



informed

Issue 391

March 2009

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See page 8 for Human Rights Consultation dates—17 March in Sydney

See page 11 for the next Jessie Street lunch time talk—19 March in Sydney—Book now!!

Next WEL Meeting
Monday 6 April
6pm at 66 Albion Street, Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2009 – WHY AREN'T WE THERE YET?

Despite women marching on International Women's Day for the last 81 years, **we are definitely not there yet.** The best news that came shortly after IWD was the Rudd government FINALLY lifting the AUSAID restrictions on funding to organisations that wished to offer a full range of family planning services, including abortion information.

The weather on the day was brilliant, the speakers and MC's were a winning combination with Lisa Pryor managing the program at Town Hall and Meredith Burgmann at Hyde Park.



IWD2009 - at Town Hall, photo Anne Barber

We had also managed to secure places in major streets for the IWD banners – and they looked magnificent – again. We believe that we will be able to hang them again in 2010.

The issues that were covered were:

- Abortion rights and lifting of AUSAID funding restrictions – Margaret Kirkby of WAAC
- Industrial Relations changes – Lara Palombo of Immigrant Women's Speakout
- Human rights – Nicole Watson, Jumbunna Indigenous House of

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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: 13 April, 11 May. 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

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Learning

- Domestic Violence – Jane Mears, Associate Prof. of University of Western Sydney
- As well as Paid Maternity Leave and affordable, accessible child care.

This year we didn't have the same drama with protesting men's groups or naked bike riders in Hyde Park – but we did have to contend with Mardi Gras holding their parade on the same day. This did have an impact on the numbers who attended the IWD rally, BUT we were a very enthusiastic crowd.

The WEL banner was very proudly carried by Lorraine and Rhianna with assistance from Tabitha and others.

IWD must not be allowed to disappear and community groups should be encouraged to participate both in the planning and in the march and rally. It is one of the rare occasions when diverse women's groups get an opportunity to provide information about the work they are doing to other interested women.

Many thanks to Anne Barber for this article and all the IWD photos in this edition—Ed.



For more info about Sydney International Women's Day over the years, go to <http://iwdsydney.wordpress.com/>

WOMEN'S FINANCIAL SECURITY IN RETIREMENT SHOULD BE A NATIONAL POLICY PRIORITY

Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, said today that urgent national policy action was required to address the alarming disparity between men's and women's financial security in retirement.

"The current retirement income system, with superannuation being linked to paid work, inherently disadvantages women - because, due to caring responsibilities, women are likely to have disrupted work patterns and lower earnings over their lifetime," Ms Broderick said while commenting on the Australian Human Rights Commission's submission to the Review of Australia's tax system today.

Many women face the prospect of poverty in retirement because they have performed the valuable work of caring and as a result have minimal retirement savings. In 2004, half the population of women aged 45 to 59 had accumulated \$8,000 or less in superannuation, compared to \$31,000 for half the men in the same age group. Of all households in Australia, elderly single female households have the highest incidence of poverty.

"These stark statistics represent one of the most serious aspects of gender inequality in Australia," Commissioner Broderick said. "It is not acceptable that women's total superannuation balances are currently at around half of those of men."

Commissioner Broderick emphasised that the current system does not fac-

tor in the value of unpaid caring work to the nation's economy.

"People who spend a lifetime caring for others deserve better than poverty in retirement," Ms Broderick said, "and unpaid caring work is primarily carried out by women."

Commissioner Broderick said that the review of Australia's tax system presents an historic opportunity to re-build our retirement income system to one that ensures equality for women and men. The Australian Human Rights Commission's submission includes recommendations to increase women's retirement savings by removing barriers to women's workforce participation and increasing women's lifetime earnings.

Recommended solutions include the introduction of a national paid parental leave scheme, measures to close the gender pay gap and stronger protection from discrimination on the grounds of family and carer responsibilities. The submission recommends that the Australian Government pay superannuation for individuals on the Centrelink Carer Payment and Parenting Payment.

The Commission also recommends that the single Age Pension rate be increased to 66% of the couple rate. Further details of the Australian Human Rights Commission's submission can be found at [http://](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2009/)

www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2009/



WOMEN'S DAY EVA COX WRITES

Poor Bettina Arndt! After all those years of promoting s-x to women, we stubbornly sometimes don't want to know. She blames it all on the concept of women's liberation, in particular the vital bit of liberation that told women they had a right to say no to unwanted s-x! This astounding claim comes from her analysis of the responses to some s-x diaries that people volunteered to fill in.

Let's leave out questions of methodology, such as how typical are the s-x lives of men and women who were prepared to keep such diaries. Or maybe how many men would ever tell a female researcher that they didn't want more s-x than they were getting versus women

who thought they may be getting a sisterly ear. There are, however, some basics of research analysis that need to be thought through. Correlation is not cause. Just because there has

been a second wave feminist movement for nearly five decades, does that affect s-x lives and frequency? Were men really getting much more in the 50s? And is it feminism that causes women to say NO!

I have another option to put up to explain this somewhat dodgy data. There have been changes over this time including an increased number of wives/mothers combining paid work with other more traditional du-

ties. What comes through in most time use surveys is that household chores are not spread evenly between most household partners. Women still do most of it. A 2006 survey (ABS 4153.0) on How Australians Use Their Time shows clearly that women still do much more housework, care and other chores than men.

After an evening of organising kids, dinner, the shopping, the washing, the homework, etc, maybe they are too tired to want s-x.

For all the complaints we have about paid work, it is generally easier to contain and leave behind when you head home than getting a break from the never-ending chores. Men do spend more time with their children, but this is rarely doing the grotty bits of care work, and related household chores, like finding and mending the sports uniform for tomorrow. Bed is therefore often refuge from constant demands and not the place to deal with further demands. And maybe under it all is also resentment that the man didn't take on his share of the boring bits of households.

Therefore, I propose an experiment for all partnered men who feel their needs for s-x are not being met. Spend the next year taking on a genuine 50% of all household tasks, which are randomly allocated to ensure both partners get the grotty bits. Then some sociologist could get a representative sample to fill in a diary. I suspect that the

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IWD2009 in King Street, photo Anne Barber

men would be more tired and want less s-x after the household chores are done. On the other hand, their female partners may feel s-xier because they too had some time with their feet up before going to bed.

Maybe equal shares of domestic re-

sponsibilities may have more to do with libido changes than feminism per se. Or maybe Arndt is suggesting that women should withdraw from the paid workforce and therefore buy their financial support by meeting male needs!

AND SOME OF THE COMMENTS!

Peter Simmons Friday, 6 March 2009 3:06:29 PM

I also have done a study on this topic. I have used a longitudinal case study method with a random sample of one. In 23 years I have found that imploring my wife to close her eyes and spread em in the interests of domestic harmony is negatively related to s-xual frequency. The more I implore the less frequent the s-x. On the other hand the level of my contributions to the housework is positively linked to the frequency of sexual activity. A very high correlation. Thank you Eva .. at last some bloody sense on the topic of this absurd headline grabbing 'study'.

Bill Friday, 6 March 2009 3:07:42 PM



IWD2009 in King Street, photo Anne Barber

I am taking 5 minutes to respond - in between time with my 2 year old who's supposed to be asleep & my 4 year old has a friend over who I pick up after the kids swimming lessons this morning. I work 4 days a week to spend time with the kids - I wash & iron the clothes & share other domestic work more than most of my mates. We out source domestic cleaning and child care. My partner runs a small but busy law firm and my sex life does not sound any different to the "average Australian couple". Blokes, don't do it just for the sex - you will be disappointed.

Bettina Arndt Friday, 6 March 2009 3:14:56 PM

How predictable that Eva Cox and her mates are dragging out that tired out cliché that more laundry would get men laid. I devote a chapter to discussing this issue in my book, 'The Sex Diaries,' reporting the experiences of my many female diarists who acknowledge that men who share the second shift remove one possible source of resentment which dampens female desire. Yet they admit still this is no guarantee the men will be sexually rewarded for their efforts.

I'm reporting the experiences of ordinary men and women as they negotiate this difficult aspect of relationships. My qualitative research does not pretend to be based on a representative sample but very effectively reveals the rich complexities of an issue which is all too often swamped by ideological claptrap. The enthusiastic response it is receiving from both men and women suggests it has hit the mark.

AUSTRALIA CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND INCREASES SUPPORT TO UNIFEM

Media Release—*THE HON STEPHEN SMITH MP, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS and THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP, MINISTER FOR HOUSING, MINISTER FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN*

8 March 2009

Australia will provide more than \$17 million to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) as part of our international commitment to advancing greater equality between men and women.

This funding over four years will support UNIFEM's work in over 100 countries to reduce women's poverty and exclusion; end violence against women; reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls; and support women's leadership in governance and post-conflict reconstruction.



IWD2009 in George Street, photo Anne Barber

Australia has a strong reputation internationally for the work we do to advance gender equality and empower women. The OECD recently commended Australia's work in this area through our international development assistance program.

With Australia's support:

- more women across Asia and the Pacific have access to maternal and child health services
- girls in impoverished parts of Pakistan are receiving an education for the first time
- women have been trained to take

on leadership and governance roles in the Pacific, and

- victims of domestic violence in PNG have better access to justice and support services.

This year's International Women's Day theme is 'Unite to end violence against women'.

As a demonstration of Australia's strong commitment to reducing violence against women the Government released a major report on *Violence Against Women in Melanesia and East Timor* in November 2008.

The report identified strategies to address violence against women in the region, including by increasing their access to justice and support services and changing attitudes and practices that encourage and condone violence.

The Australian Government is now working with local and regional stakeholders to act on the findings of the report and address violence against women in the region.

While the women of the world have much to celebrate this International Women's Day, much remains to be done to achieve equality between men and women.

Australia is committed to playing an active role in advancing women's rights and our work with UNIFEM to support development that benefits both men and women will make a major contribution to this.

TAKING THE LEADERSHIP OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN TO THE WORLD

Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick is one of an Australian delegation of women in attendance at the 53rd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the annual summit which is being held in New York City this month.

One of the critical areas of international discussion at the summit is the gender perspectives of the financial crisis.

Commissioner Broderick said that there is growing concern around the world that women will fare badly in the current economic crisis, that initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality will begin to be abandoned

and that already vulnerable people will experience increased hardship.

"Women have played a critical role in the world's economic growth in recent decades, and as such, are a crucial factor in re-

building a strong and sustainable global economy," Ms Broderick said. "Australia's important role in reforming the global economy means we must ensure that domestic initiatives intended to encourage women's workforce participation are not adversely affected by the economic downturn."

The Commission on the Status of Women is convened by the United Nations to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set

global standards and formulate concrete policies that will promote gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide. Many thousands of women and men from around the world attend each year.

Commissioner Broderick is joined by two Aboriginal women from the Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre - CEO, June Oscar, and Chair, Emily Carter - as well as federal Minister for the Status of Women, Tanya Plibersek.

Yesterday, Ms Oscar and Ms Carter addressed the summit about their inspiring efforts to eradicate the scourge of alcohol abuse, domestic violence and foetal alcohol syndrome from their remote Kimberley community.

Commissioner Broderick and the Australian Government also hosted a side event that premiered the documentary, *Yajilarra*, about the leadership and commitment of these women to their community, which has resulted in renewed hope and a positive future for its people.

"Both in Australia and internationally, it is important that there is recognition of the positive efforts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men in creating change in their communities," Commissioner Broderick said. "At this event, the women of Fitzroy Crossing have told their powerful story of leadership and change to an international audience."



IWD2009 in George Street, photo Anne Barber

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSULTATION – COMING TO A TOWN NEAR YOU!!!

The Federal government, in December 2008, announced that it would conduct community consultations and ask three specific questions:

1. Which human rights (including corresponding responsibilities) should be protected and promoted?
2. Are these human rights currently sufficiently protected and promoted?
3. How could Australia better protect and promote human rights?

The consultation group is being chaired by Fr. Frank Brennan, who claims to be a fence-sitter with respect to human rights legislation, however some concerns have been expressed about him chairing the group, particularly when he has made his views known on matters such as abortion. Other members of the consultation group are Mary Kostakidis, Mick Palmer and Tammy Williams. Information on all of the members of the group can be found on the website.

The government website: <http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/> contains information about the process, papers on what are human rights and questions that could be considered when making a submission. Closing date for submissions is 15 June 2009.

The community consultations which have still be to conducted in NSW, have been listed on the website as (some consultations have already taken place):

| | | | |
|---|---------------|--|---|
| Broken Hill | 10 March 2009 | 6pm—8pm | The Whitehouse Convention Centre 168 Boughtman St. |
| Sydney | 17 March 2009 | 10am—12 noon and 2pm—4pm and 6pm—8pm | The Smith Room, Wesley Conference Centre, 220 Pitt St. |
| Cronulla | 18 March 2009 | 12 noon—2pm and 6pm—8pm | Sharkies - Cronulla Sutherland Leagues Club Showroom 461 Captain Cook Drive |
| Taree | 19 March 2009 | 12 noon—2pm | Club Taree 121 Wingham Rd. |
| Wollongong | 19 March 2009 | 12 noon—2pm | WIN Sports & Entertainment Centre, Premier's Room, Function Centre Cnr of Crown & Harbour Sts. |
| Newcastle | 8 April 2009 | 12 noon—2pm | City Hall, Concert Hall 290 King St. |
| Tweed Heads Week beginning 3 May 2009 | TBA | TBA | TBA |

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If your area isn't listed, contact the secretariat and ask when the consultation will occur in your locality. It is very important that you register to participate in the process and go along to make your views known. I will be co-ordinating the submission for WEL Australia, so please let me know what you would like to have included in the submission.

Anne Barber

MAJORITY SUPPORT THE INTRODUCTION OF A LAW TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS IN AUSTRALIA—AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MEDIA RELEASE 12 MARCH

A new opinion poll commissioned by Amnesty International, has found that 81 percent of people surveyed would support the introduction of a law to protect human rights in Australia. The Nielsen survey results also show that 85 percent of those who support the introduction of human rights legislation believe its introduction should be a high or very high priority for the Australian Government.

"The poll results demonstrate there is an extremely high level of support for the introduction of a new law to provide fundamental protection of human rights in this country," said Andrew Beswick, Campaigns Manager at Amnesty International Australia. Amnesty International has been campaigning alongside a coalition of other groups for the introduction of a Human Rights Act in order to safeguard peoples' rights and freedoms in Australia.

The opinion poll shows that while support for such a law is high, 84 percent of respondents believe their human rights are sufficiently protected at present in Australia. However, when asked to what extent their human rights are protected under Australian federal law, only 38 percent of respondents say their rights are protected completely. The survey shows that 54 percent believe their rights are only partially protected, and two percent feel their rights are not protected at all.

"While the survey shows that a majority of Australians feel reasonably confident that their rights are protected, they clearly realise that the protection is fragile or incomplete, and should be enhanced through the introduction of a Human Rights Act," said Andrew Beswick. "Having only some of our rights protected, or insufficiently protected, is not good enough."

The Federal Government is currently carrying out an extensive public consultation on how people living in Australia want their human rights protected.

"Amnesty International believes a Human Rights Act that would guarantee national, uniform legal protection of the human rights of everyone living in Australia is the best way forward at this time," said Andrew Beswick.

"We are the only liberal democracy without such overarching legal protection of human rights. And as our mandatory detention policies and anti-terrorism laws show, this lack of human rights protection puts us in a vulnerable position. If human rights aren't formally protected, they're at real risk of being eroded," said Andrew Beswick.

The Nielsen telephone survey was conducted nationally for Amnesty International Australia from 18 to 25 February 2009 with 1,000 respondents aged 18 and over. The maximum margin of error for this survey is plus or minus approximately 3 percent

IWD
Celebrations
Sydney
2009



IWD at Hyde Park, OWN Theatre Group, photo Anne Barber



IWD at Hyde Park, photo Anne Barber



IWD2009 in King Street - photo Anne Barber



IWD2009 in King Street, photo Anne Barber



IWD2009 in King Street, photo Anne Barber



connected

WEL Executive Meeting

Monday

6 April

6pm

66 Albion St
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

The Jessie Street National Women's Library holds monthly Lunch Hour Talks.

On March 19 in Seminar Room 2, Level One at the Ultimo Community Centre corner of William Henry and Harris Streets Ultimo, Dr Beverley Kingston, social historian and author will be speaking. Her topic: ***What Shall We Do With Our Girls? Recurring anxieties about the adolescent girl in Australia from 1800 to the present day.*** Books and manuals that Beverley has used to research the topic will be on display in the Library.

Entry: \$20 for non-members and \$15 for members. Sandwich Lunch included.

Bookings: By phone on 9571 5359 or email info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

Support a good cause and enjoy the company of women while being infused with a bit of history!! **Jozefa Sobski**

There is still time to nominate someone you admire for an EDNA -

Nominations in the 10 award categories close on Friday 3 April—nomination forms can be downloaded from the website <http://welnsw.org.au> or by contacting the WEL office phone/fax 02 9212 4374.

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

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

A special welcome to new members, and many thanks to all members who renewed their membership in the past month, and especially to those who gave so generously to WEL.

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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To join WEL NSW

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

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