



informed

Issue 392

April 2009

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Next WEL meeting on
Monday 4th May
At 6 pm
66 Albion Street,
Surry Hills

Tickets are still avail-
able for the EDNAs on
Friday 8 May - see
the enclosed flyer

WELNSW PLANNING FOR 2009—AN INVITATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE

At our recent Executive meeting on 6 April, we spent some time planning WEL NSW's activities for 2009.

Our aim was to try to be a bit more systematic and proactive in our lobbying work, to spread expertise on various issues, and to **provide opportunities for increased involvement by WEL members.**

From this discussion, our main decisions were as follows:

1. Forming ad hoc working groups -
We agreed that we should grapple with priority issues (see page 3) by:
 - Forming an ad hoc group to take responsibility for each issue, co-ordinated by a WEL NSW executive member.
 - Seeking members interested in being involved in each ad hoc group.
 - Groups could work in different ways depending on the issue eg respond to a specific need such as preparing a submission, campaigning, or provide a watching brief and lobby as needed. People would not have to commit to long term involvement with these groups.
 - We would also aim to work as much as possible with or through other advocacy organisations on particular issues.
2. Alternate issue-focused Executive Meetings -
We agreed that:
 - To allow us to concentrate on issues of substance, we should alternate our current monthly Executive meetings so that every second month is dedicated to reviewing a few current issues rather than covering the usual practical, process type issues.
 - We should advertise nominated issues in the newsletter, and invite members to attend and be involved in the discussion.

The above arrangements are to be set in place at the next Executive / Members meeting on 4th May. WEL members are warmly invited to attend and become part of the proposed ad hoc working groups.

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.

Phone/fax: (02) 9212 4374
Email: welnsw@comcen.com.au
Visit: www.welnsw.org.au. ABN 50 242 525 012

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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: 11 May and 8 June. There is no newsletter in December.

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

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.

SURVEY REINFORCES THAT AUSTRALIANS WANT PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, called on the federal government today to take note of the results of a poll in which Australians overwhelmingly said they thought funding for a paid parental leave scheme should be incorporated in the next federal budget.

"The results of the poll are further evidence confirming that the majority of Australians think we should have a national paid parental leave scheme funded by the federal government," Commissioner Broderick said.

The Attitudes to maternity leave in Australia survey was conducted by Auspoll on behalf of the National Foundation for Australian Women, Unions NSW, the Commission for Children and Young People, Catalyst Australia and YWCA Australia.

Commissioner Broderick said it was particularly important to note that the poll found support for a paid parental leave scheme existed across the board, from women and men, from younger to older people, and across income brackets.

Commissioner Broderick said she recognised that the current economic climate presents real challenges for setting national budget priorities. However, experience from overseas had shown that paid parental leave contributes positively to strong economic and social outcomes, rather than being a burden on the economy. Australia remains

one of only two OECD countries without such a scheme.

"This most recent survey shows that the Australian public are also saying that, particularly in these tough economic times, a national paid parental leave scheme is vital," Ms Broderick said.

"Compared to the figures discussed for funding national stimulus packages and the national broadband network, at \$452 million, the cost of funding a national paid parental leave scheme is small and eminently affordable."

Commissioner Broderick said she had welcomed the commitment of the Australian Government to gender equality.

"A national paid parental leave scheme is a foundation reform that can no longer wait," the Commissioner said. "I urge the Government to ensure that the scheme is included in the May Budget."

**Media Release by Australian Human Rights Commission
9 April 2009**

The text of WEL NSW's letter to Federal politicians and other women's groups re paid parental leave can be found on page 4.

Members are encouraged to send a copy of this letter to their local Federal MP, and to the Prime Minister and Cabinet before Budget night.

(Continued from page 1)

PRIORITY 2009 ISSUES

State issue

Domestic Violence

Action needed

Ongoing monitoring at State and Federal levels.

Office for Women

Response submitted to State Govt report.
Meet with new Director, discuss priorities, assist in development of indicators.

Feminist conference
(November)

Seek involvement, especially on issue of whether NSW women are getting their share of federal funding.

Federal issue

Federal Budget

Action needed

Identify who is involved and form coalitions, eg WomenSpeak, NFAW.

Lobby on Paid Parental Leave pre-budget and prepare statement ahead of budget announcement, anticipating negative outcome.

Child care

Ongoing monitoring and advocacy.

Human Rights legislation

Involved in current consultation process.

Economic outcomes

Monitor, make submissions and lobby on:

- Unemployment/job creation – impact on women
- Welfare to work
- Retirement income
- Henry tax enquiry – report being prepared

Working conditions

Monitor, make submissions and lobby on:

- Work flexibility
- Pay equity
- Minimum wage inquiry

TAFE/Vocational education/
tertiary education

Initially follow up with WAVE etc to assess situation and also flag any proposed initiatives to WEL Australia

Health - preventative

Approach other organisations eg Womens' Health Network, to see how we can assist.

Housing

Monitor and advocate in relation to allocation of housing for domestic violence cases.

The Executive warmly welcome any comments/suggestions from members on the above, and also invite members to indicate areas where they would like to be involved. Contact Lorraine Slade at the WEL NSW office – leave a phone or fax message on 9212 4374, or email welnsw@comcen.com.au.

PAID PARENTAL LEAVE—DO SOMETHING NOW

No more excuses. How can we have \$42 billion in bank guarantees; \$6.2 billion in subsidies for the car industry; \$30 billion in Rudd-bank guarantees plus \$10.4 billion in a stimulus package and not \$0.5 billion for paid parental leave? Australian women won't buy it.

The Federal Government has been dropping hints that the introduction of Paid Parental Leave is going to be just too expensive to introduce in the 2009 budget because of the current financial environment.

The Rudd Labor Government was elected with the promise to refer this long overdue entitlement to the Productivity Commission, with Mr Rudd since indicating that "it's time to bite the bullet" on this issue. After extensive consultation, the Productivity Commission recommended in its draft report the introduction of 18 weeks' publicly funded leave paid at the minimum wage rate, plus two weeks for partners on a take it or lose it basis.

While these Productivity Commission's recommendations do not meet the more desirable target of 26 weeks' leave, they represent a major progressive leap forward by recognising that **caring for babies is a workplace issue for both women and men.**

The economic arguments against

PPL just don't stack up. The stated costs of introducing paid parental leave is substantially reduced with the redirection of existing entitlements such as the baby bonus. In effect, the first 13 weeks of the scheme can be covered through the transfer of existing expenditure.

There are economic benefits in increasing participation rates of women in the workforce and in retaining skilled workers. The recommended approach by the Productivity Commission in its draft report is particularly welcome in targeting lower paid and vulnerable workers.

Above all, this is an issue that goes to the heart of social justice and quality of life for women and their families, especially the most vulnerable.

We have this message for the Federal Government: failing to introduce Paid Parental Leave in some form in this budget will be seen as breaking faith with the women of Australia. **We urge you to DO SOMETHING NOW about it.**

Eva Cox
Marie Coleman
Jozefa Sobski
Helen L'Orange
Josefa Green

WEL letter sent to Federal politicians and other women's groups.

Members are encouraged to send a copy of this letter, or use it as the basis for their own letter, to your local Federal MP, now!

FREE LEGAL HELP FOR SEX ASSAULT VICTIMS

*Geesche Jacobsen, Crime Editor
SMH, April 17, 2009*

VICTIMS of sexual assault will be given free legal representation to fight attempts by their attackers to gain access to intimate counselling and medical records.

Some victims have refused to push ahead with their complaint after learning that courts planned to make their personal records available to the defence team.

One victim who did give evidence - Miss C, a teenager gang-raped by the Skaf brothers and their associates in August 2000 - refused to have any counselling or see any doctors for years after details of her discussion with a hospital counsellor were revealed to her attackers' lawyers.

If confidential information falls into the hands of alleged perpetrators and outsiders, it only served to further intimidate and humiliate the victims, the manager of the Rape Crisis Centre, Karen Willis, said.

For example, it was a normal human reaction to trauma to replay events in one's mind and ask if something more could have been done to avoid it.

But in court this could then be twisted to portray the victim as accepting some blame for the events, Ms Willis said.

At present, it is up to the owner of

records - doctors, psychologists, schools and government departments such as DOCS and Centrelink - and/or the victims to argue in court against an application for access to the records.

A six-month pilot project, developed by the law firms Blake Dawson, Clayton Utz and Freehills with the Bar Association and the Director of Public Prosecutions, will seek to ensure privileged information is withheld and only documents relevant to the case are released.

But the availability of pro bono lawyers was just a "stop-gap measure" until the law could be improved, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Nicholas Cowdery, QC, said. He has already had discussions with the Attorney-General, John Hatzistergos, on the issue.

At present, when defence barristers subpoena records, victims have to be notified. But it rarely happens, the national pro bono partner with Blake Dawson, Anne Cregan, said.

If they are notified, they often do not understand the significance, she said. If they do understand, they frequently cannot afford legal help to fight it.

The DPP has 1070 active sexual

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"[The project] removes one more obstacle that victims of sexual assault have to face when their matters get to court,"

assault cases, about two-thirds of them relating to child victims, Mr Cowdery said. In many cases, subpoenas of records became a sensitive issue, and victims often found out about it only on the first day of the trial, an already emotional time.

"[The project] removes one more obstacle that victims of sexual assault have to face when their matters get to court," he said.

"Therefore, we hope it will send a message to people that those sort of offences should be reported and people should be willing to assist the arrest and see the offender

punished."

While some material will continue to be made available to the defence, legal representation should ensure this does not include privileged material.

Six cases, including child victims and victims with an intellectual disability, have already been referred to pro bono lawyers. "It is the aim to use the experience to support requests for further legislation," Mr Cowdery said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/free-legal-help-for-sex-assault-victims-20090416-a8wq.html?page=-1>

HERE WE GO AGAIN- 'MIDDLE CLASS WELFARE.....'

Here we go again- the 'middle class welfare' pink flag is raised to justify cutting payments which essentially go to women, ignoring the huge tax expenditures, which one could reasonably accurately describe as upper class male welfare. One of my current tasks is writing the Women's Electoral Lobby submission to the Henry Tax Inquiry and the gendered nature of this debate is very clear. There are more female voters than male and cutting our payments while leaving male ones is not a good look!

The assumptions are that payments through the transfer system are welfare and should go to the less well off but tax rebates/ deductions are entitlements that legitimately go to high income earners. Yet \$5000 in tax saved on

salary sacrificing to super costs the government exactly the same loss in revenue as \$5000 in the baby bonus.

Super tax concessions on contributions, earnings and payments cost \$26B in lost income. Most of this benefit goes to higher income groups (37% to the top 5% of earners). An Australia Institute paper on tax expenditures points out an earner on \$300,000 pa with \$1 in his super fund gets \$37,000 in tax relief! This is three times the Age pension! And someone can retire on a super income of \$500,000 and pay no tax! The bulk of such benefits go to high income men, so maybe it is not surprising that these items were not included in the Henry

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**Written by Eva Cox
for Crikey.com**

1 April 2009

review.

The Baby Bonus, in contrast, costs only \$1.4 B and provides income for women at a high cost time. It was offered as a badly designed sop to women when Howard refused to introduce paid maternity leave. Means testing it further just makes it worse. It should be replaced by a taxable parental leave entitlement and a payment for those not in paid work!

Attacking Family Tax Benefits as middle class welfare fails to recognise that child bearing costs women a lot of earned income. New figures by the AMP and NATSEM show that mothers with a bachelor degree earn about 60% of what similar fathers earn. Cutting payments discourages mothers taking up paid work as it increases the effective tax on their earnings.

The hue and cry of middle class

welfare is a populist political stunt that interferes with good policy making. For instance, a universal aged pension with no super concessions would be more equitable and cost less than the current concessions. Savings would leave enough over to pay extra money for the many single older people who couldn't save, who are, not surprisingly, mainly female. Yet universal payments are seen as middle class welfare! The government could also look at other aspects of the hidden welfare of tax expenditures that includes concessions on capital gains and areas of possible tax such as wealth taxes rather than picking on payments that go mainly to women.

Eva Cox

THE WOMENSPEAK NETWORK

The WomenSpeak Network is one of four non government National Women's Secretariats funded by the Commonwealth Office for Women to act as a conduit for the exchange of information between the Government and the women's sector and provide representative advice on policy issues affecting women.

The WomenSpeak Network provides the Federal Office for Women with significant input on issues affecting women in Australia, including child-care, women's health, women's leadership, young women, the role of men and boys in gender equity, and violence against women.

Background to the WomenSpeak Network -

The WomenSpeak Network currently includes 37 mostly national women's organisations. We also include national organisations with a

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For some time now, WEL has been a member of the Womenspeak Network—this article is reproduced from the Womenspeak webpage <http://www.ywca.org.au/projects/womenspeak/index.php>

specific focus on the impacts on women of policy and service delivery and where there is no national organisation in an area state based organisations or expert individuals.

After a period of extensive consultation the WomenSpeak Network chose to form a network that did not speak as a unified voice, but reflected the diversity of women's organisations in Australia. The WomenSpeak Network has also adopted mechanisms that allow organisations and individuals to be involved in the projects and activities of the Network that support and enhance their own organisation's work.

We recognise that the current participants of the WomenSpeak Network do not reflect the full diversity of women in Australia and are actively seeking to strengthen the voice of Indigenous women; women with disabilities and women from culturally and linguistically diverse groups both within our network and within the women's sector.

Priorities of WomenSpeak Network

The identified priorities of the WomenSpeak Network are:

- Human rights;
- Involvement of young women and ensuring a youth voice in policy work;
- Diversity;
- Networking; and
- Participation in federal policy issues as they arise.

Based on the identified priorities of Network, member organisations are working together to:

- Consult on the impact and benefit of women's organisations in local and national communities;
- Share information and resources on a range of women's issues;
- Support training for women around the use and application of human rights' instruments especially the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women;
- Support WomenSpeak Network member organisations with small grants for forums and events on women's issues

WomenSpeak consultations

The WomenSpeak Network has undertaken consultations on childcare,

(Continued on page 9)

More Information

More information about the activities of the WomenSpeak Network is available from Kathy Richards on womenspeak@ywca.org.au or 02 6230 5150.

young women's recruitment, retention and leadership in women's organisations, and the benefit of women's organisations in communities in Australia.

Consultations have included surveys and interviews with young women active in the social justice and women sectors, online surveys regarding childcare and community consultations discussing the impact of women's organisations in communities across Australia.

WomenSpeak has also supported a new national network to support trafficked women, the development of a national immigrant and refugee women's network, and participation of women in various workshops and forums on topics ranging from the future of health care in Australia, to the challenges facing young Indigenous women in Australia.

DID YOU KNOW THIS?

On 27 July 1942, the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) was established as a national organisation, reporting to the Director-General of Manpower. The aim of the AWLA was to replace the male farm workers who had either enlisted in the armed services or were working in other essential war work such as munitions. The AWLA was not an enlisted service, but rather a voluntary group whose members were paid by the farmer, rather than the government or military forces. Membership of the AWLA was open to women who were British subjects and between the ages of 18 and 50 years. Housed in hostels in farming areas, members were given formal farming instruction and were initially supplied with uniform, bedding etc. Members were not engaged in domestic work rather they undertook most types of work involved with primary industries. The organisation was to be formally constituted under the National Security Regulations, but a final draft of the National Security (Australian Women's Land Army) Regulations was not completed until 1945, and did not reach the stage of promulgation due to cessation of hostilities and the decision to demobilize the Land Army. A 'Land Army' was established in each state and administered that state's rural needs, though some members were sent interstate when available. In September 1945 it was decided that complete demobilization of the Australian Women's Land Army would take effect not later than 31 December 1945.

<http://womenustralia.info/biogs/AWE0393b.htm>

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

ANNE SUMMERS' NEW BOOK

Read an early draft of an excerpt from *THE LOST MOTHER*, Anne's new book to be published in May by Melbourne University Press. The excerpt can be found at <http://www.annesummers.com.au/documents/>

TheLostMotherdraftPrologue_000.doc

UPCOMING EVENTS

UNIFEM Australia Informs Lunch

Thursday, 7 May 2009
commencing 12 noon
at Westpac, 275 Kent Street Sydney,

The speaker at the Lunch will be
Mercy Akongo

Mercy is a dedicated and self-motivated young woman who has set up a women's resource centre in Uganda. While working as Field Coordinator for Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) in Uganda in 2008, she arranged rallies and community activities to raise awareness on issues affecting local people in her community. She has founded the Tedwii Indigenous Women's Development Organisation which has been running workshops on human rights and development. She is currently completing a 3 month placement with Oxfam Australia in Sydney, and looks forward to sharing her experiences with the broader Australian community.

RSVP including payment by Thursday, 30 April
Lunch including wine: \$55

to Jenny Hall – jhall14@bigpond.net.au or phone (02) 9363 2318, fax (02) 9363 3209;

Two important events

You are invited to join this public forum to discuss Abortion Law Reform in NSW

12:30pm – 2:00pm, Friday 1st May 2009
Jubilee Room, NSW Parliament
Macquarie Street, Sydney

Speakers:

- * Dr Leslie Cannold, co-ordinator of Reproductive Choice Australia and Pro Choice Vic, ethicist, author and media commentator.
<http://www.cannold.com/>
- * Lisa Pryor, author and Sydney Morning Herald columnist
- * Eurydice Aroney - Walkley award winning radio documentary maker and academic. Listen to Eurydice's documentary tracing the history of her own grandmother who died after having an illegal abortion in 1942
- * Victorian Greens MP Colleen Hartland – active in the 2008 Victorian abortion campaign.

All welcome. No cost. RSVP to Linda Wilhelm - 9230 3551 or
linda.wilhelm@parliament.nsw.gov.au



connected

WEL Executive Meeting

Monday

4 May 2009

6pm

66 Albion St
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

Jessie Street National Women's Library—Sydney Lunch Hour Talks -

These are held on the third Thursday of each month. The venue is Seminar Room 2, Ultimo Community Centre, Bulwara Road, Ultimo, from 12 pm to 1.30 pm. Entry fee is \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. A sandwich lunch is included. Booking is essential. Ring the Library on (02) 9265 9486 or email info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

MAY—Thursday 21st

Angela Badger *Charlotte Badger, Buccaneer*

Charlotte, transported from England, was the first Australian female pirate, the first successful woman escapee and the first white woman resident of New Zealand. Angela, author of five books, tells how she became interested in this subject, where her research led her and describes Charlotte's fascinating and extraordinary life.

JUNE—Thursday 18th

Anna Volska *Ritual or My Life in the Theatre*

Anna Volska has been associated with the Bell Shakespeare Company in Sydney since its inception and speaks about her life and the part the theatre has played in it. In 1952, she came to Australia from Poland via England and attended NIDA when it had been newly set up as a drama school. Anna, her husband, John Bell, and their two children left for England in 1965 where she and her husband were with the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford on Avon.

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,
Tabitha Ponnambalam, Eva Cox, Alex Heron

**National Co-ordination
Committee Representative**

Eva Cox 0407 535 374

Office Co-ordinator

Lorraine Slade
WEL NSW office (02) 9212 4374

Auditor Anna Logan
Public Officer Cate Turner

NSW WEL Groups

Coffs Harbour:
Celia Nolan (02) 6656 1653
Wagga Wagga:
Jan Roberts (02) 6924 6459

**Media Contacts
General, Early Childhood Education
and Care, Housing**

Eva Cox 0407 535 374

Education and Training

Jozefa Sobski 0403 895 929

**Disability, Mental Health, Domestic
Violence and Sexual Assault**

Helen L'Orange 0425 244 935

Health

Gwen Gray 0405 193 584

WEL Australia

email : wel@wel.org.au
website : www.wel.org.au

WEL NSW

email : welnsw@comcen.com.au
website : <http://welnsw.org.au>

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:

WOMEN'S ELECTORAL LOBBY (NSW) Inc
66 ALBION STREET
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010
AUSTRALIA