



informed

Issue 394

June 2009

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The next WEL meeting will be on

Monday 6 July

6pm at the WEL office,

66 Albion Street,
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

NO CHILDREN IN THE SENATE!!!

Childish behaviour is apparently OK in parliament but real children are not.

The exclusion of an initially well behaved two year old because a vote was being taken is manifestly absurd. The child created more distraction as she objected than her presence could have and illustrated clearly that the question should be whether the child's behaviour created a problem, not just being there. The idea that a child is a stranger in the parliament is just an extreme example of the inability of workplaces to understand relationships. There was an earlier incident in the Victorian Parliament when a breastfeeding baby was deemed a stranger and the member mother removed.

Parliament must not become the haunt of old men and women, and in fact there are more younger members now with small children. Therefore the place needs to change the way it's run to accommodate a more family friendly approach to children. Finally there is a child care centre, albeit a small one. I fought for this when the building was being planned

and we lost the fight then. We lost again when it was nearly finished and we asked that a tourist viewing room be turned into a child care centre and lost on the basis that it could be a terrorist threat! In the eighties?

Parliament must provide a good example. In a week when the EOWA survey 2008 Census showed that the number of companies with no female executive managers actually rose from 40 per cent in 2006 to 46 per cent in 2008, we need to recognise change is maybe stalled. To quote from the EOWA report via Tanya Plibersek's media release, the following excerpt from the EOWA's Agenda in the Boardroom report:

Women are expected to bring diversity to boards and yet are criticised when their experience is not the same as those around them. They are praised for being prepared, conscientious and hard working whilst in the same breath this very conscientiousness is used as evidence against them of their lack of 'gut instinct'.

They talk about not being heard

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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 July and 10 August. There is no newsletter in December. WEL-Informed is copyright. Material may be reproduced, acknowledgement required.

Editor for this edition: Lorraine Slade, Advice/Mailout Team: Anne Barber, Josefa Green.

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

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yet when they try to contribute they are described as 'aggressive'. Their difference and alienation is exposed throughout this research while they are criticised for not being 'collegiate'. They are expected to be successful and confident whilst there is a common acceptance that they are 'token' and symbolic' and 'don't contribute as much as men.'

They cannot win.

Roll on the next revolution!

Eva Cox

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING LIGHTER!!

Sex education classes for the over-60s may become mandatory after a 66-year-old British businesswoman announced last week she was pregnant.

While many older people were sensible and could be trusted to do the right thing, others did not have the skills to say no to cheap IVF programs in Eastern Europe, experts said.

The risk was especially high if they'd been binge drinking and had access to the internet, where fertility centres and cheap air fares were accessible at the click of a mouse.

Relatives of older internet users were urged to install filters that bar inappropriate content.

Elizabeth Munro, who is single and has no family in Britain, is due to become Britain's oldest woman to give birth when she delivers her first baby by caesarean section next month. She conceived through IVF treatment in Ukraine.

Australian authorities are preparing for copycat cases. With the pension age to be raised from 65 to 67 by 2023, it is feared older people will see pregnancy as a way of supplementing their income through the baby bonus. (our emphasis)

The full article is: <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/babys-a-bonus-at-66-20090524-bj2q.html?page=-1>

DIVORCED MUMS FORCED TO STAY PUT

The Australian
1 June 2009

NEW laws governing the custody of children are being used to prevent mothers from moving even a short distance from the family home after a divorce, according to experts in the field.

Non-custodial parents - usually fathers - are able to use the laws to claim that such a move will deny their children the right to spend "substantial and significant time" with both parents, as required by the new law.

In one case, known in court transcripts as Crowe, a father was able to get the Family Court to restrain his former wife from moving the children's home to "any place outside a radius of 30km from the Sydney GPO".

The new law requires the Family Court to presume that the best interests of the child are served by a meaningful relationship with both parents.

Two recent studies of the impact of these provisions confirm it is now

harder for parents to get permission to leave town with the kids, even in cases where the wife is at extreme disadvantage.

The Australian last week reported a case where a mother was prevented from leaving a remote town in far north Queensland with her five-year-old daughter, despite having lived there for less than a year, and being confined by high rent to life in a caravan park.

In a paper presented to a lawyers' symposium in March, David Alexander said: "It is now a relatively simple matter for the non-residential parent to claim that even a short-distance relocation will preclude substantial and significant time (with the child)."

Similar conclusions were reached by family law expert Patrick Parkinson, in the *Australian Journal of Family Studies*.

His analysis "indicates that it is harder for a primary caregiver to relocate than before the 2006 amendments".

WEL SUBMISSION TO THE HENRY TAX REVIEW—UPDATE

On 5 June Eva Cox and Melanie Fernandez from WEL met the Henry Inquiry and had an interesting debate on various points. 'We stated we were probably one of the few that claimed Australia was undertaxed, and that we needed more money for services such as child care, so women workers could be better paid. We were also the only group to raise the issues of being deemed as a 'couple' by Centrelink! This was our update on our original submission.'

The original WEL submission to the Henry Tax Review will soon be available on the WEL Australia website

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONSULTATION – SUBMISSIONS CLOSED

After quite a slow start, the National Human Rights consultation has been a very intensive Australia-wide process which apparently has culminated in 34,000 submissions being received. There is a claim that this is the most number of submissions ever received for an enquiry in Australia, the previous highest being 31,540 on the rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in 2003.

This huge number of submissions was encouraged and facilitated by being able to put in a submission online through the websites of; Amnesty International, GetUp and direct to the Human Rights Consultation.

Father Brennan, the chair of the consultation, was quoted in an article by Michael Pelly in The Australian on June 19 <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/business/story/0,28124,25656585-17044,00.html> as saying there was **"a strong sense of people saying we have to do better"**.

The article goes on to say that "The final phase of the consultation will be held at Old Parliament House from July 1-3 and the committee must submit its report on how best to protect human rights by August 30. Father Brennan said the first day would be reserved for hearing from the public "about the status of human rights in Australia -- the land of the fair go -- and how we can do better".

"The second day would address the legal issues of a charter and, on the final days, he said the panel wanted "to look at issues of education and public accountability".

Despite the number of influential groups such as Amnesty International and the Australian Human Rights Commission supporting the introduction of legislation for human rights, there is no guarantee that this is what the Committee will recommend. We can expect ongoing comment in the media over the next few months, with much restating of known positions and using scare or negative campaigns to introduce fear of the unknown. This opposition should be balanced by comments which are supportive. There may well be pitfalls in the introduction of legislation, but with the experience of those countries who have already introduced similar legislation, we should be able to avoid the worst of them.

There are many interesting and excellent submissions and you can read some of them on the government website at: <http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/>. I am happy to report that WEL Australia, the WomenSpeak network and the Older Women's Network (as well as others) all put in submissions with a focus on the rights of women.

Anne Barber

Thanks to Anne Barber for her work on the WEL submission

INVITATION TO LAUNCH OF NEW WOMEN FOR WIK WEBSITE

There is a lot that is working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities but the mainstream media barely mentions the good news stories because bad news is good for sales. The womenforwik group decided we needed a website on what is working to give us all arguments for respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights and capacities to control their lives, lands and communities. Despite the Apology, progress has been slow and sometimes policies have gone backwards, often because of relentlessly negative reporting of crises and deficits.

So if you sometimes wonder whether there is good news and/or just want to support our aims, please join us to celebrate the launch of an exciting new venture.

**Women for Wik's website www.whatsworking.com.au, will be launched at
11am Sunday 28 June, Mori Gallery, 168 Day St Sydney**

With your help, we will document examples of programs, policies and activities which are actually working — or those that did until they were defunded!

Women for Wik first emerged 12 years ago in support of Native Title and was reactivated three years ago in response to the Intervention, in particular to the way things were done. Funding must come with local involvement and decision making to make it work. The role of women is crucial in making projects successful!

Every study of top-down policies shows why they don't work and how they have often proven disastrous to culture and living standards. For example, the latest proposals to underfund the outstation movement and so push people off their land to urban centres will cause new problems.

There is evidence that many outstations have worked as people on their own land avoid inter-group tensions, grog and despair, and nurture their economies and cultures. The problems of Wadeye and other such mission-based townships with multiple language groups illustrate the issues.

Women for Wik wants to hold governments to their stated commitment to evidence-based policies by offering access to evidence of the programs that have worked, are working and could work with appropriate support. By offering the wider community a clearer understanding of what works, we hope to build support for policies that respect and enhance the capacities of our Indigenous communities to manage their own lives.

Send your RSVP
to Rosie Scott —
rosie@amaze.net.au

LOOKING OUT FOR THE LADIES: AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE TAX SYSTEM - EVA COX WRITES:

Oh to be a tax expert, but I have the wrong chromosomes!

Who is trying really hard to influence the Australia's Future Tax System Review Panel? They are 'hosting' a two-day conference in late June 2009, ostensibly on the tax transfer system as a whole, however the social is absent from the agenda. The Melbourne Institute is organising two days for the Review Panel "to debate leading edge tax and transfer policy issues and contribute to the work of the review in an informal setting". The by invitation only conference for 150 people offers "a world class selection of keynote speakers" in nine sessions, but all are male, with one female discussant out of 14. Social objectives are not on the agenda, only the self interested calculus of that equation spinner, Economically Rational Man.

I am still somewhat optimistic about this Review's call for submissions, which started with the following question:

Q 1.1 In considering the community's aspirations for the type of society that Australia should become over the next two decades and beyond, which key features should inform or drive the future design of the Australian tax-transfer system?

The Women's Electoral Lobby's submission stated that "sustaining

better societies requires tax policies that encourage judicious mixes of individual initiatives with collective inputs and sharing. How much is collected and what our representatives and servants do with it determine when the public sphere shares risk collectively and what levels of social equity are deemed necessary."

We pointed out that shortfalls in funds for public health, education and community services led to competing for services and undermines collaboration and creates two tier services. Choices were for those in private sectors and residual, presumably lower quality, public services for the rest. Citizens have been re-defined as customers.

We met with three Review panel members last week and I was impressed with their interest in the issues we raised and optimistic about a good report.

We recognised that we were the only group to scold them for using the term tax 'burden' and to suggest that maybe the overall tax take was too low to reduce damaging inequalities. We also suggested that there was more to discuss than women's role as paid labour supply, an issue well covered by The National Foundation of Australian women: two submissions versus so many

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The 'by invitation only' conference for 150 people offers "a world class selection of keynote speakers" in nine sessions, but all are male, with one female discussant out of 14.

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with more status quo views.

When I opened the conference notice email, it reminded me of how well resourced are those who want to cut taxes at the top, increase inequalities and push self interest under the heading of encouraging growth. They fail to recognise that difficult times need

space for questioning older certainties.

I know the gender distribution of expert speakers is only one indicator of limited viewpoints but all male speakers on this issues a good one to stimulate questions of who has the influence and resources to push their views and who is less likely to be heard.

PUBLIC FORUM: ABORTION LAW REFORM IN NSW

The Greens held a public forum at Parliament House on Friday 1st May, 2009. The topic to be debated was the fact that NSW is about the only State in Australia that hasn't amended the criminal law to remove abortion so that it can be treated like any other medical procedure and not as a criminal offence. Among the presenters were people who had been instrumental in achieving change in other States, most recently in the Victorian campaign.

The Greens promised to maintain the pressure and if you want more information then contact Lee Rhiannon at lee.rhiannon@parliament.nsw.gov.au

It is very encouraging to see this initiative and we will be following events with interest.

I must also mention an incident

which occurred during question time at the forum. Most of the questions from the floor congratulated the speakers for stepping out and speaking up, except for one young man who rose to his feet and made the opening comment, "Most of you will probably not agree with what I am going to say, but I am pro-life."

Immediately, from around the room came about six voices who spoke loudly over him to say "**we are ALL pro-life, but we also happen to be pro-choice**". This young man who obviously thought that he would be claiming the moral high ground and putting the rest of us down, was immediately disarmed. Hurrah for all of us pro-life and pro-choice-ers!!!

Anne Barber

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ARE WOMEN BEING PAID ENOUGH?

Women are low paid because their work is not valued

“Some commentators have argued that the pay equity problem can be explained by the fact that women work less hours and that they work in low paid jobs. While women do work less hours, the nub of the problem is that they are low paid because their work is not properly valued” is one of the key points made by the National Pay Equity Coalition (NPEC) and the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) in their joint submission to the House of Representatives Employment and Workplace Relations Committee’s inquiry into pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce.

In their submission, NPEC and WEL make recommendations to “strengthen and improve the industrial framework and other legal mechanisms that address equal pay”, particularly equal remuneration provisions, the application of equal remuneration objects of the Award Modernisation Act in the award modernization process, and the strengthening on minimum entitlements and collective bargaining processes.

Committee Chair, Ms Sharryn Jackson said, “With two of the Committee’s terms of reference specifically referring to: the adequacy of federal and state equal remuneration legislation, and the need for further legislative reform, the Committee is looking forward to discussing with NPEC and WEL their views on the new legislative framework”.

Representatives of NPEC and WEL will provide evidence before the House Employment and Workplace Relations Committee in Committee Room 1R3 Parliament House Canberra on Thursday 14 May from 11.15 am to discuss their submission and other factors that may impact disproportionately on women’s employment options, and the adequacy of current data to reliably monitor employment changes that may impact on pay equity issues.

The Committee will continue to welcome submissions to the inquiry.

Further details on the inquiry, including the terms of reference, background documents, membership of the Committee and advice on making submissions can be obtained on the Committee’s website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/ewr>, by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4162 or emailing ewr.reps@aph.gov.au.

Issued by: House of Representatives Liaison & Projects Office, Wednesday 13 May 2009

See the following page for the report from WEL and NPEC.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PAY EQUITY INQUIRY

Fran Hayes (from the National Pay Equity Commission) and Sue Hammond (from WEL) recently appeared at the House of Representatives Pay Equity Inquiry. *(See previous article)*

This is Sue Hammond's report –

"We were the only ones to appear that day because they had delayed a special hearing for us as I had been away overseas.

We had a hearing for about one and a half hours and they gave us a pretty good hearing. I handed up a further supplementary submission which basically set out what I was going to say.

I raised the issue of the problems with award modernization and how important awards are. I spoke about how this was resulting in the levelling down of wages and conditions for women and that they ought to be levelling up – maintaining with the general standards in the community. I said they should be using the process to review for equal remuneration 'a unique opportunity to review awards'. I also

spoke about women's right to work in areas they choose such as nursing homes etc and that this doesn't excuse low pay and undervaluation (this is addressing Mark Wooden's argument that women choose low pay and part-time). I also spoke about the importance of the minimum wage. I suggested a specialist division within Fair Work Australia to handle equal remuneration and discrimination. Fran spoke about the need to establish principles. I spoke about the problem with EOWA and its failure with reporting requirements and waiving of reports as we set out in our Submission and noted a change in personnel for the better.

My fear is that the committee will report that using the industrial system to run equal remuneration cases is too expensive and time consuming. I argued that they were in fact cost effective in that the outcome affects whole groups of workers.

They (the House of Reps) will report in October."

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONSULTATION

On 10 December 2008, the 60th anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Australian Government launched a national public consultation about the legal recognition and protection of human rights and responsibilities in

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**See previous page
for the statement
issued by the Inquiry
Committee**

Australia. An independent Committee was established to undertake the nationwide consultation, and is to report to the Australian Government by 31 August 2009 on the issues raised and the options identified for the Government to consider in order to enhance the protection and promotion of human rights.

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) has recently completed its Submission to the National Human Rights Consultation. WWDA's Submission highlights the fact that although Australia has embraced and ratified a number of international human rights treaties and instruments affirming its commitment to protect and promote the human rights of women and girls (including women and girls with disabilities), in practice, they have had little bearing on improving the human rights of women and girls with disabilities in Australia - who continue to experience serious violations of their human rights, as well as failures to promote and fulfil their rights. WWDA's Submission focuses on several key human rights where there are continuing abuses against women with disabilities in Australia, and clearly demonstrates that the human rights of women with disabilities in Australia are not currently sufficiently protected and promoted.

WWDA's Submission to the National Human Rights Consultation is available from the WWDA website. You can access it at www.wwda.org.au/subs2006.htm in either a PDF version (780 KB) or a Word version (580 KB). Alternatively, if you would like a copy emailed to you, please contact wwda@wwda.org.au

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A small reprise on the 2009 EDNAs

WEL NSW is delighted to have an ongoing association with Edna Ryan's family, who present the awards on our behalf each year. This year the presenters were Julia and Madeleine while Lyndall, who is usually on the stage, supported from the audience.

This year, we were pleased to have Edna's great-granddaughters present at the awards for the first time. This photo shows Edna's daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters. They all have very big shoes to fill.





connected

WEL Executive Meeting

Monday

6 July

6pm

66 Albion St
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

**THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN
invites you to attend
Women Building Sustainable Futures Conference Public Day
University of Sydney**

Saturday 28th November 2009

As part of the 34th Triennial Conference for Women Building Sustainable Futures Conference, the Australian Federation of University Women is holding a Public Day to increase awareness that sustainability of physical and social resources is crucial to the future of all Australians.

Attend the Public Day and hear distinguished speakers talk about sustaining your future!

Topics include:

- The impact of climate change on Australian life and landscape.
- How the built environment can contribute to sustainability.
- The challenges facing public training providers in up skilling the population.
- How a Bill of Rights may contribute to a sustainable community.

Visit <http://www.afuw.org.au> to register now to be involved in this exciting event.

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

Convenor: Jozefa Sobski
Treasurer: Anne Barber
Members: Josefa Green, Helen L'Orange,
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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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AUSTRALIA