

# Women in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

how far have we come?  
are we better off than our mothers?

## a community forum

with

**Anne Summers**

**Are  
women's policies  
and  
women's issues  
irrelevant?**

'I haven't heard the term  
women's policies or women's  
issues for many years. It's irrelevant  
now.'

### Who decides how we live?

- ∨ In 2002, 73% of all Australian parliamentarians were men
- ∨ 90% of supreme court judges are men
- ∨ 90% of senior executives in Australian companies are men

### Who has the resources?

- ∨ 79% of people earning \$1500+ pw are men
- ∨ Women's full time earnings are 81% of men's
- ∨ 160,000 women are prevented from working because they can't get childcare

### Who gets hurt?

- ∨ One in 3 women suffered childhood sexual assault
- ∨ One in 4 women experience domestic violence in their homes
- ∨ Only 18% of rapes proceed to prosecution
- ∨ Only 24% of these result in a conviction

- 7.15 Welcome
- 7.30 'Snakes and Ladders' Deb Parkinson, Researcher - WHGNE
- 7.50 'The End of Equality' Anne Summers, Author
- 8.25 Elena Tauridsky, Program Manager - Ovens & King CHS
- 8.35 Cathy McGowan, Principal, Catherine McGowan Consulting
- 8.45 Questions and discussion
- 9.00 Conclusion
- 9.10 Supper

Anne Summers is a best selling Australian author, journalist and speaker on political and social, especially women's, issues. Anne led the Office of the Status of Women from 1983-86 and was advisor to Prime Ministers Paul Keating and Bob Hawke. She is a former editor of Good Weekend, and is a Sydney Morning Herald columnist. Anne's books include Damned Whores and God's Police (still in print after 29 years) and Ducks on the Pond, her autobiography. In 1988 Anne and Sandra Yates led a buyout of Ms. and Sassy magazines. She is a member of the Australian Society of Authors and co-editor of its magazine Australian Author. Anne is on the committee of Sydney PEN Centre, is a Walkley Award winner and is an Officer in the Order of Australia. She is Chair of the board of Greenpeace International and is Deputy President of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.



## WOMEN'S HEALTH HANDBOOK 2005

We are challenged often with the question 'Why women's health?' and the accompanying inference that women have achieved equality. The *Women's Health Handbook 2005* gives the evidence – stark and disheartening – that this is not so.

The handbook focuses on provision of data about women in north east Victoria and the Goulburn Valley, followed by a discussion of the challenges that face us. It is a resource for the ongoing improvement of planning, delivering and evaluating health services to women in Hume region.

### A GLANCE AT SIGNIFICANT AUSTRALIAN LEGISLATION

- ∞ 1861 First divorce legislation -women to prove repeated adultery, cruelty, desertion. Men to prove one act of adultery
- ∞ 1901 Publication of *My Brilliant Career* by Miles Franklin, and in 1908 *Maurice Guest* by Henry Handel Richardson
- ∞ 1902 All white women can vote for the Commonwealth Parliament
- ∞ 1908 Adult suffrage for all women in Victoria
- ∞ 1912 Marriage Act (Vic) guarantees the right of a wife to guardianship of her children following death of husband
- ∞ In 1919, female clothing workers are awarded a minimum wage set at 57% of the male wage
- ∞ 1928 First International Women's Day in Australia
- ∞ 1933 First birth control clinic in Australia
- ∞ 1957 ACTU deputation to Commonwealth Government with 61,000 signatures, asking for equal pay
- ∞ 1958 Victorian Crimes Act proclaims abortion illegal
- ∞ 1958 Acts Interpretation Act formalises male bias in language, asserting that masculine terms include women
- ∞ 1970s The pill becomes easily available to women
- ∞ 1963 Women Bureau created in Dept. of Labour and National Service (now DEETYA)
- ∞ 1966 Marriage bar lifted, giving married women access to permanent positions in the Australian Public Service
- ∞ 1967 Referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as Australian citizens with equal rights
- ∞ 1969 Equal pay for equal work introduced by Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (ACAC) (except for work which is 'essentially or normally performed by females')
- ∞ 1969 Abortion legalised in SA; lawful in Vic if reasonable concern for woman's mental or physical health
- ∞ 1970 First Women's Liberation meetings in Canberra/ 1972 WEL founded
- ∞ 1971 Bank of NSW becomes first bank to give loans to women without a male guarantor
- ∞ 1972 Principle of equal pay for equal work is adopted by CW Conciliation and Arbitration Commission
- ∞ 1973 Elizabeth Reid is appointed first advisor on women's affairs (to the Whitlam government)
- ∞ 1973 Maternity Leave Act introduced
- ∞ 1973 First Women's Health Centre, in Sydney/ 1974 First refuge. First rape crisis centre established in capital cities
- ∞ 1974 OSW established in Dept of PM and Cabinet
- ∞ 1975 Family Law Act which requires irrevocable breakdown of marriage as the only grounds for divorce
- ∞ 1975 International Women's Year
- ∞ 1975 Women on equal footing with men for jury duty
- ∞ 1977 Victoria enacts sex discrimination laws
- ∞ 1979 First Reclaim the Night marches
- ∞ (Crimes (Sexual Offences) Act 1980 provides for prosecution of rape by a husband on his wife
- ∞ 1982 Right to Choose Coalition formed to assert the right of women to control their own reproduction
- ∞ 1983 Australia ratifies UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- ∞ 1985 ACAC affirms equal pay principles of '72 Equal Pay Case, but rejects that female work areas are of equal worth
- ∞ 1986 Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act passed by Federal Government
- ∞ 1987 Nurses achieve higher award pay by demonstrating sex bias in the setting of old wage rates
- ∞ 1987 Victorian Crimes (Family Violence) Act becomes law - to protect through restraining orders

(Joan Kirner and Moira Rayner, *The Women's Power Handbook*)

"It is going to be up to women to change the political agenda so that it treats them seriously and with respect. We have had to do it several times in relatively recent history and now it seems we have to do it all over again."

Anne Summers, *The End of Equality*, 2003, p. 261

"There is one thing and that is we must always have hope. There is a difference between having hope and dreaming. It is not wrong to have hope but you have to work towards achieving that hope. Just sitting down and dreaming will not do. Have one vision and struggle to achieve it."

Address by Aung San Suu Kyi, General Secretary of the National League for Democracy, Jan 29, 1999

"There are hundreds of battles being fought around the world that need your skills, your minds, your resources. No battle is irrelevant. No victory is too small.... But remember that if the struggle were to resort to violence, it will lose vision, beauty and imagination. Most dangerous of all, it will marginalize and eventually victimize women. And a political struggle that does not have women at the heart of it, above it, below it and within it is no struggle at all. The point is that the battle must be joined."

Arandhati Roy, Sydney Peace Prize Speech, 2004

## SPEAKER PROFILES

**Cathy McGowan** is a rural consultant, farmer and Cathy McGowan is the principal of Catherine McGowan Consulting. She is a rural consultant, farmer and academic. Her experience includes researching effective services for rural communities. Her major current work is with horticultural industries, where she is responsible for a national program to encourage and support leadership. Cathy has a vision for rural Australia where everyone is able to 'bloom where they are planted' a vibrant and caring rural Australia alive with opportunities.

**Elena Tauridsky** was the original women's health service worker, based in Seymour. She has a social work degree and has worked as a counsellor and in community development. Elena has a passion for social justice and women's issues.

**Deb Parkinson** works as a researcher with WHGNE to offer resources for improved planning and ultimately better services for women. She has an MA through a research thesis, a BA and B.Litt (Hons) in Social Research. Deb is co-author of *The Woman's Health Handbook 2005* with Kerry Burns and Claire Zara -launched tonight.

## ACTING UP - 10 WAYS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

1. Write the prime minister a letter describing those parts of your life that could be better if his government was more attuned to women's needs. Send copies to the leader of the opposition, Australian Democrats and Greens.
2. Find out who your federal member of parliament is and send her/him an email to let her/him know your opinion on issues that affect your life.
3. Choose one of your senators and email her/him as well.
4. Make sure the women members of parliament know how you feel.
5. Join one of the political parties and work to achieve change from the inside.
6. Write a letter to the paper to express your views - especially if one of the newspaper columnists is stating opinions that you think are detrimental to women's equality.
7. Ring up talkback radio and air your opinion. Don't let the airwaves be dominated by ratbags.
8. Check out the groups linked to below that fight for women's equality; you might want to give one of them your support.
9. Boycott companies that are unfair to women.
10. Above all, talk about this stuff. Share your thoughts and feelings with your friends, people at work, your family, anyone you come in contact with."

(From Anne Summers, *The End of Equality*)

## TAKE IT PERSONALLY

- ✓ Change your attitude
- ✓ Spread the word - talk to your friends about the change you want to see happen
- ✓ Campaign - support a group with like minded goals
- ✓ Change your lifestyle
- ✓ Be a proactive employee - work towards family friendly policies
- ✓ Be a leading and innovative employer
- ✓ Lobby - raise issues with all decision makers
- ✓ Get the media involved
- ✓ Join in events

(Adapted from Anita Roddick & Barry Coates)

What WHGNE can offer you...

# Equity

Assisting your organisation in: 'Acting to reduce social inequities and injustice' and 'Explicitly considering difference in gender and culture'

## Understanding Equity Training:

A half day workshop

- Introducing you to the principles of equity

## Integrating Equity Training:

Two half day workshops on integrating equity into your policy and planning

- Establish opportunities and methods for involving all potential clients
- Create a policy response to ensure equity is central in all aspects of the organisation, its projects and services

## Planning for equity principles:

WHGNE will work with you to plan and evaluate with an equity lens

## Specialised Training:

One day workshops on working with people with specific needs, including culturally and linguistically diverse people, same sex attracted people, young people, people with disabilities

Contact WHGNE: P 03 57223009 F 03 57223020  
[whealth@whealth.com.au](mailto:whealth@whealth.com.au) [www.whealth.com.au](http://www.whealth.com.au)



## RIPPED OFF!

IN 1996, THE HOWARD GOVT DID THIS:

- ∨ The Women's Bureau in DEET was abolished after 30 years work tracking women's employment
- ∨ Women's Statistics Unit in ABS was abolished
- ∨ The annual Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey, which collected data on women's employment and maternity leave, was stopped
- ∨ The Sex Discrimination Commissioner position was allowed to remain unfilled for 14 months
- ∨ The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's budget was slashed by 40% (reducing staff by one third)
- ∨ Staff numbers in the Human Rights Branch of the Attorney General's Dept were cut from 21 to five
- ∨ \$120m was cut from the Legal Aid Budget.

(From Anne Summers, *The End of Equality*)

## SINCE 1996

- ∨ Office for the Status of Women (OSW) funding was cut from \$5.58m to \$3.68m with consequent halving of staff numbers
- ∨ Women's Electoral Lobby was defunded and continues to be unfunded by the Federal government
- ∨ Register of Women in OSW was abolished
- ∨ There has been a drop in complaints under the Sex Discrimination Act from 2000 a year to 300 a year - reflecting the increased formality and filing fee of \$1,000 introduced under Howard
- ∨ \$850 million was taken from the childcare budget 1996-2000
- ∨ \$1m in grants to women's organisations was abolished (restored to half this after protests)
- ∨ Women's organisations that do receive funding (\$150,000 per annum) are required to sign a contract preventing them from making public comment without first getting written permission of the Prime Minister or OSW.

(From Anne Summers, *The End of Equality*)

## SINCE ELECTION 2004

- ∨ OSW was moved from the Dept. of PM and Cabinet to Family and Community Services, thereby reducing its powers even further