

# Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

## Newsletter

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### WHAT'S ON-MARCH 2017

#### HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 8 MARCH!

These are difficult political times, but we still have a lot to celebrate.

Wednesday 8 March  
10.30 – 12.30

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

Thursday 9 March  
1.00 – 3.00

UAW Book Group  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room Ross House

Thursday 9 March  
6.00 – 8.00pm

Molly Hadfield Social Justice Oration  
Preston Shire Hall, 286 Gower St Preston  
Speaker: Clementine Ford  
Bookings: use Google to find eventbrite

Wednesday 15 March  
8.00pm

Coburg Historical Society celebrates IWD  
Speaker: Dr Madonna Grehan  
'Female maternity attendants and their work  
in colonial Victoria 1850-1900  
Coburg Library meeting room

18-26 March  
21 March

Cultural Diversity Week  
Harmony Day

Celebrate International Women's Day with the UAW  
Wednesday 22 March, 10.30 – 12.30

Speaker: Claire Saxby  
Author of *My Name is Lizzie Flynn: A Story of the Rajah Quilt*  
*History, Gender and the Power of Stories*

4<sup>th</sup> floor Ross House  
247 Flinders Lane Melbourne \$5  
RSVP 9654 7409; [office@uaw.org.au](mailto:office@uaw.org.au)  
See Page 6 for more information on our speaker

## **TIME FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE: YOUR RESPONSE.**

Anne Sgro

I am pleased that a number of members responded to the article in last month's Newsletter.

**Gina Boyanton.** "...I was really heartened and inspired by (Anne's) article in the newsletter 'Is it time for some civil disobedience?' and wanted to say to her YES IT IS! I don't have any new suggestions but all the ones mentioned in Anne's article sound good to me."

**Heather O'Connor.** "Please pass on to Anne my total endorsement of her sentiments about direct action – and thanks for voicing just what I have been thinking - ...Living in a regional area (as dare I say it – in NSW) only adds to the isolation and the frustration of having so little contact with what other women are feeling about the appalling policies of our government. Phone calls to Ministers' offices don't seem to make much difference – though I continue to believe we should all do it. I am heartened by Anne Summers' article in the SMH (Saturday 4 Feb) telling us of the American women knitting millions of pink pussy hats as a sign of solidarity. Well worth a thought. Anyway, yet again Anne, thanks for your leadership and for your never-ending commitment – an inspiration to us all – and I will distribute the article to my friends up here. In sisterhood and solidarity."

**Rosalind Byass.** "In response to Anne Sgro's call for civil disobedience. I am keen to get into effective campaigning. My problem is I have a genetic predisposition to action countered by my Mother's methodical indoctrination 'not to go asking for trouble Rosalind, because you will make it soon enough.'" I found the aftermath of arrest at Jabiluka (along with Alvie Booth and Amanda Wilson) tedious, disconcerting and expensive. The reaction of friends and relatives just that 'reactionary'.

I have decided to have one last go at working within middle class acceptance norms. When I was in Canberra with the Grandmothers' action I wore an apron with "we did ask nicely" on it. I was presuming to be in a scuffle at some stage, however the influence of the group kept me in order.

Now I want to be effective – not simply out for media exposure.

What is the Achilles Heel for Dutton and Trump?

I am going to ask my Federal MP Andrew Broad to arrange a meeting for me with Peter Dutton. Presumably it is hopeless but what else is there to lose.

We have to win because we are right.

Best regards.

**Yvonne Adami.** "I read your UAW Newsletter article with interest.

Since March 2014, a group of concerned citizens from the Geelong region has held weekly vigils outside the Electorate Offices of Sarah Henderson, Member for Corangamite and Richard Marles, Member for Corio. The vigils condemn the demonizing and vilification of refugees by the Australian Government and by the Opposition and call on (them) to develop progressive, legal and compassionate policies. We call for the closure of offshore and onshore detention centres, and to permanently settle in Australia those deemed to be refugees under the Refugee Convention. In 2017 our Vigil group relocated to Malop Street in the CBD where we are experiencing a greater vehicle and pedestrian presence, interest, engagement and support from the public.

In the wake of the US President's appalling actions in relation to refugees, the Australian Government must take immediate action to offer safety to more people by increasing Australia's refugee intake to a minimum of 30,000.

How to get the message to the Government and to the Opposition? There are many excellent refugee advocacy groups across Victoria. Is it possible to join forces for regular demonstrations in Melbourne and in our regional cities? Here in Geelong the Vigil group is in touch with the Combined Refugee Action Group (CRAG), comprising Rural Australians for Refugees, Interfaith and Social Justice Groups.

You will know of many others in Melbourne, including the Grandmothers Group and Amnesty International. A regular demonstration in the national capital perhaps? A strategy to convince the media to report on the actions of advocacy groups?

We continue to write letters to MPs and to take other action, however I feel that a regular frequent public demonstration that attracts attention would hopefully influence both the community, the Government and Opposition.

You will recall the group of clergy who, in 2014 were charged and convicted of trespass at the office of Richard Marles, MP. The hearing in the Geelong Magistrate's Court attracted a large crowd and the presentation by each of the seven clergy was a demonstration in itself.

I'll keep thinking about it.

Thanks for the feedback. There are ideas for action in all those responses.

I have just read Clive Hamilton's new book: **What Do We Want? The story of protest in Australia**, which really documents protest from the time of the Vietnam War onwards, and includes Women's Emancipation, Gay Liberation, Indigenous Rights, Justice for all and Save the Environment. The photographs are terrific and it is well worth a read. He mentions how powerful the Moratorium marches were in ending support for that war, and contrasts them with the political reaction to Australia's involvement in Iraq, the case for which was also built on a lie – that of weapons of mass destruction. *"...600,000 Australians marched in protest against the looming Iraq war, dwarfing the 200,000 who had marched at the first Moratorium in 1970. But the Howard government was unmoved. After the huge marches there was no continuing campaign –no pickets, no strikes, no civil disobedience, no blockades of the US Embassy. The times had changed. Politicians were no longer afraid of large-scale demonstrations, nor outraged at the challenge to order...today's politicians may be more afraid of a small, noisy but highly influential group than 200,000 walking across Sydney Harbour Bridge."*

That is possibly true, but nonetheless, I think that demonstrations are an important part of protest. People have the chance to come together with likeminded members of the community, and we are visible. That is also the reason behind the vigils for justice for asylum seekers – we are out there, being seen, interacting with people:

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supporters, those who think Australia's policy is ok, and those who have never really thought about it.

So it has to be a combination of a number of actions. The recent online petition **Let Them Connect**, was successful in having the Federal Court grant an injunction to prevent the Department of Immigration and Border Control from confiscating mobile phones from detainees in detention centres. This was another calculated cruelty that would have prevented detainees from contacting family and support networks. And

while there will no doubt be appeals, thanks to the work of the Melbourne Advocates, and the action of a Blue Mountains refugee group, a spoke was put in Border Force's wheel at least for the time being.

I think that we need to form alliances with other organisations. That is starting to happen on a number of fronts e.g. the eighteen lobby groups ranging from the Business Council to the ACTU regarding the need for reform of the energy market. Will it work? Who knows. But there is a need for organisations to collaborate, whether it is to get out on the streets, support GetUp, or to encourage political personages to speak out. I really miss Sarah Hanson Young not being the spokesperson for the Greens on asylum seekers, and find it hard to forgive Richard Di Natale for removing her from the position in which she was so effective. What was that about?

Which brings us back to ourselves. What has the UAW been up to? We have made a donation to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre to assist in its work. In response to a recent call from the ASRC to telephone both the Government and Opposition, I phoned both their offices on behalf of our organisation. Normally I email, but found that it was a useful exercise to actually take the time to talk to someone and leave a message for the politician. Both calls were polite and pleasant.

Shorten's electorate officer replied that she had received many such calls; Turnbull's office gave little away, but assured me that the message would be passed on. I think that I might call regularly, both as UAW and myself. It is actually so easy and quite satisfying. It is something that we can all do. The response from the ASRC: "Thanks so much for taking the action...it is great to hear about all the good work that people are doing to change the way our country treats people seeking asylum," and expressed an interest in how the organisations can support each other "in advocating on these issues."

Malcolm Turnbull: Parliamentary Office: 02 6277 7700

Electorate Office: 9327 3988

Bill Shorten: Parliamentary Office: 02 6277 4022

Electorate Office: 03 9326 1300

The UAW has also made a recent donation to GetUp, to help them in their excellent campaigning. We are one of the many organisations supporting the Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees. Many thousands on the streets will demonstrate opposition to Australia's refugee cruelty – a recent poll is heartening, showing that increasing numbers of citizens are opposed to the indefinite detention of refugees on Manus and Nauru – just over 50% of those polled (see next article for details)

I heard Pete Seeger recently singing **We Shall Overcome**. I do confess that I have lost some of my optimism. I no longer believe “deep in my heart” that we shall overcome some day. But I do know that, like many others, I have a huge determination to not be silent, to use whatever means I can to have a voice and influence government policies, to value and speak out for humanity and the future of the planet. So until I can come up with a nifty piece of civil disobedience, I'll just keep on writing, telephoning and being there.

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**ATTITUDES ON REFUGEES ARE CHANGING: The Government is out of step with majority public opinion**

**Cath Morrison**

Many will have heard on Q and A last week that a special Morgan Poll on February 17, 2017 showed that Australians are now evenly divided as to whether asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru should be brought to Australia (50%) or not (50%).

The detail is even more interesting. Take out the over-50 age group and there is a clear majority in favour, although clear splits emerge along party and gender lines, with the Liberal voter the most clearly opposed, and men opposed much more than women

**The question was:** “Do you think asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru should be brought here to Australia or not?”

The results in summary are shown below:

**Voting Preference**

L-NP voters: Yes (23%)

ALP voters: Yes (68%)

Greens voters: Yes (93%)

Others/Independent/can't say- more opposed than support

**Analysis by Gender**

Women: Yes (58%)

Men: Yes (41%)

### **AIITITUDES ON REFUGEES: Continued**

#### **Analysis by Age**

All age groups except the over 50's had clear majority support.

#### **Analysis by State**

The more progressive states, Victoria and NSW had a majority in favour.

The Labor Party in particular should take some note of this poll and show leadership and provide humanitarian direction to reflect the changing tide in public sentiment refugees in the Manus which would then provide a clear choice for voters.

Whilst only 23% of Liberal voters now agree that the refugees should come here, some encouragement from their party leadership might hopefully change their opinions. This is probably a hope in vain.

It is easy to come to believe that we are a nation of racists and that we have little regard for the suffering of 'people other than us'. But this is not true and quite often polling will show that it is the actually the Government-pandering to the right- that is out of step and proving itself to be inhumane and uncaring.

I just wish they wouldn't do it in our name.

The Grandmothers should take heart and redouble their efforts with perhaps a little more civil disobedience thrown in.

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### **ABOUT OUR SPEAKER –CLAIRE SAXBY (FROM HER WEBPAGE)**

*I have always loved reading. I used to go home from boarding school and read for days on end, only emerging to swim and eat. I love words. I love how they sound, the work they do, the images they create.*

*It took me much longer to realise that I also loved writing. But I'm doing my best to make up for lost time. I write fiction, non-fiction and poetry for children*

*I was born in Victoria, Australia, lived in New South Wales and Queensland and was lucky enough to spend some time in Papua New Guinea. Where I live now is within cooe of the hospital where I was born.*

*I have worked at many jobs including waitressing, vote counting, mail sorting, podiatry, sheet ironing and towel folding. I have worked in hospitals and in community health. I now work part time in a bookshop where I get to unpack new books, and talk about books all day! When I'm not writing, or talking about writing, I walk my dog, try to teach myself to quilt, sing in a choir, watch films and share a wonderful life with my family and friends.*

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**BROKEN ECONOMIC SYSTEMS- GROWING INEQUALITY:****Cath Morrison**

Inequality in Australia is not on the scale of the UK or the USA yet. But if trends continue it will be. We must continue to urge the adoption of policies which narrow the gap here before it is too late. Cutting penalty rates isn't one of them! Another Morgan poll (February 22, 2017) showed: *A majority of Australians don't see the wider economic benefits of lowering company tax rates while more Australians want social welfare payments increased rather than reduced.* **Again, the current Government is running against the tide of public opinion on this issue as well.**

**Brexit and Trump are the expression of inequality in the UK and the US:**

**According to Mark Goldring, CEO of Oxfam, the world's eight richest people have the same wealth today as the as total of the poorest 3.6 billion on the planet** (Guardian, Jan 16, 2017)

*'Today nearly 800 million people – one in nine – across the world will go to bed hungry or undernourished. The eight wealthy men – yes, they're all men – and their fellow billionaires will wake up having slept rather better, and their wealth, invested across the world, will have increased by countless millions even as they slept'* Goldring says that narrowing the gap requires a more challenging task than asking eight men to change their behaviour. It requires creating a more human economy; one that encourages and rewards enterprise and innovation, but one which also offers everyone, regardless of background, a fair chance in life and ensures when individuals and businesses succeed, they do so for the benefit, rather than at the expense, of others. A properly functioning economy requires our companies to see themselves as vital contributors to society, rather than a means of extracting wealth from it. It demands that governments set the rules in a way that reward, rather than penalise, them for good behaviour. Rich countries, including the UK, lose countless billions in tax avoidance. Yet governments, (including our own in Australia) have failed to adequately respond to companies' use of tax loopholes, corporate power and new technology to avoid paying their fair share.

*The World Economic Forum pinpointed inequality as the number one threat to the global economy during the year ahead. It also cited it as a key factor in continuing extreme poverty, political instability, violence and the polarisation of societies. The warning needs to be heeded by our current Government.*

**Why is it not surprising that Trump is the new president?** It's no secret that the United States has a glaring—and growing—problem with inequality. The Great Recession made things worse, and the recent economic recovery remains uneven, and unevenly distributed. Families in the bottom 99 percent of households have recovered just 60 percent of their income losses from the economic slump, according to a recent analysis of tax data by University of California-Berkeley economist Emmanuel Saez. Meanwhile, the super rich keep getting richer: The average family in the top 1 percent of earners in the US makes 40 times more than the average family in the bottom 90 percent of households. **Continues p.12**

**PENALTY RATE CUTS AFFECT YOUNG AND WOMEN  
Morrison****Anne Sgro & Cath**

It didn't really come as a surprise to me that penalty rates for weekends and public holidays would be cut for Hospitality, Fast Food, Retail and Pharmacy Awards. After all, what would well-heeled judges of the Fair Work Commission know about the struggle of low paid workers who too often need to give up their weekends to work while others spend time with families and friends? Most people believe that workers need to be compensated for working when most of us don't. The decision will hit young people, and it will particularly hit women. They are the bulk of this workforce. For a lot of people it means a big cut to their take-home pay and their survival. Weekend shifts are often taken up by workers who are also part-time and casual – young people and women again.

Will the decision mean that employers will engage more people? I doubt it, and there doesn't seem to be evidence to back this assertion. But it does mean another attack on the living standards of fairly low-paid workers. The unions have stepped in with a campaign that includes petitions. The ALP and the Greens say that they will introduce legislation that prevents it from happening. The decision needs to be overturned. For those workers in particular, but also because the decision will be the thin edge of the wedge and used to do the same for other awards. There is a growing inequality in our society.. Inequality hurts women the hardest. This is yet another example of it.

Caitlin Fitzsimmons, the Money editor for the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age quantified this effect on women in a great article recently. *She says that "in (2014) in the retail trade, 56 per cent of employees are women. In accommodation and food services, it's 54.3 per cent...Weekend shifts are particularly prevalent for people working in part-time roles and casual jobs...Not only are the retail and hospitality industries dominated by part-time and casual employment, but in both cases women are much more likely than men to be working part time. In the retail trade, 32.4 per cent of the workers were women working part time, while 28 per cent were men working full time. Some 23.6 per cent were women working full-time, while only 15.2 per cent were men working part-time. In hospitality, 33.5 per cent of workers were women working part time, while 20.8 per cent who were women working full-time. For the 45.7 per cent who are men in this industry, it was roughly even for full-time and part-time work"*

Caitlin also rubbishes the notion that many more jobs will be created.

She concludes that: ***A cut in penalty rates isn't anything to do with equalising Saturday and Sunday and whether or not we go to church on a Sunday. It's actually just a pay cut for young people and women.***

Enough evidence that the UAW must campaign against these unfair changes to penalty rates and ensure they don't go even further.

**MOLLY HADFIELD SOCIAL JUSTICE ORATION 2017: SPEAKER CLEMENTINE FORD**  
by Carmen Green

The topic for the Molly Hadfield 2017 oration is to explore openly and honestly the state of the world we live in and I can think of no one better to address this topic than writer/feminist/activist Clementine Ford. She writes regular columns in the AGE and has also appeared in the Guardian, CLEO and the Big Issue and on the ABC's Q and A. According to Wikipedia: "Clementine hopes to give other women the language and confidence to articulate their own feelings of frustration and anger".

Her most recent article in "The AGE" Feb. 21, 2017 was *"If you aren't the target you don't decide what's funny"*. The article addressed the news that Queensland had passed legislation to ban "offensive and indecent advertisements" on vehicles. I'm sure everyone will be aware of the incredibly misogynist slogans on the Wicked Campers' vans. This new legislation means that if in Queensland companies continue to put slogans insulting to women on their vans they will have their vehicles deregistered. It is hoped that other states will follow Queensland's example.

Clementine went on to say that as expected the news has been met with opposition from people suddenly concerned about "freedom of speech" and the death of "comedy". But as she highlighted the "jokes" are all directed at people who have less power than the person telling the joke. She concluded her article by saying that *"When you are not targeted by the jokes you defend, you don't get to decide how people are allowed to think about them. You don't get to demand that people shrug them off and find them funny."*

Clementine has written many other thought provoking articles on issues of concern to UAW members. Just to give you an idea of what these cover I've listed a few titles-

- *White people need to stop shrugging off racism as "not our problem"*.
- *It's 2016 and women in Australia still aren't allowed control of their bodies*
- *The damage being done when people insist "boys will be boys"*
- *The epidemic of rape culture in schools can no longer be ignored.*
- *This is why we have women only spaces, and why I don't want to hear your complaints.* See: [www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/by/Clementine-Ford](http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/by/Clementine-Ford)

Recently, Clementine Ford has been receiving a lot of publicity because of her new book *"How to fight like a girl"*. A thousand women attended the launch of her book at the Melbourne's Athenaeum Theatre. At the launch Clementine discussed her book in a conversation with the ABC's Julia Baird, and addressed such issues as whether feminism should make room for men, why women need to silence their inner critics, and how we can all stand up against online abuse.

During the interview Baird made the following comment: *"Just listening to you, I was thinking about the song during the depression about "don't be too polite girls, show a little fight" The women of the Second Wave (of feminism) used to sing it and their grandmothers had sung it to them. Every generation it seems needs to be told this message again. What is it that needs to be said now?"*

Clementine replied “*there are multiple things that need to be said. But one of the primary things we all need to absorb is that liberation for women won’t happen by being polite... So the analogy I often use is of a pond and you want to change the surface area of the pond, you’re not going to do it by asking the pond nicely- you do it by throwing a rock into the middle of the pond. And that’s what I feel very simply we have to do.*” See: [www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-27/clementine-ford](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-27/clementine-ford)

These comments reminded me of Anne Sgro’s article in our previous newsletter “*Is it time for some civil disobedience?*” Anne also referred to the song: “*Don’t be too polite girls*” and discussed issues relating to non-violent civil disobedience in order to make our voices heard more widely.

It’s encouraging to know that the views canvassed in this UAW discussion are also shared by well-known activist, feminist and writer Clementine Ford and her thousands of supporters. I’m sure that Molly Hadfield would be delighted to know that Clementine is presenting her 2017 social justice oration. *Note: for further details about this event see “What’s on” page.*

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### **WOMEN’S MUSEUM FOR MELBOURNE: a big step closer to reality**

by *Cath Morrison*

The announcement that the Victorian Government will provide \$330,000 seed funding to engage staff to begin planning activities for the Women’s Museum in Melbourne was made recently by Fiona Richardson, as part of the launch of the Gender Equality Strategy of the Victorian Government.

This funding news has been eagerly awaited for several years. The two groups who initiated the call for this Museum -the Victorian Womens Heritage Committee (WHCV) and the HERplace Committee- have been working away individually and have now joined forces to provide a unified voice to ensure that this major development happens.

The time is now right. The Andrews Victorian Government has done more for gender issues than any other Government in my memory. *Gender is on the radar in Victoria in a way that is long overdue and unique in Australia; from the groundbreaking Royal Commission into family violence to respectful relationship education in schools, to the women’s Australian Rules Football league, to the state’s new (and first) Gender Equality Strategy* (Miki Perkins, The Age, 12 th January, 2016)

Ms Perkins writes about her vision of a fantasy Museum for Women in Melbourne, designed by a woman architect, and incorporating best practice from the numerous examples already existing in other more far-sighted environments: *In Senegal, Hanoi and Istanbul there are museums dedicated to the experience of women...(and) in Norway, the National Women’s Museum, amongst many others.* But now perhaps this fantasy which we have all held dear will become a reality sooner rather than later. There is a desperate need for an institution to collect and preserve records of Victorian women and to make these available in an organised and accessible collection, also searchable online. A website which brings together and links all the existing collections, was high on the agenda for the WHCV which also emphasised the need for archival preservation and identifying and linking records as well as for exhibitions about women.

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Women's records and archives are scattered around the country, and information about them can be hard to find. The website could be a centralised hub for information on women's archives, providing a portal that makes the whereabouts and content of Australian women's records discoverable, whether they are in private or public hands, physical or online.

There are many women and women's organisations in this State who have been supportive of the Women's Museum vision and who will be happy to assist in any way possible to bring this idea to maturity and reality.

More information on planning so far is available from the Her Place Museum web site: <https://herplacemuseum.com/>.

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### *UAW CELEBRATES IWD*

*Wednesday 22 March 2017*

*10:30am - 12:30pm*

*4th floor Ross House*

*247 Flinders Lane Melbourne*

*Guest Speaker: Claire Saxby*

*"HISTORY, GENDER and the  
POWER OF STORIES"*

*Claire Saxby writes fiction, non-fiction and poetry for children. She is an award-winning picture book author and has nearly 40 books in print, including "My Name is Lizzie Flynn - A Story of the Rajah Quilt"*

**\$5 for morning tea/coffee**

**Membership for 2017 (\$20) can also be paid in cash at this meeting.**

**RSVP - 9654 7409 [office@uaw.org.au](mailto:office@uaw.org.au)**

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Families in the top 0.01 percent—the 1 percent of the 1 percent—make, on average, a whopping 198 times more than those in the bottom 90 percent, according to Saez and fellow economist Thomas Piketty's data. "***An economy that fails to deliver growth for half of its people for an entire generation is bound to generate discontent with the status quo and a rejection of establishment politics,***" Saez, Piketty, and fellow economist Gabriel Zucman recently wrote in a post for the Washington Center for Equitable Growth. (Mother Jones, Dec 22, 2016-Edwin Rios and Dave Gilson)

**Trump tapped into that discontent very successfully. We will all have to live with the consequences.**

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