



informed

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OLDER WOMEN ABUSED AT HOME—NEW RESEARCH

Article by Adele Horin
SMH Monday, 20 July 2009

'Josie Jackson was married for 39 years and suffered regular physical and emotional abuse until she finally kicked her husband out. By then she was 58 and he 66.

"He didn't mellow with age," she said. "But the kids were bigger so by the end it was less physical abuse and more emotional. He had a wicked mouth."

Domestic violence has usually been thought of as a crime against younger women. But a study shows that one in four women who report physical violence from their

partner is 45 or over. Yet these women are largely invisible, and too few services are available to help them. The Report, *The Disappearing Age*, was commissioned by the Older Women's Network and will be released today (20 July) by the Minister for Women, Verity Firth.

It shows a big number of older women might have endured a lifetime of family violence—and the violence becomes more complex as they age. For example, some women come under pressure from adult children to stay and care for their ageing fathers.

"When you're older, it's really hard to start your life over," said Ludo

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A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY—WELNSW AGM

Members and friends are invited to the WELNSW Annual General Meeting

On Sunday, 23rd August 2009

At the WEL offices

66 Albion Street, Surry Hills
(just up the road from Central Station)

From 10am to 12noon

RSVP - Call us on (02) 9212 4374
or email welnsw@comcen.com.au

Next WEL monthly
meeting :

Monday, 6pm on

3 August at WEL of-
fices

66 Albion Street
Surry Hills

All welcome

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: 10 August and 14 September. 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

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BAD ECONOMIC TIMES WORSE FOR WOMEN

The final Decision of the Australian Fair Pay Commission not to grant any increase in the Minimum Wage will worsen the gender wage gap and disproportionately affect women. It would seem that Professor Harper and his fellow Commissioners accept the proposition that women and the low paid should bear the brunt of the global financial crisis. Low paid workers should forego wage rises under the guise of maintaining employment.

The reasoning of the Fair Pay Commission's Decision was selective, failed to recognise other evidence and was more a reflection of the economic ideology of the members of the 'Workchoices' inspired Commission. The reasoning for the Decision is flawed in arguing that an increase would worsen unemployment. Not only does the Decision harm women and low paid by not granting them an increase when other workers have received annual increases of 4.6% but it also is a retrograde step in addressing the gender wage gap.

Commissioner Harper justified the Decision on the back of a Report from the Centre for International Economics commissioned by his office. In support of his case Professor Harper referred to the study that 'forecasted' that unemployment would increase by 17,000 jobs if an increase in the minimum wage was granted. The

Commissioners rejected submissions from the Federal Government which did not support a reduction in the real minimum wage and argued that a reduction was unlikely to be effective in stimulating employment. The AFPC also chose to ignore international research from other organisations such as the OECD which found that 'there is no significant direct impact of the minimum wage on the unemployment rate'.

The argument that increases in minimum wages, (or even having a minimum wage at all) drive down employment has long been advanced by adherents to right wing economic theory. Several members of the soon to be defunct Australian Fair Pay Commission have long supported this belief. Not only is there much evidence which has been presented to the Commission to debunk this theory but in the current climate it would also seem at odds with policies aimed to stimulate the economy. Low paid workers do spend their income in order to survive. They put money into the economy. To insist that low paid workers rely on the forecast of economists in a period when the discipline of economic forecasting appears to lack credibility seems even further worrying when the CIE report itself also argues that previous increases awarded by the AFPC could have helped constrain

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wage growth thereby reducing inflationary pressures and leading to higher aggregate wages and lower unemployment than otherwise'. What are we to believe, do minimum wage increases decrease or increase unemployment or is there no relationship as argued by the OECD? It would seem that this current Decision selects from the ideologically 'what suits' basket. To base the economic livelihood of low wage workers on such contestable assumptions is unfair and cruel.

The Decision also exacerbates the gender pay gap and pay equity. Other research by Healy, Kidd and Richardson commissioned by the Australian Fair Pay Commission seems to have not been given as much weight in this Decision. Their study shows that over the last decade much of the increase in employment and the increase in women's participation has been in the low paid sectors of the economy. They found that women and the low paid rely upon the Commission and the adjustment of awards in the setting of their wages which in turn affects the wage gender gap. The Commission 'may play an important role in determining the overall size of the gender wage gap, through its role in setting award wages'.

Professor Harper also based the failure to grant a wage increase on claims that changes to the tax and transfer system have provided increases in the incomes of lower paid households. The setting of minimum wages should not be reliant upon perceived household arrangements, these ideas do nothing for workers' financial independence, particularly that of women, and fails to pay a fair wage for work performed. It certainly transgresses all attempts to have women's jobs properly valued and paid on a non gendered basis.

The Federal Government recognizes the importance of fixing the gender wage gap and is

currently conducting a House of Representatives Inquiry into Pay Equity and a Review of the toothless Equal Opportunity in the Workplace Agency. The importance of minimum wages and of pay setting arrangements has been made clear to those conducting the Inquiry. The current award modernization process and subsequent reviews does provide a means of properly valuing and paying women and workers. There are many issues to be considered such as the relationship between low pay and the gender gap, why is it that women's jobs are 'low paid', why is their work undervalued, why is it that a bricklayer is paid \$1026.40 a week and a personal carer in a nursing home paid \$839.00, how do work and family arrangements affect women wages, how the wages gap affects women in their retirement and how best can the pay equity problem be solved.

In the 1970s the Equal Pay Cases did improve the gender wage gap. More recently, equal remuneration cases in the various State industrial relations systems also improved the wages for many women in such occupations as child care workers and community workers. However closing of the gap has stalled and it has in fact widened. Affirmative action policies, gender audit requirements and programs provide little improvement unless they are enforceable. Toothless policies and Pollyanna beliefs that stakeholders will see the light and 'get' that inequality is inefficient, bad for business and take action simply have not worked. The problem will be further exacerbated by this Minimum Wage Decision that allows women and low paid workers to languish below increases received by other workers in the community. Economic good times failed to make advances in wage justice for women and it would seem that women and low paid workers must carry a greater burden than others in economic bad times.

Suzanne Hammond

Not everything that matters can be captured in indicators, and some information is better presented in words, rather than numbers.

CLOSING THE GAP

Closing the gap: let's talk about things that work. Eva Cox from Women for Wik writes:

Closing the Indigenous gap was never going to be easy, but the reception of the Productivity Commission report will unfortunately make it harder. Media and political responses have focused on the child abuse and extreme deviance increases and have generally reinforced the widespread views that nothing has worked.

These media responses are problematic because they reinforce the propensity of governments to look for quick fix authoritarian responses, based on assumptions that the faults are with the intransigence of the communities, who fail to respond to good intentions. Headlined proposals to mandate healthy food in the outback stores ignore both the questions of freight costs and the health problems of those communities that live close to good food supplies, and therefore deeper problems than bad food choices.

There has been extra money allocated but perceptions that "throwing money at the problem" fails, overlook how much of the spending has gone to outside administration, not to the communities themselves. For instance, \$88M extra allocated to quarantining income has gone to bureaucratic costs, not to the recipients and much of the other Intervention costs have gone on new white

bureaucrats and the housing they need in remote communities.

No media report raises the questions of what we/the Governments/the wider society might be doing wrong. There is a scads of evidence to show that it is not necessarily spending the money that works but how it is done. The last government both verbally trashed the views of many Indigenous communities and removed their semi-independent voice and also failed to recognise that short term, top down initiatives would not work, as was shown in this report.

The current government network at COAG still failed to recognise that such approaches fail time and time again despite the Productivity Commission suggesting this, as do many other studies on this point. The Report says clearly on page eight of the Summary document.

Things that work:

Not everything that matters can be captured in indicators, and some information is better presented in words, rather than numbers. In particular, community level change may not show up in state or national data. The main report includes many examples of "things that work" - activities and programs that are making a difference, often at the community level. This Overview

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summarises these "things that work" in the discussion of each COAG target, headline indicator or strategic area.

Analysis of the "things that work", together with wide consultation with Indigenous people and governments, identified the following "success factors":

a.. cooperative approaches between Indigenous people and government -- often with the non-profit and private sectors as well as community involvement in program design and decision-making

b.. a 'bottom up' rather than 'top-down' approach

c.. good governance -- at organisation, community and government levels

d.. ongoing government support -- including human, financial and physical resources.

This warning was not reported in the media. Nor unfortunately did the Commission's report assess which policies and program over the last decade had been designed co-operatively and bottom up. These predictors of successful programs are in many other reports. These show that education, employment, health, housing and family support services that are short term funded, not culturally appropriate, and linked to engaged local communities fail in both remote and urban settings.

The media emphasis on the

'deviance' statistics (abuse, crime etc) means we are likely to continue to get more inappropriately designed and delivered programs that will continue to blame the victims for their failures. The claims that this government delivers evidence based policies needs to be made true, but the evidence must be based on what works and not just on the admittedly horrific statistics.

The report states with some optimism "Across virtually all the indicators in this report, there are wide gaps in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. However, the report shows that the challenge is not impossible -- in a few areas, the gaps are narrowing."

Overall, Indigenous people have shared in Australia's economic prosperity of the past decade or so, with improvements in employment, incomes and measures of wealth such as home ownership. However, in almost all cases, outcomes for non-Indigenous people have also improved, meaning the gaps in outcomes persist.

The challenge for governments and Indigenous people will be to preserve these gains and close the gaps in a more difficult economic climate.

(For more evidence, I'm involved in a new website www.whatsworking.com.au which is documenting examples to counter the views that nothing

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These show that education, employment, health, housing and family support services that are short term funded, not culturally appropriate, and linked to engaged local communities fail in both remote and urban settings.

Despite the Government already spending over \$56M to fund the bankruptcy and save centres, it refuses to look at how the current funding model made such collapses inevitable.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE CHILD CARE REFORM STRATEGY—

Eva Cox writes:

Early Childhood Development is a claimed priority for the Rudd Government, albeit to enhance future human capital in current preschoolers.

These economic outcomes are presumed to depend on upgrading qualifications and ratios of staff.

As a long term advocate in the area, I welcome the possibilities of more adults per child and the upgrade of skills, but I am concerned that more formal qualifications may not include needed skills. As one example, there is a gross deficit of skills in two ways teaching that recognises Indigenous cultures and builds literacy and numeracy on these. Yet closing the gap is a key aim of this program.

COAG has endorsed papers for the current brief national consultation on possible desirable changes to staffing ratios and qualifications. The modelling was done by Boston Consulting and the "products ie child care services" are assumed to be inter-changeable and the demand inelastic. This adds up to the proposition that rises in costs will be affordable as parents will want to compete for better staffed services and any good services will do the trick.

These assumptions are already the flawed basis of the current market driven policies which have not been shaken by the collapse of market leader ABC Child Care.

Despite the Government already spending over \$56M to fund the bankruptcy and save centres, it refuses to look at how the current funding model made such collapses inevitable. The basic building block is parent fees "purchasing" services, based on competition and adequate market knowledge. Public funding, apart from some accreditation and odd bits of support, is primarily directed to subsidising parent fees.

Low income users get child care benefit (\$180 pw) if the family earns less than \$40,000 per annum, and then pro rata and all users of approved care get a 50% rebate (max \$7,778 pa) So the maximum a very low income parent would get for full time care would be \$330 pw out of bills ranging from \$400 to \$540 or even more. This leaves a gap they have to meet.

The differences in gaps is usually because of extra staffing, more qualified and more experienced staff. Therefore those who pay higher gaps get better services. The proposals are to move to more qualified staff, eg four year degrees, but these qualifications are in short supply so they can, and do, choose schools as these pay more and have better working hours. So keeping high quality staff may require that the

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service offers higher pay.

The discussion paper underplays the importance of gap fees and denies these are a factor in decision making, particularly at low income levels.

Other issues such as the location of the services, cultural factors and trust affect choices but are left out as "externalities" in the economic modelling.

The COAG proposals do not deal with funding issues at all. This is the elephant that is not being dealt with. The old market model that allowed ABC to fail is deeply flawed because it has no contractual relationship between funder and supplier. The government is the only player who has the power to ensure both that services are run responsibly and that they can meet the needs of the children they serve.

They abrogate their potential power to the parents and assumes they, as purchasers, will drive quality and price. This allows cowboys to flourish. There are still some 700 plus

ABC centres in receiver hands and the 200 plus already auctioned off have mainly gone to commercial operators, who may not be finding them the cash cow they hoped for.

So the proposed changes won't work unless the funding system changes from one-size-fits-all payments to parents to a system which funds services and set conditions. This would allow COAG to recognise the varying needs of children and fund centres according to the ages and capabilities of their users. This model would allow for some form of fee control, as there is with nursing homes, as well as subsidies to meet the needs of children in need of extra care skills or the very young.

So, if the government and COAG are serious about reform in this area, there needs to be a total review of the funding model and then we can take the proposed quality care upgrades seriously.

The old market model that allowed ABC to fail is deeply flawed because it has no contractual relationship between funder and supplier.

CLOSING THE GAP

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works.

We will be adding in the many examples the Productivity Commission intersperses in its report because these and other examples show that there are answers but these relate as much to how things are done as what is to be done).

Eva Cox is a member of Women for Wik

U.S. OPENS PATH TO ASYLUM FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

By JULIA PRESTON

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/16/us/16asylum.html? r=5>

Published: July 15, 2009

The Obama administration has opened the way for foreign women who are victims of severe domestic beatings and sexual abuse to receive asylum in the United States. The action reverses a Bush administration stance on an issue at the centre of a protracted and passionate legal battle over the possibilities for battered women to become refugees.

In addition to meeting the existing strict conditions for being granted asylum, abused women need to show a judge that women are viewed as subordinate by their abuser, according to a court filing by the administration, and must also show that domestic abuse is widely tolerated in their country.

The administration laid out its position in an immigration appeals court filing in the case of a woman from Mexico who requested asylum, saying she feared she would be murdered by a common law husband there. According to court documents filed in San Francisco, the man repeatedly raped her at gunpoint, held her captive, stole from her and at one point attempted to burn her alive when he learned she was pregnant.

The government submitted its legal brief in April, but the woman only recently gave her consent for the confidential case documents to be disclosed to The New York Times. The government has marked a clear, although narrow, pathway for battered women seeking asylum, lawyers said, after thirteen years of tangled court arguments, including resistance from the Bush administration to recognize any of those claims.

Moving cautiously, the government did not immediately recommend asylum for the Mexican woman, who is identified in the court papers only by her initials as L.R. But the Department of Homeland Security, in the unusual submission written by senior government lawyers, concluded in plain terms that "it is possible" that the Mexican woman "and other applicants who have experienced domestic violence could qualify for asylum."

As recently as last year, Bush administration lawyers had argued in the same case that battered women could not meet the strict standards of American asylum law.

"This really opens the door to the protection of women who have suffered these kinds of violations," said Karen Musalo, a professor who is

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director of the Centre for Gender and Refugee Studies at the University of California Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. Ms. Musalo has represented other battered women seeking asylum and recently took up the case of L.R.

The Obama administration's position caps a legal odyssey for foreign women seeking protection in the United States from domestic abuse that began in 1996 when a Guatemalan woman named Rody Alvarado was granted asylum by an immigration court, based on her account of serial beatings by her husband, a Guatemalan soldier. Three years later, an immigration appeals court overturned Ms. Alvarado's asylum, saying she was not part of any persecuted group under American law.

Since then Ms. Alvarado's case languished as officials debated the issue, reluctant to open a floodgate of asylum petitions from battered women across the globe. In 2004, lawyers at Homeland Security broached the possibility of asylum for victims of domestic violence, but the Bush administration never moved forward with that policy.

NEW RESEARCH ON ABUSE OF OLDER WOMEN

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McFerran, the author of the report which draws on Australian Bureau of Statistics crime data. "Even more than younger women, older women want to stay in their own homes wherever possible. Some think the answer is to wait for the so-and-so to die."

The report says older women thought refuges were not for them and, in some cases, refuges did give priority to younger women with children. There was also a fear that they would be placed in an aged-care facility.

Ms McFerran said the challenge was to respect the choices of older women to stay at home but to find

ways to make their life safer.

This included encouraging the use of security-call buttons, more domestic violence outreach services and support groups, and better training of general practitioners in detecting the signs of domestic violence, and in referrals.

Sonia Laverty, of the Older Women's Network, said violence against older women would increase with an ageing population. The impoverishment of some older women, and increasing homelessness, made it imperative that older women benefited from affording housing initiatives.'

Jessie Street National Women's Library - Twentieth Anniversary Luncheon

Monday 21st September 2009 - 12noon for 12.30pm

Stranger's Dining Room, Parliament House, Sydney

Speaker: Adele Horin

Topic: "Do Newspapers Have a Future and Who Cares?"

Cost: \$80 members \$85 non members

Contact: JSNWL ph 9571 5359 fax 9571 5714

E-mail: info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

Further Info: www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

REMEMBERING PINE GAP

An exhibition of banners, posters, photographs and archival material from the Women's Peace Camp at Pine Gap in 1983 will be on display at NSW Parliament House from 1-24 September.

The Jessie Street National Women's Library, which holds this collection, would like to send invitations to anyone interested, especially women who were there in 1983. Please give us your contact details.

For further information about the exhibition and the official opening, email info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au, phone 9571 5359 or fax 9571 5714.

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.



connected

Judy Small and Annalisa Kerrigan Charity Concert / with Deb Spillane

MC: The Hon Dr Meredith Burgmann

Where: The Gaelic Theatre, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills

When: Saturday 1st August 2009 (For One Night Only)
6:30pm Doors Open - 7:00pm Concert Starts

Cost: Door price \$35 or online price \$30

Contact Tanya 0418 222 513

Auction item A surprise item from **KD Lang**

THE DIVA, THE FOLKIE and THE SPORTS JOURNO

Enchanting internationally acclaimed soprano Annalisa Kerrigan and powerful Australian folk music icon, singer/songwriter Judy Small, will bring out emotions buried deep within. These two extraordinary talents come together for an AFAP and The Corrilee Foundation charity concert to benefit women and their families.

Special singing guest appearance: Deb Spillane

www.afap.org is a non profit organisation providing assistance to the people of Africa, Asia & the Pacific. AFAP is an Australian based non-profit organisation that supports development projects in over 20 countries. It is half funded by the donations. For over 40 years, AFAP has been supporting work in many different sectors such development, health, education and literacy.

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.

**Next WEL
Monthly Meeting**

Monday

3 August

**66 Albion St
Surry Hills**

ALL WELCOME

WEL NSW Executive

Convenor: Jozefa Sobski
Treasurer: Anne Barber
Members: Josefa Green, Helen L'Orange,
Tabitha Ponnambalam, Eva Cox, Alex Heron

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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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66 ALBION STREET
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010
AUSTRALIA