

Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

Newsletter

WHAT'S ON – MARCH 2018

Happy International Women's Day 8 March!

Theme: #PressforProgress

***Sunday 4 March
2.00 – 3.30***

***The Round Table: Do We Need A Women's
Museum? A public discussion
HerPlace Women's Museum Australia
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art
111 Sturt St Southbank***

***Sunday 25 March
2.00***

***Walk for Justice for Refugees
Palm Sunday Refugee Rally
State Library, Cnr Swanston and LaTrobe Sts
The UAW is a sponsor***

Annette Madden OAM!

***Congratulations to UAW member Annette, who received the award in the Australia
Day Honours List for Contribution to Aged Care.***

VALE Zelda D'Aprano, feminist and activist, who passed away recently at 90.

Celebrate International Women's Day with the UAW.

Tuesday 20 March 10.30 – 12.30

4th floor meeting room Ross House

Speaker: Emeritus Professor Patricia Grimshaw AO

'WHY WOMEN'S STORIES MATTER'

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S TRUST FUNCTION: IDEAS to ACTION by Carmen Green

On January 24, 2018, about 300 women crowded into the Church of All Nations in Carlton to listen to Marilyn Waring- political economist- and Richard Denniss - Chief Economist, The Australia Institute- discussing issues relating to the VWT's proposed plans for removing barriers to women's economic well-being. Mary Crooks, Executive Director, Victorian Women's Trust introduced the speakers and gave a brief introduction to the background to this important function.

Ideas for action came out of the VWT's Economic Security Summer Intensive which was headed by Marilyn Waring and experts from various fields. Discussion at the Intensive centred around issues of importance to women such as child care, pay equity and women's retirement incomes. Mary Crooks said that they wanted bold, well-conceived ideas to back up social movements with the aim of achieving gender equality in Australia. The ideas discussed will be firmed up later and released when considered appropriate.

After brief introductions for each speaker, Mary Crooks handed over to Marilyn Waring who is an economist, feminist and former member of the New Zealand Parliament. Professor Waring said she had changed her mind about a number of things since writing *Counting for nothing* in 1988. She said that she wrote the book shortly after leaving Parliament when she was "consumed with creating visibility for things that were not visible in mainstream economic practice...[such as] reproductive activities, service activities of unpaid work...and overwhelmingly, the work of women."

She said that in terms of women's unpaid work most of it is still left out of the national accounts which measure economic activity. She now believes that rather than fighting to include women's work in national economic data like the GDP counties should use instead time use surveys to assess the contributions of this unpaid women's work.

She stressed that time use surveys demonstrate overwhelmingly that women work longer than men, when counting paid work and unpaid work together. According to Waring, time use surveys also show that women are "the single largest sector in any nation's economy— bigger than mining, tourism, banking and financial services." She said that Time USE Surveys are done by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and were in the past up to date. Now they're behind with the ABS wanting to do them and the government not wanting us to know. She said these surveys are essential information for women so we must fight for them to be introduced and carried out regularly. Waring warned of the dangers of language in limiting our understanding of unpaid work, urging the audience to avoid terms such as 'care' or 'care economy' which undervalues what women do. There are very poorly paid workers in the "care economy" who are mainly women.

Richard Denniss supported Waring's remarks. He said that he'd been following Marilyn Waring's work for years and spent a lot of time trying to put dollar values on the things that were left out, but decided about 15 years ago it was nonsense. He believes that when we start putting a dollar value on the time women spend caring for kids, you strip away what we're actually talking about. A dollar value trivialises it, rather than emphasising it.

Denniss was extremely critical of Australia's superannuation system and its inability to adequately provide a dignified retirement for everyone. Denniss pointed out that the system

was created for people who engage in paid work their entire adult life, ignoring the unpaid work undertaken by women in raising children or looking after elderly parents.

People who do casual work or part time work have very inadequate super on retirement. The system was designed for men and in particular the tax concessions favour wealthy men. "What most people don't understand is that super is not universal," he said. "Super takes the inequities between men and women and magnifies them."

Waring said that since 1977, New Zealand has had a Universal Super Income and from age 65 everyone receives it and if you're able to afford it you can subsidise it with private superannuation.

In Australia there is a means test for the aged pension and as a result 80% get the aged pension (some full pension, some part pension according to their income or assets), 20% don't get any pension. Denniss said that if you scrapped the huge tax concessions on superannuation you could give a 25% increase to everyone on the pension and we'd still have money left over. Moreover we could give the aged pension to everyone of pension age and we'd save on public servants.

In relation to the issue of pay equity, Waring noted that Australia introduced the *Equal Pay Act* in 1972, the same year as New Zealand, which granted women equal pay for work of equal value to men.

But, she said, the parallels between the two countries end there. Waring highlighted the recent win in New Zealand in which a professional aged care worker, supported by her union, successfully argued in the Employment Court her low hourly pay rate was a result of gender discrimination under the Equal Pay Act, resulting in \$2 billion equal pay settlement for about 55,000 of her low paid, mainly female colleagues. Yet, said Waring, Australia, on the other hand, has systematically undermined these rights since 1972. She pointed out that Australia's legal frameworks such as the *Fair Work Act*, do not mention 'equal pay', 'pay equity' or 'gender discrimination'. "There is no legislation which provides for pay equity in Australia, anymore," she said. There used to be a pay equity unit but it no longer exists. She said that there was an opportunity for the Human Rights Commission to partner with a women's group and go to the High Court to see if the right to pay equity does exist in Australia.

Richard Denniss pointed out that crucial services previously carried out by Government in Australia are now carried out by the "market" rather than the public service with huge Government subsidies and often poor service. These include essential services such as aged care and child care. Denniss said that child care concessions - like superannuation - are complicated so people don't complain. Child care workers - mainly women - are the lowest paid in the country yet the parents don't care. He believes that pay inequality is not due to lack of data but due to expectations that women don't deserve better.

Richard Denniss has recently written "Curing Affluenza- how to buy less stuff and save the world" which addresses many of his concerns about modern Western societies. The book and the VWT function challenge us all to take action to help shape a better world. Denniss stressed we need to be militant about what we want

The speakers were followed by a number of questions and the session concluded as it had started with the fabulous female choir Prana Mob. After such an interesting and stimulating function we will wait with considerable interest to see what next the Victorian Women's Trust will do in the continuing fight for gender equality in Australia.

CHILD POVERTY IN THIS COUNTRY: a disgraceful and shameful fact

Cath Morrison

I imagine many members were as angry and ashamed and sad as I was to see the media ads by the Smith Family asking us to sponsor an Australian child : not a child in an underdeveloped country; but a child in this supposedly wealthy 'lucky country'. Wealthy and lucky for some obviously, but not for many others. Depending on the source of the statistics, between one in 5 or one in 7 Australian children is in poverty at this moment. The Smith Family says : *One in seven Australian children and young people are growing up in poverty, where even the bare necessities are hard to come by. In a family where there is no regular income, money goes on food, rent and bills. Finding money for a school uniform, proper shoes, textbooks or the next school excursion is often impossible. Through no fault of their own, these disadvantaged children are struggling at school because they don't have what they need to fit in, catch up or keep up with their peers.*

I wrote some years ago in this Newsletter about a program in Victorian schools run by a charity -State Schools' Relief - where children whose parents can't afford appropriate school clothing are supported to enable them to "fit in". This charity provides tens of thousands of young Victorians and their families with clothing for 1 in 60 kids in Victorian State Schools each year...to children in nearly every State school, even in prosperous areas. Many teachers in the State school system already provide food for children who have none. Why does our government take no responsibility for these poorest children in our community and leaves this to well-meaning charities? The Victorian State Government has been progressive in so many areas- why not begin provide meals and clothing for disadvantaged school children (in a discreet way) -at least until the Federal Government raises pension levels to above the poverty line?

This is, however, only the tip of the poverty iceberg. ACOSS recently (October 2016) reported that there are more children living under the poverty line around the country today than in the past decade. Their research shows that despite more than 25 years of economic growth, 13.3 per cent of the population is living in poverty. The report found there had been an increase in child poverty amongst sole parent families, with 731,000 children living below the poverty line. ACOSS chief executive Dr Cassandra Goldie described the data as "disturbing". "We have made virtually no impact over the last ten years on the level of poverty in Australia," she said. This damning indictment comes at a time where the Liberal government wants to provide a \$60 billion tax cut to multinational and large corporations to provide "jobs and growth". We have all read about the major corporates which have paid zero tax in past years. This tax foregone will no doubt lead to greater calls for welfare stringency to "reduce the deficit" and the unemployed and the single parent will descend further into the hell of abject poverty relying on charitable handouts to feed and clothe themselves and their children. Children suffer the consequences of ineffective and cruel neo-liberal 'trickle down' policies which have been proven failures here and abroad. Nothing much seems to trickle down while inequality increases.

What will it take for a policy rethink? Instead of further entrenching an underclass in supposedly fair go Australia we could use this \$60 billion to lift unemployment and single parent pensions above the poverty line and give children a start in life to get out of the poverty and welfare cycle. I hope members who share my anger will write to the Prime Minister expressing that anger and asking for an increase to sole parent and unemployment pensions to help lift these 731,000 children out of poverty!

REMEMBERING AND HONOURING MOLLY

Darebin Council continues to honour the late Molly Hadfield with an annual IWD Social Justice Oration, recognizing that “Your friend, Molly Hadfield, made an invaluable contribution to Darebin and Victoria as a long-time campaigner for women’s rights, seniors’ rights, public education, community health and peace. Molly Hadfield led by example and was an inspiration to many in our community.”

DONATIONS

Thanks to the following members: Sue Graefe, Lorraine Butler, Evelyn Mullenger, Pauline Hutchinson, Rosalind Byass, Yoland Wadsworth, Janet Rawlings, Heather O’Connor, Jude Newcombe, Erica Moulang.

WIELDING THE PEN. UAW members Yoland Wadsworth and Anne Sgro have had letters in the Age during January and February about women in sport and language used for women athletes, restricted access to welfare, and the need for an inquiry into the decision to go to war in Iraq.

Keep at it, members! Write to politicians, the press. Get our voices out there!

ROSE STONE WINS SENIORS’ WRITING AWARD.

The annual City of Port Phillip’s Seniors Festival concludes each year with the Port Phillip Writes: Writing Awards. Last year was the 13th anniversary of the writers’ awards and the City Of Port Phillip acknowledged two writers who have contributed every year. One of these was long standing UAW member Rose Stone. Many writers participate in these awards but Rose has not only participated but has been successful in gaining prizes for most of her contributions. In 2017 she again won an award for her entry “Afternoon tea at the Windsor” which is included with the other prize winners on the City of Port Phillips website.

If members would like to read a copy of Rose’s story please phone or email the office and we will happily forward one to you.

SUBMISSION/CORRESPONDENCE

- The UAW has made a submission to the Freedom of Religion Inquiry (on our website)
- We have written to the Prime Minister re the government’s decision to subsidise the armaments industry. (See Page 6), and to Bill Shorten to ascertain the Opposition’s stand on the issue.
- We have registered our support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

ACTU TO DISCUSS INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA, ITS CAUSES AND IMPACT ON WORKING PEOPLE.

The ACTU is concerned that inequality in Australia is at a 70 year high. 40% of the workforce is in casualised and other insecure work and wage growth is at a record low. More than 3 million people live in poverty while corporate profits increase. So the ACTU setting up a discussion with ‘ a small group of leaders of civil society including faith groups, welfare and climate advocacy groups, indigenous leaders together and culturally and linguistically diverse community leaders.’

ERA received an invitation but the limited places were snapped up before the UAW could respond. The meeting is Friday 9 March, and we will report back to our members. We welcome the initiative.

PEACE: REVISITING THE WOMEN'S PEACE GARDEN – HOPES FOR A PEACEFUL WORLD

By Sheila Byard

A visit to the Women's Peace Garden off Epsom Rd Kensington on 18 January was a chance to recall the involvement of members in the design and maintenance of this beautiful spot opened in 1990. Thirty years after its creation its quiet charm provided plenty of shade on a 40C plus day.

Victoria was planning a new park for International Year of Peace in 1986. It was realized that it would be possible to use residual funds from International Women's Year 1975, as an expression of women's commitment to peace.

At the time Lecki Ord was Melbourne's first woman Lord Mayor and Joan Kirner was the then Minister for Conservation and Lands. A team of women botanists, designers and engineers worked together on the design, including plants associated with peace in many cultures including Peace roses, rosemary, native flax lilies and iris, and trees like tamarisk and olive trees. The Garden also includes a number of mature Morton Bay Fig trees and Pepper Trees, remnants from the area's use between the 1850s to 1980s for cattle sales, one of the world's biggest livestock markets.

In 2002 the Friends of the Women's Peace Garden group organised an event when an interpretive panel was unveiled by Mrs Joan Kirner and then Deputy Lord Mayor Cr Susan Riley, and the Kensington Primary School children from 15 different homelands brought their artwork – a ceramic tile panel funded by the Friends of Women's Peace Garden was on display.

The City of Melbourne is to be congratulated for its thirty years of care for this lovely place.

..and WAR

UAW OPPOSES SUPPORT FOR ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY

By Anne Sgro

The UAW has written to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

For almost 70 years the Union of Australian Women has campaigned for peace and an end to wars.

We were therefore dumbfounded and disheartened at your government's decision to subsidise the armaments industry to the tune of \$3.8 billions of public funds, while expressing the hope that Australia would soon be in the top 10 armaments producing countries. We were dismayed at the jubilation that seemed to accompany your announcement.

We believe that our government should be supporting innovative technologies and industries that foster our nation's skills base while benefitting humanity. Why not invest in solar and wind technology? Why not support learning and industry that supports life, not one that is based on death and destruction for communities elsewhere?

Surely Australia can do better than support arms dealers trade with nations where the most vulnerable will suffer. We strongly disapprove of your actions in our name.

We have also written to Opposition Leader, Bill Shorten, stating our view and asking what stand Labor has taken on the issue

ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

The UAW has registered our support for the Statement. It is a moving document that came from the 2017 National Constitutional Convention. It points out that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes have possessed the land for more than 60,000 years and that it has never been ceded. It states, in part...

“Proportionately, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This *is the torment of our powerlessness*.

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution. “

As we know, Malcolm Turnbull dismissed the request out of hand, intimating that he knew what Australian people were thinking without asking. No leadership there.

You can register your support and find more information at www.1VoiceUluru.org or email support@1VoiceUluru.org Thanks to Carol Stals for alerting us to the Statement.

I'M APPALLED...

By Anne Sgro

Finally the Barnaby Joyce spectacle is over. More than enough has been written and said about the saga. But I was rather taken aback at the moral outrage expressed by the Prime Minister in his unsuccessful attempt to encourage Joyce to resign. Turnbull was “appalled” at Joyce’s behavior. Rather an over-reach of outrage I would have thought. Milder language would have more than sufficed.

I have been appalled by a number of other issues, for example, the continuing cruelty towards **asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus**. Human rights lawyers had to take the government to the Federal Court to allow a critically ill child to be brought to Australia for medical treatment unavailable to her on Nauru. This was a not- yet 13 year old child, into her 5th year of detention, who was suicidal. Not many politicians seemed to be appalled by that.

I am appalled at the willingness with which Australia’s leaders follow others into war. The Greens have called for an independent, comprehensive inquiry into John Howard’s decision to invade Iraq. I support that call. It was a decision to go to war based on the lie of weapons of mass destruction and, as we wrote to the PM in 2015, there was no legitimacy for the action, no focus for the future and it triggered chaos and instability, death and destruction. I also think that any future decision to go to war should only be made after a full debate in parliament. Australia needs an independent, peaceful foreign policy. **I am appalled that we are being drawn into US confrontation with China**, as Trump’s top military commander “*is planning to ramp up the number of US Marines at a key base...*” – Darwin. **And I am appalled** that our PM is jubilant about the use of \$3.8 billion dollars of taxpayer funds to subsidise and promote the growth of the Australian armaments industry in the hope of us being in the top ten of those countries that peddle death and destruction. What have we become?

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