Mary Rimmington** today (also a UAW member, ed) whose pen has ensured we still have a foreshore of indigenous vegetation, a cleaner creek and many parklands including the Green Wedge. Over the years she has written thousands of words in submissions and has had letters published in the local papers and *The Age*. Mairi concluded: *To achieve the goal of gender equality the entire system needs to change. Diversity and equity begin with you... Finally, words matter, we can make a conscious decision to change words that have demeaned women and others. Ignore the voices that sneer at political correctness – they may never have been the butt of sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism or ageism.**

A Message from Mary Owen.

Mary Owen recently celebrated her 95th birthday with a number of functions, and has sent a note thanking all involved – organizers, participants, well-wishers. She enjoyed herself hugely and appreciated family and friends.

My last wish is that we should remember and record the work of so many folk – particularly women, whose work is more likely to be overlooked. (Mary is campaigning for a women's heritage museum at the State Library of Victoria).

All these events (i.e. the celebrations) brought home to me the tremendous importance of family and friends who accept me as I am despite all my faults, and still want to be with me. To all of you, who came to one of these events and to those who couldn't manage it, please keep in touch with each other and CARRY ON. Many, many thanks and much love.

Molly Hadfield Social Justice Oration.

Darebin Council hosted the 3rd Social Justice Oration in March to celebrate Molly's life - a major International Women's Day event. The speaker was Celeste Liddle, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Organiser for the National Tertiary Education Union, and a writer and activist. As a unionist she recognized that the rights that people do enjoy have been fought for, and felt that there is real, unfinished business in regard to Aboriginal rights. She referred to Aboriginal women as being strong and opinionated, but nevertheless expected to look after the community, not lead. Aboriginal women are highly represented in the statistics of women killed by their current or former partners: they are 11 times more likely to die, 70 times more likely to have an acquired brain injury than other women. Violence against Aboriginal women has not been dealt with. Women generally are considered secondary in Australia, but Aboriginal women are 38 times more likely to be hospitalised. The federal de-funding of health centres and refuges has not helped. Remove factors such as poverty and remoteness from the equation and violence would still exist. Disturbingly, Aboriginal women are the highest, fastest growing group of incarcerated women.

Recognition of indigenous people in the Constitution. Australia is the only Commonwealth country that does not have a Treaty. The Mabo Ruling rejected the notion of Terra Nullius, but the notion of indigenous sovereignty must be addressed. How can we be the Lucky Country until at least that step has been taken? Reparations are needed for the stolen lands, stolen children and stolen wages. A Treaty would contain certain obligations. Currently there is a lack of truth, understanding and equality. Ms Liddle reminded listeners that the land has never been ceded.#

Fiona Patten contd. from p. 4

Fiona has also fought to protect the Princess Mary Club from developers as the church wants to demolish it despite the fact that it is a unique part of women's history in Victoria. She believes it could be a safe place for women fleeing domestic violence.

Fiona said that, as an independent, she can be an effective voice on issues of concern such as the ones she has outlined in her talk. She is socially progressive, economically prudent and believes in an adequate safety net. She believes quite strongly that churches-currently tax exempt- should pay their fair share of tax and wants to establish an enquiry into religious groups and their automatic tax exempt status. She also supports the implementation of the Gonski recommendations.

There were many questions from the audience at the end of Fiona's talk. The general view of the meeting was that she has certainly been a progressive, effective and influential Member of Parliament and a voice for Victorian women in the very short period since she was elected in 2014.#

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