

Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

Newsletter

WHAT'S ON- JUNE 2017

**Thursday 8 June
1.00 – 3.00**

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

**Wednesday 14 June
10.30 – 12.30**

**UAW Organising Committee
3rd floor meeting room, 3.2 Ross House**

Thursday 15 June

Elder Abuse Awareness Day: United Nations

**Saturday 17 June
1.00pm**

**Women's March to Ban the Bomb
Day of Action. Women led, but inclusive of all.
State Library, Cnr Swanston & La Trobe Sts.**

Endorsed by UAW icanw.org/day-of-action

Women's International League of Peace and Freedom is leading a Women's March on Saturday 17 in New York. WILPF has invited civil society worldwide to respond and organise solidarity actions on the same day. Australia voted against the UN resolution to begin negotiations in 2017 on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. See February Newsletter

**18 – 24 June
Tuesday 20 June
6.00pm**

**World Refugee Week
WORLD REFUGEE DAY ACTION
State Library, Cnr Swanston and LaTrobe Sts
There are still 160 refugee children on Nauru
Protest Dutton's latest cruelties**

**Wednesday 21 June
12 noon**

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

INDIGENOUS CHILDREN: STILL BEING REMOVED

By Anne Sgro

It is 50 years since the 1967 referendum that amended the Constitution to include Aboriginal Australians in determinations of population and empowered the Federal Parliament to legislate specifically for this group; 25 years since the High Court's Mabo land rights decision; 20 years since the **Bringing Them Home** report on the forced removal of Aboriginal children, and almost 10 years since Kevin Rudd's apology to Indigenous people and his pledge that it would not happen again. During Reconciliation Week there were moving documentaries on the NITV channel, and the latest Big Issue focused on a woman who, with her 7 siblings, was taken from her parents and sent to Cootamundra Girls' Home at age 4 – she never saw her parents again. A common, tragic reality.

Today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 10 times more likely to be removed from their families as non-Indigenous children. While comprising just 4.6% of the nation's child population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children represent 34% of all children in out-of-home care. These are shocking statistics. It was this kind of horror that was discussed by Indigenous leaders at Uluru, where they formed a proposal for a voice. Another story.

A panel discussion at the Wheeler Centre coincided with the beginning of Reconciliation Week activities, and the beginning of the Indigenous constitution convention at Uluru. Muriel Bamblett, Andrew Jackamoss (inaugural commissioner for A & TSI children in Victoria) and Natalie Lewis from Queensland were the panelists and spoke about the Family Matters Campaign that was established by SNAICC, the national voice for the children, with the aim: Kids Safe in Culture, Not in Care - an initiative that aims to break the traumatic cycle of child removal and halve the number of children in out-of-home care by 2018.

Why are children being removed at such a high rate? Why are they often placed with non-Indigenous families? We are dealing with huge disadvantage: many people came off missions and reserves, or had been removed, so had few parenting skills; family violence; drug and alcohol issues. Many of the Aboriginal child care agencies that were established by the Whitlam government no longer exist. There is discrimination within the system and many workers are not familiar with Aboriginal culture and history. Out-of-home care children experience greater homelessness and dysfunction.

Culture and education are critical as they provide a structure for children. Most of the deaths in custody were of children who had been removed from family. All agreed that children must know who they are and where they come from. How to balance this right with the need for safety? It was agreed that safety is paramount but that children also have a right to cultural community. A cultural disconnect means that they don't fit in with anyone. Natalie Lewis pointed out that this situation also occurs in Canada and elsewhere but other countries have a treaty with their Indigenous population. Children are often raised in institutions, experience poverty and have few if any role models.

It was agreed that early intervention is needed, before children are removed – not enough is invested here. In Victoria, 91% of children are placed outside of community. Yet in Victoria, Indigenous people enjoy many rights. In Victoria, says Muriel Bamblett, there are conversations around treaty, culture planning, etc but this is not standard around the country. Northern Territory paints the worst picture with children ending up in terrible situations. A national standard is needed, involvement of and trust in Indigenous people is required, family is often side-lined when decisions are made, and there needs to be training. In Victoria, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency runs programs for carers but in Queensland there is virtually no support.

The figures are shocking and auger badly for the future. We are, perhaps, reaping what was sown in the past, A great deal of support, collaboration with Indigenous people and a change of system are needed. And more information: www.familymatters.org.au

THERE ARE GOOD 'FEMINIST' BOOKS ABOUT GIRLS-IT IS JUST HARD TO FIND THEM: by Cath Morrison

Members who attended the UAW IWD Meeting in March this year will recall Claire Saxby spoke about her book "My Name is Lizzie Flynn" and her work in bringing to life the hidden voices of the young women who made the Rajah Quilt on board the convict ship bringing them to Australia. Some at that meeting remarked on the dearth of strong female role models in books for children, particularly picture books and the low levels of promotion these books receive.

As a former librarian I found this an interesting topic and then recent articles in the Guardian (Emine Sana, 18/3) and The Conversation (Sarah Kanake, May 19, 2017) popped up which further stimulated my interest. Both articles provided information on a very popular new book (Good Night stories for Rebel Girls) and some good resources for mothers and grandmothers looking to get suitable books to inspire their daughters/granddaughters not to be pink princesses but queens!

According to the Guardian article, Janice McCabe, associate professor of sociology at Dartmouth College, published a large study into children's books in 2011. She looked at more than 5,600 books published in the US throughout the 20th century, and found a huge gender imbalance. *"Male characters were central in 57% of children's books, while only 31% had female central characters. And males featured in the titles of 36.5% of books each year, but only 17.5% of titles referred to a female character. All this, she says, "contributes to a sense of unimportance among girls and a sense of privilege among boys"* Another study of 5,000 children's books found that a quarter had no female characters, and less than 20% featured a woman with a job. But a new wave of books and writers is helping to fix that disparity.

There has been much publicity about a relatively new book "Good Night stories for Rebel Girls" which was a best seller on Amazon. The authors, Francesca Cavallo and Elena Favilli, crowdfunded the publication of the book; initially aiming to raise \$40,000 USD and ended up raising more than \$1m, with the book becoming the most highly funded original book in the history of crowdfunding. **The authors say that they wrote it in response to the perceived lack of inspiring books for girls.** *"There aren't any pretty pink princesses in this book, but queens are represented. We read about Nefertiti, Hatshepsut, Yaa Asaantewaa, and Elizabeth I. Inventors, Olympians, activists, artists, spies, surgeons, scientists. There are women you would expect to see: Frida Khalo, Jane Goodall, Maya Angelou, and Rosa Parks"* (Sarah Kanake).

It sounds like a wonderful book yet it is not such a lone voice as I might have expected. The publicity for the book refers to an almost empty bookshelf containing a few books with girl role models which the authors used to illustrate the need for their book and others like it. Kate Wilson, of the children's publishing house Nosy Crow, says: *"I could have assembled a different bookshelf for that child, filled with brilliant books. Any bookseller or librarian worth their salt could put together a different bookshelf... Libraries and bookshops have an incredibly important part to play in that, because we have incredibly knowledgeable people who can guide you towards things. But there's no lack of great books with girls as central characters."*

Two good resources for good books for girls are available online:

A Mighty Girl (<http://www.amightygirl.com>) with over 3000 books in which girls are the protagonists and **Letterbox Library** (www.letterboxlibrary.com) - a not for profit enterprise- reveal many available titles in children's fiction which offer strong female role models for young girl readers.

Some recommendations from the Guardian, Sarah Kanake of The Conversation, and from the above websites for books with strong female central characters are as follows:

- **Picture books**

Wild by Emily Hughes, featuring a green-haired, huge-eyed, untameable heroine.

Interstellar Cinderella by Deborah Underwood and Meg Hunt: Cinders saves the prince with her mechanical aptitude.

Get out of my Bath: (a female elephant is the protagonist): Britta Teckentrip

Don't Wake up Tiger: (a female tiger) also by Britta Teckentrip

Australia doesn't have the same number of overt feminist picture books as, say, the US but that doesn't mean we don't have empowering books for girls, about girl characters. Sarah Kanake, who was a bookseller for 20 years, refers to these **Australian picture books:**

The Patchwork Bike by Maxine Beneba Clarke is about a girl and her friends building a bike from scratch.

Molly and Mae (2016) by Freya Blackwood and Danny Parker. This is a story about two very different little girls who meet, become friends, and quarrel, during a long train ride.

Aaron Blabey's **Sunday Chutney** is a favourite of Kanake's.

- **Books for ages five to eight or thereabouts:**

Kate Pankhurst (descended from Emmeline Pankhurst): **The Mariella Mystery Investigates** series- there are quite a few titles in this series

Nelly and the Quest for Captain Peabody by Roland Chambers, A bold, resourceful girl sets out with her pet turtle to find her father.

Adrian Edmonson: **Tilly and the Time Machine**

Attack of the Demon Dinner Ladies by Pamela Butchart, which has a wealth of female main characters and she has written others in similar series.

- **For older girls:**

The **Mystery of the Clockwork Sparrow** by Katherine Woodfine, a historical crime novel in which two girls solve a crime;

Rooftoppers by Katherine Rundell

The Wolf Wilder by Katherine Rundell,

The Secret of Nightingale Wood by Lucy Strange:

Kate Pankhurst **Rad Women Worldwide.**

Women in Science – 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World by Rachel Ignotofsky:

Kate Pankhurst: **Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World**

Kanake also refers to the growing number of books about female scientists: *Leading the charge here are Rosie Revere Engineer (2013) and Ada Twist, Scientist (2016) by Andrea Beaty (illustrated by David Roberts). Another notable book in this category is [The Magnificent Thing](#) (2014) by Ashley Spires. These books don't argue that girls should be inventors and scientists: they suppose they already are.*

These are just a few of many interesting titles mentioned in the two articles I have drawn upon.

Ask your local library if they have these books, if not, can they buy them, and will they promote them in displays?

IMPACT OF THE 2017 FEDERAL BUDGET ON WOMENby **Carmen Green**

Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) held a members' meeting in Melbourne in May. Attending were women representing about 50 women's groups with delegates coming from around Australia. Papers were presented on a wide variety of issues of importance to women. I attended on behalf of the UAW. Several speakers gave reports on the recent Federal budget.

The first presentation was from Marie Coleman, the Chair of the National Foundation of Australian Women (NFAW), on her widely circulated document "Gender Lens on the Budget". Ms Coleman gave a summary of the report which is 100 pages long with a large number of contributing authors –all volunteers. Marie said that while there had been a lot of well-intentioned commentary on the budget there was no real critique of the budget from a women's perspective. So what "Gender Lens on the Budget" does is provide this crucial critique.

A gendered lens on the Federal budget has been missing from the government's documents since 2014. Since publication ceased, NFAW has produced a budget gender lens analysing the impact of the budget on women. It was clear to the authors of this 2017 report that there was no effective gender aware analysis in the formation of this budget. The authors called on the Prime Minister to again introduce gender aware budgeting to increase the transparency of the budget process.

It is worth noting that the 2014 budget was also the first in more than a decade not to include a table of cameos detailing the dollar impact of budget policies on different household budgets. The PM should also be pressured to bring back these budget "cameos" so that we can gain a real understanding of the impact of the Federal budget on Australians from the poorest to the richest.

Some measures in the budget were beneficial to women – e.g. state sponsored pre-schools extended for a few more years. Child Care –there is a new formula which has caused concern from larger not for profit providers in relation to the activity test which in their view would exclude disadvantaged children most in need of childcare. However child care does receive a substantial increase in funding. Zombie measures were dropped from this budget so paid parental leave is safe.

Some measures were not beneficial for women e.g. freezing of family tax benefits for 2 years, proposed change to Medicare Levy – no treasury modelling on the combined impact of these two measures. University Graduates will start repaying loans when they receive an income of \$42,000 p.a. These changes hit those earning well below the average wage and are particularly harsh for women. For Single Mothers there is a proposed adoption of "identification" of single parents that is especially demeaning for these already struggling women. The proposed drug tests on the unemployed continue the demonising of other vulnerable Australians. Are these tests even legal? –the government doesn't know! No evidence anywhere that drug testing in this way produces any behavioural improvement so this measure is unlikely to get through the Senate. However other budget measures aimed at the unemployed - harsh compliance measures and expanded income management- might. The Newstart Payment should instead be increased but this is unlikely in these mean spirited times.

Hannah Gissane (ERA) gave a summary of Housing Initiatives in the budget which she said were a mixed bag:

- Recognition of the federal government's role in housing affordability was a positive
- Continuing housing need e.g. affordable housing, homelessness etc. –measures for each – some problematic.

- Bond Aggregator (raises money at lower rates for not for profit community housing) is supported but for it to work it needs huge scale up in community housing and an increase in Commonwealth rent assistance -60% of which goes to women- yet no increase here despite
- income support being so critical – essential that it be indexed in relation to actual rent increases without which there will continue to be huge housing distress.
- National Housing & homelessness Agreement is welcomed.
- Tax reform (negative gearing gets a haircut) no impact on housing –gender equity here too as mainly men benefit from negative gearing.
- Young people have huge difficulty in acquiring housing either for rental or purchase as do many older women existing on welfare or part time/casual work –public housing essential for all these people yet there are concerns about future federal government funding.

Other comments on the budget:

Australia's aid budget is now at the lowest point ever yet defence is at the highest point in two decades. We have never been so missing as a good global citizen –close the borders, treatment of refugees, voting at the UN against the resolution to prohibit nuclear weapons. A coalition of aid agencies is working to increase aid but campaign needs a broader voice.

NFAW is aware of only one poll that examines women's reactions to the Budget: ***Mamamia's Australian Women React: Federal Budget 2017 (11 May 2017)*** reported that over 60% of women were disappointed that equal pay, aged care and domestic violence did not receive coverage. The chronic underfunding of domestic violence was considered to put women's lives at risk. The increasing numbers of single older women, who overwhelmingly work in low income jobs, were seen to be in desperate need of affordable housing.

NFAW believes that a comprehensive gender analysis by Government would have made explicit the challenges Australian women face. Among those key challenges are:

- Women and girls' experience of poverty, violence and harassment.
- Labour market challenges: the gender wage gap, women's concentration in a narrow range of lower paid occupations, women's relatively low participation in the workforce compared to the best performing OECD countries.
- Balancing work and family responsibilities: Australia has one of the highest rates of part time work for women, in part because of the contribution of women to the unpaid care sector

Federal Government Budgets are one of the most important ways of tackling Australia's rising inequality so we need as much informed information as possible if we are to voice our concerns about budget measures that increase inequality particularly for women. Marie Coleman's "Gender Lens on the Budget" provides that crucial informed critique.

NFAW's Gender lens on the budget can be found at: <http://www.nfaw.org/gender-lens-on-the-budget/>

REFORM NEEDED ON HOW AUSTRALIA GOES TO WAR

By Anne Sgro

Defence Minister Marise Payne has just announced, at the request of NATO, an increase of 30 trainers for Afghanistan, taking Australian military personnel to 300. What is our end goal? Afghanistan is in dire need of humanitarian assistance; no new hospitals have been built; the country is again a huge producer of opium.

In March 2003 John Howard enthusiastically agreed to Australia becoming a member of the 'Coalition of the Willing', invading Iraq against the wishes of the Australian people. The consequences were disastrous, for the Iraqi people, for the Middle East generally, and right now for Syria. Prime Minister Abbott in 2014 made decisions for renewed military deployment in Iraq and the bombing of Syria. Both sides are now deliberately targeting hospitals.

In none of these cases was there a clear purpose or time limit, and very little prospect of success – however that may be seen. Most of Australia's involvement in wars has been at the behest of Empire and later the US. What are we doing? War is a terrible thing, with long-lasting consequences for all concerned, including returned soldiers.

Parliament needs to be involved in any decision to go to war. At present, the Prime Minister and Cabinet can make that decision. Government and Opposition should agree that war is necessary, and should reflect a situation where action is the last resort, is authorised by the UN Security Council or our own country is under threat. In the UK, then Prime Minister David Cameron was anxious to become involved with the US in Syria – the House of Commons defeated that proposal.

Australians for War Powers Reform (AWPR) is campaigning for a renewed national examination of Australia's war powers. It "calls upon all members of the Federal Parliament to take responsibility for deciding any proposal to send Australian Defence Forces into war in a foreign country – the reasons, the strategy, the humanitarian impacts and how they will be managed, the legality, the end point and the financial costs." (www.warpowersreform.org.au)

There is a great enthusiasm for war. There is the promotion of the ANZAC myth of the Aussie digger; a huge amount of money has been spent on war memorials in recent years; defence spending increases; even PM Turnbull's first meeting with President Donald Trump was aboard an aircraft carrier. The US economy depends on involvement of war. The President has trumpeted an arms deal worth over \$110 billion dollars with Saudi Arabia, supposedly as a renewed commitment to security in the Persian Gulf. Dr Jenny Grounds, Medical Association for the Prevention of War, states that the US spends six times more on defence than on education. We don't want to follow down that path, though we are being urged to do so. We need to respect international law; preventing crises should be a priority; engagement with the UN is needed; and our leaders should be seeking a national peace and security strategy.

The UAW will be writing to various politicians on the issue of who decides when and where we go to war.

NO SUPPORT FOR ADANI COALMINE

As part of a campaign by the Australian Conservation Foundation, the UAW recently telephoned the office of Environment and Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg, urging no support for Adani. I was asked by his office to also send an email, which I did. The many calls and emails had an impact. **Give it a go.** Call your Coalition MP, telling them why the mine is bad news. If your representative is not Liberal or National, contact the Minister's office: 02 6277 7920 or email josh.frydenberg@environment.gov.au A phone call is easy. We can all manage that. Take your pick – Peter Dutton, PM Turnbull...It's time we upped the ante, and this is a good form of letting politicians know what is important to us.

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