



WEL-Informed

The Newsletter of Women's Electoral Lobby NSW

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WEL MEDIA RELEASE - WHERE DOES BUDGET LEAVE SOLE PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN?

The announced change in the Parenting Payment which moves a further 100,000 single parents and their children onto the lower paying Newstart Allowance is roundly opposed.

Women's Electoral Lobby joins advocates for sole parents and their children in condemning this government budget measure.

Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) endorses the negative response of ACROSS, National Welfare Rights Network, and National Council for Single Mothers and their Children to this policy change.

Newstart Allowance pays just \$35 a day (\$37 for sole parents). It has not been increased since 1994.

"The change will add to the disadvantages suffered by sole parents trying to raise their children" said Helen L'Orange, National Chair of WEL.

Ms L'Orange acknowledged that several initiatives in the budget will benefit sole parents.

"These include \$225 m for Jobs Education and Training(JET) funding for work related childcare; the new lump sum Supplementary Allowance to be paid twice yearly (\$105 per instalment for singles); the new School kids Bonus worth \$410 for each child in primary school and \$820 for each child in high school and the dental care scheme.

"However there were no additional funds in the budget for out of school hours care or affordable housing- two initiatives which would have helped sole parents."

"The bottom line for these 100,000 sole parents with kids over eight years old being moved on to Newstart is that they will have around \$50 per week less regular money."

Next WEL meeting

Wednesday 6 June

6.00 pm at

66 Albion Street
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

RSVP 02 9212 4374

**WEL Spokeswomen: Helen L'Orange 0425 244 935
and Jozefa Sobski 0403 895 929**

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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Deadlines for contributions to the next edition: 22 June. 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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CONVENOR'S REPORT

In March feminists gathered to celebrate the 101st anniversary of International Women's Day. In Sydney we celebrated with a community picnic looking forward to shape our feminist future. WEL members got together with hundreds of other feminists from diverse backgrounds to hear from some inspirational young women. All the speakers were 25 and under and demonstrated that feminism is not only alive and well; but diverse and accessible.

They spoke of their different feminist experiences and how they had become engaged in the movement and presented other young women with a variety of ways to engage in activism. There were also performances from a number of very talented young women. It was a day for WEL members to get together, share some food, some feminist chatter and hear from a new generation of feminists.

It was a great opportunity to share our picnic rug with some new faces and chat about who we are and what we do. Many feminist organisations had their own picnic spaces and our members got to mingle and make connections hearing what other organisations and their members are working on.

Shaping a feminist future is particularly important in our current political climate. We are facing a NSW government whose gender agenda is embarrassing and demonstrates a lack of support for women and their genuine concerns. It has been very disappointing to see the Government's lack of consultation with women's groups since gaining government. The allocation to the NSW Office for Women's Policy has been unacceptably small, making it very difficult to continue to fund an effective program. It was sadly indicative that for the first time this year the Office did not assist with funding the IWD march and community event.

Recently WEL wrote to the Minister for Women regarding the Office ceasing its funding for Women in Prisons Advocacy Network (WIPAN). WIPAN fulfils a vital role in providing support for women leaving custody. It is a grassroots organisation governed by women, including ex-prisoners dedicated to advancing the status and well-being of women in the criminal justice system. The Office ceasing its financial support for this organisation places its sustainability in jeopardy. WEL requested that the Minister support the continuation of funding for this important service.

We are in the process of seeking a meeting with the Minister to discuss the government's agenda and lack of consultation with women's groups.

In the last month WEL welcomed the federal government's announce-

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STATE POLITICAL ROUNDUP

Premier O'Farrell embraces the word *boring* injecting it with hidden virtues of being focused on real issues and making tough decisions. He is unflashy and happy to be described as dull and there is so little opposition that he may well get away with boring government for the full term.

The NSW Business Chamber gave the first year of the government a score of 7.5 while Unions NSW gave it 2.23 out of a possible ten. Of course, these organisations are measuring quite different priorities and Unions NSW is still smarting from the public sector salary cap. The Chamber has focused on broad aims like: rebuilding the NSW economy and returning quality services (the Liberal policy). Unions NSW in its *Betterstate* report has aims which include: looking after our public assets and backing our workers.

The state of the NSW economy, like the national economy, is not entirely within the gift of government. As we well know, many factors are contributing to NSW job losses in banking, Qantas, Caltex and among clothing and other manufacturers. The finance and tourism sectors are being hit hard as a result of global forces and the high Australian dollar is a culprit on a number of fronts. One ABS report on the NSW labour force shows a 10,000 job loss in Inner Sydney last year. The government's rebuilding will need to be targeted and energetic.

The state-owned electrical power generators have just struck another blow to the budget bottom-line by writing down their asset value in preparation for the carbon tax to be introduced in July. This will reduce any gain from their sale announced by the government late last year. The realisation on sale was to be about \$5 billion; now this may be halved. A reasonable score for 2012 on rebuilding the NSW economy may become much harder to attain whatever the government may do to please the Chamber and business generally.

The Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister for Women, Pru Goward has been praised for negotiating new contracts with the non-government sector to take over foster and out-of-home care. But, she also imposed cuts to carer allowances which were naturally criticized.

For women, she has announced the publication of an Annual Report on the Status of Women for later in 2012. She is investing in the preparation of data and its analysis as an evidence-based approach to policy reform to benefit women. The Report "will focus on indicators where inequality between men and women remains an issue". The report will be organised around five themes: Health and Well being, Education and Learning, Economic Participation and Financial Security, Leadership and Representation, Safety and Access to Justice.

Consistent with the government's theme in its **2021 Plan to Make NSW Number One**, the Minister announced a new council to boost economic opportunities for women. The Council for Women's Economic Opportunity is to provide specialist advice and "champion solutions to increase the participation of women in non-traditional roles". The Council will be working with industry. Members, among them two men, have backgrounds in engineering, manufacturing, construction, training and mentoring. WEL NSW welcomes the establishment of the Council and looks forward to the outcomes from its first activity, an industry roundtable on encouraging more women to work in non-traditional trades.

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STATE POLITICAL ROUNDUP CON'TD

(Continued from page 3)

We are assuming that the **NSW Women's Plan** produced in the last days of the Labor Government has been sidelined or abandoned although there has been no announcement. But, extracting from **WEL NSW Position Statement for the 2011 Election**, *Skills Training* will receive some attention with the Minister signaling in her IWD speech that one of her key priorities is *making every trade traditional for women*.

As well as this area of priority, she announced that there were three other priority areas: women's right to live free from violence; getting more women into leadership positions and building a stronger evidence base for policy and program decisions in NSW. WEL NSW endorses these priorities and looks forward to actual improvements.

WEL NSW, like some other women's organisations is seeking to meet with the Minister on her priorities and some of our key recommendations in our **Position Statement**; in particular, those which may receive more attention once the evidence base has been compiled and published in the Annual Report.

We hope that the Report will propel action rather than act as a proxy for it, while we contemplate the implications of its findings.

Go to the Office for Women's Policy website in www.facs.nsw.gov.au and www.2021.nsw.gov.au for more detailed information.

Jozefa Sobski

CONVENOR'S REPORT—CONT'D

(Continued from page 2)

ment to overhaul aged care services whilst releasing our aged care policy, which is available on our website.

We are currently working on and finalising our children's services policy. In the coming month WEL NSW and WEL Australia Chair Helen L'Orange will be meeting with Senator Lee Rhiannon to discuss our policy document. [*This meeting has now taken place—see page 6—Ed*]

The *WEL Talks*, a series of discussion forums, will be kicked off in June with *Manage This: Women's Voices on Income Management*. This session will explore what the further roll out of Income Management to five test sites around Australia will mean for women. You will hear from women involved in the campaign in Bankstown against this further roll out and be able to share your views.

WEL is in the thick of organising 40th Anniversary Celebrations around the country. If you want to get involved in organising the NSW event we would love for you to contact us at: info@wel.org.au. Remember to keep up to date with our weekly e-update and website and follow us on Facebook and twitter.

Melanie Fernandez, Convenor

THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) AND HOW WEL LOBBIED FOR THIS

There is a long WEL history of lobbying and working hard for a personal care support levy, which has eventualised as the NDIS. The first stage of the new scheme was funded in the 2012-2013 budget, with \$1 billion committed over four years.

The first stage will begin in mid-2013 and will provide care and support to around 10,000 people with significant and permanent disabilities in up to four locations across the country. From mid-2014, the reach of an NDIS will be expanded to bring the total number of eligible people up to 20,000. These individuals will have their needs assessed and be supported to develop individual plans to deliver ongoing personalised care and support over their life times.

In recent years WEL has worked closely with Women With Disabilities Australia in advocating for an NDIS.

Beryl Holmes, a long time member of WEL Queensland, recently sent us archival material about WEL's advocacy efforts over many years. Elizabeth Kentwell (WEL ACT) put together this summary.

In 1993 WEL formally supported a submission stating that if the personal care needs of people needing care were met, the problem of carers would be greatly relieved. This submission was sent to Federal politicians and other influential people working in the areas of aged, disability, carers and women. WEL's involvement included presenting a proposal at the National CAPOW conference, which was included in the conference papers.

In 1994 WEL organised a seminar on 'Looking ahead at support needs' and adopted the Principle of a 'National Personal Care Levy' which it has used continuously when lobbying politicians and other influential people. This included the statement that 'On application from the person who is handicapped [or their advocate or carer], the needs of the person with a disability would be assessed. Support hours, equipment, aids and devices, would be allocated to them to enable them to life as independently as possible.'

In 1995 and 1996 Women's Electoral Lobby presented submissions entitled '*Personal Care Support for people of any age, who have a disability and are handicapped*' to the Minister for Family Services and the Minister for Human Services and Health. The submissions stated that 'WEL believes that personal care support should be rights-based with services delivered to allow recipients dignity and power over their own lives. We believe that the approach should be intersectoral, unifying programs and services delivered in the area of disability and aged care.' It also stated that 'at a minimum, personal care support should cover: self care including basic needs such as eating, communication and mobility'. It goes on to state that 'WEL contends that having an insurance policy funded by a national levy to which everyone contributes, ensures that provision of personal care support will be a right that is affordable, and equitably available to people with a severe handicap.'

In 2008 letters were sent to Mr Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disability and Children's Services, from WEL member Beryl Holmes urging him to look at the 'discriminatory situation that currently exists and consider introducing a 'Medicare' type system that ensures that Government funds will be available on an equitable basis for all concerned'. Beryl Holmes also wrote to Minister Jenny Macklin, among others, along similar lines. In his reply to both letters Mr Bill Shorten indicated that the Government was considering a range of issues around this topic.

Beryl Holmes and other WEL members have been among those who have continued to work hard for such a scheme over many years, and it is gratifying to see that their arguments and lobbying have been so effective.

Thank you to Elizabeth Kentwell, WEL ACT and Beryl Holmes, WEL QLD, for this article

WEL MEETING WITH NSW SENATOR LEE RHIANNON (GREENS)

On 15 May 2012, three WEL members (Melanie Fernandez, Jozefa Sobski and Helen L'Orange), met with Sen Lee Rhiannon at her Sydney Office.

Sen Rhiannon requested the meeting when she received WEL's Policy Statement. The delegation tabled WEL's new children's services policy and talked through the implications for women of the new Aged Services Policy and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The meeting noted that, in her budget reply speech last week, the Greens leader Christine Milne gave priority to the following issues (amongst others):

- A \$50 a week increase in Newstart
- Restore the foreign aid cuts imposed by the government as part of its push for surplus
- Funding for the full roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- Greater level of mental health services in rural communities

Early in the meeting we discussed the passage of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace (EOWA) legislation through Parliament. The Bill has been supported by the Senate Committee of which Sen Rhiannon is a member.

Jozefa Sobski spoke strongly about Newstart and the further shift of women with children turning eight onto Newstart. She emphasized that WEL policy is for a \$50 per week increase in Newstart but also that there ought to be an evaluation of the effectiveness of Newstart at getting people into real jobs. Jozefa said that for many the program is more like NoStart than Newstart.

Melanie Fernandez spoke about WEL's position on the income management issue. Greens policy opposes income management. As a NSW Senator, Sen Rhiannon is very involved with the action in Bankstown.

The delegation emphasised that affordable housing was a very important issue for many women and that WEL and many other organisations are lobbying the government for increased funding for affordable housing.

As well the delegation drew the Senator's attention to the need for action on Children's Services including Out of school hours care funding, increasing pay for qualified educators, and a general review of funding mechanisms, subsidy structures and eligibility rules to eliminate the divisions which exist between long day care, preschool and out of school hours care.

The final point of discussion was urgent need for the whole of government to integrate gender more strongly into policy development and program implementation.

Australia finally gets a National Children's Commissioner

On 27 April 2012, the Gillard Government made a long overdue announcement that it would appoint a National Children's Commissioner. However, the presence of several essential principles in the formation of the role will be key to its success. For more information on this important announcement, go to

<http://www.monash.edu.au/news/show/australia-finally-gets-a-national-childrens-commission>

WEL NATIONAL REPORT

40th Anniversary celebrations

WEL started in Melbourne on 27th February 1972. Victoria held a very successful cocktail party to mark the anniversary. Activities are planned for each state/territory except NT. In Queensland and Tasmania the events managers Miranda Mason and Andrea Watson, have arrangements well underway.

IAW World Conference

Organisational arrangements are well underway for the IAW National Conference in October. Kerry Lovering and Priscilla Todd (WEL Vic-toria) are members of the Conference Committee. National WEL is providing support to the Conference Committee .

Policy work

27th Feb WEL National Policy document was sent, with covering letters, to the Prime Minister, the Minister for Status of Women, the Leader of the Opposition and the Shadow Parliamentary Secretary and the Greens. The letters stress the need for a whole of government approach to integrate gender analysis into policy development.

Further work is being done on national policies. Helen L'Orange Gabe Kavanagh and Judy Hill are working on Children's Services Policy. Jozefa Sobski is working on Education Policy.

WEL's submission on the EOWA legislation was endorsed by the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA). Many thanks to Kathy Mac-Dermott who prepared the WEL/ERA submission. After the Bill was introduced to the Parliament it was referred to a Senate Committee. Kathy addressed the Senate Committee hearing in Melbourne on 18 April.

Website

Laura McLean continues doing a great job of updating the WEL website. The policy document and the EOWA legislation submission can be found on the website.

Data Base

Our National Data Base Coordinator, Lorraine Slade has updated the WEL mailing list. Thanks to Lorraine and state convenors for their work on the mailing list.

Helen L'Orange
Chair, WEL National Executive
19 April 2012

WOMEN'S STATEMENT 2012

Jessie Street National Women's Library was the venue for the launch by the Minister for the Status of Women, Julie Collins, of the **Women's Statement 2012 – Achievements and Budget Measures**.

It was an occasion for a re-affirming of the Federal Government's broader reform agenda in driving gender equality. The Foreword to the **Statement** reiterates the strong economic case for this goal and emphasises that, if women's and men's workforce participation was similar, then Australia's GDP would increase by 13 per cent.

Many representatives from the national women's alliances attended the launch and circulated copies of the **Statement** were examined with interest as the Minister spoke. Women attended in a positive and supportive frame of mind, but there was little in the **Statement** that had not already been announced.

Paid Parental Leave, improvements in family payments, investment in quality early childhood education and care, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, mental health reforms and a better, fairer, more sustainable and nationally consistent aged care system were highlighted under the broad category of *Supporting Working Australians and their Families*.

The new Fair Work Act of 2009, the pay equity decision and reforms to the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act, 1999 and the Agency were listed in the section on *Building a New Australian Economy*.

Strengthening our Communities featured the establishment of the six National Women's Alliances, the National Plan to reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2012 and the launch of the National Women's Health Policy in 2010.

The **Statement** outlined the government's commitment to its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2018 and its appointment of Australia's first Global Ambassador for Women and Girls to advocate internationally for gender equality.

There were few figures to assess just what proportion of the budget's outlays related to specific initiatives for women. The achievements reported upon could be quantified from previous announcements, but the new national plans and the Insurance Scheme and so on cannot be easily deconstructed and quantified. The complexity of the Budget papers means that it is now very difficult to assess the level of investment in women's programs, initiatives or budget measures.

The major criticism by welfare groups of the change in eligibility rules for Parenting Payments was not mentioned in the **Statement**. The growth in the number of Newstart recipients (See WELA Budget Media Release) resulting from the change has not been contested by the government.

WEL welcomes all reforms and changes in programs where they benefit participants. We acknowledge the National Disability Insurance Scheme, aged care reform and legislative changes as positive. We are concerned, however, that there is no recognition, that Newstart is inadequate as a payment and needs urgent attention. There is also little evidence provided that placing welfare recipients in lower paying categories results in job or training outcomes for

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WOMEN'S STATEMENT 2012—CONT'D

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them. Is Newstart a NOSTART?

The Minister for the Status of Women needs to raise this issue with her colleague, Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. While investment in skills, education and training is growing, it is at a cost and on conditions imposed on the public TAFE system which is under pressure to drive down costs and increase its revenue-raising. Women on Newstart, young people and all other categories of the unemployed, cannot afford in many instances to attend the training which may be available. They are not adequately supported to undertake what training may be on offer and, if they are a single parent, their struggle is multiplied.

Then, there are the issues of matching skilled people to job vacancies and the available vacancies compared with the numbers on some form of government benefit. Where are the skilled job vacancies concentrated? Which industries in which geographical locations are looking for skilled workers? How many job seekers are registered with Job Services Australia as of the date of the budget? How many of these are women? What are their ages, family circumstances and qualifications or highest level of education?

Welfare payments need closer examination and a national discussion needs to be opened up before the next election. Reform is overdue as is an evidence base for the changes currently being implemented to increase numbers on Newstart.

Jozefa Sobski

EQUALITY RIGHTS ALLIANCE (ERA)

New Manager

Helen Dalley-Fisher took over as the new Manager of the Equality Rights Alliance in early April. She is planning to meet with members from the various ERA member organisations as soon as possible. WEL's representative to ERA, Elizabeth Kentwell, has already had a few discussions with Helen. Helen has replaced Kathy Richards who has moved to work at AusAID.

ERA Priorities for 2012-13

ERA is currently holding discussions with member organisations on which priorities ERA could usefully focus on for next year prior to meeting with the Minister and Office for Women representatives to discuss the various issues.

Affordable Housing

ERA constructed an 'affordable housing display village' on the lawns of Parliament House on Thursday 22 March 2012 to raise awareness of the impact on women of the shortage of affordable housing. The 'village' consisted of over 30 cardboard houses – certainly not something we would want to live in! Speakers, Sarah Toohey from Australians for Affordable Housing, Caroline

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ERA—CONT'D

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Lambert, YWCA Australia, Jeannette Large, Victorian Women's Housing Association and a local Canberra supporting mother experiencing great difficulty because of the high costs of rental accommodation, talked about the impact of the shortage of affordable housing on women. The event attracted interest from politicians and the media and provided an innovative way of raising awareness of this issue for women.

Out of School Hours Care

A workshop was held in Sydney on 21 March 2012, which was attended by WEL members Helen L'Orange and Gabe Kavanagh.

Elizabeth Kentwell

NEW PUBLICATION ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

Gwendolyn Gray, PhD, Convenor of the Australian Women's Health Network, and WEL member, has recently completed a book on the history of the women's health movement in Australia. It can be read online or purchased from the URL below:

<http://epress.anu.edu.au/titles/reaching-for-health-2>

Gwen Gray
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Australian Women's Health Network Website: <http://www.awhn.org.au/>
7th AWHN Women's Health Conference: <http://www.womenshealth2013.org.au/>

economic Security4Women (eS4W) recently announced the appointment of Louise Rose in the role of eS4W's Executive Officer and Sally Jope in the role of eS4W's Policy Advisor.

eS4W is one of six National Women's Alliances funded by the Australian Government through the Office for Women, FaHCSIA. eS4W believes that economic wellbeing and financial security are essential ingredients to achieving equity for all women. The ability to achieve positive economic outcomes impacts on all aspects of women's lives including their family, education, health, employment, retirement, housing and personal safety and can enable women to make informed choices.

From eS4W Media Release of 7 February 12

EVENTS - ACTIVITIES - ANNOUNCEMENTS

It was to be a picnic this year for a younger generation of feminist activists in celebration of International Women's Day. There was a picnic, but the marchers could not resist taking to the streets. There was a joyful air of defiance as they strode down George Street towards First Fleet Park adjacent to the MCA. There were picnic hampers and small card tables of pamphlets and papers advertising an array of events and campaigns. It was a gloriously sunny autumn day.

There was entertainment with a wonderful drumming group that was theatrical, energetic and feisty. WEL NSW members came with food enough for a loaves and fishes feast. Marchers included Young Labor Left, the Australian Services Union, the Nurses Association, NSW Women in Education and Immigrant Women's Speakout.

The IWD Collective this year had tried something different, but those women's organisations accustomed to and expecting a march were not to be deterred. Union women were also more comfortable with a march that did end in the usual picnic, some speeches and then some fabulous young performers fringed by a group of Korean dancers.

The baton has been handed on from the Collective to the organisers of the march and hopefully next year there will be early agreement and full consultation with all participating women's organisations on what form the celebration or protest should take.

Jozefa Sobski



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.

Renewal—If a renewal form is enclosed with your newsletter or included with your email copy, then your membership is now due. We encourage you to renew your membership of WEL as your ongoing support is important to us.

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

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.'

Next WEL
meeting

Wednesday
6 June
at
6.00pm

66 Albion St
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

WEL NSW Executive

Convenor: Melanie Fernandez
Treasurer: Charity Danquah
Members: Josefa Green, Helen L'Orange, Jozefa Sobski, Charity Danquah, Laura Maclean, Gabe Kavanagh, Lorraine Slade, Anne Barber

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Helen L'Orange 0425 244 935

Health

Gwen Gray 0405 193 584

WEL Australia

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WEL NSW

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To join WEL NSW

Download a membership form from www.welnsw.org.au or phone (02) 9212 4374 for a membership package.

**IF NOT CLAIMED WITHIN 7 DAYS PLEASE RETURN TO:
WOMEN'S ELECTORAL LOBBY (NSW) Inc
66 ALBION STREET
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010
AUSTRALIA**