

Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

Newsletter

WHAT'S ON- November 2017

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|---|--|
| 13 October – 26 November | Women of the Land
Melbourne Gallery
Melbourne Museum
11 Nicholson St
HER Place Women's Museum and
Invisible Farmer Project |
| Wednesday 8 November
10.30 – 12.30 | UAW Organising Committee
3rd floor meeting room 2: 3.2 |
| Thursday 9 November
1.00 – 3.00 | UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room Ross House |
| Saturday 25 November | International Day for the Elimination of
Violence Against Women
Designated Orange Day to raise
awareness
Over-arching theme:
'Leave No One Behind: End Violence
Against Women and Girls |
| 25 November-10 December | 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-
based Violence |

MEMBERS TRIP TO GEELONG: Visit the Geelong Art Gallery to see the Archibald Prize paintings. November 29th, 2017 and have lunch together. Meet at platform Southern Cross Station for 10.30 am train departure \$16/\$12 RSVP Anne 93549691

Vale Merle Martin. UAW member Merle recently passed away at 104 years. Condolences to family, particularly to her daughter Sheila Byard.

AND NOW FOR THE GOOD NEWS

Anne Sgro

So often we are rightly in a rage or in despair and disbelief at political realities so it is good to celebrate some steps forward and have some good news to celebrate.

ICAN wins Nobel Peace Prize

ICAN, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, has won the Nobel Peace Prize! We congratulate them. They received the prize from the Norwegian Nobel Committee for their efforts to *“draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for groundbreaking efforts to achieve a treat-based prohibition of such weapons.”*

The UAW has long supported ICAN, both with donations and by taking up their campaign (see February and August Newsletters). We celebrated the launch of the UN treaty, and have written to our government urging Australia to participate in negotiations, and later to sign. So many of our close neighbours have done so: it was adopted by 122 countries on July 7, and signed by 53 nations in September.

Now more than ever, there is a need for Australia to think and act independently. In the face of the posturing and threats of both the US president and the leader of North Korea there is a growing possibility that a finger may be accidentally put on the button, so to speak, or, as John Hewson recently wrote in the Age, *‘miscalculation, or accident, an isolated piece of stupidity.’* I can’t believe how often I find the former Liberal leader to actually be making statements with which I wholeheartedly agree. We need to end the rhetoric of standing *‘shoulder to shoulder’* with America (Defence Minister Marise Payne) and adopt a strong, independent foreign policy in our own national interest. The brinkmanship between the two countries needs to stop. In fact, North Korea will continue to respond to the US provocations of missiles on the border, war games and rhetoric.

Australia could play a crucial diplomatic role for peace if we weren’t such sycophants. The UAW shall again be writing to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop on the issue – the horror of a nuclear disaster is unthinkable. We shall be raising again the demand that there should be no involvement in war, or the deployment of troops overseas, without parliamentary debate. Congratulations again to ICAN which, to quote Nobel Committee Chairwoman Beret Reiss-Andersen, is *“a driving force in prevailing upon the world’s nations to pledge to cooperate...in efforts to stigmatise, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.”*

Jacinda Ardern leads New Zealand Government.

It was exciting to hear that the young Labour leader is the new Prime Minister of New Zealand, forming a government with the Greens and NZ First. She has promised a fairer deal for New Zealanders, with emphasis on alleviating child poverty, providing housing and climate change. Her energy, enthusiasm and youth are such a welcome change. Good luck to her.

Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill

I was one of many UAW members who were relieved at the passing of the Voluntary Assisted Dying bill in Parliament last week. 47 to 37 was quite a resounding result, and I hope that it also passes the Legislative Council. Well done, Daniel Andrews for persistence and courage, and for all those who campaigned so strongly in the face of organised religion and others who want to impose their views. We are talking about giving people a choice in how they die in quite specific circumstances. To me, a first step.

WOMEN OF THE LAND

By Anne Sgro

A collaboration between Museum Victoria's Invisible Farmer Project and Her Place Women's Museum to celebrate rural women who work, protect and heal the land.

This beautiful exhibition made me think of my Great Aunt, Jean Campbell (nee Foster), the first of my family to migrate from Scotland. She met her husband Jim, a farmer, when he came to her town on leave during the First World War, to meet distant relatives. They married in Broxburn in 1919, and sailed for Australia, arriving in Tallangatta, NE Victoria, in early 1920 – no electricity, she was 2 years ahead of the fashions, and, once established on a farm, initially did her washing in the creek – no laid on water. She worked so hard – preserving fruit, pickling, making jam and sauces, sewing and knitting, raising poultry, cooking on a wood stove. My sister interviewed her in the late 70s, and she describes cooking meals and morning and afternoon tea for many workers during the shearing. At one stage, her farm was the centre for shearing in the valley. The farm would not have run without her considerable input. I would love to be able to talk to her about it now, but I doubt that she would have considered herself a farmer. Which is just as well, because in Victoria in **1891, women farmers were deliberately excluded from the Victorian Census, to be listed only as farmers' wives or housewives.**

Yet there were plenty of women who were farmers. Two Geelong suburbs are named after women farmers in the area. Miss Anne Drysdale (who had owned a farming property in Scotland) and her business partner Miss Caroline Newcomb, had a licence to occupy Boronggoop, a squatting run, in 1843. And we all know that it was Elizabeth Macarthur who was the farmer, not her husband.

The exhibition acknowledges that for over 65,000 years Indigenous women have provided food and fibre, shaped the landscape and developed a knowledge system. It then focuses on a number of specific women:

Aunty Fay Carter – community elder

Maisie Carr, 1912 -1988 – a botanist and courageous ecologist, whose work with soil erosion revolutionized farming and grazing practices throughout Victoria's High Country.

Pat Bigham, CFA volunteer, recognized for her service to her community

Lisa Sartori - viticulturist

Amy Paul – organic poultry farmer

Sally Jones – dairy farmer

Amelia Bright – pig farmer

A visitor to the exhibition can hear and watch them speak either on a big screen, or on smaller screens with headphones. There are photographs, objects, little stories, that present a picture of their lives, and of women who went before them. There is Heather Mitchell's hat. She was instrumental, with Joan Kirner, in **establishing Landcare in 1986. That was the year that Victorian Women's Network was established. In 1990 the first Victorian Women on Farms Gathering was held.**

Only in 1999 did the Victorian Farmers' Federation allow 2 votes per farm, in acknowledgement of reality.

Women produce at least 49% of real farm income in Australia. Yet they are significantly under-represented and undervalued in positions of rural leadership and decision making.

1994 the Australian Law Reform Commission reviewed farm women's legal status and finally defined them as 'farmers' (instead of 'domestics', 'helpmates' or farmer's wives.' I found this little exhibition fascinating, and a good start to knowing about, and celebrating, rural women.

**#LETSBREAKTHROUGH CAMPAIGN – AGM SPEAKER: MARY CROOKS, AO
–PRESIDENT VICTORIAN WOMEN’S TRUST.**

by Carmen Green

Mary Crooks was the speaker at the UAW’s 2017 AGM on Tuesday 24 October. Mary is the Executive Director of the Victorian Women’s Trust (VWT), an organisation which has had some remarkable achievements since its foundation in 1985. In her opening remarks Mary congratulated the UAW on having been in existence for 67 years.

Mary started her presentation by showing a short 4 minute film *“Let’s Breakthrough”* on women’s struggle for equality. It’s a fascinating short film, incredibly well researched and should be shown widely especially to younger women. You can still watch it on the VWT’s website: <https://www.vwt.org.au/>. It starts with the statement “150 years ago in Australia” and then lists all the things that women couldn’t do. For example women couldn’t vote, couldn’t stand for election, couldn’t own property, and couldn’t access reproductive rights or access justice for marital rape. It then goes on to list the many significant achievements of women since then. For example: 1884 first women’s suffrage group formed, 1891 monster petition for women’s suffrage, 1943 first woman elected to House of Representatives, 1969 first abortion rights granted with conditions, 1972 the right to equal pay, 1973 paid maternity leave, 2010 first woman PM.

Yet as the film concludes despite all these achievements women are still a minority in parliament, earn less than men, have half the superannuation of men, many women over 60 live in poverty, women still do most of the unpaid work and sexual violence is widespread with one woman dying each week from family violence. Clearly the need for organisations like the VWT and the UAW is just as urgent now as in the past.

Mary said that there were and are so many areas of inequality to focus on - the fact that white Anglo Celtic males still dominate political positions of power, the fact that not one of the recommendations from the Senate Enquiry into women’s retirement income has been adopted, that the top 3% of super beneficiaries are all male. She said that Australia as a whole has not moved forward on the crucial issues of economic security for women and safety for women. Change is happening at glacial speed.

#Breakthrough-2016 was a women’s conference organised by the VWT over 2 days, in 3 venues including the Melbourne Town Hall, with over 100 speakers and one message - the future is gender equality. It was an enormous success with 1000 attendees whose average age was 35.

Mary highlighted the speech by economist **Dr Richard Dennis: “Money-Power-Freedom”** which summarises the economics and politics behind women’s inequality. He said that there are 3 big lies that powerful people in Australia use to silence public debate on women’s inequality. The first is that women are making “choices” (e.g. to take time out to care for their kids or to work in the low paid caring professions). The second that politicians need more evidence before they can act and the third lie is that Australia can’t afford to do something about gender inequality.

Yet Dr Dennis reminded us that we are one of the richest countries in the world. The reality is the Federal Government has no intention of narrowing the gender pay gap yet it wants to make large tax cuts and found \$50 billion to build submarines in South Australia. Mary recommends that we listen to Dr Dennis's complete speech at the #Breakthrough Conference which is available on the VWT website: <https://www.vwt.org.au/>

Mary said that in relation to family violence there is no honest narrative in this country about why this violence exists. There are deep cultural layers behind this violence against women and children. Mary said that it is a national disgrace that so many Australian children go to bed frightened each night, that there is one death a week from family violence and thousands of hospital visits because of family violence. The impact of violence on women who survive family violence is horrendous. It's not enough to have white ribbon ambassadors, not enough to have more and more refuges. In 2018 we need a narrative that is honest and confronting. Statistics alone don't lead to understanding and don't change things. We need to reframe the discussion. Need point of healing to move on as with indigenous people.

Mary said the VWT has two mantras: If you can't see a problem you can't fix it and your solution will be as good as your analysis of the problem.

Women need equal representation in parliaments –quotas, targets both work. Women's poverty doesn't get considered. Our 2 party system is broken. For example, the Marriage Equality Survey –a shabby technique because of Tony Abbott. There is no energy policy. Enough is enough. VWT wants to challenge this culture and have a parliament that represents all Australians.

UAW members may recall reading Sheila Byard's report on the #Breakthrough-2016 conference in the UAW's December newsletter. Sheila concluded her report by saying "*well done Victorian Women's Trust. Now we wait to see what will flow from this amazing feast of ideas and multiple interactions between so many passionate participants.*"

Mary answered Sheila's question when she said that the VWT had a pact with those who attended #Breakthrough -2016 that they would follow up on the issues raised in the conference. They intend to do this through the campaign **#LetsBreakthrough for Women's Economic Security**, and have set up 3 major teams: Violence and Safety, Equal Representation and Economic Security. On the question of economic security, they intend to research child care models, superannuation for women, the gender pay gap and unpaid work for women. Dr Marilyn Waring, political economist, and an expert on these issues will assist the VWT's examination of these issues.

Mary said that the next stage is to involve the speakers and presenters at #Breakthrough to discuss the work of the 3 teams with a series of public statements in 2018 on these issues and to involve politicians, people of influence and the public to build a movement for future change.

In conclusion, Mary promised to keep the UAW in the loop on this vitally important project for women.

“THE TIDE IS TURNING. IT WON’T STOP.”

Non Una Di Meno – Not One Less. Protests for women’s rights in Italy.

Anne Sgro

Thanks to Sheila Byard for forwarding the link from IAW Board correspondence.

Non Una Di Meno (Not One Less) takes its name from Ni Una Menos, conceived in Argentina in 2015. The movement has spread across several Latin American countries, and has created a space for women to challenge all aspects of patriarchy. Its symbol is the Russian doll (Matryoshka): one woman inside another, from Italy to Europe to Latin America.

In Italy, the first big demonstration was held in Rome, 26 November 2016, the day after the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. It was organised by Io decido – I Decide (a group from Rome who fight for the application of the law on abortion; Donne in Rete - Network of Women (a network of over 70 anti-violence centres in Italy) and UDI: Unione Donne in Italia* - Union of Women in Italy. More than 100,000 women, families, people of all ages from all over Italy marched through the streets of Rome to stop gender-based violence. They chanted: *“We take back the streets. We take back the squares.”* Much the same slogans as are heard at Reclaim the Night rallies. There have been meetings of local groups in many cities all over the country. During a year of activity the movement has united different feminist groups under one banner, forming one big inclusive wave of protest. *“We Will Be A Tide”* is one of the slogans. *.”* A new wave of young women are becoming activists and organizing themselves, determined that the tide will turn and won’t be stopped.

A rally was held 28 September this year in Rome to protest against conscientious objection whereby Italian gynaecologists can refuse to conduct abortions – as many as 7 out of 10 are conscientious objectors - and to demand women’s right to choose when it comes to their bodies. Many women are currently forced to travel around until they find a hospital where they can access the services they need. Protestors held fuchsia and black placards, and many shook rolling pins.

In recent weeks the issue of violence against women has been raised to the fore, following the rape of a young women by immigrants that also turned into a media and political venting of racism. The next demonstration will be 25 November. Sara Pichi is one of the founders of action in Italy and likes the idea of building a worldwide movement that holds protests on the same day and in the same forms. *“Gender-based violence is an international issue that affects women in every country.”* And in fact, the statistics of violence are virtually a mirror image of the statistics in Australia. Pichi says: *“Italian politicians want women to stay home, they want to control us and our bodies, pretending that they do it for our safety. They blackmail us with fear. Meanwhile women are raped or killed every day. We do not need cameras or surveillance, we need rights. We want to go out alone, even at night. As one of our slogans says: free streets are made by the women who cross them... Violence against women is a structural problem: it involves many facets of women’s lives, limiting their freedom.”*

*UDI: Unione Donne Italiane (Union of Italian Women) grew out of the Resistance to Occupation and Fascism and was officially established in 1945. It was a strong organisation, producing a terrific magazine to which I used to subscribe. A similar organisation was established in France, and they were possibly a model for the UAW. In 2003 it changed its name to UDI: l’Unione Donne In Italia (Union of Women in Italy), no doubt to reflect the changing nature of Italian society, and to encompass immigrant women.

ERA'S LONG OVERDUE STATEMENT ON SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & RIGHTS

by Carmen Green

Equality Rights' Alliance (ERA) is Australia's largest organisational network of women's advocates bringing together more than 60 women's organisations to improve women's equality, leadership & recognition of diversity.

Equality Rights' Alliance (ERA) recently forwarded to its members a draft Sexual and Reproductive rights policy position. ERA is one of Australia's 6 National Women's Alliances. Each of the other alliances has a specific area of operation, with ERA operating as the generalist alliance. Consequently ERA is the Alliance which receives the majority of requests for information on Australian women's sexual and reproductive rights. However, because of difficulty in reaching agreement in what for some members is a controversial area they have not previously had a clear position on sexual & reproductive health & rights.

This lack of agreement is a problem for ERA because they are increasingly asked by media for comments on issues such as abortion, access to contraception & sex & respectful relationships education. Also the Office of Women is increasingly seeking ERA's views in this area, particularly in the international context. ERA advises that it is in the international area that the lack of a policy is causing the greatest difficulty. Given that women's sexual & reproductive rights have become a highly contested area in international negotiations, ERA's lack of a policy position is causing considerable difficulty.

The draft policy circulated to members is to get members within their organisations talking about this issue & deciding which parts of the draft policy are non-controversial and whether there are amendments required. ERA hopes to adopt a finalised position at the members' meeting in May 2018.

The circulated draft policy states that ERA believes that women face particular barriers when it comes to exercising their reproductive & health rights and that these barriers are higher for groups already facing disadvantage. The draft goes on to say that there are many aspects to this broader area of health rights including access to high quality maternity care, sexual health services, contraception, sexuality education and safe & legal abortion services.

After consideration, the UAW's Organising Committee meeting (11 October) endorsed ERA's draft Sexual and Reproductive Rights policy position and thanked them for the work that they are doing to ensure that ERA finally has a policy position on this vitally important area for women.

Footnote:

Marie Stopes recently announced that there are many financially disadvantaged women in Australia who are not able to access abortion because of the cost. They are seeking donations to assist women facing an unwanted pregnancy and financial difficulty. Publicly funded abortion services are not available in NSW, Queensland, the ACT and Tasmania. Shamefully, in Queensland and NSW abortion is still a criminal offence.

UAW (Vic) ORGANISING COMMITTEE FOR 2017/2018

Anne Sgro	President
Amy Duncan	Vice-President
Cath Morrison	Secretary
Patrizia Archivio	Treasurer
Carmen Green	Member
Fran Mackieson-	Member

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