

## A word from the Chair

It gives me considerable pleasure to introduce to you all our new Manager of WHGNE, Ms Susie Reid.

Susie commenced working with us on Monday 11 April, and was chosen from a field of very high caliber candidates.

Indeed, Susie comes highly recommended, with a diverse range of high quality experience in the Victorian region in both management and leadership positions, in health care and industry.

We as a Board know that Susie's energy and enthusiasm as our new leader of the WH team will be of major benefit in promoting the health and well being of women in the Hume Region.

On behalf of us all, welcome Susie!

Beth Seers  
Chair  
Board of Management



Chair - Beth Seers and WHGNE's new manager - Susie Reid

## Vera Drake at Swanpool

As part of the International Women's Day celebrations Women's Health Goulburn North East sponsored a screening of Vera Drake at Swanpool Cinema on ANZAC weekend.

Over 70 people attended on Sunday night. The film generated lots of conversation and opinions which were expressed over a delicious supper provided by Swanpool Roadhouse and sponsored by Women's Health Goulburn North East.

Vera Drake is a movie which depicts what life was like for women before abortions were safe and accessible.

Although the whole film is about the issue of abortion, there is no moral judgment; the judgment is left to the audience.

Director Mike Leigh does a brilliant job of addressing the sensitive issue surrounding the dilemma of unwanted pregnancies and abortion.

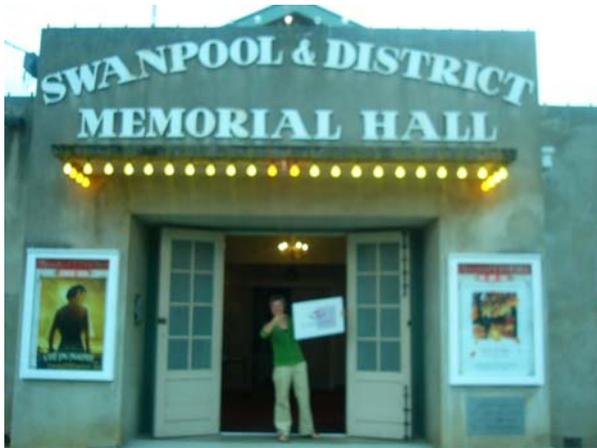
Vera Drake played by Imelda Staunton, is a sweet motherly working class woman in the 1950's who secretly helps women end unwanted pregnancies.

Vera is unlike other "backyard abortionists" in that she doesn't charge the women. She sees it as "helping them out", if she doesn't, "who will".

The film alludes to other "backyard abortionists" who charge large amounts of money and use metal hooks and other dangerous equipment, it compares the circumstances of working class women, both young and those who have completed their family, with a young woman from a well off family, all of whom have unwanted pregnancies. The young woman with money is well cared for in a hospital setting and the working class women take their chances with untrained "backyarder" using kitchen utensils.

Whatever side of the abortion debate you stand on, seeing Vera Drake reminds us that we need a society where women are not forced to seek a backyard solution to their unwanted pregnancy.

Information regarding the abortion issues raised recently by parliamentarians and access to unwanted pregnancy options are available from Women's Health Goulburn North East 57 Rowan Street 5722 3009.



Board member Lee FitzRoy at the Swanpool Cinema

## **PAMPA for women**

Ninety women enjoyed a night of pampering at The Centre on Tuesday the 26th April. Many were WHGNE members.

Congratulations to The Centre team, especially Susan and Paul, on an informative and entertaining night.

Delicious food was provided and guest speaker Dr Caroline Hawkins talked about the importance of a healthy active lifestyle. Debra Eason, dietician, reminded us to be aware of what we are eating also to learn when we have had enough, and to stop!

Belly dancers inspired us and Alethea Baldwin from the Laughter Club made us laugh.

We were given the opportunity to explore how we can choose to live a healthier lifestyle and what makes it easier to choose healthy options.

Participants were able to try activities including belly dancing, strength & weights, foot massage, tai chi, yoga and petanque. Everyone received a show packed with ideas and information.



*Two sisters lived together. After dinner every night one sister had a biscuit, the other sister went for a 1 km walk.*

*At the end of the year sister one had consumed 365 more biscuits than sister two. Sister Two had walked 365 km more than sister one.*

*Moral of the story, it's the little changes that make a difference*

## **Equal access for all**

WHGNE is conducting audit to recognise and respond to the inequity and exclusion within our organisation. We looked at using larger print in this newsletter for those whose sight is not 50/50. The newsletter lost its appeal with large print and used many more trees!. We looked at how the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children formatted their newsletter and found that they use a similar font and size to this one. We would welcome any comments or suggestions.

## Women's Health Conference

The Fifth Australian Women's Health Conference was held in Melbourne in April and attended by around 650 delegates.

Every five years this conference offers us the opportunity to meet with other women doing interesting work in the women's health field.

Senator Lyn Allison, Leader of the Democrats took the role of Chair for the morning on Thursday, and handed over to Australian Greens Senator for NSW, Kerry Nettle in the afternoon. Both women spoke of the unfortunate lull in the status of women in Australia over the past decade.

This theme was repeated by International speakers who remembered Australia as leading the field in women's health and in health promotion. Ten to 15 years ago, Australia was up there with Canada. This is no longer the case.

As usual with conferences, this one had some absolute gems amongst the broad range of topics covered. For me, there were two unmissable messages, and one surprising presentation.

If anyone is looking for a really funny speaker, try the Victorian State Health Services Commissioner, Beth Wilson. Her topic was "The impact of Gender Blind Policy on Health Service Delivery". Despite the title, the audience spent the whole 20 minutes or so in hysterical laughter!

Admittedly some of it was black humour. Like when she spoke of the woman who was operated on for a hip replacement and the surgeon replaced the wrong hip. He realised half way through and then replaced both of them. The Health Services Commissioner told us that this case came to her attention because the woman – not surprisingly – complained. The cause of her complaint though, was not that the surgeon had replaced a perfectly good hip, but that he had billed her for TWO hip replacements!!!

I was particularly interested in a presentation by Kathleen Maltzahn, Director of Project Respect, who spoke about her work since 1992 on trafficking and prostitution.

It seems we naively think we live in a civilised society. Even in Melbourne and even in 2005, women are enslaved in the prostitution industry. They are brought to this country on the understanding that they will work as a teacher or a cleaner and will be able to send money home to their families in China,

Thailand, Bangladesh, the Philippines. Instead, their passports are taken from them, and they are 'inducted' which means they are starved of food and water and repeatedly sexually abused and raped until they give in.

When 'broken in', they work as prostitutes in terrible conditions and for long hours. They are often told they have to repay many thousands of dollars to their captors for bringing them to Australia. Kathleen spoke in very positive terms about the determination of the Australian government to bring a stop to this practice. In response to a question, she said that when there are no willing women to act as prostitutes for men, they are forced into this. She suggested we need re-educating as a society, so that men no longer believe they have a right to sexual access to a woman whenever they want it.

The other gem was the impromptu presentation by five Aboriginal women. They were filling in for a speaker who was unable to make the trip from Darwin at the very last minute! Without exception, they inspired us with their stories of survival and triumph in their own lives and in their communities.

In another context, I read a quote from Dr Ian Anderson (Medical Adviser to the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services, Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services) who stated in September 2004:

"Quite bluntly, the low health status of Indigenous people, especially compared to the health of the wider Australian community, is a national and international disgrace."

Some facts:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) women are 45 times more likely to be a victim of family violence
- Life expectancy in Hume region is 17 years earlier for ATSI women than other women
- ATSI people suffer premature deaths related to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, lung disease and self harm
- There are disproportionately high numbers of children as clients of DHS Child Protection Unit
- Across Australia, birth rates for ATSI women in the 15-24 year age groups were 2-3

times higher than for all women (ABS 1998b, Ross & Barnes 1999) and babies born to ATSI mothers are twice as likely to be of low birth weight and twice as likely to die at birth as other babies (ABS & AIHW 1999 pp85, 88).

- 49.7% of ATSI smoke compared with 28.2% of the non-ATSI population (1989-90 National Health Survey on Smoking)
- Compared to non-ATSI, Aboriginals face up to 13 times the risk of cardiovascular disease; for those aged 25 - 44, the risk is greater - up to 40 times that for the non-Aboriginal population. (Aborigines in Western NSW study)
- The mortality rate for respiratory diseases is more than four times that for non-ATSI and the mortality rate for lung cancer is twice that for non-ATSI. (National Aboriginal Health Working Party)

One of the Aboriginal speakers at the Conference said that white workers 'see my world through their eyes'. And she said that this approach doesn't work.

In the WHGNE library, we have a fantastic book, (*Why Warriors Lie Down and Die* by Richard Trudgen (Darwin: Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Inc., 2000), which helps non-Aboriginal Australians see the complexity, and understand that answers and solutions cannot be imposed.

Richard Trudgen writes: 'For [Aboriginal people] to regain control of their lives, all present programs need assessing to see if they are part of the answer or part of the problem. Where programs do not return responsibility and control to [them] and their communities they must be modified or replaced with programs that do. This change should be done in a sensitive and constructive way.'

In recognition of this, the most recent Victorian Government policy document launched in April 2005, A Fairer Victoria commits \$45.7m in extra funding for Indigenous Victorians. A major shift is in changing the way we are to work with Indigenous communities to reduce the red tape.

So, the conference entertained us and extended us - and challenged us to think of the implications of this new knowledge on the way we do our work.

I'm just hoping the 2010 Women's Health Conference is in Uluru!

Deb Parkinson

## WHGNE Present at International Women's Health Conference

WHGNE presented to the conference the Powerful Journey research (APJ) and the formation and achievements of the Women's Support and Advocacy (WSAG), currently being facilitated by Sandy King.

As the conference session was entitled "EMPOWERMENT" WHGNE negotiated with conference organisers so that the women could speak for themselves about their experiences in APJ and the WSAG

Julie, from Shepparton, spoke on her involvement in A Powerful Journey :

Jodie, from Wangaratta, shared her involvement in the support and advocacy group which began as a result of the research.

Both women were supported by workers, Deb Parkinson and Sandy King.

The presentation was well received by the audience of 60. One participant said, "It was refreshing to hear from women, rather than second hand from workers."



Deb, Julie, Jodie and Sandy at the Women Health Conference after their presentation

## Family Violence Network News

Family violence prevention networks from across the region met at the annual **Planning and Review Day** held in Benalla. 33 workers attended. The idea for having a planning and review day is to share

network initiatives, learnings, linking with each other and establishing a realistic future direction.

**Two new family violence prevention networks** have been established in the Benalla and Alpine areas.

**Marie Claire magazine** (march 2005) have launched a campaign "Start Talking; talking to stop the violence". The magazine features Australian celebrities speaking out against domestic violence, and includes stories of emotional abuse.

An **Educational Kit** targeting year 11 and 12 students featuring Angela Barker's story is currently being distributed to secondary schools across the state. The kit was released in Benalla during March. The aim of the kit is to educate young people on healthy and unhealthy relationships.

## **Professional Training - Hume region**

### **Victorian Centre of Excellence in Eating Disorders**

For further information contact Sarah Walker 03 9342 8184

**Introduction to the Management of Eating Disorders**, Shepparton, 11<sup>th</sup> May 9.30-4.30

**Specialised Training in Management of Eating Disorders for Dieticians**, Shepparton, 18<sup>th</sup> May, 9.30-4.30

**Specialised Training Management of Eating Disorders for mental health professional**, Shepparton, 25<sup>th</sup> May, 9.30-4.30

### **Hume Region Disability Service Provider's Network**

For further information contact Antonella Skinner 03 5822 1944

#### **How People Learn**

This training is for anyone who is interested in understanding how people learn with the view to helping all children as well as adults who have learning difficulties. Benalla 25<sup>th</sup> May 9.30 -3.30

#### **Mental Health First Aid**

For all managers, team leaders in all sectors as well as staff working with people in the aged and disability sector. Benalla 6<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> May 10.00-4.00

#### **An introduction to the 'Spark of Life' club program**

Suitable for anyone with a role in dementia care, aged care managers, professional carers, family members, volunteers and students.

Shepparton 21<sup>st</sup> April 9-4

### **Centre for Grief Education**

For further information 03 545 6377

**Understanding and Supporting the Bereaved Child – Facilitator Training** 17<sup>th</sup> August 9.30-4.30 Albury  
**Coping with Trauma and Crisis in Schools** 18<sup>th</sup> August 9.30-4.30

### **Goulburn Ovens TAFE**

For further information 1300 733 111

**Eating Disorders: A Psycho-Biological Approach** 29<sup>th</sup> July 10-4

#### **Counselling Children**

Designed to enhance the knowledge of health and welfare professionals who work therapeutically with children 26<sup>th</sup> August 9-4

#### **Psychopathology & Diagnosis**

Topics include mental state examination, history taking, the diagnosis of serious mental disorder

### **Communities in Control Conference 2005:**

Imagine a Healthy Future, Where Communities are in Control.

For further information 03 9320 6800

## **New Books in the Library**

**Spirited Women: Journeys with Breast Cancer** by Petrea King

This book addresses the many practical and emotional issues faced by women of diverse backgrounds as they journey with the experience of breast cancer. It is based on the experiences of hundreds of women who talk frankly and bravely about how breast cancer has changed their priorities, affected their self-esteem, their sexuality and their relationships and has provided unexpected opportunities for growth.

The book offers guidelines for dealing with the diagnosis, choosing a doctor and a treatment plan, minimizing the effects of chemotherapy and radio-therapy, using food to support recovery, communicating effectively with partners and families and finding peace.

**Making Meetings work: Achieving High Quality Group Decisions** by John E. Tropman

*Making Meetings Work* covers everything you need to know about organising engaging meetings, including preparing agendas, controlling what happens behind the scenes prior to and after

meetings, and managing conflicting values and personalities.

Tropman has formulated seven principles and fourteen commandments for implementing dynamic meetings.

### **Communities of Hope: A strengths-based resource for building community** by Wayne McCashen

*Communities of Hope* describes a 'strengths' approach to community capacity building. This approach is concerned with the building of a community's own capacity and potential. This practical book also contains a comprehensive three day workshop and 39 handout masters to build and empower hopeful communities.

### **Members Making A Difference**

After an inspiring night at the Anne Summers forum and in response to the challenge, put out by Cathy McGowan, to have women around for a pasta evening, I decided it was time to do it!

So I invited a group of friends over for tea (pasta) and invited Elena from Wangaratta to come and chat.

It was great to have Elena share the first gathering.

Since then the "MAD gals" (Making a Difference) met the first Monday of each month 5.30-7pm for a drink and stimulating chat.

We have had members share travel talks, their work, their passions.

Best of all, it's about support, passing on snippets of wisdom, knowledge, building stronger friendship caring and I guess learning more about life and how we live it!

I agree it's a very necessary thing to get women together. There are networking groups and we do a bit of this but, most of all we build relationships the more we meet, the more we want to meet!

At the recent Women's Expo in Albury I had a MAD flyer up on my pin board. I had more enquires about MAD than about my business!!

Is this saying women are looking for groups with a difference to join? Or just that woman want to meet with other women?

Certainly us "gals" would say both, I'm sure!

Try it - It's a buzz!

Jann Graetz

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Editors note: Thanks Jann for sharing this with us. It's encouraging to know that people's lives have improved as a result of the Anne Summers Forum.

The Anne Summers Forum was videoed and the video is for sale for \$25, or can be borrowed from the library.

### **Project to Retain Workers**

Central Hume Primary Care Partnership Allied Health Recruitment and Retention Project has just released its Phase 1 report.

The research which incorporated allied health professional surveys, exit interviews and service mappings revealed the key findings to be issues of workforce composition, identified incentives and disincentives to rural practice, the length of service in rural agencies, the challenges of professional, social and geographic isolation and a lack of access to professional development (which incorporates training, supervision and peer support). There were also issues around clerical, management, human resources and Allied Health assistant supports, funded vacancies and recruitment and retention challenges, lack of service coordination, systemic barriers, service gaps and overlaps and issues particular to sole therapists.

Women's Health Goulburn North East have copies of the report available for loan from their library. Links to the executive summary, service directory and full report can be found at <http://www.centralhumepcp.org/index.php?n=10&id=10>

Contact the project officer Kate Cuss on 0418 588 036 or [kate.cuss@nhw.hume.org.au](mailto:kate.cuss@nhw.hume.org.au) if you would like any further information.

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