



informed

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You're Invited!

Sat, 07 March 2009

When was the last time that you marched through the streets of the Sydney CBD, carrying a banner and "making noise"? If you are a rally-junkie, then the answer probably is, fairly recently. But some of us only march once a year or for specific causes (such as APEC) and that, for me, is International Women's Day.

Marching in numbers with other women is a very exhilarating feeling. Down the middle of the street making lots of noise, rather than walking sedately (if that is your style) down the footpath. Pedestrians stare in amazement and wonder what all the fuss is about, whilst usually the women amongst them wave and smile. Some in buses and cars on the other side of the road, hang out of the windows and cheer us on. The women in the march usually chant slogans "What do we want? - PAID MATERNITY LEAVE - When do we want it? NOW" It is brilliant.

So, where are you? Where are your sisters, daughters, granddaughters, mothers or friends?

We hope you have plans to join us under the WEL banner on Saturday March 7 at the Sydney Town Hall from 11am.

SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL
WOMENS DAY 2009

WEL NSW Inc is a member of WEL Australia and is dedicated to creating a society where women's participation and potential are unrestricted, acknowledged and respected, where women and men share equally in society's responsibilities and rewards.

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All members are invited and encouraged to contribute or comment. Ideas, comments, articles or clippings from other media all gratefully accepted. Content may be edited.

The editor(s) happily read emails sent to welnsw@comcen.com.au and hard copy articles or letters can be posted to the WEL office.

Deadlines for contributions to the next editions: 9 March and 13 April.

There is no newsletter in December.

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Join the national WEL email list, email your name, email address and your WEL group (eg NSW) to owner-wel-members@lists.nwjc.org.au

DISCLAIMER

Views expressed in WEL-Informed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect WEL policy. Unsigned material, apart from inserts, is by the WEL-Informed editorial team.

WHAT IS IWD?

Joyce Stevens has published a "History of IWD" in Australia which contains text and images of IWD marches and marchers from the past. I can think of no better analysis of IWD, than the last few paragraphs of the book:

"The fact that IWD has endured for so many years cannot be taken as an automatic guarantee that it enhances feminist goals. The goals in themselves are controversial for feminism is not a monolithic theory or movement, and is often beset with contradictory priorities.

However, there have been some common expectations of what IWD might contribute to the advancement of women's politics. The day has been variously seen as a time for reassessment and reaffirmation of broadly based goals; a day for the celebration of gains, or of women's potential and creativity; and as a time for direct and radical action. In contrast to this, the main thrust of "official recognition" has been to use IWD to plaster over the sex, race and class contradictions affecting women's lives with platitudes.

While at one time or another, IWD has performed all of the above functions, its major contribution seems to have been in raising and popularizing feminist issues on which there is fairly wide agreement within the women's movement, and for providing a cultural

and social venue for diverse groups within that movement.

The effectiveness of this role has largely depended on the existence of a strong and widely-based women's movement which has groups within it who see the need to find the connections between diverse strands in the movement and to work for some continuity in political forms and activity.

IWD has been a part of the general process of women's politics, rather than a catalyst. It sometimes suffers from too few having to interpret the wishes of the many and reveals that this questionable form of delegating authority can arise both within open feminist structures as well as hierarchies.

Nevertheless, despite these problems and all attempts to trivialize it or make it respectable, IWD survives as a point of reference and some measure of progress in the longest struggle of all – the liberation of women."

More information and articles from Joyce's book can be found on: <http://www.isis.aust.com/iwd/herstory.htm>

Alex Heron has joined the NSW WEL Executive. She has returned to Sydney after nearly 20 years living interstate or overseas. Her interests are rights at work, combating violence against women and the environment.

FLEXIBLE WORKING—BY ALEX HERON

The availability of flexible working: will the Fair Work Bill improve this?

Will the 2008 Fair Work Bill's right to request flexible working turn out to be a right to be disappointed?

The Bill sets down National Employment Standards one of which is a 'right to request flexible working arrangements' to assist families to balance work and family responsibilities. An employee (with 12 months' service) who writes to their employer requesting a change in working arrangements to help them care for a child under school age, giving details of the change they want and the reasons for it, must receive a response. The employer is to reply in writing within 21 days, and can refuse the request on reasonable business grounds.

However, the concept of 'reasonable business grounds' is not defined and therefore subject to confusion and uncertainty. Further, if denied there is no way to chal-

lenge or appeal or enforce the decision. We have raised this problem in our Submission to the Senate Inquiry.

This 'right' is based on a similar UK one. But the UK law's (relative) success is based on a more detailed procedure e.g. requiring a meeting to be held to discuss the employee request. And it's also possible to challenge employer failure to follow the procedure properly or for refusing change on the basis of incorrect facts. But the UK law doesn't allow the reasonableness of a decision to be reviewed although a similar law in Victoria does.

Fortunately, the Federal Bill allows State laws to provide better rights and a much better one exists in Victorian legislation. Should New South Wales consider remedying the defects of the Federal right to request with its own flexible work law?

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WEL Executive Meeting

Monday

2nd March

6pm

**66 Albion St
Surry Hills**

ALL WELCOME

GREENS MOVE TO OVERTURN RESTRICTIONS ON AID FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young will today move a motion in the Senate calling on the Rudd Government to abolish restrictions on Australian aid funding going to family planning and maternal health overseas.

US President Barack Obama recently overturned the global gag rule that prohibited aid funding going family planning services.

"Australia is now the only country that continues to enforce these draconian restrictions on our aid programs," said Senator Hanson-Young.

"34,000 mothers die in our region alone per year because of a lack of maternal health support.

"Australia's aid funding could be better used to reduce these alarming numbers. We need Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith to show compassion and to act now.

"The Minister has already had over 12 months to remove these restrictions, with no action to date. President Obama managed to do it within his first week in the job.

"The Greens hope that the Senate will support this motion, and compel the Government to immediately overturn this cruel and archaic policy."

The text of the motion is below.

The motion.....

That the Senate

(a) Notes:

1. The recent decision by US President Obama to overturn the global gag rule for family planning guidelines that effectively prohibits the use of aid funding for some contraceptives, and for abortion advice and services;
2. Australia is now the only country that continues to enforce these harsh restrictions on our aid program, limiting its ability to provide an effective and essential family planning service; and

(b) Recognises:

1. The essential role mothers play in developing communities, with both maternal and child health considered crucial Millennium Development Goals;

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2. That an estimated 34,000 mothers die in our region each year, due to the lack of maternal health supports available, with more than half of the 29 developing countries not on track to achieve either goal; and
3. calls on the Rudd Government to stand up for women's rights, and immediately abolish the family planning guidelines that prevent Australian aid money from being spent on contraception, and family planning advice.

ALP BLOCKS GREENS' WOMEN'S HEALTH AID FUNDING MOVE

The Greens say they will bring the critical issue of AusAid funding for overseas women's health services back to the Senate for debate, despite obstructionist moves by the Government today.

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young went to move a motion in the Senate, but was denied formality by the Government, meaning that it could not even be put to a vote. No explanation was given.

"The Labor Party are clearly embarrassed about their complicity in the Bush-Howard policy of restricting funding to important women's health services overseas," said Senator Hanson-Young.

"These restrictions are literally costing the lives of young girls, women and mothers in developing countries, who are unable to access support, advice and services through AusAid-funded programs because of this gag rule."

"These policies are backward and dangerous, and must be overturned."

"US President Obama was able to do this in his first week in the job. Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith has had over 12 months to do the same, and has failed."

"Today's blocking behaviour by the Rudd Government leaves Australia as the only nation to restrict access to family planning services in developing countries, because of a narrow-minded ideology."

"ALP voters will be disappointed that the Rudd Government, which they elected for change and compassion, is still carrying the mantle of the Bush-Howard obstruction to essential healthcare services."

"34,000 mothers die in our region alone per year because of a lack of maternal health support."

And the response!!

NOMINATE SOMEONE YOU ADMIRE FOR AN EDNA

In 2009, in these early days of hope for the Rudd government, despite the economic turmoil, the Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW) is inviting you to nominate someone you admire for an EDNA.

The EDNA awards were developed to recognise the life and passion of Edna Ryan (1904-1997) who worked tirelessly towards making a better world – especially for women.

Nominations close on Friday 3 April and nomination forms can be downloaded from the website: <http://welnsw.org.au> or by contacting the WEL office phone/fax: 9212.4374 or welnsw@comcen.com.au

The EDNAs are awards made to women who have made a feminist difference, ie whose activity advances the status of women: the troublemakers, the stirrers, the battlers, who show extraordinary commitment and determination.

There are 10 award categories:

Workforce	for improving conditions for women workers
Government	for feminist activity in the political sphere
Arts	for creative feminism
Community activism	for feminist activity in the community
Media/ communication	for consistent promotion of women's interests in the media
Humour	for using wit to promote women's interests
Mentoring	for sharing knowledge and ideas generously with other women
Battling	for making it against the odds
Education	for a special contribution to the education of women and girls
Grand Stirrer	for inciting others to challenge the status quo

So who are YOU going to nominate for an EDNA?

The EDNAs are a way of publicising and celebrating some of our achievements, and to encourage all of us (as Edna did) to keep contributing, to keep on making a feminist difference.

EVENTS FOR IWD

Much is happening in Australia and around the world.

The “official” International Women’s Day website: <http://www.internationalwomensday.com/search.asp?page=3&country=13&town=> lists 271 events around the world, including 46 events around Australia. Check it out to see what might be happening in your area.

For those of you and/or who live in NSW you can go to the website of the Office for Women’s Policy, NSW Dept. of Premier and Cabinet: http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/Working/events/events_list.htm and see what is there. The Office has again offered grants of up to \$1,000 to NSW councils or shires to work with local community groups to organise an event or project to celebrate 2009 IWD. In previous years these local events were listed on the website and probably will be again – so watch the site.

BANNERS IN THE STREETS OF THE SYDNEY CBD

The flags for IWD make the city “feel” different, we are finally taking over the public space. 180 banners will be up again this year from Sunday 23 February until Sunday 8 March. The streets to look for them on are:

- George Street in front of the Town Hall,
- Alfred Street – at Circular Quay
- Macquarie Street
- Martin Place
- King Street
- Market Street
- Park Street (between George and Elizabeth)

The list of sponsors for the banners can be found on the WEL NSW website at: http://welnsw.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=55&Itemid=35.

We were hoping to increase the number of banners this year, but the economic downturn defeated these hopes. There is always next year!!!



ISSUES FOR 2009

Why AREN'T we there yet?

Last year we commemorated, celebrated isn't quite appropriate, 80 years of marching in Australia. The more things change, the more they seem to stay the same. The vigorous feminists of the 70's who achieved major change through the Whitlam government, if they are still with us, are still battling or mentoring younger women to do the same. Yet we have the long-standing issues of:

Violence against women. Still accepted by some as being "OK", despite the work being done by the Federal campaign and the UNIFEM white ribbon campaign. In NSW there is a current inquiry through the unit which handles this located with the Office for Women's Policy, but will things change?

Abortion rights (the elephant in the room - never formally on the agenda because it is **too** political and likely to lose votes for politicians, but continues to be sniped at through Medicare funding, restrictions on overseas aid and the like). Victoria won the battle last year and changed their laws, is it time to have a go in NSW? It comes down to a conscience vote and always mobilises women to give support to wavering politicians to show they are not alone.

Accessible, affordable **child care**. There is a lot more, but it's too expensive and a mess. Consider the debacle of the privatisation of the

child care industry and its collapse and local government and NGOs now scrambling to cover the gaps.

Industrial relations. Women have some concerns over the changes being proposed by the Rudd government that are dismantling the infamous Work-Choices legislation. A promise of the right to request part time work has no power, so we need to make sure it has teeth as well as examine other options that are there to please employers.

Paid Maternity Leave. This has **only** been on the table for about 22 years now and still looks wobbly despite Australia being one of only two OECD countries in the world that have not introduced PML. Can they ignore again recommendations from HREOC (now Human Rights Commission) and the Productivity Commission that it could be introduced at relatively low cost, without destroying businesses? Isn't it a stimulus to pay money to new mothers, I am sure the numbers could be argued either way to support PML or to deny it – depending on your feminist understanding.

All of these issues can be boiled down to women's rights ARE human rights. The right of women to choose who and with whom they wish to live, whether or not they wish to have children, the care of those children, the right to

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Some things YOU can do to get us 'there'

- Join the IWD March on 7th March
- Support the Asian Women at Work Action Group (see page 11)

And

- Join WEL!!

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appropriately paid and satisfying employment. The right of women not to be treated differently than others. Mmmmm!!!

Despite the fact that Attorney Generals in other States have supported community consultation and discussion **and** the introduction of human rights legislation (Victoria and the ACT, with Tasmania and WA under active consideration), the NSW Attorney General consistently refuses to support consultation around human rights legislation for the people in NSW with the well-worn (and misleading) argument that you should trust your elected politicians rather than unelected judges with human rights decisions.

The Federal Government has stepped up to the mark with the announcement in December 2008 of community consultation around Federal legislation for human rights. I am very carefully avoiding describing such legislation as being a Charter or a Bill, because these mean different things to different people and have to be part of the consultation.

And of course there is the aspect of the Federal government with its intervention in the NT, that it could act contrary to the Racial Discrimi-

nation Act with the introduction of some of its community measures. Despite the fact that some people in some communities have been encouraged to speak for the end result benefits – we cannot avoid the fact that the process is flawed and is contrary to the human rights of people who live in those areas.

IWD is urging everyone to become involved in the community consultations and to have your say on what you would like to be included ... or even if you are opposed to human rights legislation, and your reasons why. It is VITAL that women be involved in these discussions and ensure that the issues that are now taken for granted (remember when the NSW Public Service used to terminate women's employment once they got married!!!) are not diminished. We also have to make sure that the "rights of unborn" do not become an issue in the consultation.

Anne Barber
WEL Member

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

A special welcome to new members, especially Alex Heron who has recently joined the Executive of WELNSW.

Many thanks to all our members who renewed their membership in the past month, and especially to those who gave generously to WEL.

MARGARET WINDEYER—1866-1939—FOUNDER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN NSW

J. B. WINDEYER

In the movement to improve the status of women at the end of the 19th Century, Margaret Windeyer was prominent, persuasive and active. Initially her influence was derived from her parents, Sir William Windeyer and his wife Mary, but while still young Margaret began making her own impression.

She was present at the meeting that produced the Womanhood Suffrage League and on its Council; called the meeting from which the National Council of Women of NSW emerged; and was a Commissioner for NSW at the 1893 Columbian Exposition or World Fair and the Congress of Representative Women at Chicago.

Although not a full biography, this work covers those areas as well as

her career as a librarian—she trained at Dewey's library school in America and worked for many years in the Mitchell Library, Sydney—together with her moves to bring books to children and the bush.

The author is a great-nephew of Margaret and a history graduate of Sydney and Oxford Universities. He draws on the large collection of material still in the family possession in addition to some now in the Mitchell Library.

Copies available from the author @ \$30 plus \$2.50 p&h.
Contact J.B.Windeyer, 50 Golden Grove, Red Hill, ACT 2603

Some interesting reading available now!

GOOD READS FROM THE FEMINIST BOOKSHOP

- The Complete Book of Great Australian Women by Susanna De Vries
- Enid Lyons: Leading Lady to a Nation by Anne Henderson
- Shakespeare's Wife by Germaine Greer (now in paperback)
- A Woman in Charge: Life of Hillary Clinton by Carl Bernstein

And don't forget

- Making Women Count: History of Women's Electoral Lobby in Australia by Marian Sawyer

All available from
The Feminist Bookshop
Shop 9 Orange Grove Plaza
Balmain Road, Lilyfield NSW 2040
Phone 02 9810 2666 Fax 02 9818 5745
www.feministbookshop.com



connected

MAKE THE FAIR WORK LAW FAIR FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

The Federal Government has written its new law to replace WorkChoices. It is called the Fair Work Bill. There are some good parts of the law that help protect migrant women workers, but there are some parts which are not strong enough. For example, there are now unfair dismissal laws to protect all workers, but the unfair dismissal law for small business workers allows only one verbal warning before you can be dismissed.

Our **Asian Women at Work Action Group** has worked to prepare a submission to the Government about what we like and what we want improved in the new law. And now we have a chance to talk to a Government Senate Committee about our lives at work and why we want them to make the law better.

WHEN: Wednesday 18th February

WHERE: Meet at Circular Quay Railway Station at 9.30am

OR come directly to 200 George St, Sydney by 9.45am.

AT 10am – some of our members and staff will talk to the media about our concerns

AT 10.45am – we will go inside and sit in the audience

AT 11.30am – our Asian Women at Work representatives will speak to the Senate Inquiry

WEAR: If you can wear a light blue shirt to show you are with AWatW that would be great, but if not just come along. Wear sunglasses and a scarf if you don't want to be recognised.

Any questions ring Hanh Le 0409 841 208 or Angela Zhang 0448 708 003

WEL Executive Meeting

Monday

2nd March

6pm

**66 Albion St
Surry Hills**

ALL WELCOME

Consider a Bequest to WEL NSW

A bequest enables you to perpetuate your ideas and make a difference far into the future. Please remember WEL in your will.

The following wording is recommended:

I bequeath the sum of (amount written in words and figures) free of all debts, duties and taxes, to the Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW) Inc (ABN 50 242 525 012) for its general purposes, and I declare that the receipt of the Treasurer for the time being of the Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW) Inc shall be complete discharge to my executors for this gift, and that my executor shall not be bound to see to the application of it.

If 'RENEWAL' is stamped in your newsletter and/or a renewal form is enclosed or attached to your email copy, your membership renewal is now due. Please renew your membership of WEL NSW.

Don't forget to let WEL know if you change address.

WEL NSW Executive

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Tabitha Ponnambalam, Eva Cox, Alex Heron

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WEL NSW

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To join WEL NSW

Download a membership form from
<http://welnsw.org.au> or phone (02 9212
4374) for a membership package

IF NOT CLAIMED WITHIN 7 DAYS PLEASE RETURN TO:

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SURRY HILLS NSW 2010
AUSTRALIA