

Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

Newsletter

WHAT'S ON-DECEMBER 2016

*Best wishes to all members and friends for the festive season.
Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to continuing
our campaigns and friendships in 2017.*

NB: Our next newsletter will be sent out early February 2017

**Saturday 3 December
11.30 onwards**

**Southern Branch UAW
Brunch for Peace at the Beach Rotunda, Peter Scullin Reserve
Mordialloc Foreshore Speaker: Cr Rosemary West
'On the election of new councillors for Kingston and the future of
the green wedges'**

**Wednesday 7 December
10.30 – 12.30**

**UAW Organising Committee, 2nd floor meeting room,
NB 1st, not 2nd Wednesday**

Saturday 10 December

**Human Rights Day
The anniversary of the adoption by the UN of the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

**Saturday 10 December
11.45 for 12 noon**

**Grandmothers' City Walk for Asylum Seeker
Children.
Meet at St Paul's Cathedral then walk across Princes
Bridge to the Queen Victoria Gardens opposite the Arts
Centre.**

JANUARY 2017

**Wednesday 18 January
12 noon**

**UAW Pub Lunch
Royal Oak Hotel North Fitzroy
Tram 96 from Bourke St Stop 18**

**Thursday 19 January
10.00 for a 10.30 start**

**Annual Australia Day Women's Ceremony
Pioneer Women's Garden
Speaker: Janet Mitchelmore.
Jean Hailes and the struggle to establish a women's
health centre at the Alfred Hospital**

A PEOPLE'S INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION**By Morag Loh**

In early October an email from Action Aid Australia announced a meeting for those interested in working to develop 'a people's inquiry into privatisation.' Remembering the alarm engendered by proposals to privatise Medicare and aware of ongoing suggestions that some Medicare functions should lose funding I decided to attend.

On October 18 I joined about 30 people gathered in a rear top-storey room at the Novotel Hotel in Collins St. Most seemed to come from unions and/or service industries and some had begun to put their concerns in writing. A number of them presented short papers outlining how privatisation of services had affected various sections of society. These papers and the questions they aroused indicated that there was already a solid basis for a people's inquiry. Not only were they informative but they raised issues not often discussed. One of them was the negative impact privatisation of water supplies would have on women.

Women have traditionally been the providers of the most basic health care, responsible for the personal hygiene of entire families, for clean food, clean clothes, clean homes and household utensils. In some parts of the world their home gardens still provide nutrition, enhance the appetite and gladden the spirits of millions of people. All of these responsibilities require water. The speaker who presented this topic insisted: 'Water is a public good, not just an economic good. We must protect our water supplies.' She told us that when Argentina privatised its water there was such disaster related to availability, quality of supply and price increases that the government reversed its decision and reclaimed responsibility for this 'public good'. The multinational company which had bought the country's water rights then sued the government for breaking its contract. The Argentine population had to pay in many ways for their government's mistaken faith in privatisation. The Age on November 9th reported that foreign ownership of Australian water rights had jumped from 9 to 14 per cent over the past three years. Perhaps we should feel alarmed.

An email I received on October 15 from Tracie Lund of the Latrobe Valley organisation Community Run described a situation there where an international company was plainly putting profit before public welfare. She considered that the fires at the mines have been 'one of the worst disasters in Australia's history' and noted that community health had suffered from the constant fumes and smog. She claimed that 7000 fire fighters, mostly volunteers, had put their lives on the line to fight the fires but that GDF Suez, owner of the Hazelwood mine, was refusing to pay its \$18 million fire fighter debt.

An interesting contribution at the Novotel meeting came from an older participant. Firstly he declared that governments, by handing over publicly owned property and resources to those whose primary aim was to make a profit, were walking away from their responsibility to govern. He then reminded us that during the 1950s, after years of war and depression, there had been an informal community understanding that we needed a harmonious society based on a citizen's right to essential services – decent, affordable housing, education, health care. The government had responded by building houses – whole suburban areas were composed of government housing. Governments also trained teachers and doctors when these were in short supply by providing bursaries which covered the costs of a tertiary education. They established power industries and trained people to work in them. 'Within a generation these aspects of a fair and harmonious society have been lost,' the participant concluded. Perhaps we should more often remind ourselves of the successes of government endeavours in the recent past.

A People's Inquiry into Privatisation cont'd

The Fairfax press regularly documents the inequalities of privatisation. The Age, on November 13th, reported that child care centres often make large amounts of money for private operators who then build them where they will be most profitable not where they are most needed. The same edition discussed the development of former industrial land at Fisherman's Bend where government officers had recommended that part of the site be allocated to affordable housing. However in 2012 the Minister, Matthew Guy, ignored their advice and rezoned the area without insisting on height or design controls and so '...brought windfall profits to land owners without a cent captured for the wider Victorian community or for infrastructure in the area.'

The meeting spanned the hours between 4 and 7pm and people came and went during that time. I left before the end and did not find out on the day who had started the project off. An internet search told me that Public Services International was co-ordinating activities and participating unions included the CPSU, ASU, and ETU together with some community organisations. They want testimony about the impact of privatisation on individuals and families and are asking participants to outline what sort of society they would like to live in. The ACTU has made a submission.

After the meeting I thought about countries which might approach planning differently from here. Scotland came to mind because I lived there for a number of years and visited many times. One of the most impressive features of my father's home town near Edinburgh was the attractive modern rental housing for the aged provided by the local (county) government. I also remembered with approval a large, green car-free space behind a stand of houses where children could safely kick or throw a ball, play football in teams, play marbles and tiggly and ride their bikes or scooters. Scottish government planning policy is easy to access on the internet and is clearly explained. Its aim is to provide 'high quality sustainable places where different interests are balanced.' It is inclusive, its spaces encompassing not only people and their various needs but also their environments. Policy is 'plan led' and outcomes are clearly defined. These include: a sustainable place that supports economic growth, regeneration and good design; reduced carbon emissions and adaptations to cope with climate change; the protection of natural cultural assets and the facilitation of their sustainable use; good transport and digital connections. When policy is being re-assessed public input is called for.

I think the People's Inquiry is a good idea. The information it has collected could make for a very useful publication and become a rallying point for change. If we could persuade planners to take account of climate change and 'balance different interests' wouldn't that be something?

VALE MARGARET LLOYD

We were saddened by the recent death of our friend and UAW member Margaret Lloyd, after a long period of ill health. Margaret was a champion of human rights and social justice, not just taking part in various campaigns such as support for asylum seekers, Indigenous rights and a fair society, but she lived her ideals. She was a gentle, lovely person – a good woman. We shall miss her.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN & HEART DISEASE

by Carmen Green

The speaker at the November meeting of the National Council of Women, Victoria (NCWV) was the NCWV's Health Advisor, Freda Kaufman. Her topic was "**Don't miss a beat –heart health care and gender differences.**" Freda said that while women are usually aware that heart disease is the single biggest killer of men in Australia, they are often not aware that heart disease is also the single biggest killer of Australian women and therefore underestimate their risk of heart attack. After menopause women's risk of heart attack is the same as men. Because of low public awareness of this fact, women also fail to recognise the symptoms and therefore often delay going to hospital.

Freda discussed the causes of heart disease –those we can't change & those that we can. 60% of heart disease causes are preventable. She distributed a sheet "Heart Health Care Guide" covering "Common Symptoms and Atypical symptoms in Women".

It also included the following information:

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK THAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING A HEART ATTACK:

If the warning signs get progressively worse for at least 10 minutes:

- 1 **STOP** and rest immediately
- 2 **TALK.** Tell someone how you feel.
- 3 **CALL** 000 without delay & don't hang up –
wait for the operator's instructions.

At the end of the Heart Health Care Guide, there was a list of websites for further information.

One of the websites listed was the Heart Foundations and I've included the following extract from that website.

www.heartfoundation.org.au/programs/nsw-women-and-heart

- *Three times as many Australian women die of heart disease as they do breast cancer.*
- *Common heart disease risk factors for women are physical inactivity, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking.*
- *Over 90% of Australian women have at least one of these modifiable risk factors; half of all women have two or three.*
- *Women are more likely to experience non-chest pain symptoms of heart attack (such as pain in the jaw, feeling nauseous, sweaty or fatigued) than men; however awareness of these symptoms is low.*
- *On average, health care expenditure on females with heart and blood vessel disease is 20% less per person than for males.*
- *Women's participation in recovery programmes like cardiac rehabilitation is generally lower than for men.*

Freda said that because women still underestimate their risk of heart attack, the NCWV has initiated a heart disease awareness campaign to raise awareness among women.

“EVERY WOMAN HAS A VOICE – LOUD AND CLEAR, OR PATIENTLY WAITING “ ***by Sheila Byard**

Looking at the national political and policy landscape over the last two years, according to Mary Crooks, Executive Director of the Victorian Women’s Trust, *despite “being one of the first countries in the world to enfranchise women, we seemed to be going nowhere fast when it came to realizing gender equality’*. So early this year the VWT decided to set up a two-day Breakthrough program to *‘galvanise people to take action over the next few years to achieve a much greater measure of gender equality’*.

#Breakthrough-2016 was held as part of the 16 Days of Action, was thoroughly modern with an App to download on your mobile phone with a live updated agenda, speaker bios and social media stream, and those who could do this were no doubt more up-to-date than those of us who had to rely on the stylish printed program that was, in its aqua and dark blue, a bit hard to read for some of us especially in the muted lighting of Melbourne Town Hall spaces and the other nearby venues. For those of the thousand attendees who had the staying power, apart from the talks there were many other things to learn from and enjoy: music, book signings, photo opportunities, news about many like-minded groups and other relevant activities and initiatives.

Some of the hundred speakers spoke in the largest space – the main Melbourne Town Hall – in the main plenary sessions, for example when Rosie Batty spoke with a video clip from Phil Cleary at 11.15 on the Saturday and Kate Jenkins AHRC Sex Discrimination Commissioner at 1.30. But for the most part navigating the program to have the chance to hear your speakers of interest took some care since the clusters, in so many different thematic streams, all held some interest.

Most of the # Breakthrough 2016 conference offered a wonderful opportunity for Victorians to sit and listen to some remarkable visitors, including Auntie June Oscar AO from the Fitzroy Valley WA. She is the CEO of the Fitzroy Women’s Resource Centre who is a champion for women and children in that community as well as for Indigenous Australian Languages. From 2007 she has focused on the impact that the ‘right’ to buy full strength alcohol has upon the long-term health of children. In both the ‘Justice for Indigenous Women’ and the ‘Tyranny of Distance’ Breakout sessions the stress was on the need to start the journey to justice by a form of listening filled with empathy, not to reacting to Aboriginal women as trauma victims but to acknowledge their survival in the face of inappropriate policies, where oppression is pervasive silencing, and the service systems are imposed from far away.

Another important visitor was Dr Marilyn Waring, author of ‘Counting for Nothing? If Women Counted’. Her book reading provided fascinating insight into her navigation of the NZ political system as she became the youngest MP in New Zealand in International Women’s Year, and the importance of a thorough critique of international accounting systems that measure ‘growth’ and ‘development’.

Well done Victorian Women’s Trust. Now we wait to see what will flow from this amazing feast of ideas and multiple interactions between so many passionate participants.

*June Oscar AO, VWT Breakthrough 2016

CONSUMER DIRECTED CARE: privatisation of the 'aged care industry'?**Report by Anne Sgro**

Wilma Marmur from COTA was the speaker at the AGM 22 November. Assisted by colleague Margaret Thorne she explained the changes to Home Care packages that will be introduced by the federal government in 2017, and distributed booklets with photos of smiling Seniors and other pamphlets. I think it fair to say that members were confronted and disturbed by the information in her presentation. It seemed obvious to us that this is the beginning of massive privatization of what is becoming the aged care 'industry'.

It is obviously desirable, both for the older person and for the government to help people stay in their homes as long as possible – people are happier and healthier, and it costs the taxpayer less for a better result. This is the aim of the Home Care Packages which have 4 levels of support, from basic to high level care, and provide services such as help with cleaning, washing, shopping to showering, nursing and allied health support, care coordination and management. Each package will apparently be 'customised' to meet individual needs. You can approach MyAgedCare yourself, either by telephone or with the internet, and you will be referred to an Aged Care Assessment Service for assessment. If you are eligible for a package, you choose the provider from a given list, and the government funding goes to that provider to pay for the services needed. You can be expected to supplement the funding, depending on your income.

- The steps:
1. Check your eligibility
 2. Find a Home Care Package Provider
 3. Work out the costs
 4. Accept a package
 5. Begin your services

There may be a waiting period. Administration fees can vary, so be sure to ask what they are.

What Wilma advised, time and again, was **be informed**. Have someone you trust to help you. The free newspapers *55 Plus* and *The Seniors* (often available in pharmacies) are useful. **Know your rights. Check your monthly statements** to ensure that you are not being charged for a service that you have not used. If you use fewer services in a month, the funds will be transferred to the following period, but **you must check**. Make sure you **keep all your documents**, as everything must be in writing. Concerns must be in writing.

It seemed to members that the scheme puts an onerous strain on older people who are increasingly vulnerable as they age. How easy is it to negotiate online? How much time will be spent with a voice on the phone – will it be an offshore voice or local? There is the problem of contacting a 'real' person. What if you do not have family or a trusted friend who can help you navigate the system? You can get an advocate, but that person will need to be paid, decreasing funds available for the services.

As was pointed out, essential services have been sold out to private businesses. The role of local government has been diminished. The example of Family Day Care was mentioned. It used to be provided by local Councils, now private providers do the job, with obviously inadequate oversight given the thousands of dollars that have been paid to scammers who provided no service. Child care is increasingly privatized, and may not be available in less populated, harder to access communities because profit is the over-riding motive.

Will there be an overseeing body to check on providers?

Are service providers adequately trained?

What provision will there be for gender diverse people?

Cont. p7

The question “What does COTA think of the service?” was not answered – Wilma’s task was to explain, not get involved with the politics of it. Yet she was well aware and concerned herself. Must one have a provider? Not sure, but individuals would need insurance.

Will there be a place for local government? There were many questions raised that we need to think about. It was suggested that members go to see the latest Ken Loach film, **I, Daniel Blake**, which has just started a season at the cinemas. I love Ken Loach’s work, but I found this film fairly harrowing as it focuses on dealing with a Centrelink system, and the effects on ordinary people’s lives.

The National Foundation of Women has stated that “Aged care is an increasingly important issue in Australia, especially for women as users of services, as workers providing services, and as informal carers if services are not available.” That was made very obvious in our discussions – and we did not get into the question of wages and conditions for workers in an increasingly privatised system. The topic will be on the agenda for our next Organising Committee meeting.

UAW UPDATE

Paid Parental Leave. Australia has one of the least generous schemes in the OECD – rated 3rd lowest, in fact. It was not until 2011 that the Gillard government finally introduced a very basic scheme that provides 18 weeks paid leave for women workers at the minimum wage, It was set up as a public/private partnership aimed at encouraging business to recognize that PPL is of benefit to women, their families, and the economy. The Turnbull government now aims to restrict the number of women who can access the scheme in a penny-pinching attack on ‘double dippers’. The UAW has written to the cross bench senators, has put in a submission to the Senate Affairs Legislative Committee to which the matter has been referred, and has signed an open letter from ERA (Equality Rights Alliance). We do not want restrictions on what is already a very basic scheme.

A Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. We were one of 50 organisations that endorsed an open letter organised by ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, calling on the Australian government to vote “yes” to the resolution “Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations” at the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. There is a growing global push to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The resolution was endorsed by 123 nations, with 38 against and 16 abstentions. Australia voted against the resolution, so the pressure needs to be kept up. Australia has signed on to treaties prohibiting biological and chemical weapons, landmines and cluster munitions, often after much resistance. The Australian government’s opposition to a ban on nuclear weapons is increasingly at odds with the majority of nations, including in our region where ASEAN nations and Pacific Island states have joined New Zealand in strongly supporting moves for a ban. A majority of Australians support such a ban.

Asylum Seekers: Nauru and Manus Island. What will the Australian government deal with the United States mean in real terms? Will it be honoured by the incoming President? Like much of asylum seeker policy, the deal is shrouded in secrecy. Minister Peter Dutton has acknowledged that not all refugees will be offered a place. What happens to the others? What happens to those who are in Australia for medical treatment? The UAW has supported a GetUp petition calling on our politicians to prevent deportations and ensure safety for everyone.

UAW Organising Committee 2017

President: Anne Sgro

Vice-President: Amy Duncan

Secretary: Cath Morrison

Treasurer: Patrizia Archivio

Committee: Carmen Green, Fran Mackieson, Jenny Stewart.

As always, we welcome member participation in whatever capacity.

DECEMBER 2016 INDEX

What's On	Page 1
A people's inquiry into privatisation	Page 2
A people's inquiry into privatization cont.; Vale Margaret Lloyd	Page 3
Australian Women and heart disease	Page 4
"Every woman has a voice – loud and clear, or patiently waiting".	Page 5
Consumer directed care: privatization of the 'aged care industry?'	Page 6
Consumer directed care cont'd; UAW Update	Page 7
UAW Update :Organising Committee 2017, December Index	Page 8

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