

Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

Newsletter

WHAT'S ON –OCTOBER 2016

Wednesday 12 October
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Organising Committee
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Thursday 13 October
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Saturday 15 October
2.00

UAW Southern Branch meeting
Mordialloc Neighbourhood House
Main St Mordialloc
Amy: 9547 6167; Mairi: 0403 900 585

Wednesday 26 October
12 noon

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

NOVEMBER

Plan ahead. Note these dates in your diary now.

Wednesday 16 November

Archibald Prize exhibition
Ballarat Art Gallery \$15/\$13
Meet Southern Cross waiting room
for 10.17 train (arrives 11.44). Return 15.52
(arrives 17.13). Gallery 250 metres from station.

Tuesday 22 November
10.30 – 12.30

UAW AGM
Ross House.
Details November Newsletter

(Nomination Form with this Newsletter- forms are due back to Secretary
November 8)

“WE’RE AT A CRITICAL POINT IN VICTORIA AT THE MOMENT”**Report of end- of-life choices meeting****Anne Sgro**

So stated Lesley Vick, President of Dying With Dignity Victoria at our recent Coffee with a Focus. She explained that DWDV advocates and agitates for law reform in this area. Vice-President, Dr Rodney Syme, has publicly stated that he has assisted patients to die at a time of their choosing, and has had no charges laid against him – rather making a mockery of the current law. It also reinforces the need for transparency without which there is indeed greater possibility of criminality.

There have been 20 attempts to pass legislation in Australia.

South Australia: a Bill is pending

Tasmania: a Bill also coming up soon.

Western Australia: there are moves.

Northern Territory: 1996 Marshall Perron brought in legislation that was overturned by the Federal Government courtesy of Kevin Andrews, supported by the ALP’s Tony Burke.

While Greens leader Richard Di Natale has spoken about their policy, realistically, action will be taken in the states.

Globally, the momentum for assisted dying is very strong: there are laws in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Switzerland (because of a loophole in the law), and big growth in North America – the US and Canada. Legislation was passed in Oregon in 1998, and in California a few months ago. **1 in 6 Americans can access assisted dying.** In Canada, February 2015, the Supreme Court laid down desirable guidelines. While Trudeau introduced legislation that fell short of those guidelines, the discussion is continuing, helped by the fact that a charter of human rights is part of the Canadian Constitution. In Australia, 80% of the population supports assisted dying. While church leaders speak out against it, churchgoers support it.

In Victoria a Legal and Social Issues Committee was established to investigate the issues and make recommendations. Their report was tabled in Parliament in June 2016. The government must respond by December. 1,000 submissions were received, and research was thorough. The bi-partisan report recommended assisted dying be available to adults suffering from a serious or incurable condition at the end of their life, and which is ‘causing enduring and unbearable suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner the patient deems tolerable.’ Lesley pointed out, however, that long-term illnesses and diseases, such as Multiple Sclerosis and Motor Neuron Disease, were not included, and DWDV will continue to advocate for their inclusion. There were 8 members of the committee; 6 supported assisted dying. Cesar Melham changed his mind after seeing the evidence and the need. The committee’s safeguards are adequate and bolstered by overseas experience. Lesley stated that once people know that they have control, they relax, and often don’t use Nembutal.

The Health Minister, Jill Hennessey, has conducted a broad-ranging review of the Health Act, and is looking at palliative care and Advanced Care Directives. She has established an End-of-life and Palliative Care Framework, and has allocated resources. DWDV has been part of the process. But the framework doesn’t currently include assisted dying, which should be the logical end of a pathway that includes the above. Jill Hennessey has personally indicated her support for allowing terminally ill people to decide the manner and timing of their death, as has more than half the cabinet, and many members of the opposition. Now is the time for politicians to hear from the electorate. Arrange a meeting with your MP; DWDV has a kit that can help focus discussion. Personal stories are important – they are what has already changed the minds of many MPs. Remember that we employ the politicians, they need to hear from us.

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The Age newspaper has given a lot of space to the issue, and has editorialized in support. Lesley was a terrific speaker – knowledgeable, clear and forthright.

Question time enabled interesting discussion.

DWDV insists on the focus being on patient **directed** care, **not** patient **focused** care. Intolerable suffering should be determined by the patient, not by doctors. She advised that a Medical Power of Attorney has power, but an Advanced Care Directive is essential, so that our wishes are clearly stated and with legislation, will have statutory recognition.

Could a patient sue for torture if denied assisted dying? Not the way to go – it would be expensive and take a long time.

The question of the cost of Nembutal was raised – currently, it can be available over the internet, but costs \$700, putting it out of the reach of many. A quirky side-note was that European suppliers won't send Nembutal to America because they won't supply countries that have the death penalty.

Nationally, Andrew Denton has been invaluable, and DWDV works closely with him. After his father's death, he went overseas to do research, and has set up "Go Gentle Australia."

But we need to focus on Victoria. Prospects for success couldn't be better, in Lesley's opinion. But if we don't succeed in having assisted dying incorporated into end-of-life choices now, it will be put off for a very long time.

So we have until December to get in touch with our political representatives to let them know that this is important to us. **The UAW has written to Health Minister Jill Hennessey, thanking her for her stand, and encouraging her support.**

THE RESURGENCE OF RACISM AND ZENOPHOBIA

Anne Sgro

People were allegedly shocked at the high level of mistrust of Muslims in a recent survey that showed half of all Australians supported a ban on Muslim immigration. I'd like to know more about the questions asked and who was asked them, but it should really come as no shock given the politics of fear that have been fostered by both major parties over the last many years. John Howard acted on much of what Pauline Hanson spouted the first time she was elected, and the display of support after her recent maiden speech was telling – a warm hug from a senior minister, no less. We have been living in an environment that has fostered racism and bigotry since the Howard years, whether it has been deciding '*who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come*' to the so-called '*black armband*' view of history. Further research by Deakin University has confirmed that Islamophobia is alive and well in Australia, based on fear over terrorism and ignorance about other cultures.

Australians have always hated the other – from our Indigenous people to most waves of immigrants: Irish orphan girls, Chinese, Italians and Greeks, Vietnamese, Muslims. As Annabel Crabbe writes (Sunday Age 18.9.16) it is '*a long and dark and deeply Australian tradition for dealing with immigrants.*' She recommends reading George Megalogenis' Australia's Second Chance.

Two recently published books detailing the long-term effects of racism are also well worth a read: Stan Grant –Talking About My Country, and Maxine Beneba Clarke – The Hate Race. They detail the unrelenting impact of racism endured by those with a black or brown skin. As Celeste Liddle writes: '*We live in a country which can mark a horse race with a day off yet doesn't see fit to celebrate the oldest continuing culture on the planet.*' (VWT/Sheilas

It is past time to stop demonising marginalized groups. We need to demand a sense of humanity and respect - from our leaders in particular – and we must continue to stand up against the hatred, bigotry and influence of the conservative Right

SOUTHERN BRANCH AUGUST REPORT

Mairi Neil

On Saturday, August 20th, a baker's dozen of Southern Branch members gathered at Mordialloc Neighbourhood House for soup and a movie. Not just any movie, but the Canadian documentary *Pink Ribbons, Inc.* released in 2012. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QPZfcYTUaA>). The film is based on the 2006 book *Pink Ribbons, Inc: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy* by Samantha King, associate professor of kinesiology and health studies at Queen's University

Due to the Federal Election, we hadn't met for a few months. The cheerful chatter in the room as we welcomed each other and settled around the table, proof we missed our get-togethers! We also missed Barb Barling, a Southern Branch stalwart who is recovering from open heart surgery and hope she gets well soon. It was lovely that Evelyn brought Betty who has recently had to go into a nursing home. Their caring relationship reminiscent of the friendship of Barb and Dot. The UAW practises what it preaches when it comes to supporting those in need. Sisterhood powerful! There were a couple of new women and the welcoming atmosphere, lively discussions, and delicious lunch, good incentives for them to return.

The lunch was ideal for a day when mercurial Melbourne decided to give a final blast of wintry weather. My sweet potato and lentil soup and Lucy's delicious vegetable soup went down a treat with sour dough and garlic bread. Amy raided her freezer for home-baked spinach pies, brownies and the ubiquitous cream sponge — no one went home hungry.

Perhaps it was the heater at full blast or dare I say because we were all of a certain age but once the lights dimmed and the film progressed, Amy noticed a few eyes drooping despite the riveting subject matter. The documentary is 98 minutes long and so we decided to have our lunch 50 minutes into the show. Unfortunately, we never watched the last part because lunch and the discussion generated took up the rest of our time.

However, the point of the session noted and absorbed! *Pink Ribbons, Inc.* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pink_Ribbons,_Inc.) is a 2011 National Film Board of Canada documentary about the pink ribbon campaign, directed by Léa Pool and produced by Ravida Din. It is confronting, and although filmed in North America much of the point of the documentary is relevant to here. 59,000 women in USA die yearly from breast cancer but the industry of the Pink Ribbon isn't really about cancer. It's about self-promotion, capitalism and what the film refers to as pink-washing.

The pharmaceutical industry has always milked medical causes but with breast cancer, publications and cosmetics jumped aboard the gravy train and they stole a good idea and remade it as their own. Charlotte Haley began a grassroots effort to pressure the National Cancer Institute to make more funds available to breast cancer research and used a peach or salmon coloured ribbon. *Self* magazine and **Estée Lauder** approached Haley about using her idea for their own ribbon campaign, but when she wouldn't accept the commercialisation of her idea, the two companies joined forces, consulted a lawyer **and stole her idea simply by changing the colour of the ribbon to pink.**

The first known usage in connection with breast cancer was by the Susan G. Komen Foundation in 1991 according to the **Think Before you Pink** article, *Pretty in Pink*. While the Komen Foundation raises a great deal of money for breast cancer research, they have shown questionable judgment. In the documentary, the KFC campaign is mentioned, but more recently they had a public spat with Planned Parenthood.

"Breast cancer has become the poster child of corporate cause-related marketing campaigns. Countless women and men walk, bike, climb and shop for the cure. Each year, millions of dollars are raised in the name of breast cancer, but where does this money go and what does it actually achieve? Pink Ribbons, Inc. is a feature documentary that shows how the devastating reality of breast cancer, which marketing experts have labeled a "dream cause," becomes obfuscated by a shiny, pink story of success."

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SOUTHERN BRANCH AUGUST REPORT

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In the late 1980s and early 1990s, women marched in the streets over the lack of funding for breast cancer. Today, that movement has gone more commercial than Christmas. You can walk, run, party, eat and even vacuum in the name of breast cancer. Historical black and white film footage of early protests, candid footage at various current breast cancer events are intercut with an assortment of interviews. The interviewees include leaders recognised in North America such as Nancy G. Brinker, the founder and CEO of the Susan G. Komen Foundation, author Samantha King, Barbara Ehrenreich, Barbara Brenner and Dr. Olufunmilayo Olopade.

Ehrenreich, although best known for her 2001 book *Nicked and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*, an expose about her three-month experiment working minimum wage jobs (including a stint at a Wal-Mart), has a Ph.D. from Rockefeller University in cellular immunology. She's served in various capacities with organisations such as the U.S. National Women's Health Network and the National Abortion Rights Action League.

Barbara Brenner is a breast cancer activist who currently faces issues with ALS. She had been until 2010, the executive director of the organisation Breast Cancer Action. BCA is behind the **Think Before You Pink** campaign and persuaded General Mills to stop using milk produced by cows treated with a cancer-linked hormone. Dr. Olufunmilayo Olopade is a haematology oncologist at the University of Chicago Medicine and considered a leader in b/c research. **Have foundations sold out? Put money before full health considerations? Short answer is yes**

The documentary challenges the "tyranny of cheerfulness" pointing out that not everyone wants to be cheerful when faced with a life-threatening disease and that happy, smiling cancer survivor (the terminology of cancer patients is also discussed) facade seems to play into the stereotypical female role of cheerleader or selfless, silent, suffering martyr. The documentary intersperses the personal opinions and stories of a group of stage 4 breast cancer patients. (These interviews are confronting and heart-breaking.)

This intelligent documentary is a troubling exposé on how industry has taken a genuine concern and used it for profit. It may look specifically at the breast cancer fund-raising and awareness industry, but points raised can be used in evaluating other similar concerns, encouraging everyone to make a better choice on which groups to support and question where does money raised go? Do you need a pink pen etc? Why not give your \$2 direct to a research hospital! **Ask the vital questions:** Why isn't there a cure yet? Where does all the money go? What's up with the large corporations that support the cause - are they ethical, what links do they have to damage to the environment? Have we seriously addressed environmental issues?

The film documents how some companies use pink ribbon-related marketing to increase sales while contributing only a small fraction of proceeds to the cause, or use pinkwashing to improve their public image (like sports clubs with violent or anti-women culture going pink for a day) while manufacturing products that may be carcinogenic. For the millions that are raised for breast cancer research by the campaign not enough money goes to prevention or exploring possible environmental factors.

Entertaining, informative, and a must see, the doco will make you think of the commercialisation of social justice/charitable efforts or the marketing for mass consumption of said causes. In October, see beyond the sea of pink and start asking pertinent questions like why no cure considering more money is supposedly spent on research and awareness today than years ago and yet the number of breast cancer sufferers just keeps increasing!

From the producer, herself a breast cancer survivor, a great quote:

'How did we get to this kind of breast cancer culture that privileges shopping [as a solution] as opposed to getting angry and asking for change?'

Those present also signed a letter to the PM and Leader of the Opposition demanding improved policy on refugees and a closure of the camps. We hope for a huge turnout on Saturday at the rally/march in Melbourne.

WARN YOUNG WOMEN AT RISK -FASD IS A REAL PROBLEM IN AUSTRALIA Cath Morrison

FASD -Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder-is a hidden but increasingly serious problem for children and their families. Once considered primarily confined to indigenous communities- a racist myth which has been lately disproven- this preventable disorder can remain undiagnosed for years with a devastating effect on families and FASD children.

Unlike many other developmental disorders the cause of FASD is known and entirely preventable. FASD is seen only in children whose mother drank alcohol during the period of conception or during pregnancy or breastfeeding. It is not just binge or heavy drinking....there is no safe level of alcohol consumption in pregnancy according to NHMRC guidelines. Alcohol readily crosses the mother's placenta, entering the blood of the developing fetus. Alcohol can then disrupt brain development, causing lifelong problems such developmental delays, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD), communication disorders, poor impulse control, disobedience and hostility issues, and learning difficulties. Many FASD children end up as young adults in the criminal justice system. FASD has been called an "Invisible disability" as milder cases are so hard to diagnose in retrospect and are often put down to 'poor parenting' etc.

How prevalent is FASD ? Child Specialist Dr Doug Shelton, who runs one of the only FASD clinics in Australia on the Gold Coast, thinks up to one million Australians could be on the spectrum. His estimate is based on modelling from similar countries, because so little is known about FASD in Australia. Dr Sheldon hopes a new diagnostic tool, released in 2016 in Australia with Government funding, will change this.

Dr Sheldon said the myth needed to be busted that FASD is an Indigenous problem "The great burden of FASD in Australia lies firmly and squarely in the white middle class," he said. "What we need to do is make FASD as mainstream as type 2 diabetes. When all clinicians and GPs and nurses and everybody that works with people are as well informed about FASD...then we will have a real chance of a preventing FASD and optimising the life course of people who currently have FASD." (*ABC News, 28/07/2016*). Professor Penny Cook (University of Salford) estimates that at least 2% of UK children have the disorder ... only five countries had good estimates for the general populationof these Italy had a surprisingly high prevalence of 4.7%. (*Conversation, 13/1/2016*).

How to prevent FASD ? Women planning or hoping for pregnancy, pregnant or breastfeeding should totally avoid alcohol. Of course this is difficult for women when we live in a positive sea of alcohol in Australia, and even more difficult if women do not know they are pregnant, but the consequences are so alarming that it is worth avoiding alcoholic drinks if there are any plans for a pregnancy. FASD may be diagnosed at birth, but in many cases, the diagnosis occurs later, when the child is having problems with learning or behaviour. These problems need professional attention early in life which is why early diagnosis is important using this new diagnostic tool developed as an outcome of the Commonwealth Government's 5 Year FASD Action Plan launched in 2014. Early intervention improves outcomes for individuals with FASD. NOFASD is an organisation fighting to prevent FASD and increase awareness (www.nofasd.org.au).

These initiatives need our support and so do young women in our strong drinking culture who are contemplating pregnancy or who are pregnant.

Prevention through education campaigns is absolutely crucial at a national level but also at the individual level. Every woman of child-bearing age needs to know that the risk of FASD is not worth it for a couple of drinks. It's not being a wowsler or a wet blanket to talk about these alcohol related harms and we must be brave enough to do it!

UNION ACTIVISM. TWO DIFFERENT STORIES**Anne Sgro**

A terrific little exhibition has just finished at Docklands Library: **Wharfies support! Social justice activism from the Melbourne Docks.** It showed how the Waterside Workers Federation led the way on social justice, including support for the Indonesian independence movement, and anti-apartheid and Vietnam war protests, while at the same time campaigning for better working conditions for their own members. It was a history of activism through photographs, documents, film and text. I wanted more. It wasn't just a trip down memory lane, but I was so pleased to see those union leaders and activists, and to remember those campaigns.

And I wondered how they would have reacted to the conniving and manipulation of the leaders of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association and their deals with the big supermarkets and take-away giants that enabled the latter to put *'millions of dollars every year...into the pockets of corporate giants rather than low-wage workers.'*(Duncan Hart, Sunday Age 18.9.16).* The SDA and employers bargained for an agreement that undermined penalty rates and night work in exchange for a higher base rate, leaving the workers worse off than under the award. Duncan continues: *'The last 20 and more years have been years of betrayal for retail workers in this country.'* The UAW wrote a letter of concern to the President of the ACTU, as did member Morag Loh – July Newsletter. Dave Oliver's response to Morag doesn't inspire confidence.

But a major concern for me is the disproportionate influence that the SDA has in the ALP in terms of policy. My local MP, for example, is Lizzie Blandthorn, whose office has clearly indicated that she is too busy into the foreseeable future to meet with constituents to hear our points of view about end-of-life choices. To me that refusal smacks of arrogance and disrespect, to say the least, and is a clear indication of the social conservatism of the 'Shoppies'. A co-Grandmother at my weekly vigil to free refugee children also pointed to that same influence in Julia Gillard's insistence at the time that marriage was between a man and a woman. We could well have had marriage equality by now if she had not caved in.

So, a tale of two unions, and the influence that they have exerted for humanity on the one hand and self interested social conservatism on the other.

**Duncan Hart is a member of the SDA who took the issue to the Fairwork Commission*

ASYLUM SEEKERS: WHEN WILL THE CRUELTY END?**Anne Sgro**

One wonders how long the calculated cruelty will endure. Visitors to Melbourne's detention centre may no longer bring musical instruments in the form of ukuleles to cheer and engage with the detainees; nor can they bring a gift – that must first be requested by a detainee. A young Iranian artist, formerly on Manus and injured there, has been whisked off in the night to detention on Christmas Island – no reason given, but obviously an attempt to further break him. Who makes these decisions? Has the Department of Immigration and Border Control become a total law unto itself?

Malcolm Turnbull lectures the world in the face of damning and continuing reports about the devastating harm being done to asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru. It has cost us \$9.6 billion dollars since 2013 to keep people incarcerated in detention centres. According to the Age's Peter Martin (15.9.16) it breaks down to \$573,100 a year, or \$1,570 a day for each asylum seeker. Add to that the cost of dealing with self-harm, suicide attempts and mental deterioration, especially among children. These are people who could be contributing constructively to our economy, to say nothing of adding richness to our multicultural society. It is madness financially and inexcusable in terms of humanity and decency. Grandmothers have sent an open letter; organisations and churches, as well as individuals continue to raise their voices. Let's hope that we can prevail in the midst of government fearmongering, bigotry and indifference.

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