



# informed

Issue 403

May 2010

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Next WEL members' meeting :

Monday 7 June, 6pm

WEL Offices

66 Albion Street  
Surry Hills

All Welcome

## THE EDNA RYAN AWARDS FOR 2010 ('THE EDNAS')

This month we celebrated the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the EDNAs with the presentation of 14 Awards in recognition of women who have made a feminist difference. The Awards night was held on Friday 14 May at Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts.

It was particularly a pleasure to have the Awards presented by representatives of three generations of the Ryan Family including a daughter -Julia, a granddaughter -Madeline Challen, and a great granddaughter, Grace Williams.

Verity Firth, (NSW Minister for Education and Training) Judy Hopwood (Member for Hornsby) and Helen Westwood AM, MLC, all attended the celebrations, and Lee Rhiannon, MLC, sent her apologies due to a previous engagement.

The 2010 EDNAs were awarded to:

### Arts

for creative feminism

Shokufeh Kavani

### Battling

for making it against the odds

Kat Armstrong

### Community Activism

for feminist activity in the community

Maggy Farago  
Ludo McFerran  
Sue Salthouse  
Susan Smith

### Community Activism (Special Award)

for feminist activity in the community

Rosa Campbell and  
Gabe Kavanagh

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: 18 June and 16 July. There is no newsletter in December.

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

Join the national WEL email list, email your name, email address and your WEL group (eg NSW) to owner-wel-members@lists.nwjc.org.au

#### DISCLAIMER

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.

### **Education**

for a special contribution to the education of women and girls

Dawn Atkinson  
Jane Pollard

### **Media/Communication**

for consistent promotion of women's interests in the media

Nina Funnell

### **Mentoring**

for sharing knowledge and ideas generously with other women

Mary Dimech ( posthumously)  
Frances Plummer

### **Workforce**

for improving conditions for women workers

Debbie Carstens  
Jennifer Dalitz

Congratulations to all. It was inspiring to hear of these women's achievements in their work with women in areas such as domestic violence, prisons and raising awareness of the needs of women in our multicultural society. Each award was greeted with enthusiastic applause.

It is not possible to single out any particular woman who received an EDNA. However you can read information about the 2010 recipients under 'News and Events' on the WEL NSW website:

<http://www.welnsw.org.au>.

An important aim of the EDNAs is to create a permanent record of the feminist activity of the women of our time. All women awarded an EDNA have the documentation submitted with their nominations for an EDNA Award, deposited with the NSW State Library to build an archive which is available to the public.

The EDNAs are a way of publicising and celebrating some of our achievements, and to encourage all of us (as Edna did) to keep on contributing, to keep on making a feminist difference. So start thinking about who you might nominate in 2011.

Thank you to all who made it such a wonderful night.

***Ardyce Harris***

**Anybody who would like to help .. is most welcome. We'll be putting out an official call for volunteers soon.**

## **COMING BACK TO WEL—FROM OUR NEW COORDINATOR**

I'm happy to be back at WEL, and doing a job I'm very excited about. Coordinating WEL's campaigns for both the upcoming Federal and NSW elections is a great opportunity to get women back on the political radar. Unfortunately, as Fenella Souter so eloquently pointed out recently, women are going backwards. It is becoming increasingly difficult for women to get access to work and the resources needed for financial security, let alone achieve pay equity once they are working. Of course, there's all the other things we are still fighting for – good child care, maternity leave, decent health care – that allow women, and men, to combine all aspects of their lives.

Fortunately there are some great women in WEL whom I will be working with to get these things on the agenda – and to run a feminist eye over the policies all the parties put out. Anybody who would like to help with this is most welcome. We'll be putting out an official call for volunteers soon.

So, who am I? I'm a feminist from way back. My initial involvement with WEL was back in the mid to late 90's while I was at university. During that time I spent a couple of years on the WEL Executive, with both WEL NSW and WEL Australia. As a single mother I had a particular interest in family issues,

particularly those affecting sole parents. My involvement with WEL gave me the impetus to start up the Sole Parents' Union, of which I am still President. Like with most community organisations, this was all done on a volunteer basis. I finished my honours degree at UTS in 1998, and after trying out different jobs, have spent the past 9 years working in local government in various positions.

Now that my children have all left school I can spend more time working on those things I enjoy – like WEL. I'm looking forward to meeting, talking and/or working with more of the members and the WEL Executive. We will be organising a social get together shortly, where we can also have a chat about what's happening and the upcoming elections. We'll get details out as soon as we have them, and I hope to see many of you there.

***Kathleen Swinbourne***

## CONVENOR'S REPORT

With the appointment of Kathleen Swinbourne\* to enhance WEL's effectiveness as a lobby group in the lead up to the national election, some members of the Executive were taken through a process of review and stock-take to prepare for our activities later this year. The Federal election is likely to be later in the year and WEL is hoping to have its electronic communications updated, its website fully operational and an e-mail list and membership database consolidated so that we are fully utilizing all members and supporters for all aspects of our campaign.

We will be organizing an election planning day to which all interested members will be invited to contribute. As part of this process, the WELA website will be modified and material re-organised for ease of access and searching. Consideration is also being given to reducing the frequency of the newsletter in its current format to a bi-monthly or quarterly publication and augmenting communication with the membership through weekly or twice weekly email news and activities updates.

WEL NSW will be attending the **Equal Pay Rally** at 11 am on 10<sup>th</sup> June at the Town Hall. If you are interested in participating with us, please convene outside the Sydney Town Hall. See the Australian Services Union website for more information.

The Federal Budget, 2010/2011, had some fine cuts in areas also mentioned in Tanya Plibersek's Media Release on the **Women's Budget**. The child care centres cuts were announced prior to the budget's release, but the child care cap rebate was reduced from \$7778 to \$7500 resulting in families paying more for child care. This is seen as part of the Government's strict fiscal strategy. There will also be a crackdown on the disability support pension with the introduction of a new test for those on this pension to be conducted by an allied health professional. Unless there is capacity for TAFE and other vocational educational education providers to offer training assistance at no cost, those who fail this test may end up with less assistance under an alternative income support payment. WEL wonders how much this is going to save the budget.

The **Women's Budget** focuses on the superannuation changes which will deliver substantial improvements in women's retirement savings through a range of measures. One of these is the princely sum of \$500 annually to those earning under \$37,000 while retaining the current co-contribution scheme. The quality of child care is to be boosted with the introduction of a New National Quality Framework costed at \$273 million. Its reduction in the building program is explained as stabilization of the system.

WEL welcomes all the positive measures introduced in this Budget, and reforms to the health system which should yield benefits for women as workers in the system as well as patients and carers. There is also \$42 million allocated to the **National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women**. The continuing commitment to reducing homelessness is acknowledged as a major driver in family and domestic violence. The spending here is impressive. It must result in a long term difference to housing availability. For full details, please check the website of the Minister for the Status of Women.

The Federal election now looks to be a contest. The lines of policy difference are being drawn and the matters of contention between the parties are becoming clearer. WEL members will be engaged at various levels. Keep your eye on the websites – WEL Australia and WEL NSW - get active and engaged.

May I also thank all members and supporters who assisted with the EDNA Awards evening which was another festive occasion which allowed all present to reflect on the outstanding achievements of so many dedicated feminists.

**Jozefa Sobski**

\* see 'Coming Back to WEL' on page 3

## MORE FROM THE EDNAS

The Ednas are a lesson in how women 'hold up the world', take the cares of less fortunate women on their shoulders, care for the society's wellbeing and get on with the job, without fanfare and with little financial reward or public recognition. Every year I am surprised and delighted, as I was at this years Ednas, that there is yet another long list of dedicated women 'making a difference for women'.

What a contrast with the Australian Honours announced each January and June. The Honours are lengthy lists of the awards, at least two thirds of which, go to males being rewarded with ACs and AOs, for giving away their corporation's money (called philanthropy) or for achievements in fields for which they were educated, much of it by public money and for which they have usually been well paid over a lifetime (senior public servants and academics) or prowess in licensed violence - war or sport. The other third of the Honours is usually awarded for services 'to the community at the lower level of AM and OAM'. Of course this section includes a higher ratio of women, some with a lifetime of achievement in voluntary community service but also a few in academic or business life.

An example of that in this year's Australia Day Honours was Pat Giles. Pat was one of the founders of WEL in WA, a nurse, a Nurses Union official of considerable achievement, later a Senator for WA. Pat was the first woman President of the Australian Senate. Pat received an AM! Notably the same Honours list gave an AC to a business man who was chair of a major company which made a large contribution to charity, and AOs to numerous male worthies.

I nominated a woman with a lifetime of corporate and community service at executive and board level, including a lifetime of service to women both at local and national level in Australia and inter-nationally. She did not get a mention. She obviously rose above her station. Perhaps she would have been rewarded if she was nominated by a high status male. Or perhaps she should have stuck to 'community service'.

Many women may think it does not matter. Many refuse to be nominated because of the obvious bias in the awards. But it does matter. If women are confined to good works, to the female dominated occupations and poorly pay occupations, this affects all women's socioeconomic status and life chances. Women will have no influence on decisions about how public resources allocated, including these areas of policy affecting women. Without recognition of women's contribution to society as equal to that of men, women will remain beggars in the society, making submission after submission for what is theirs by right.

Sexism appears to be alive and well in the selection committee for the Australian Honours awards. I think I will make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission! Or ask for an public inquiry into systemic discrimination in the award of Australian Honours! Want to join me?

**Long live The Ednas and many thanks to the organisers!**

***Joan Bielski***

## EQUAL PAY DAY : GAP WIDENS YET AGAIN

The gender pay gap in Australian businesses has widened according to ABS stats released [20 May]. (See 'Equal Pay Day Factsheet below) ABS data shows that women's average weekly earnings are now 82% of men's, meaning that since this time last year the gap has widened by 0.8 of a percentage point. As a result of this pay gap, Australian women will have to work an extra 66 days than men to earn the same amount as men.

Acting Director of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, Mairi Steele announced [today] that as a result of this widening of the pay gap, Equal Pay Day this year will fall on 4 September. She said 'It's very disappointing that we will have an extra 3 days to plan our Equal Pay Day activities this year.' Equal Pay Day last year fell on September 1<sup>st</sup>.

The gender pay gap is caused by a variety of factors including the undervaluation of women's work, women's access to training and inflexible work practices which limits their employment prospects.

However, a recent report by NATSEM found that the main contributing factor to the wage gap was simply 'being a woman', and this accounted for 60% of the difference between women and men's earnings. This report also revealed that a gender wage gap of 17% costs the Australian economy \$93 billion each year – equating to 8.5% of GDP so an 18% gap paints an even worse picture. ....

'We tell our daughters that if they study hard, train hard and work hard that they will be treated fairly and equitably in the workforce. Sadly this is not always the case. Instead of perpetuating this myth, we would like to see the entire community commit to making the gender pay gap a problem of the past,' said Ms Steele.

*Extract from EOWA Media Release 21 May 2010*

## EQUAL PAY DAY FACTSHEET

In Australia, Equal Pay Day 2010 will take place on 4 September. This date illustrates the number of extra days many women have to work after the end of the financial year to earn the same as men — because women on average now earn 18 percent less than men.<sup>1</sup>

On Equal Pay Day 2009, EOWA launched a pay equity resource site on the Agency website which provides statistics, a comprehensive pay equity audit tool, fact sheets and resources for businesses on pay equity. Later in the year EOWA will be launching an online pay equity training module for human resource practitioners.

Key Statistics<sup>2</sup>:

In February 2010, the gender pay gap was 18.0%.

The data show a widening of the gender pay gap in Australia, with the gap increasing by 0.5pp over the quarter (from 17.5%) and 1.5pp over the year (from 16.5%).

The average weekly ordinary time earnings of females working full-time were \$1,091.30 per week or \$239.30 per week less than their male counterparts, who earned an average of \$1,330.60 per week in February 2010.

The gap is higher in the private sector at 21.7% compared with 12.1% in the public sector.

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The gap is now at its highest level since August 1994.

Industries with the highest pay gap in February 2010 were financial and insurance services (29.3 %), health care and social assistance (29.0%), rental hiring and real estate (28.3%) and professional scientific and technical services (27.6%).

Industries with the lowest gender pay gap were transport postal and warehousing (6.5%), public administration and safety (8.6%) and education and training (9.8%).

A NATSEM report released in March 2010 shows that simply being a woman accounts for 60 per cent of the difference between men's and women's earnings. The gap impacts negatively on women's labour force participation. That is women earning less than men acts as a disincentive for women to enter paid work or to work more hours<sup>3</sup>.

A decrease in the average gender pay gap of 1 percentage point from 17% to 16% would increase GDP per capita by approximately \$260 which equates to approximately \$5,497 million or 0.5% of GDP assuming the population is held constant<sup>4</sup>.

It is estimated that a 17% pay gap between men and women workers costs the Australian economy \$93 billion each year. This equates to 8.5% of GDP. As such, the current gap of 18% will now cost the economy even more<sup>5</sup>.

A recent KPMG report shows that indirect costs to the Australian economy of the gender pay gap include potentially higher unemployment and underemployment - meaning women have less ability to accumulate adequate superannuation and are more likely to require government care<sup>6</sup>. Women are two and a half times more likely to live in poverty in their old age than men - by 2019, on average, women will have half the amount of superannuation that men have<sup>7</sup>.

In 2009, female graduate starting salaries were, on average, \$3000 less per year than that of their male equivalents. In some industries female graduates are severely disadvantaged; the average gender pay gap for graduates in Architecture and Building sits at \$6800 per year<sup>8</sup>.

The gender pay gap for female executive managers is significant and in some positions (CFO and COO) women earn less than half of their male equivalents. Even in positions where women are more likely to work they earn significantly less than their male counterparts<sup>9</sup>.

If current earning patterns continue, the average 25 year old male would earn \$2.4 million over the next 40 years, while the average female would earn \$1.5 million<sup>10</sup>.

**For more information on Equal Pay Day, visit the [pay equity resources](#) section of the EOWA website**

1. The calculation is based on the gender pay gap using seasonally adjusted ABS Average Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings at February in the given year (ABS Cat No 6302.0) using the following formula -  $365 \times \text{GPG} / 100$  ie  $365 \times 18 / 100 = 65.7$  - rounded to 68 extra days starting from 1 July results in September 4.

2. ABS Cat No 6302.0 Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, Feb 2010

3. NATSEM Report to the Office for Women, Department of Families, Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs (2009), The Impact of a Sustained Gender Wage Gap on the Australian Economy

4. *ibid*

5. *ibid*

6. KPMG/DCA (2009) Understanding the Productivity Effects of the Gender Pay Gap in Australia

7. Queensland Government, (2009), "Women and Superannuation," Focus on Women, Office for Women, Information Paper

8. Graduate Statistics Online, (2009)

9. EOWA, (2009), Pay, Power and Position: Beyond the 2008 Australian Census of Women in Leadership

10. AMP NATSEM, (2009), "She works hard for the money," *Income and Wealth Report*, Issue 22, p.34

## THE ANTI-SOCIAL BUDGET - A FEMINIST VIEWPOINT

Boring boy stuff dominates this budget: lots of money for road and rail, big bucks for the super industry, and more public subsidies to boost retirement income of the better off, but very little for what may be seen as social infrastructure. Those who gained and lost illustrate the lack of concern this government really has for their version of 'working families'.

Why give tax cuts to those with up to \$20,000 in the bank, just because the other people can fiddle their taxes with inequitable CGT and super concessions?

Why give a \$1000 tax deduction in 2013, to all taxpayers who don't claim work related expenses? Maybe many don't have them!

Why continue with tax cuts promised in 2007 that give most money to high income earners. Some promises maybe should be broken, and I'm sure most people would not have missed them. Over four years, someone on \$20,000 will gain \$332, while on \$200,000, they gain \$1800 (SMH).

There are many other small cuts and changes that surprisingly target low income households, individuals and programs that serve them:

Why peg the small co-payment to low income super contributors at \$1,000, when it was cut from \$1,500 as a temporary saving last year? Super is very much a rich man's tax avoidance scheme and this small boost has now been permanently reduced. (savings \$800M)

Why tighten up the eligibility rules for Disability Support Pensions, just when many sole parents, who manage both parenting and disability, move from Parenting payments?? How will they cope with demands that they find paid work and maybe lose eligibility under new rules? (\$383M)

Why make it tougher on low income families with recalcitrant teenagers by cutting out Family Tax Benefit Part A, if their 16 to 20 year olds are not participating in education or training? And not enough new money for mental health programs to help!

There is nothing for those on welfare benefits such as the unemployed, even though they now trail pensioners by up to \$100 per week. There are assumptions that with training they will get jobs but ignore the difficulties faced by older people, those with minor disabilities or sole parents. Many who lost jobs in the last couple of years are still looking and can't live on the money available.

The biggest new welfare spending item (\$410M) seems to be the administrative cost for implementing the new income management scheme in NT.

The scheme extends welfare quarantining to more people, removing racial discrimination by including other welfare recipients. Given no rise in payments this is insulting.

There is little there for women who try to balance work and family pressures. Nor is there any commitment to making changes to entrenched inequalities like low wages paid in care areas to mainly women workers.

There is no allocation of extra funding for workers in aged care or community services who cur-

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rently have cases under the Fair Work Act.

Why cut the child care tax rebate back to \$7500 and remove indexation, including the current year's grant, when fees are rising because of unfunded quality demands?

Child care rebates will be slashed for 72,000 families, who stand to lose up to \$280 next year and up to \$1085 in 2013 — savings \$86M

Why cut out the \$1500 start up grant for new Family Day Care, which is already having difficulty recruiting carers? - \$15M

Why is the only mention of the time pressures and work life balance Wayne Swan's description of the "tick and flick" tax returns system as 'This means less time with the Tax Pack and more times with loved ones.'

Why cut staff numbers at the Family Court, to save \$10.5m over four years, by not proceeding with filling four vacancies for judicial officers and claiming an unlikely 'expected reduction in the workload and improved administrative systems'. Waiting times are already very long.

The extra funding for training is tightly targeted to employer needs, which suggests questions of gender, community obligations and needs or common good issues will not be part of VET priorities.

This no frills budget managed to find some unworthy goodies for those the government wants to woo. They need to remember that there are increasing numbers of voters who have been Labor supporters and now don't trust the government. Little in this budget will please them, even if the budget is praised by economics commentators. Most of them, as wealthy males, vote Liberal anyhow!

Good things (that took a while to find!) -

More money for nurse practitioners which recognises they are not just handmaidens to doctors;

Extra money for budget based child care, upgrading skills etc \$59M;

Extra Legal aid, (but cuts in family mediation) including for Indigenous services. The additional funding will be provided from 1 July 2010 and will include an additional:

- \$92.3 million over four years for legal aid;
- \$34.9 million over four years for Indigenous legal services; and
- \$26.8 million over four years for community legal services programs.

From 1 July 2010 the Low Income Tax Offset (LITO) will increase from \$1,350 to \$1,500. The increase in LITO will allow Australians to earn up to \$16,000 and not have to pay income tax and the Medicare levy base level is also raised.

**Eva Cox**

## MUSLIM FEMINISTS DESERVE TO BE HEARD

*SMH 28 January 2010, p11*

### **Women don't have to give up Islam for rights, argue Randa Abdel-Fattah and Susan Carland.**

Orientalists writing on Islam and Muslims have tended to represent Muslim women as infantilised and oppressed, victims in need of rescue by the enlightened West. This is a classic example of the tyranny of self-projection, where the "rescuer" assumes a position of superiority so the belief systems, values and norms of Muslim women are judged against the Western experience.

The work of Muslim human rights and social justice advocates is discredited and ignored. It is as if liberation and freedom are the monopoly of secular feminists. Muslim women are apparently too downtrodden to care to make a difference.

If they do insist on fighting for equality and justice within an Islamic perspective, their efforts are dismissed, assuming freedom and Islam are mutually exclusive, or, worse, that Muslim women are brain-washed, suffering from a form of religious Stockholm syndrome.

This patronising discourse arrogantly assumes the way to overcome patriarchy is to abandon Islam and adopt "Western values". How can a constructive effort to improve the situation of women begin when the conversation is so unsophisticated, demeaning and primitive?

Muslim women have engaged in the quest for dignity, democracy and human rights, for full participation in political and social affairs, since the time of Prophet Mohammed. As Amina Wadud, the American-Islamic feminist scholar, said: "By going back to primary sources and interpreting them afresh, women scholars are endeavouring to remove the fetters imposed by centuries of patriarchal interpretation and practice."

And although you may not hear much about them, Muslim women and men are doing much to improve the plight of women, from grassroots projects to legal activism and religious leadership training. They see Islam not as a stumbling block to progress, but as a platform for change.

In Jordan, there is a strong push, spearheaded by journalist Rana Husseini, to fight honour killings. Husseini's team has publicised each crime despite death threats. She has led the charge for law reform and mobilised protest rallies, which even princes from the Jordanian royal family have attended. Far from fighting Islam to achieve this, Husseini tells the murderers during interviews that their acts contradict the teachings of Islam and are punishable by God. Most of them concede this.

In Malaysia, groups such as Sisters in Islam offer free legal clinics to teach women their rights under Sharia and civil law, run campaigns to stop domestic violence and hold education programs for women with a goal of "justice and equality within the family".

In the United Arab Emirates, Ahmed al Haddad, the head of the Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department, has started a program to train women to become muftis. Previously, women religious advisers were only allowed to speak on "women's issues".

*(Continued on page 11)*

The training will enable them to work as equals to men in issuing religious rulings in all areas. There is nothing new in this. Islamic history is "rich in examples of highly learned women acting as muftis and issuing decrees on all matters", al Haddad said.

The Shura Council of the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equity, an advisory council comprising of Muslim women scholars, activists and specialists from around the world, aims to "critically engage with dominant Islamic interpretations of social issues and practices and promote religiously grounded arguments that enable women to make dignified choices based on their own religious tradition".

There is a long way to go for women in many Muslim societies, just as there is for women everywhere. But if we are interested in change, it is time to let go of outdated Orientalist arguments and ill-informed generalisations that see Islam as "The Problem".

It is time to respect the fact that Muslim women are fighting for their rights and doing so without giving up their allegiance and commitment to Islam. Their quest does not stem from imported Western values but is integral to the Islamic tradition. Demonising their convictions is unhelpful - and a repudiation of the feminist ideal of the right for women to autonomy and freedom of choice.

**Randa Abdel-Fattah is a lawyer and author, and Susan Carland is a lecturer in politics at Monash University.**

#### **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 your address.**

**WEL Executive/  
members'  
Meeting**

**Monday**

**7 June at 6pm**

**66 Albion St  
Surry Hills**

**ALL WELCOME**

**WEL NSW Executive**

Convenor: Jozefa Sobski  
Treasurer: Tabitha Ponnambalam  
Members: Josefa Green, Helen L'Orange,  
Eva Cox, Melanie Fernandez, Gabe  
Kavanagh, Lorraine Slade

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