



WOMEN'S HEALTH
GOULBURN NORTH EAST

Women's Health Goulburn North East Member's Newsletter Oct 2007

**Women's health
matters to me.**

**Does it matter
to you?**

Vote as if women mattered

Women are discriminated against in structural ways that continue decade after decade. Even in the 21st century, women have a greater struggle than men to achieve equal opportunity. Wages are still lower, universal maternity leave is a dream, childcare is not available to all who need it, and superannuation remains starkly inequitable for men and women retiring and about to retire in the next two decades.

What you can do!

Vote for political parties that have women's policies and a commitment to eliminating the inequity between men and women.

Women make up 51% of the Australian population. We have had the vote in Federal elections since 1902. More than a century! Why haven't we used the vote to demand equal status?

If we think it matters that we do not have equal rights in this country, we could use our vote to make a real difference.

If women mattered, we would care that:

- Men's wages are approximately 51 per cent higher than women's. This is a result of both direct discrimination, and lower earnings for many female dominated occupations. Why **does** a childcare worker earn less than a caretaker? ¹
- There are over 100,000 single mothers living in poverty. There are considerably more poor women in sole parent families than there are men (104,000 compared with 34,000). ²
- Average retirement pay-outs were expected to be \$130,000 for men and \$45,000 for women in 2006. Actual average account balances were \$56,400 for men and \$23,900 for women in 2004³
- Australia is one of only two OECD Countries that does **not** have government funded paid maternity leave. In contrast, the United Kingdom offers 26 weeks.⁴
- Approximately 160,000 women want to work but are not looking because of issues relating to childcare, including shortage of childcare places, long waiting lists (especially for under three year olds) and increasing costs.⁵

¹ http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/womens_rights_watch/ (Accessed 27.9.2007)

² Ibid

³ Figures from Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia research cited in Corboy, A. (2007, September 29) System not so super. The Age. [Online]. Retrieved October 2, 2007

⁴ http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/womens_rights_watch/ (Accessed 27.9.2007)

⁵ ibid

So which political parties care?

The Greens	Australian Democrats	ALP	Liberal Party	National Party
<p>The Greens Women's policy outlines 6 Principles, 8 Goals and 14 Measures to address these (and more) inequities. See http://greens.org.au/about/policy/policy.php?policy_id=26</p>	<p>The Australian Democrats have a policy entitled 'Equality for Women', with sub-headings of 'Paid Maternity Leave', 'Pregnancy Counselling', 'Sexual and Reproductive Health', 'Status of Women' and 'Women's Health'. See http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/election_07_our_election_platform/#women</p>	<p>The ALP's policy is more nebulous. Women are grouped with youth and seniors. There are eight media releases listed, four of which relate to women: improving safety; 12 months unpaid leave for both parents after birth of a baby; and a women's budget statement. There is also a Child Care and Families Policies which repeated the same policies already outlined under Women, Youth and Seniors. See http://www.alp.org.au/policy/index.php</p>	<p>The Liberal party does not appear to have a women's policy. See http://www.liberal.org.au/ When we asked the local member's office staff, we were directed to the Office for Women site. The Office for Women itself has lost funding and been moved out of the Dept of PM under the Howard Govt⁷. See http://www.ofw.facs.gov.au/</p> <p>The record of the Howard Govt since 1996 on women's issues speaks for itself. Many key women's organisations were abolished or defunded, including the Women's Bureau in DEET; Women's Statistical Unit in ABS; the Women's Electoral Lobby; the Register of Women in the OSW. Since Howard came to power in 1996, the gap between men's and women's average full time earnings widened from \$163.30 in 1996, to \$195.40 in May 2004 to \$301 a week less than men in 2004⁸. The current difference in average weekly total earnings is \$891.20 for men and \$588.50 for women. This is a \$302 difference⁹. Despite the work of the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, a national scheme of paid maternity leave has not been adopted¹⁰.</p>	<p>The National party does not appear to have a women's policy. See http://www.nationals.org.au/About/Policies/default.asp</p>

What now?

Use your vote to tell government that women matter. Equality matters. OR take it up notch and influence election promises by asking your local member or candidates what they will do to address **LOWER PAY FOR WOMEN** or **NO NATIONAL PAID MATERNITY LEAVE** or **LIMITED CHILD CARE** or **LOWER SUPERANNUATION PAYOUTS FOR WOMEN**.

Actions to take:

- Tell your candidates that you care about women's issues. Call, write or email and ask for their women's policy. See www.whealth.com.au for candidates contact details.
- Take part in surveys
- Write letters to newspapers
- Ring talkback radio shows
- Vote in electronic polls
- Pass on information to friends and people in your circle of influence. Never under estimate the ripple effect!

⁶ All websites accessed October 2 and 3, 2007.

⁷ Summers, A (2003) The End of Equality. Random House Australia.

⁸ (http://www.trishcrossin.com.au/html/media_2004_10_27.html) Accessed 3.10.2007

⁹ http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/womens_rights_watch/#pay (accessed 3.10. 2007))

¹⁰ Crabb, A, 'Government rejected family task force' in The Age, 13.2.2004 <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/02/12/1076548160751.html> (accessed 14.5.10.2007)



Fly a White Balloon in Wangaratta

By Faylene Howard

Fly a White Balloon Day, on the first Tuesday in September, aims to raise community awareness of child sexual abuse and strengthen community engagement in resolution and prevention strategies for this issue. The CBD of Wangaratta was awash with white balloons. We set up an information stall at the kiosk on the Commonwealth Bank corner to provide information on service providers and stories from survivors of child sexual abuse. The kiosk was staffed by our state and federal members of parliament, one city councillor, workers from service agencies, TAFE students and volunteers. A survey on the local community's knowledge of Fly a White Balloon Day was conducted by Charles Sturt University students. The day was a huge success with over 120 businesses, churches, agencies, organizations and schools participating. Congratulations to Wangaratta for having the courage to confront this issue with enthusiasm.

Carmen Denniss

It is with deep sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Carmen Denniss on Thursday 11th October, aged 42. Carmen was a community member and worker at Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, and previously the Aboriginal Planning Officer for DHS, Hume region. Carmen was a Wiradjuri woman, born in Uranquinty, NSW. She was compassionate and committed; a warm hearted colleague and friend, always up for a yarn and a laugh. Carmen enthusiastically shared her many skills and wisdom with all to improve the health and wellbeing of her community. She supported agencies such as ours to understand how we can work more respectfully and effectively in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities. Carmen contributed to, and participated in all our partnership projects with Mungabareena including the Koori Cultural Regeneration Project, Little Women's Business and Making Two Worlds Work. She also supported Aboriginal women to participate in the Powerful Journey research, launch and audio-taping. Carmen was an inaugural Board member of WHGNE. We will miss her greatly.

WELCOME TO RACHAEL MACKAY



I have recently been employed as the new Bsafe Project worker with WHGNE. My background is social work and I have an eclectic work history in family violence, housing and child protection, both in Australia and overseas. The opportunity to combine my family violence knowledge with a community development project such as Bsafe was one I could not refuse! I am looking forward to extending my skills working with Victoria Police, government and the community sector to implement the project.



Students On Placement

Hi there,
We are Sarah and Lany, students on placement from Latrobe University. We are based at WHGNE until mid-December and we are participating in two projects involving young women. The first project is compiling demographic data on young women in booklet form and the second is, identifying the gaps in information for young women who are either pregnant or parenting. Throughout the projects we will be conducting focus groups with young women across the Hume Region and navigating our way through statistics. We are enjoying our time at Women's Health and hope that our work here is found to be helpful for working with young women.

Don't forget to check out our website
www.whealth.com.au
which is being constantly updated.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2007

Dr Vivian Waller was the guest speaker at this year's combined AGM of regional domestic violence, sexual assault and women's health services. Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE), Upper Murray Centre Against Sexual Assault (UMCASA) and Cooroonya Domestic Violence Service hosted the event at the Gateway in Wangaratta, where Dr Waller spoke about "The High Court Decision of Stingel v Clarke, the high profile legal case involving the alleged rape of Carol Stingel by Geoff Clarke, (the chairperson of the now defunct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) and Civil Litigation in Sexual Assault cases". In 2003 Dr Waller established Victoria's first specialized unit dedicated to the legal representation of those who have endured rape and other sexual assault.



Susie Reid, Dr Viv Waller, Marg Welsh and Kerry Burns

Family violence is a crime most often perpetrated by men against women and children. The sensitive and often hidden truth about this crime is that most violent assaults are not those by strangers, but by people who are known to us and that we trust.

Cooroonya DV Service and UMCASA both provide direct service to those affected by violence from a partner or someone else known to them. Perpetrators can also be parents, children, relatives, friends, neighbors or others known to the victim survivor. UMCASA also provides services to men, women and children affected by the sexual violence of a stranger.

WHGNE undertakes research about family and partner violence, working in partnership with other community agencies to improve service response and increase community awareness and understanding of these important issues.

All three services conduct community education to help professionals and members of the community to respond appropriately when there is a cry for help.

Collaboration between these local agencies is a key feature of providing high quality service to the community, particularly to women and children who experience family violence.



There is very little in the way of women's sexual and reproductive health suitable for women with an intellectual disability, nor for workers supporting them.

It Takes Two to Tango is an exciting resource about one woman's journey through pregnancy and childbirth. The purpose is to help women understand what is happening to their body and their emotions during pregnancy and it offers an avenue for discussion and action plans for workers supporting or caring for other women with intellectual or learning disabilities. The book fills a gap in available resources for this very disadvantaged group and is unique in its very positive and uplifting presentation as a scrapbook of memories. Download a PDF copy (1887KB) ***It Takes Two to Tango*** from WHGNE's website- www.whealth.com.au



Regional Teen Pregnancy and Parenting Forum-Continuing Education

Centre Wodonga - Tuesday 25th September 07

This highly successful regional forum brought together over 80 speakers, services and young parents to talk about the experiences and needs of young parents, examples of good practice, and the issues and priorities that exist. A major highlight of the day was hearing from Professor Julie Quinlivan about the importance of ante-natal engagement in creating strong health outcomes and how to create a strong evidence base for further work. Other highlights were hearing about supported residential accommodation, peer education, young parents voices, and hearing what is happening across the Hume Region. A wide range of resources were made available on the day, bringing together work done in Tasmania, South Australia, NSW and Queensland. Evaluation feedback was extremely positive, and a report will be circulated detailing the findings of the issues, gaps, and priorities session.