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Susie's Update

Wow this year has started with a rush!! We started with the debate in Parliament over the RU486 Bill that removed responsibility from the Health Minister to the Therapeutic Goods Administration. This was closely followed by International Women's Day. (See the summary below.) Wangaratta had a fantastic turn out and there were many other events held around the region. Well done to all the organisers.

This year we have many plans. They include planning with the four Primary Care Partnerships in our region, completing our three year health promotion plan and developing our strategic plan. The Board and staff are very busy planning!

We've had some changes and additions to staff in the past few months, so here's a quick intro to each of us.



We welcome a new face to reception. Sally Gingell (pictured left), has begun as our Administration Worker. Sally comes to us with a strong background in admin., and has made a great impression already. Welcome Sally.

Sally Nansen, who volunteered with us last year, and Tanya Pawlowsky have taken up positions one day a week on "Tanya's Project". This project is documenting Tanya's pregnancy with a view to developing an accessible resource for a range of pregnant women who have difficulty understanding the typical literature on pregnancy.

Sandy King is with us for a few more days before she takes maternity leave. Sandy plans to return after the birth of her baby and research the potential for implementing a microfinance system in our region.

Julie Tyler is focusing on information and resources, so don't forget to access the information in the library and look out for a new website soon.

Deb Parkinson our Researcher, is working on two research projects and in the planning stages of others. More information about those later.

Kylie Stephens, our Education and Training Worker, is focusing on Project:Equity, which is working with organisations to recognise inequity in their work, to change inequity and to engage all sections of the community.

Emma Fahey is currently the Family Violence Networker for the Hume Region and supporting Breanna Wilson who is working one day a week as a Family Violence and Disability Worker.

Christine Alexander, our Finance Officer, is taking long service leave this year in Europe!! Congratulations Christine and have an enjoyable time away.

We have a very busy team and you will see the fruits of their labour as the year progresses.

Susie Reid, Manager

Over 80 Women Shared International Women's Day with Senator Lyn Allison

On Wednesday the 8th March 2006, 82 women met to celebrate International Women's Day at a breakfast in Wangaratta.

International Women's Day is held to celebrate past achievements by women and to look towards new achievements.

Our Manager, Susie Reid, began the morning with statistics confirming women's financial disadvantage. She urged women to once again "use our collective power to tell politicians at State and Commonwealth level that we want women's services. **We want equality**".



Ms Reid said, "The presumption that men can make decisions for women is not so subtle in relation to reproduction. And women don't think it's

OK for male politicians to make these decisions for them."

Susie then introduced Senator Lyn Allison, (pictured above), Leader of the Australian Democrats, by congratulating her on her success and her foresight in initiating the RU486 Bill. The Bill sought to remove responsibility for RU486 from the Health Minister to the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Senator Allison emphasised the importance of women parliamentarians representing women and how there needs to be **50% representation at all levels of government**.

"In the RU486 debate, 90% of women voted for the Bill compared to only 46% of men. So, if we didn't have women in parliament, the bill would have failed." Senator Allison encouraged women to contact the Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks, urging him to allow the debate on removing abortion from the Victorian Crimes Act before the election, rather than after.

At the end of the breakfast, women said they were inspired to run for Parliament, change their vote, be heard, become more political and challenge our local members!

Snippets from Susie's Introduction at IWD

The RU486 debate was important at a community level. For the first time in a long time, the **silent majority of women got active again** and contributed to the success of the RU486 Bill. But the fight is far from over. Abortion remains on the Victorian Crimes Act and it seems that the \$51 million allocated for counselling women with unwanted pregnancies comes with a stipulation that there are to be no counsellors with connections to abortion clinics. There is **no similar stipulation** about counsellors with connections to pro-life associations. The counsellors will provide contact details for abortion clinics only 'if asked'.

If the aim is to reduce the number of abortions in Australia, why have we heard nothing about prevention? Mr Abbott has not mentioned increasing funding to schools for sex and relationship education; nor is he insisting that pharmacists fill prescriptions for the pill.

Why is this?

In our brave new world of counselling women to keep their unwanted child, we have not heard about extra resources to support women through pregnancy and the long years after.

Pru Goward told us in October last year that:

- The primary source of female economic disadvantage is child rearing.
- There is no national maternity leave scheme – it is provided adhoc and at the employer's discretion. It is least available in rural areas.

Anne Summers told us, and from our own research we know, that:

- Women in full time work earn 85 cents in the male dollar.

- Once all workers, including casuals and part timers, are included, the earnings drop to 66 cents in the male dollar.
- Some of our assumptions are that it's really ok because most women have a husband and it's a partnership approach rather than an issue of individual earnings. Here's the bad news. Divorce rates are just below one in two. After divorce, 35% of women under 45 live below the poverty line, and more than half who divorce over 45 live in poverty.
- In our region, 87% of all sole parents are women.
- Women do a lot of unpaid caring. In Australia, 75% of carers are women.
- 91% of elderly parents receiving informal care receive it from their daughters, not their sons.
- One third of women who work in this country have no paid entitlements and even more have no significant superannuation.
- Despite women working more than ever, by the year 2019, women will have half the retirement savings of men.
- Women are two and a half times more likely to live in poverty during retirement.

The indications are that the Victorian Government, like the Howard Government, believes there is no need for **women specific services**. Have they read the above statistics?

In the current policy vacuum, the Women's Health Association of Victoria has developed a 10-point plan for Victorian Women's Health to 2010. (See enclosed handout).

RU486 showed that we **can** lobby successfully. Let's use our collective power to tell our politicians at State and Commonwealth level that we want women's services. We want equality. Although a lot of us resist being called feminist (not including us at WHGNE of

course!), let's take on the challenge of feminism.

Feminism is '**The view, articulated in the 19th Century, that women are inherently equal to men and deserve equal rights and opportunities.**'

Let's work towards this. Let's tell Sophie and Ken and John and Tony and Steve and everyone else, that our support for them depends on what they're going to do to change those stats about women. To make it equal.

BreastScreen Van in Our Region

The BreastScreen Van has been in Yarrawonga for two weeks and will be there until mid-May when it then moves to Corryong. It then proceeds to Tallangatta in June, Myrtleford in July and Wangaratta in August until mid December.

As a follow up to the Woman to Woman Breast Cancer Research, Kate Cuss from Women's Health Goulburn North East, has been working with Yarrawonga District Health Service to 'value-add' to the visit of the van. Around 40 well women go into the van each day. The 'Passport to Good Health' (originally developed by Jenny Gee and women from the Older Women Carer's Project), has been updated with local information for Yarrawonga women and is given to women when they attend the van. The passport suggests that women undertake a range of health checks from vision to foot-care to cardiovascular checks, and gives contact details to arrange these.

In addition, a professional development session was held last week in Yarrawonga for GPs and health professionals working with women with breast cancer, and a women's health evening is planned for July (more details soon!).

WHGNE Research is Quoted

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) is hosting the Hume region briefing by the **Victorian Law Reform**

Commission on their "Review of Family Violence Laws Final Report".

This report has been informed by local women's stories through the Powerful Journey research conducted by WHGNE.

Members are invited to the information session to be held at the Wangaratta Uniting Church – Wangaratta, on 20th April, from 10.30am -12-30pm with lunch provided afterwards.

The Victorian Law Reform Commission has reviewed the Crimes (Family Violence) Act and made 153 recommendations for change. You have the opportunity to hear the key recommendations and to have your questions answered. Hope you are able to attend.

When: **20th April 2006**

Where: **Wangaratta Uniting Church,**
10 Rowan Street, Wangaratta

Time: **10.30am to 12.30pm** with lunch to follow

To register contact Sally at Women's Health ASAP on (03) 5722 3009 or email s.gingell@whealth.com.au

For a copy of *Review of Family Violence Laws Final Report*, visit www.lawreform.vic.gov.au or phone (03) 8619 8619.

Gender & Health Inequalities

The first National Conference of Gender & Health Inequalities is on Thursday 22nd June in Melbourne.

This conference is set to make a difference to the way research is done and policy is made.

For further information, contact (03) 8344 4333 or visit the website on www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au/news/conferences/

The office will be closed on this day (22/6), as all staff will be attending.

Congratulations Mungabareena

We have just heard that Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation has been successful in attracting \$300,000 under the Local Answers funding stream of the Commonwealth Dept. of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Women's Health Goulburn North East worked with Mungabareena in preparing this submission. It is part of our current health promotion plan to support both Aboriginal Corporations in Hume Region, in recognition that they are best placed to know what works in their community and how to deliver programs aimed at improving health and wellbeing.

Accessing Information

Australian Bureau of Statistics - Free Access!

All statistics on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) website at www.abs.gov.au can now be accessed free of charge.

The new policy was announced recently by the Federal Government as an ABS Centenary tribute to the people of Australia.

The change means that all statistics, tables, spreadsheets and Census data are now available free to any member of the public with Internet access.

For further information visit the ABS website at www.abs.gov.au

InfoHub: Information for Women

The Queen Victoria Women's Centre, in cooperation with partners WIRE - Women's Information and Women's Health Victoria, introduces the QVWC InfoHub Website: www.qvwc.org.au

InfoHub is a website with trusted online health information for Victorian women and women's organisations. A range of women's networks have contributed

information to meet women's needs and concerns.

All the resources have been carefully selected and reviewed, creating a reliable and reputable hub of services, support and information.

The InfoHub's website address is:

www.qvwc.org.au/infohub

Topics are: Health and Wellbeing, Violence Against Women and Work Family Balance. So log on and check it out!

Women are welcome to use the computer at WHGNE to access this information or any other online or internet information.

Rainbow Network Website

The new Rainbow Network website (Stage 1), is up and running:

www.rainbownetwork.net.au

The Rainbow Network is the State-Wide Network for workers who facilitate groups, coordinate projects or work with same sex attracted, bisexual, queer and transgender young people. The website provides an outline of Rainbow Network, the membership criteria for the Network and most importantly, the listing of current same sex attracted, bisexual, queer and transgender social and support groups and projects from around the state.

Stage 2 will be launched in April and will include a region by region guide of groups and projects and useful contact people and organisations, resources and links,

support for workers and publications & research information.

Assistive Technology Forum

A forum is being held to showcase adaptive technologies that provide alternative reading, writing and research tools available to individuals with disabilities including physical, vision, hearing impairments and learning impairments.

These technologies may allow individuals to independently and effectively integrate into mainstream post secondary and tertiary education settings.

The forum has three main target groups:

Students with a disability;

Parents; and

Professionals assisting students with a disability of the post secondary and tertiary education sector.

When: **12th May 2006**

Where: **Riverina Institute, Albury, NSW**

Time: **8.30am to 4.15pm**

To indicate your interest to attend, go to: www.adcet.edu.au/nthvic or contact (03) 5833 2526.

Next issue will have a focus on same sex attracted women. If you have any information, resources or stories you would like included, please forward them to WHGNE, by 30/5/06.

Rural and Regional Women's Representation on Boards

Rural and Regional Women's Representation

Federal Senator Judith Troeth will chair an Inquiry into Rural and Regional Women's Representation. The Inquiry will report on:

- The position of women in decision making in rural and regional Australia;
- Factors assisting and impeding the broad participation of women in

bodies of influence in rural and regional Australia; and

- Strategies for industry and governments aimed at increasing women's representation for the longer term sustainability and competitiveness of rural and regional Australia.

The report is due in June 2006. For further information including background papers phone (02) 6274 7915, email

diversityonboards@dotars.gov.au or visit www.dotars.gov.au

Women's Representation

The following statistics are from the Australian Government's publication, *A Snapshot of Women's Representation on Selected Regional Bodies*.

- Around 55% of women in rural Australia work, yet the level of women's representation in rural and regional bodies is seldom above 25%. It is not uncommon to be considerably below this figure.
- Only 17% of Mayors and 6% of Chief Executive Officers in non-metropolitan local government are women.
- The average female representation for ASX 200 companies is 1.1% Chairs, 2.3% Chief Executive Officers (CEO) and 8.6% Board Directors.
- Even worse for agricultural companies sampled. 0% female Chairs or CEO's and 7% female Board Directors.

These statistics and others give a strong case for women to get involved or to support other women to take on leadership positions.

Women on Boards – National Program

'Women on Boards' is a national program to improve the gender balance on Australian Company Boards through skill-based selection. The program funds research as well as networking and mentoring events. The web site acts as a meeting place for current Board Directors and aspiring Directors, and contains a range of relevant articles and reports.

For more information, or to become a WOB member, visitors need to register and complete a resume at www.womenonboards.org.au

Rural Women

Are you a female war, peacemaking or peacekeeping veteran?

Alison Herron and Dr Susan Feldman are seeking 120 Australian female veterans who would be willing to discuss their experiences of returning to life at home after overseas service.

Victoria University has been funded by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), to investigate the experiences and impact of war (post-Vietnam) and/or peacekeeping service on female veterans and the factors that assist their reintegration into their families and communities. This new knowledge will assist community programs and support networks to better promote the health and wellbeing of women veterans.

Participants would attend a two hour discussion group with other female veterans in Queensland, NSW, ACT or Victoria, during May or June. Personal

details and any responses that could be identifying will remain confidential to the research team and participation will not affect DVA entitlements in any way. Some financial assistance is available for travel and childcare.

Albury/Wodonga has been chosen as the site to launch the research. Discussion groups will be held on 26th & 27th April 2006.

The research is approved by the Ethics Committees of Victoria University and DVA, and has the support of the Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association (APPVA) and Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service (VVCS).

For further information, please contact Alison Herron Ph: (03) 9919 1183 or email alison.herron@vu.edu.au
Dr Susan Feldman Ph: (03) 9362 0332 or email susan.feldman@vu.edu.au

'Women's Eye on Peace 2' Photography Exhibition

The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) invites women from across the globe to submit entries in **'Women's Eye on Peace 2'**, to be launched in Melbourne, in October 2006.

You don't need to be a professional photographer and the images don't need to be picture-perfect. We want to find out how you see peace and which images resonate in your minds eye (and camera!).

The International Women's Development Agency is a non-profit organisation that creates positive change for women and their communities. For twenty years the IWDA have supported practical and rights-based projects for women, directly addressing poverty and oppression in developing countries.

All proceeds raised from the Women's Eye on Peace 2 photographs will support IWDA's work with women working towards peace. Entries Close 31st July.

For further information visit www.iwda.org.au or for an entry form contact Kathy Proctor on (03) 9650 5574 or email kproctor@iwda.org.au

Rural Women Linking Arms

Rural women are invited to attend a free, fun and social evening. The Rural Women Linking Arms evenings in Shepparton or Tatura, are taking place during Rural Health Week. The aim is to promote individual wellbeing by assisting rural women to value themselves and their journey.

Rural women will be exposed to a broad range of groups and networks that are available to them, promoting the discovery of options and possible skill development. The evenings are focused on having fun with 'like minded' women. The sharing of food and wine will help generate conversation in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

The evenings will be facilitated by the Rural Women's Network. Special guest speakers (all from the local area), include Rien Silverstein (Women in Horticulture), Cath Marriot (Women in Agriculture), Cathy McGowan (Women in Agriculture) and Jenny Reuther (Women in Dairy and VFF).

The two events will take place on:

May 16th, Shepparton, 7.00pm - 10:30pm
May 17th, Tatura, 7.00pm - 10:30pm
For further information and RSVP, contact Paula Way on (03) 5832 9857.

Single Gender Bathing Sessions

Aquamoves Lakeside Shepparton are conducting a women only session on Saturdays 5.30pm to 7.30pm. For further information contact (03) 5831 8188.

Health Promotion Priorities 2007 - 2012

The Department of Human Services Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services Division (DHS RRHACS), and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), are hosting a series of consultations across the state to develop health promotion priorities for 2007 - 2012.

The Hume region session was held in Benalla on Wednesday 12th April. participation provided Women's Health Goulburn North East with the opportunity to have input into the process of defining the HP priorities for 2007 - 2012.

A discussion paper has been developed to support this process and the consultation discussion was structured around it. For those unable to attend any of the sessions, but would like to make a written submission, please see the discussion paper for details.

This paper is downloadable from <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion>

For further information contact:
Anita Thomas on (03) 9637 4046 (Wed, Thurs & Fri) or email anita.thomas@dhs.vic.gov.au

Training in the North East and Goulburn Valley Region

Explore the Effects of Family Violence on Children

If you work with children, you will benefit from this session.

You will:

- Hear the latest research on children and the effects of family violence;
- Learn about the amendments to the Children and Young Persons Act;
- Learn how children are effected by family violence;
- Discuss how as a community we can take responsibility for children's safety;
- Meet agency workers and ask specific questions – eg. referral process;
- Enjoy a light supper.

Date: **27th April**

Where: The Centre **Wangaratta**

Time: **5.30pm – 8.00pm**

Cost: **Free**

For further information contact (03) 5722 3009 or email e.fahey@whealth.com.au

Drug Actions

Frontline workers in the Community Service Health Industry will gain knowledge of drugs and drug actions required to work with clients who have alcohol and/or other drug issues.

Date: **19th & 20th June 2006**

Where: TAFE NSW, **Albury** Campus

Time: **9.00am – 5.00pm**

Cost: **Free**

For further information contact Mary Sloan on (02) 6058 2973 or email mary.sloan@tafensw.edu.au

Mental Health Issues

Frontline workers in the Community Service Health Industry will gain the basic understanding and skills required to assist people with mental health problems, to participate in community life.

Date: **22nd & 23rd June 2006**

Where: TAFE NSW, **Albury** Campus

Time: **9.00am – 5.00pm**

Cost: **Free**

For further information contact Mary Sloan on (02) 6058 2973 or email mary.sloan@tafensw.edu.au

Disability Workers Skills Update Information Session

The aim of this session is to provide an update and refresh the skills of people who already provide support and direct care to people with a disability.

Date: **27th April**

Time: **Seymour 10.00am - 12.00noon**
Benalla 2.00pm – 4.00pm

For Further information or to register, contact Antonella Skinner on (03) 5831 1610 or email trgtraining@inet.net.au

Disability, Dementia & Aged Care

This training aims to increase participant's knowledge of the key issues facing people with disabilities who are ageing and to understand dementia and its impact on clients with disabilities.

Date: **8th May**

Time: **9.30am – 3.00pm**

Where; **Benalla**

For Further information or to register, contact Antonella Skinner on (03) 5831 1610 or email trgtraining@inet.net.au

Implementing the Person Centred Approach

This workshop will provide participants with skills and knowledge that they can take away and implement within their organisation and with their clients.

Date: **17th May**

Time: **9.30am – 3.30pm**

Where: **Benalla**

For Further information or to register, contact Antonella Skinner on (03) 5831 1610 or email trgtraining@inet.net.au

Free, Interactive & Practical Research & Evidence Based Practice Skills you can take back to your workplace.

Where: **Shepparton**

Time: **9.30am – 1.00pm**

9th May: Research writing for funding submissions and disseminating findings;

6th June: The ethics of research;

26th July: Sourcing the evidence for submissions and reports;

26th September: The ABC of presenting at a research conference.

For further information email Barbara Hellwege on bhe@unimelb.edu.au (PHCRED).