



WEL-Informed

The Newsletter of Women's Electoral Lobby NSW

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Next WEL meeting

Wednesday
5 September

6.00 pm at

66 Albion Street
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

RSVP 02 9212 4374

CELEBRATING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF WEL

Arrangements for more celebrations are well underway in:

Tasmania - 9 August lunch at Parliament House.

NSW - 17 October dinner at Parliament House.

ACT - Two events – September Launch of ACT Gender Audit of ACT Government Performance at ACT Legislative Assembly; and 23 November dinner at Brassey House.

South Australia - Two events in September and October- one a reception at Parliament House.

Events in Western Australia and Queensland are still at planning stage. WEL Victoria held a party in February.

The history of WEL in Australia is very well documented in the book "Making Women Count" by Marian Sawer with Gail Radford. You can read the first and last chapters of the book at:

<http://wel.anu.edu.au/Ch.1.pdf> and <http://wel.anu.edu.au/Ch.8.pdf>

We are also fortunate to have Joan Bielski's article on the history, organisation and achievements of WELNSW:

http://welnswh.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/5_1-welnswh-history.pdf

On page 3 **Helen L'Orange AM, Chair of WEL's National Executive** writes a personal recollection.

We would love to have recollections from other WEL members to publish over the next few months. Please send yours to

wel@welnswh.org.au

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. There is no newsletter in December. WEL-Informed is copyright. Material may be reproduced, acknowledgement required.

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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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WEL AT THE STOP IM SEMINAR IN BANKSTOWN –

Speech by Melanie Fernandez at the 'Say No to Government's Income Management: Not in Bankstown, Not Anywhere!' seminar

Often in debates surrounding Income Management there is little discussion of how gender plays a role in people's experience of these programs. What I want to talk about today is how women in particular are affected by income management.

The Government's commitment to continue income management programs fails to recognise diverse social and economic contributions made in ways other than by paid work, and ignores barriers that can exclude many from paid work. It particularly affects groups such as sole parents and Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and has the strongest impact on women, who are most vulnerable to low paid work or unemployment. Women are usually the primary carers and the primary shoppers, so experience income management differently to men. The women placed on income management are often some of the most marginalised and vulnerable members of our community.

The Women's Electoral Lobby is a member of a national women's alliance called Equality Rights Alliance (ERA), which has 51 membership organisations in total. ERA recently conducted [research](#) into women's experience of income management in the NT and how it impacts their daily lives.

Of the 180 women ERA surveyed, nearly all were unhappy to be on compulsory income management. Three quarters of the women surveyed indicated that they did not feel safer because of the BasicsCard. Instead the vast majority felt a loss of dignity and respect and felt disempowered. Participants reflecting on their experience of income management made comments like: 'There is a shame attached to it.' and it 'Makes me feel more diminished. So small...'; 'I don't feel supported; I feel so vulnerable.' The participants felt that Centrelink and the broader community did not respect them; that they were seen as incompetent parents unable to care for their children. The lack of dignity and respect experienced by these women impacts on their ability to care for others.

Many of the women indicated that they did not understand why they had been put on income management. Some believed it was because of their cultural background and others thought everyone in their community was on it. For many of these women language and cultural barriers made it difficult for them to gain a better understanding of the program that they were placed on.

(Continued on page 10)

RECOLLECTIONS FROM HELEN L'ORANGE— CHAIR OF WEL NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

In 1973 Henry Mayer edited the book "*Labor to Power: Australia's 1972 election*". Mayer talks in his foreword of the two sub-themes of the book: "...the rise of the issue-lobby of which WEL was the most outstanding; and investigations of the swinging voter."

Of the six articles in the Women in Politics section, five are by WEL members about different aspects of WEL's first year. One of these, "The World of WEL NSW" by Jan Aitkin, Julie Boyce, Caroline Graham, Wendy McCarthy and June Surtees lists the women at the first meeting in May 1972 - Julia Freebury, Helen McCarthy, Wendy McCarthy, Joan Evatt, Victoria Green, June Surtees, Elizabeth Fell, Anne Summers, Caroline Graham, Faith Bandler, Mavis Roberston, Helen L'Orange and Helen Berrill.

Curiously Bob Ellis, who was also present and quite vocal as I remember, is not mentioned.

With the 1972 Federal Election nearing, WEL devised a questionnaire which was used to interview politicians all over Australia. As I lived in the then Prime Minister's seat of Lowe, I interviewed the PM, the late Bill McMahon, together with my neighbour Lynn Dickson, who was a TAFE secretarial studies teacher. I was at the time a councillor on Strathfield Council.

The Sunday Telegraph ran a full page story on the interviews with Bill McMahon and Gough Whitlam (interviewed by Jane Smith and Lindsay Bews). The subheadings were family planning, social services, women at work, discrimination, sex education, education and abortion. The PM was actually quite progressive and had initiated the first funding of long day care centres by the Commonwealth - the 1972 Child Care Act.

On the other hand when asked if discrimination still existed, McMahon said: "*I do not believe in this idea of discrimination. Far better to have combined women's and men's clubs. I would be in favour of a little bit more discrimination my way! I feel we should open women's clubs to men. Sonia has dominion over the household even though sometimes I know she is wrong. I choose all Sonia's dresses.*"

Not surprisingly, in our How To Vote Guide, WEL rated McMahon as "risky."

In his response to the same question, Gough Whitlam said there should be women on the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. In December 1972, Elizabeth Evatt was appointed as the first female Deputy President of the [Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission](#). She was followed in the role by Mary Gaudron (April 1974) who had presented

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Send your
recollections to
wel@welnsw.org.au

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS—HELEN L'ORANGE

the Government's equal pay case in 1973.

In many parts of NSW there were WEL Groups. As well as attending the main WEL meetings, I was a member of Western Suburbs WEL. About half a dozen of us formed a consciousness raising (CR) group. We met every week for a couple of years and talked about how to live as feminists. My learnings from our CR group have stayed with me all my life.

We had a lot of fun. One of our International Women's Day march chants was "What do we want? Everything! When do we want it? Yesterday!"

The onlookers in George Street shook their heads.

Being active in WEL taught us many skills – how to advocate and write policies.

For me it led to vocational work. I worked as a child care coordinator at Marrickville Council and in 1980 I was appointed to head up the Women's Coordination Unit in NSW. In 1988 I became head of the Office for the Status of Women in Canberra. So I worked for 13 years as a femocrat. During these years I worked with many WEL members on major policies and programs.

In an article for the Sydney Morning Herald in December 1985 at the end of the UN Decade for Women, I wrote:

"So where will women go from here? We will continue to advocate what are called women's issues. New issues will emerge. Others like education will be reworked.

Men still bash, rape and murder women: women still cannot move easily into many areas of work: the value of women's worth to society is still undervalued: women's poverty and homelessness is of growing concern: women's responsibility for parenting still outweighs the responsibility taken by men. So the women's movement's work on women's issues is far from done."

Since then we have seen some great improvements. Girls are doing well in education. Violence is now condemned rather than condoned. Equal pay is closer. There is a greater appreciation of the systemic nature of discrimination. The paradigm is shifting.

Over the forty years since WEL began I have worked with many brilliant women. The second wave of feminism has done extraordinary work.

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Being active in WEL taught us many skills – how to advocate and write policies.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS—HELEN L'ORANGE

(Continued from page 4)

These days, activists are relatively thin on the ground. We work collaboratively and rely on each other's areas of expertise to put together our policies such as those on the WEL website <http://wel.org.au/index.php/the-issues/>

I hope you will be able to join us at one of the 40th Anniversary celebrations around Australia over the next few months. Come and meet up with WEL women and talk about the past and, more importantly, about the future.

*Helen L'Orange
Chair, WEL National Executive*

WEL NSW 40 YEARS AGO—JULY 1972

40 years is a very long time and for some WEL feminists, this means two generations of involvement in the political struggle. In this anniversary year for WEL, we thought that a report issued of a meeting held in Sydney on Sunday July 30, 1972 would be of interest. It also may be of interest to know that the newsletter was on foolscap paper (before A4 was invented) and it was done by Gestetner!!! These WEL NSW records are currently being prepared for archiving with the NSW State Library.

Sadly, some topics are still unresolved, read on

About 30 attended, which was remarkable considering the petrol shortage (ed – remember those) and we had four hours of heated debate.

It was decided that WEL would be run by a series of committees with convenors:

Publicity:	Julie Boyce, Wendy McCarthy, Alicia Lee
Membership & Finance:	June Surtees
Electoral Coordinator:	Pam Peelgrain
Survey:	Eva Cox, Sue Marsh, Jan Aitkin
Newsletter and Publications:	Caroline Graham, Helen McCarthy, Jan Aitkin

(Continued on page 6)

It also may be of interest to know that the newsletter was on foolscap paper (before A4 was invented) and it was done by Gestetner!!!

WEL NSW 40 YEARS AGO—CONT'D

(Continued from page 5)

Public meeting for Mosman by-election

On July 25, WEL held its first political meeting in St. Peter's Hall, Cremorne. All four candidates for the State by-election in Mosman (blue ribbon Liberal) were invited to address the public and answer questions from a WEL panel of five women, after which the meeting was thrown open for questions from the public.

WEL sidestepped into State politics for three reasons. Two of the candidates were feminists and deserved encouragement: Ann Conlon of the ALP is actually a WEL member, and Bridget Gilling of the Australia Party (humanist and social worker) campaigned in the last State election on an abortion law reform platform. Secondly, there is a nucleus of WEL activists in the area who were most interested in this election, and thirdly, the meeting was well covered by the media and brought in \$30 in donations and several new members.

On all levels this was a valuable political exercise and June Surtees, who chaired the meeting and did much of the organising, is to be congratulated. We'd like to repeat it – often. Mr. Arblaster did retain the seat for the Liberal party, but with a considerably reduced majority.

Mr. Chipp meets more WELwomen, NSW

On 27/7/1972, Don Chipp spoke to a Liberal Party, 'Meet the Candidates' meeting. The local lads present were Vince Bruce for the Federal electorate of Barton, currently held by LJ Reynolds for the ALP with a 3.2% margin, and Les Bosman for St. George now held by WL Morrison for Labor with an 0.2% margin. These narrow margins were no doubt the reason for Mr. Chipp's presence.

Mr. Chipp gave us a rousing, sexy speech on 'Censorship and Drugs' – but some of his 'mum' and 'little woman' stereotypes made us flinch.

During question time, Julia Freebury asked Chipp about the Liberal Party's attitude to Abortion Law Reform and he confirmed that they do not support abortion on demand, and think that the Menhennit ruling gives doctors sufficient latitude if they want to take it.

Jan Aitkin asked Mr. Bosman about the adequacy of local child-minding centres and pre-school kindergartens. He said that they were not adequate, but felt that something would be done about it before the end of the year. Could he mean the budget???

Caroline Graham's question on tax-deductible child-minding was badly answered. More about this elsewhere.

(Continued on page 7)

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WEL NSW 40 YEARS AGO—CONT'D

(Continued from page 6)

Helen McCarthy asked about a Royal Commission into the Status of Women. Chipp said he thought it worth considering, but was not sure it was warranted. He went on to say that he thought Women's Lib and WEL should keep up the pressure about women's grievances. He also expressed alarm about private questionnaires put to members being circulated publicly. He felt this would be mischievous politically, and that people would have good grounds for not replying.

Coming Events – Sydney

The Prime Minister is scheduled to speak at North Rocks Community Centre on October 3 at 8pm. He will probably speak on the Budget and there will be an opportunity for questions. COME AND SEE KING BILLY IN THE FLESH."

The articles were not reproduced in full.

This newsletter also contained reports from WEL Victoria, WEL ACT, WEL South Australia, WEL Queensland, WEL Tasmania and WEL Northern Territory.

The convenors shown were:

ACT – Gail Wilenski,
Queensland – Jill Ritchie,
Tasmania – Jeannine Bevan,
Western Australia – Pat Giles,
South Australia – Karla Tan,
Northern Territory – Maria Edwards and Lucille Kidney; and
Victoria – Katy Richmond.

Thanks to Anne Barber for this article—Ed.

"COME AND SEE
KING BILLY IN THE
FLESH."

CONVENOR'S REPORT

Over the last months WEL has been working hard to progress its plans for our 40th Anniversary celebration. We have welcomed Corina Backhouse as our Coordinator, and she has been hard at work advancing the 40th celebration. We have continued our work campaigning against Income Management and working with the Bankstown Coalition opposing the further roll out of these programs. WEL provided a gendered analysis and response to the NSW budget and attended the launch of Women in NSW 2012, the first annual report on women's progress towards equality in NSW.

To celebrate our 40th Anniversary WEL NSW will be hosting a dinner event at Parliament House Sydney from 6pm on Wednesday October 17th in the Strangers' Dining Room. Speakers at the event will include Wendy McCarthy, founding WEL member, Jane Caro, author and social commentator and Hon. Pru Goward, Minister for Women. The event will be attended by the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, Shadow Minister for Women and the Hon. Cate Faehrmann, Greens Spokesperson for Women.

We invite all women from the New South Wales community who have been involved with WEL over the past 40 years and anyone interested in becoming a member of WEL into the future to come along. We will celebrate and honour your passion for, and contribution towards, a society free from gender inequalities. We look forward to sharing in your stories and your visions for the future of women in Australian society.

We will be sending out invitations shortly, so save the date and watch for your invite in the mail! If you want to get involved in organising the event we would love for you to contact Corina Backhouse at wel@welnsw.org.au

WEL has continued to work with the Bankstown coalition of 63 organisations opposing Income Management, 'Say No to Government's Income Management: Not in Bankstown, Not Anywhere!'. As of 1st July, the Government has rolled Income Management out to five test sites around the country, including Bankstown.

In the lead up to the further roll out WEL members attended a rally and a seminar in Bankstown. I spoke at the seminar to provide a gender perspective (see page 2). Often in debates surrounding Income Management there is little discussion of how gender plays a role in people's experience of these programs. I focused on women's experience and the findings of the recent report by Equality Rights Alliance of women's experience of Income Management in the

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CONVENOR'S REPORT—CONT'D

Northern Territory.

Over the past months WEL has been meeting with federal members of parliament as part of our lobbying campaign to abolish compulsory Income Management in Australia. We have also been working closely with other organisations that are members of the Bankstown Coalition, such as a number of unions. We have seen some positive progress on this issue. The NSW ALP State Conference passed a resolution last weekend calling on the Federal Government to halt the imposition of compulsory Income Management in Bankstown or in any community.

WEL kicked off the *WEL Talks*, a series of discussion forums, in July with *Manage this: Women's voices on Income Management*. It was held on Tuesday 31 July at the Teacher's Federation NSW -23-33 Mary Street, Surry Hills. Randa Kattan from the Bankstown Coalition spoke about the work she has been doing in Bankstown and Eva Cox gave a broader perspective and context to the issue. The night was well attended and many were able to have their say on Income Management.

Last month WEL NSW provided an analysis of the NSW Budget going through its main themes and identifying the key problems and possible pain to come. There is virtually no mention of women in the entire budget and no indication that gender perspectives have been considered in the development of government policy at all.

In the last month WEL attended the launch of Women in NSW 2012. Women in NSW 2012 is the first annual report on women's progress towards equality in NSW. It provides baseline data for use in policy, decision making and program design.

There are a number of exciting events coming up at WEL, particularly our 40th Anniversary celebration. Remember to keep up to date with our weekly e-update and website and follow us on Facebook and twitter.

Melanie Fernandez, Convenor

Keep Wednesday 17th October free for our 40th Anniversary Dinner event in the Strangers' Dining Room. Parliament House.

Invitations in the mail soon or contact Corina Backhouse at wel@welnsw.org.au if you would like to attend.

IM SEMINAR AT BANKSTOWN—CONT'D

(Continued from page 2)

Not only does income management disempower women; but it has not been established that it delivers the intended outcomes. 91% of participants indicated that being on income management has not improved their family relationships. Most women said that the quarantining of their income had little or no effect on what they bought. They said the BasicsCard added to the difficulties and costs of paying for goods and services; particularly in accessing culturally specific goods. Some women raised concerns that they were losing the skills to manage their money while Centrelink took over. Many were concerned that their children were growing up not gaining these same skills and believing that you do not have to manage your money as someone else will take care of the bills.

It is also deeply concerning that some participants commented that they were not seeking Centrelink assistance to exit an abusive relationship because they did not want Centrelink to then place them on the income management Vulnerable Welfare Payment Recipient Measure.

There has been little independent research into the effectiveness of compulsory income management programs; in particular how safety and family relationships are impacted. This, along with the ERA study, and other data on increased crime rates makes it clear that the program should not continue, let alone be extended to five new sites.

It is a core principle of the women's movement that women have autonomy over their lives, finances and income. Compulsory income management programs disempower and disenfranchise women, denying them their dignity. All forms of income management, unless ordered by court or tribunal, should be abolished. The Government need to establish policies that recognise the social value of many other activities other than paid work, such as care for others, and allow adequate income for people who contribute outside of paid work.

WEL is working with the Coalition in Bankstown to stop income management. We have been meeting with members of parliament as part of our lobbying campaign to abolish compulsory income management in Australia.

*Melanie Fernandez
Convenor WELNSW*

*It is a core principle
of the women's
movement that
women have
autonomy over their
lives, finances and
income.*

WEL NSW ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

All WELNSW members and friends are invited to the

WELNSW Annual General Meeting for 2012

to be held on

Sunday 2nd September at 11am

at 66 Albion Street, Surry Hills

Refreshments and chat after the meeting

RSVP to 02 9212 4374 (phone and fax) or

Email to wel@welnsw.org.au

Don't forget to send us your recollections of your time with WEL. We would love to have enough recollections to fill the next newsletter!!

Send them to wel@welnsw.org.au.

Next WEL
meeting

Wednesday

5 September

6.00pm
66 Albion St
Sydney

ALL WELCOME

The Edna Ryan Awards are returning in 2012 and will be presented on the evening of Friday 9 November 2012 at Sydney Trades Hall.

For further information and nomination forms, go to
www.ednaryan.net.au

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

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

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

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

Consider a Bequest to WEL NSW

A bequest enables you to perpetuate your ideas and make a difference far into the future. Please remember WEL in your will.

The following wording is recommended:

'I bequeath the sum of (amount written in words and figures) free of all debts, duties and taxes, to the Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW) Inc (ABN 50 242 525 012) for its general purposes, and I declare that the receipt of the Treasurer for the time being of the Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW) Inc shall be complete discharge to my executors for this gift, and that my executor shall not be bound to see to the application of it.'

WEL NSW Executive

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

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**Disability, Mental Health, Domestic
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Helen L'Orange 0425 244 935

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Gwen Gray 0405 193 584

WEL Australia

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website : www.wel.org.au

WEL NSW

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

To join WEL NSW

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

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