

Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

Newsletter

WHAT'S ON- JUNE 2016

**Wednesday 1 June
12 noon**

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

**Wednesday 8 June
10.30 – 12.30**

**UAW Organising Committee
2nd floor meeting room Ross House**

**Thursday 9 June
10.30 – 12.30**

**UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room Ross House**

Wednesday 22 June

**UAW visit to Bendigo Art Gallery
Marilyn Monroe \$25/\$20
Catch 10.15 train from Southern Cross
Station. Meet waiting room 9.50
Return 15.03/16.02**

**Saturday 25 June
10.00 – 5.00**

**Big Red Book Fair
Trades Hall
Victoria St Carlton
Donate books! Pick up can be organised
9662 3744 or nibscoordinator@gmail.com**

PLEASE NOTE

**The scheduled Southern Branch meeting for 18 June and the UAW 21 June Coffee with a Focus have been cancelled.
A combination of member involvement in the federal election campaign and the unavailability of our chosen speakers are the reasons for this decision.**

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY 2016: THE FEDERAL BUDGET HITS WOMEN HARDEST-BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR THE COALITION? by Cath Morrison

To sum up this pre-election Budget : The Coalition must have forgotten that women vote too.

The Conversation (May 20, 2016) thought that: *Gender was [invisible in the 2016 Budget](#). But...neither party can afford to ignore gender in the current election campaign. Treasurer Scott Morrison [has previously implied that women's concerns](#) about the inequality in tax and expenditure measures are "petty". But gender bias in economic thinking ignores the gender division of labour, including women's under-representation in paid work, their over-representation in unpaid and low paid caring work, and men's over-representation in full-time work, and higher paid jobs. The oversight and attitude need to be remedied in the development of policy for the next term of government.*

Eva Cox reminds us that : *once upon a time, there was a [Women's Budget Statement](#), started under Bob Hawke in 1983 but stopped in 2013. Were it still extant, it would have little to say. Despite some puffery, the 2016 budget has done very little to remedy women's structural disadvantages that derive from gender inequities. These arise when women earn less [for full-time work](#) (17%), do fewer paid hours, and do more of the unpaid care of others.* (The Conversation, May 17)

NFAW also condemns this 2016 budget as unfair to women: *It provides tax breaks for the wealthy, while low to middle income families are hit by 'zombie' savings from the Abbott-Hockey horror budgets. In addition, it lacks investments in education and training reforms. Health spending is being heavily cut and will disadvantage women, particularly those with chronic conditions.* (NFAW website, May 16, 2016).

These Budget cuts or underfunding in the following areas have a greater effect on women:

- **Cuts to front line crisis services, including a \$40 million cut to Community Legal Centres** forcing them to turn away more than 160,000 people a year, many of whom are women affected by family violence. As WEL's Deputy Chair, Helen L'Orange said after the Budget: *We are back to the seventies with community groups setting up women's refuges without government funding.* More than 1000 jobs will be axed from the community services sector following federal budget cuts to homelessness services, mental health programs and community legal centres, the Australian Services Union claims. ASU NSW/ACT acting secretary Judith Wright said the impact would be felt by the most disadvantaged people in the country (SMH, May 4, 2016).
- **Inadequate or reduced funding for services to indigenous women:** Services like Family Violence Prevention Legal Services – a vital specialist service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have been cut. Shane Duffy, the co-chair of Change the Record, a coalition of indigenous groups working to address Aboriginal incarceration and violence, said: *This is a national crisis and tackling these issues should be front and centre of our nation's budget priorities...the government had failed to prioritise indigenous justice issues. He said Aboriginal women were 34 times more likely to be hospitalised for family violence than other women while Aboriginal men were more likely to go to jail than to university.* The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (NATSILS) is deeply concerned that the Federal Government has decreased the funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) in the 2016-17 Budget.
- **Family violence inadequately funded :** \$33 million for the next year to tackle domestic violence. It's a woefully inadequate response to a national epidemic of abuse that is expected

to affect 1 in 4 women in their lifetime. Contrast this with the \$ 500 billion announced by Premier Andrews. The 2016 federal budget is confirmation that the Commonwealth government is far more concerned about national security than the scourge of family violence. The budget allocates \$30 billion for national security, with the promise of "keeping Australians safe". More than twice as many women are killed each year in Australia in intimate partner homicides than people killed in Australia as a result of terrorism since 2001 (Kate Fitzgibbon, The Age).

- **Homeless abandoned:** Peak body Homelessness Australia criticised the decision to cease the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness funding from 2017. Michael Coffey, chief executive of youth homelessness service YFoundations, said the \$115 million funding supported 80,000 people a year. *"Services are at breaking point and communities across Australia will continue to see more and more people turned away from services and on the streets,"* he said. Mission Australia chief executive Catherine Yeomans expressed concern that the budget failed to address the lack of social and affordable housing. (SMH, May 4,
- **Aged Care cuts:** A decision to change the funding model for aged care which has allowed the government to save \$1.2bn and is a "Band-Aid over a broken system", according to a key aged-care group according Ian Yates, chief executive of the Council on the Ageing (Cota). Women live longer than men and these cuts directly affect them more. The cuts to aged care spending will also exacerbate the barriers to women's workforce participation. As with childcare, when aged care is not adequately funded women's unpaid care for parents increases, and this reduces their capacity to participate in paid work.
- **Child Care:** The postponement to July 2018 of new childcare subsidies and the Community Child Care Fund will mean that participation in paid work will be financially unviable for many women.
- **Parental Leave:** The changes in Paid Parental Leave (PPL), included in the 2014 budget and retained in the current Budget "economic plan", will force women to choose **between** either government or employer-funded PPL. The amount of paid leave available for many women to spend with their baby will be reduced. Some women will not return to work, and others will be forced to return to work earlier than the 26 weeks recommended by experts and recently recognised as desirable by the Productivity Commission.
- **Gender and taxation policy:** The government's Budget "economic plan" focused on tax incentives for full-time workers (who are mostly men) and they did nothing to lessen the barriers to women's workforce participation. The changes to the income tax thresholds will benefit individuals on annual incomes greater than \$80,000. The average full time male wage rate is just over \$87,604 . However, the average full time female wage rate is only \$69,846; well short of the tax cut. Perhaps more importantly, the majority (56.3%) of women who work in part time jobs were missing in the Treasurer's calculations of "the average worker". The Budget tax cuts to business -costing \$50 billion over 10 years- and to top earners are a disgrace in terms of equity and fairness.
- **Superannuation:** Much has been made of the 2016 budget "improvements" in superannuation policy for low income workers. The Turnbull Government has basically merely reversed the decision under Abbott to remove compensation to low-income earners for excessive taxing of their contributions. Not much credit due there.

This Government should be delighted that there is no Women's Budget Statement. It would be a very short statement. This budget fails dismally to provide funding to crucial services which underpin social wellbeing for women and it absolutely and utterly fails to redress gender inequality in this country.

Well, women DO vote and hopefully this Government will find that it has ignored women's "petty" gender concerns to its detriment when election day finally comes around on July 2!

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN VIC: VICTORIAN SCHOOL CURRICULUMS ARE ADDRESSING ISSUES RELATING TO THE INCREASED VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY

by Carmen Green

Pam Hammond (NCWV Education Advisor) had tabled a report for the May meeting on “how the Victorian Curriculum is addressing issues related to the increasing violence in our society including domestic violence and bullying and respecting diversity”. This report was discussed by a group of NCWV members –many of them ex-teachers and one a trainee teacher. I attended this discussion on behalf of the UAW.

Pam started the discussion by giving an overview of her report which outlines in detail the 3 different approaches to this important part of the school curriculum. In summary these are:

- **The Australian Health and Physical Education Curriculum** was developed and then revised 3 years ago and was accepted by all the states and territories.
- The Programme “**Safe Schools**” aims to support sexual and gender diversity and prevent bullying of LGBTI students. This programme is now mandatory and funded in State Secondary Schools in Victoria.
- **Respectful Relationships Education (RRE)** is designed to help students develop healthy relationships. It also challenges negative attitudes such as prejudice, discrimination and harassment as these attitudes can lead to violence. This is currently being trialled in 19 Victorian Secondary schools and is being reviewed by Our Watch.

There was considerable discussion of the issues raised in Pam’s paper with particular emphasis on the need for teacher training in this area for all teachers given the sensitivities for some children of some of the issues being discussed, including being able to identify children at risk. It was also suggested that schools could work with parents to ensure that they supported the programmes. Concern was also expressed about violence on the internet, in films and some pop songs.

Pam’s paper’s concluding remarks were from Cara Gleeson, the Policy and Projects Manager for Our Watch* which welcomed the Victorian Government’s focus on relationships and family violence: *“There have been fantastic high-level commitments to make changes to curriculum and to syllabus, but we know this work is complex and schools and teachers require ongoing support, resources and training if they are to integrate this work into the way they educate Australian children.”*

UAW members will remember that earlier this year Malcolm Turnbull bowed to pressure from Conservative MPs and held an enquiry into the Safe Schools Programme. The Greens accused Turnbull of “caving into homophobes on the back bench”. The Government made a number of changes to the programme which in the view of supporters significantly reduced its effectiveness. Shortly after Premier Daniel Andrews stood up for the rights of LGBTI students on the ABC’s Q & A programme when he said that the programme would be provided unchanged in all Victorian state secondary schools even if they had to fund it themselves. Research indicates that almost half of young LGBTI people were depressed and nearly 40% had thoughts about suicide. 75% of same-sex attracted young people are bullied and the vast majority of that occurs in schools. Premier Andrews said that the Safe Schools programme works and it’s here to stay.

**Our Watch is an advocacy organisation that seeks to change the culture and attitudes behind domestic violence.*

TWO AMERICAN FEMINISTS IN MELBOURNE: GLORIA STEINEM AT MELBOURNE TOWN HALL

By Sheila Byard

There was quite a buzz in the Melbourne Town Hall when two thousand people held up their signed copies of the book. Lots of people had queued up round the corner into Collins St, not allowed in until after 6 o'clock. And once inside there was much roaming round, meeting friends not seen for years, mothers and daughters, groups of three and four older and younger women, and quite a few men. Then at 6.45 Virginia Trioli introduced Steinem. At first the sound system malfunctioned but after five minutes all came good.

She spoke from the book **'My Life on the Road'** about her itinerant childhood experience, mostly not in school, so that she missed out on the tyranny of role expectations. As to her learning from the great campaigns of her lifetime, the movements – anti-war, civil rights, women's movement – the great thing that she and others had learnt, particularly from the women of colour - First Nations women, Native American women – is that there is something about being together in all five senses that is important: the talking circle is crucial. We still need to be together in small groups, and the big talking events.

Wondering why the sponsors of her trip, Black Inc and Readings, thought to bring her here, and why so many paid for their ticket that included a signed copy of the book, I decided that it was that they sensed a deep disillusionment in Australia with Parliamentary democracy and decided that we'd benefit from exposure to the very skilled communicator who says 'Voting isn't the most we can do, but it is the least.'

A read of the book and an hour in her company in Melbourne, in fact demonstrates that Gloria Steinem's narrative is not yet informed by any knowledge of local struggles in relation to race relations, violence and civil rights. Is this another American expert with a rallying call, to tell us what to do, whose main qualification is that she has been, for many decades, been telling us these stories from the USA?

She was keen for us to be ready for the great things that might flow from our experience of coming to hear her, and that idea seems now to have been a bit too optimistic.

However, we might be more careful about how we vote in this year's Federal election and in the local government elections in November.

And I guess we'll be on the lookout for her new television series of which eight parts are already released. She says it is all about how, across the world, the single biggest indicator of propensity for war is the use of violence against women.

Interesting that there was nothing in the papers about what seemed to be a great event.

The organizers were generous in providing 2 entry tickets for each of four feminist entities to set up stalls – IWDA, Emily's List, Victorian Women's Trust and WEL Victoria/IAW affiliates.

VIVIAN GORNICK AT THE WHEELER CENTRE

By Anne Sgro

The queue snaked back on itself and down the steps as young and old waited for the doors to open to listen to a writer I was not familiar with speak about her book **'The Odd Woman and the City'**. The odd woman is herself, the city New York, where she has lived all her life. She writes about human interaction, and the beauty that comes with this interaction.

She regards feminism as a kind of explanation of how she is. American feminism is successful, and different to European feminism, because women were willing to look with clear, cold eyes at the world as men have made it. *'That also hardens your heart. You lose the fantasies of romantic love. The assumption was that romantic love was the salvation of one's life – a notion that people had when they had no experience.'* She sees feminism as being about achieving political and social equality. Religion? *'I have none. I am secular to the core. I prize human existence.'* Passions? *'I have strong feelings about everything, but no passions.'*

'Trump is popular because so many Americans are disaffected. In the economic crisis, 6 million people were foreclosed on, but not one Wall St banker went to jail.'

ASYLUM SEEKER POLICY AND THE ELECTION.

Just when we thought that we had hit rock bottom, Minister Peter Dutton has gone yet lower with his ignorant and derogatory comments about asylum seekers, supported by Prime Minister Turnbull. There have been some terrific responses in the media, valuing the huge contributions of migrants and refugees from generations past. And the campaign for a humane and effective policy continues in the lead-up to the election. Rural Australians for Refugees and Grandmothers among others are urging voters to keep up the personal letters to politicians demanding closure of the detention centres established by the Australian Government on Nauru and Manus Island, and the release of all refugees including children, their families and unaccompanied minors into the Australian community. As the Grandmothers state in their latest leaflet:

Free the children. Close Nauru. Close Manus. Support the Let Them Stay and Bring Them Here campaigns. End Australia's Disgrace. Take Action for refugee children now.

FEMINIST WRITERS FESTIVAL COMING TO MELBOURNE

Some interesting news to take our minds off the awfulness of the election campaign.

The Stella Prize and Sydney's All About Women Festival have bolstered support for women writers in recent years. Now a group of women are launching the Feminist Writers Festival in partnership with Melbourne Writers Festival on August 26-28. Melbourne Writers festival will host a weekend of events, and Queen Victoria Women's Centre will hold a day of networking and workshopping.

Writer Maxine Beneba Clarke, one of the organizers, says that "Not so long ago, many young women rejected feminism as a 70s white liberal movement... I thought we needed to reclaim 'feminist' and promote opportunities for more marginalized women. There was a failure to understand the complexity of feminism, but in the last ten years people have educated themselves and seem ready to embrace it. Social media has helped bring a nuanced message to a large audience.' She hopes that the festival, if successful, will move around the country in the future.

The program will be announced in June at feministwritersfestival.com

GENDER EQUALITY

From Sally Hasler, who works for the Fred Hollows Foundation, and attended the Steinem event. *"Over the past decade, the case for gender equality is increasingly framed by evidence, statistics, buzzwords, business cases- as if the fact that women having less opportunities than men is not enough, in and of itself. Do we really need any other reasons?"*

We sometimes forget the human side, the very basic notion that everyone on this planet deserves an equal shot at living a happy and safe life, with equal opportunities to succeed. We sometimes don't harness the fiery sense of justice from the suffragettes and the 70s feminist movement for fear of being labeled or offending the status quo or not being 'nice.'

LAUNCH OF "LESBIANS IGNITE"

The launch on 30 April of the third book of the Archives Trilogy, *Lesbians Ignite! In Victoria in the 1990s*, was a great success. Launched by musician and singer Lou Bennett, with a performance by nine members of the Performing Older Women's Circus, and with readings and great food, the afternoon was enjoyed by all. Thanks to Jean Taylor for the report back.

HUMANITY UNDER FIRE

By Anne Sgro

There is an exhibition at the Shrine of Remembrance of some of the marvelous work of Will Dyson, marking the centenary of his becoming official WW1 artist. He utterly detested war: *'I'll never draw a line to show war except as the filthy business it is.'* he told Charles Bean, official war correspondent and historian. Dyson drew endurance and resilience, grit and grief – there is no glorification of war in his work. The exhibition is well worth seeing, and will remain on show for the remainder of the year.

It is many years since I had visited the Shrine, and it had changed hugely – not surprising, given that \$42 Million were spent in the last few years. There were many visitors, particularly school students, and it did make me think again of how quickly our governments forget the ghastly lessons of war, add a touch of glorification in the remembrance, and start all over again.

An article in the Sunday Age (1.5.16) by Paul Ronalds, CEO of Save the Children Australia really brought this home. Australia *'will spend close to \$1 trillion on defence over the next 20 years, including a large chunk of the \$50 billion Prime Minister Turnbull recently committed to building 12 submarines.'* It is a sum that goes beyond comprehension and there is a bipartisan commitment to lifting defence expenditure to 2 percent of the GDP. More productive ways to spend this money are not hard to find. How many hospitals and schools could be built, how much affordable housing, just for starters? But in terms of strengthening global and Australian security, of maintaining peacekeeping missions, of helping prevent disasters – what could those funds build? While boosting the war machine, Australia is simultaneously slashing our foreign aid. *'Today we invest around 22c out of every \$100 in the budget tackling global poverty. This lack of investment means we are less capable of overcoming the poverty and injustice that is fuelling conflict and extremism. This is the very same conflict and extremism we spend so much money – and lives – to combat militarily.'* Australia's annual aid budget is roughly equivalent to the cost of building one submarine.

While our aid budget has been savagely cut by Abbott and now Turnbull, other countries are increasing their commitment. At a recent funding conference hosted by David Cameron, Australia contributed \$25 million towards the Syria relief effort – by comparison, the UK contributed \$1.75 billion in new aid between now and 2020. Germany gave \$3.6 billion. China is also increasing its overseas aid, and obviously earning influence in neighbouring countries. It doesn't make sense unless Australia is just not interested in stability, eliminating poverty, supporting health and education in poorer nations. Actually, in another way, it makes perfect sense, because the Coalition is not interested in these issues within Australia.

Labor has pledged to reverse the Coalition's latest \$224 million cut to foreign aid but is not promising to restore the billions slashed under Abbott. It would keep projects that deliver maternal and child health, schooling, clean water and sanitation. *Labor has also promised an extra \$450 million over three years to support the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and an extra \$40 million a year to help Australian NGOs deliver frontline services.*(Sunday Age 22.5.16).

The military industrial complex is alive and well. The rest of humanity? The title of the Will Dyson exhibition sums up the situation in Australia really well, whether we are thinking domestic or foreign policies – **Humanity Under Fire.**

It can be exhausting and creating of despair, but in the awfulness of this extended election campaign, we have to be on the side of humanity.

VALE GWEN GOEDECKE

Gwen, a longtime member of the UAW, recently passed away at 94 years. She was a tireless activist and feminist all her life. She was a founding member of the Sunshine International Women's Committee, a founding member of the Footscray Centre for Working Women, and a councilor on the Sunshine City Council, among other things. She was a strong supporter of the Queen Victoria Women's Centre. She represented the UAW at the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference, and was a member of the Organising Committee for some years. She was of the generation of women who refuse to give up.

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