



informed

Issue 399

January 2010

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YOUR FIRST DIARY DATE FOR 2010 - INTERNATIONAL WOMENS' DAY MARCH

In 2010 the march and rally in Sydney will be on Saturday 6 March – so please put this date in your diary. If you live in Sydney, or can visit, encourage your friends, neighbours or social group to come along and march. In previous years the Office of Women's Policy has funded IWD activities in council areas throughout NSW. Hopefully, something similar will occur this year and I would encourage you to participate in one or more of these activities.

The Sydney IWD Collective is currently convening to make arrangements for the march and rally in 2010. Once the details of the route march and rally location have been decided it will be posted on the IWD website: <http://iwdsydney.wordpress.com/> and promoted in the newsletter.

2010 will be the third year that the magnificent IWD banners will be flying in the streets of Sydney.

Again we have secured locations along Macquarie Street, Martin Place, Alfred Street (in front of Circular Quay) King Street, Market Street and the streets around Governor Macquarie tower. The banners will be displayed for two weeks, the week before and after IWD. As long as the banners look good we will be allowed to keep hanging them, so fingers crossed that the weather is kind and they keep intact for another few years. There is a cost however in putting them up and taking them down again and so the collective has to generate some funds each year to cover these expenses.

This year, we were pleased to learn that the Mardi Gras march will NOT be on the same day as the IWD march, and will be held the week before.

The celebration of IWD is important, because it is one of the few umbrella events which enables

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Next WEL meeting :

Monday 8 February

6-8pm

**66 Albion Street
Surry Hills**

ALL WELCOME

**HAPPY NEW YEAR TO
ALL WEL MEMBERS**

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: 9 February. 9 March. 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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many different women's groups to come together. Whilst some women see the day as one of celebration and to revel in the company of other women, others are focused on the need to continue to press for improvement in the many different areas where women are woefully under-recognised or under-resourced. The IWD collective tries to combine these two approaches.

The Sydney IWD collective would still like to keep the march and rally as a women-only event. We are frequently asked the question about the participation of men in the march so they can support women and their demands. Whilst we acknowledge that there are many men who are individually supportive of women there are many other opportunities for men to show their support, other

than marching on IWD. For instance, men's groups (or individuals) could lobby politicians on such as equal pay or for access to child care ...

The IWD march in the 1920's saw over 300,000 women marching!!! That would be a sight to lift the spirits ... and would make it impossible for politicians to ignore the changes that women are advocating. I hope that we will be able to build up the IWD marchers to about this number in future years.

There is lots of work to be done, and only about six weeks to accomplish it. If you would like to join the collective, or know more about what is involved, please contact Anne Barber on 0410.524.523



IWD2009 in King Street, photo Anne Barber

HOPE: CRISIS, CARTHASIS AND RENEWAL BY EVA COX

Thank you to Eva Cox for providing the text of her speech at the Sydney Festival session on Hope: Crisis, Carthasis and Renewal which was held in the City Recital Hall on Wednesday, 13th January ... ED

I have 3 points to make:

- We can think big and make a more civil society: ethical, fair and kind!
- This involves changing political/policy agendas to make society our focus not the economy. and letting the politicians know we want a change.
- We need to engage ourselves in conversations on what needs to be done, and how to do it!

2010: a hope-full starting point for renewal to fix the crises caused by the last thirty odd years of bad policy and politics. Firstly let's acknowledge that whatever we are doing is on Aboriginal land, and we need to thank the elders, past and present who care for it. We can learn from their knowledge, and skills in mending social links in difficult times with hope, resilience and humour, as I have done recently.

It is the quality of relationships that make societies work well. Belonging is crucial to our sense of who we are and can be and defines what we can do and for whom. Even those of us who move around and may not have a clear sense of place, still need to be accepted and see our-

selves as linked to the margins of somewhere. Tribe, clan, family, neighbourhood and interest groupings help us define our ways of being.

Ties may be resilient and adaptive or over-stretched. Belonging may come at costs which constrain us and create pain by making demands we will not, or cannot, comply with. Resilience allows us to deal with the difficulties.

Relationships require kindness, which comes from the words 'kin and our kind', but means much more. It offers a form of connection between people that recognises our common ground, connected vulnerability and reciprocal needs. So we may both get pleasure from being kind and generous and giving to others, but may be pushed into self interest and competition.

Both responses are part of being human and therefore need to be managed at both personal and political levels. Balancing differing needs and views, civilly, creates tensions. Doing the right thing by others, as well as ensuring rights are respected may not be easy and needs to be encouraged.

Valuing the quality of our connections is basic to being more civil. These links can be reciprocal, generous and sustaining; or

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It is the quality of relationships that make societies work well.

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if stretched and broken, become inward knots of anger if things go wrong.

We may be good to those we know in our private lives but such relationships don't fit in the public sphere. Putting the social back on the public agenda means reversing the language of public debates from individualistic greed and self interest to collaborative social well being and making policies that demonstrate and support these.

Hope is both powerful and fragile. It can fuel change by mixing optimism with seeing the ways forward. Hope, however, can drift to despair if it just delivers futile dreams for those who feel powerless and unfairly excluded. Hope needs dignity to fuel a collective sense of worth and encourage on wider responsibilities. This is the X factor: the sense of agency that produces health and well being which has been identified by researchers as the control factor that is the core of fairer societies.

Research shows that unfair societies are toxic, so my hope for 2010 is that we will engage in making our society more civil. I am using 'civil' in the same way I used it in my 1995 Boyer lectures, as shorthand for fairness which involves ethical social links that allow us to engage thoughtfully with diversity, the healthy tensions of belonging as well as pushing the boundaries. Society is about valuing the ties that bind us to each other, from

gossamer threads to thick twisted ropes. It should not be seen just as a contract between self-interested individuals. But more on that later!

We know these formulae are part of making society more civil, so why have we failed to adopt the public practices and policies that encourage better societal links?

The damage was done by the long dominance of the neo liberal agenda, with Thatcher proclaiming in the 80s that there was no such thing as society, just individuals who need to take care of themselves. This fed into the neo liberal beliefs that markets were the answer. Equations assumed decisions were made by economically rational men. Feelings and generosity were defined as irrationally feminine and therefore irrelevant to macho and autistic economic ideas. This masculinised view of what counts still dominates political agendas, promoting a basic distrust of human generosity.

Markets may increase the money supply, but at a high cost to collective and connected goodwill and well being. Self-interested greed is to blame for both the crises in the environment and the financial markets, so solving these requires new policy thinking.

As evidence mounts that economists have failed as alchemists, we need to explore older and new ways of making sense of the

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**Hope is both
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world. The shift must be from increasing production and consumption to avoid scarcity, towards allocating fair shares of what we can sustainably re-distribute.

This needs a mindset change which develops policies for encouraging commitment rather than enforcing compliance. Social policies should recognise and extend healthy personal links to make connections become more generous, kind and mutually satisfying. These will include a variety of feelings: belonging, giving, accepting, rejecting, loving, hating, feeling, talking, touching and caring which are intrinsic to being human. Politicians who ignore these emotions make mistakes which damage the social fabric.

Recognising that humans are fallible is the starting point for change. However, if people are infantilised or encouraged to take care of only their kin and kind, they will resist contributing to a wider public good.

Changing priorities needs leadership to be seen as fair and ethical. Accepting the need to share the costs and benefits of remedies to the financial and environmental crises will not be easy, but is necessary. Is this possible in an election year?

Election strategies could further damage our social fabric if the

political parties play on popular anxieties to grab power. Can we ask political parties to campaign responsibly and *not* to treat voters as venal and ready to sell out to the highest bidder?

The cost of such an election win will be too high if it reinforces the legitimacy of self-interest. Voters need policies and options that appeal to what Lincoln called our better angels, rather than to the lowest denominator exposed by focus groups.

Campaigns should emphasise the positive options for sharing and fairness, and not scare monger on boat people and taxes. Using scapegoats and unfairness plays into voter cynicism and distrust, further damaging the resilience in the social fabric. Fear is the antidote of hope and creates despair.

Communities too often absorb and reflect the wider views around them, particularly if promoted heavily in advertising and media. Is ethical leadership possible in politics or almost an oxymoron?

There are some examples. In 1979 Malcolm Fraser and the Opposition supported the Vietnamese boat people, despite their being politically risky and unpopular. Peter Andren held a conservative seat with radical policies for some years because his voters told him they trusted him, even when they disagreed.

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Changing priorities needs leadership to be seen as fair and ethical.

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Could that happen now? Are our leaders even aware of the possibilities of gaining respect for doing the right thing rather than selling political indulgences for votes? We need parties and policies which make the more social possible.

People make their decisions on varying mixes of fact and feelings: ethics, the desire to please, the wish to do good or the desire to take care of their own with money. We need policies that appeal to voters' goodwill to others to make sensible and ethical public decisions possible.

We need to remember money is a poor substitute for relationships so economic criteria should no longer define the good society.

So let us start in 2010 to unravel the knots and tangles that have damaged the links that make us social beings and prioritise ways of making society more civil. This activity requires our time and commitment because asking questions is easier than finding answers. Combining hope and thoughtfulness gives us the power to work out what we can do - and be, by making our lives more civil, more fun and more creative!

How? A few suggestions for our leaders to use in policy and practice, as well for all of us -

- Be fair and kind to strangers as well as those we know

- Be generous and prepared to share
- Recognise and respect what we have in common as well as our differences
- Budget time not money so we can spend time on what we value
- Collaborate and co-operate as a first strategy to meet social ends, not competition
- Act with civility and respect, even when we disagree
- Retain goodwill and optimism about the good will of others, even when it seems tough
- Build ethical cultures by both doing the right thing and recognising the rights of others
- Recognise and respect autonomy as well as connectedness that works
- Value risk takers and boundary pushers who also reflect the above criteria
- Recognise the value of shared experiences, such as tonight, including with strangers.

Please join me in making this happen!

Eva Cox

We need to remember money is a poor substitute for relationships so economic criteria should no longer define the good society.

30 YEARS SINCE SIGNING OF CEDAW

*Media Release from Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Federal Minister for Housing
18 December 2009*

Today is the 30th anniversary of the United Nations' adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In 1983 when Australia became a party to CEDAW, there was no protection from discrimination or sexual harassment. Since then, Australia has made great strides towards equality between women and men.

This year Australia also celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Sex Discrimination Act, which has been instrumental in changing attitudes and creating opportunities for women to participate in public life.

Importantly, the Act established the role of independent Sex Discrimination Commissioner, which has been crucial in promoting equality and monitoring the implementation of CEDAW.

In December last year the Australian Government became a party to CEDAW's Optional Protocol, which allows complaints about sex discrimination to be taken directly to the UN once all domestic remedies are exhausted.

Australia will appear before the CEDAW Committee in New York in July 2010 to discuss our national report, which highlights the wide range of measures we have introduced to further advance the status of women and uphold CEDAW values.

While Australia rates well against international measures of women's empowerment, we still have work to do. For example, research by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency shows that male graduates start employment on a median salary of \$45,000, while female graduates are starting work on \$3000 less per year.

With data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics showing that one in three women will experience physical violence in their lifetime, and one in five women will experience sexual assault, it's also vital that we work to reduce both the impact and the incidence of violence against women.

The Government recognises that Australians want action on this issue so we are working with States and Territories to develop a National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children which will be finalised through the Council Of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2010.

Greater equality will benefit women, men, our society and the economy.

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FRENCH PLAN TO FORCE GENDER EQUALITY ON BOARDROOMS

- Proposal would turn Paris stockmarket 50% female
- Scepticism but also seen as 'necessary evil'

Wednesday 2 December 2009 21.51 GMT

Nicolas Sarkozy's centre-right party has put forward legislation that would see women make up half the figures in France's leading boardrooms by 2015, under a bold plan to impose gender equality on the male-dominated business world.

In a bill submitted to the French parliament this week, all companies listed on the Paris stock exchange would have to ensure female employees made up 50% of their board members by 2015. If passed, a gradual implementation of the law would see businesses obliged to have women in 20% of board seats within 18 months, and 40% within four years.

Jean-François Copé, president of the majority UMP party, said it could give a "much-needed electro-shock" to the French corporate world, long considered a bastion reserved for the male elite in which only 10.5% of board members in CAC 40 (French stock market index) companies are female.

Referring to France's move in 2000 to encourage gender equality in politics, he said: "We must do to companies what we did in the public domain a few years ago and impose parity."

The proposals, which would also apply to state-owned companies and non-listed firms with supervisory boards, will be debated next month and would need the approval of both houses of parliament to become law.

Despite the historically entrenched opposition of business chiefs to quotas, advocates say the bill is the result of a sea change in public attitudes towards gender equality. Over the past year a series of French figures not known for their feminist stance have spoken out in favour of quotas.

Daniel Lebègue, president of the conservative French Institute of directors (IFA), said his organisation had reluctantly decided they were the only way of encouraging progress. Nadine Morano, the secretary of state for the family, has said quotas are a "necessary evil", while the president of Areva, Anne Lauvergeon, recently admitted she had changed her mind about a strategy she nonetheless acknowledged as "humiliating".

Véronique Préaux-Cobti, a leading businesswoman, said the discussions

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In a bill submitted to the French parliament this week, all companies listed on the Paris stock exchange would have to ensure female employees made up 50% of their board members by 2015.

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were a sign that times had changed.

"In 2002, a huge majority would have been against," she told *Le Figaro* earlier this year. "Now, after years of good will with no change, there is a real realisation that things are not going to change on their own."

Cope and the bill's other author, the UMP's Marie-Jo Zimmermann, are determined to capitalise on the change in public opinion to drive through the reforms. Inspired by the example set in Norway, where enforced quotas have led to 40% of director posts being occupied by women, they say they are willing to take on the "reserves" of several government ministers.

Their boss, President Sarkozy, was congratulated in 2007 for appointing seven women to his 15-member cabinet. However three of those, including former Justice Minister Rachida Dati, have since been replaced, giving rise to one news weekly wondering if he was starting to show his true "macho" colours.

France's failure to impose parity on its politicians, despite a constitution change in 2000 which had the aim of giving women a larger presence in the French parliament, is one of the reasons many people remain sceptical about this week's proposals. At the last election, only 18% of MPs in the lower house were women.

Françoise de Panafieu, one of those MPs, hit out today at her own party for setting out quotas for the business world when it had failed to put its own house in order. "I prefer people setting an example to those giving lessons," she told *L'Express* magazine, claiming that Sarkozy's party had had to pay €5m (£4.5m) in fines after the 2007 elections for failing to impose parity.

The Norway way

Norway was the pioneer in introducing legislation to boost the number of women on company boards, in 2003. The change in the law affected nearly 500 public companies, including 175 firms listed on the Oslo stock exchange. Ministers stipulated that businesses should increase the number of women on their boards to 40% or face the threat of closure.

It unleashed an uproar in the Norwegian business community, with many protesting it was ridiculous to shut down a company because it lacked a woman on the board. Others argued that the law infringed the rights of shareholders to decide who they want as directors. But the threat worked and company owners duly complied. Norway now has the highest proportion of women on boards anywhere in the world with 44.2% – up from 6% in 2001. By comparison, in the UK, 12% of FTSE 100 directors are female and one in four boards are exclusively male. Sweden and Finland boast more women at leading companies at 22% and 17% respectively.

The proportion of female directors among US Fortune 500 firms is 15.2%.

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SUITED FOR WORK

Suited for Work (SFW) is a voluntary organisation that offers free clothing, styling and presentation skills to women wanting to enter or return to the workforce; or needing good clothes to present themselves well at an important event.

SFW's third dinner was held on 7th September 2009 at the Novotel Hotel in Darling Harbour. About 140 women and the odd male guest attended, having paid \$80 to enjoy a delicious dinner and hear Oonagh O'Reilly speak about life-changing events. See: www.linkedin.com/pub/oonagh-o-reilly/11/140/733

The final SFW dinner for 2009 [was] held on the 16th November at the International College of

Management in Manly.

Many of SFW's clients may have been unemployed for considerable periods of time, may never have had a job, may have been released from prison or detox programmes recently, or be refugees trying to get established.

Potential clients are referred to SFW by a referral agency or community based not for profit organisations that support disadvantaged women. Successful applicants are also provided with additional outfits once they've secured their new job.

Read the full article at: <http://blog.askher.com.au>

12 Nov enewsletter of "askher"

Mary Daly has passed away

Mary Daly (1928-2010) died on Sun 3 January in West Massachussetts. Mary Daly was a giant of the women's movement and a foremost radical feminist thinker. Her theoretical works changed the ways in which we think. She was the author of *The Church and the Second Sex*, *Beyond God the Father*, *Gyn/Ecology*, *Pure Lust*, *Outercourse*, *Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language* and *Quintessence* as well as numerous influential articles. Spinifex Press published her autobiography *Outercourse* in 1992. It is the only edition of this book still in print.

Source : http://www.spinifexpress.com.au/news_detail.php?id=106



connected

EDNA RYAN AWARDS 2010

Preparations are continuing for the 2010 Edna Ryan Awards (EDNAs) so now is the time to do something about nominating those women you know and admire. The EDNAs are awards made to women who have made a feminist difference, ie whose activities advance the status of women: the stirrers, the battlers, the troublemakers, who show extraordinary commitment and determination. Nominations close early April, 2010.

Nomination forms can be downloaded from the WELNSW website (<http://welnsw.org.au>).

F: A Festival, A Conference, A Future will be held on the 10th and 11th of April, 2010, and is being run by a collective of women who have come together, to enliven and ignite the Sydney feminist movement.

We envision two days of lively debate, workshops and discussion about where we're from, where we're at and where we're going.

We are currently putting out an open call for workshop proposals. Workshops will run for one hour on either the Saturday or the Sunday of the conference, and we are committed to covering as many topics as possible, with a diverse range of voices heard.

If you have an idea for a workshop that you would like to run, then we want to hear from you! Please email f.the.conference@google.com.au with suggestions, ideas or questions.

WEL Executive Meeting

Monday

8 February

66 Albion St
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

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
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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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66 ALBION STREET
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010
AUSTRALIA