

Networknews

A Newsletter from the Australian Women's Health Network



JUNE EDITION 2009

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S HEALTH NETWORK

Online Women's Health News Bulletin June 2009

www.awhn.org.au

Dear Members

The AWHN Network News will be sent to all members three times a year (June, September and December). The AWHN Committee values your input and invites submissions for consideration. Contact details for submissions are provided at the conclusion of this newsletter.

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PO Box 1160, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001

CONVENOR'S REPORT

The first months of 2009 have been even busier than all the months of 2008! The main projects have been funding and the agenda for our Aboriginal women's Talking Circle, the 2010 Conference (see conference report below) and consultations for the New National Women's Health Policy (NWHP).

You will remember that in 2008 we obtained a grant from Womenspeak to allow the Talking Circle, convened by Dot Henry from Western Australia, to hold another meeting and update its Position Paper on Aboriginal women's health. That meeting was held in Adelaide on April 17, 2009. The primary purpose was to gather ideas and practical proposals about ways to improve Aboriginal women's health and the health of their families and, with those ideas, to update the Position Paper. Every State and Territory was represented at the meeting, except for the Torres Strait Islands, the representative from which was, unfortunately, unable to attend. It was a major organisational effort to get people from all parts of the country to a meeting and thank you to all those who contributed.

The Talking Circle has been asked to make a major contribution to the new NWHP, which is being developed by the Commonwealth. AWHN wrote an application for funding support to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to strengthen the Talking Circle and develop an Aboriginal Women's Health Strategy Paper. A grant of almost \$100,000 was obtained in March which will allow us to employ a project worker to facilitate communication between members of the Talking Circle and groups of Aboriginal women in diverse locations. The

project worker will act as a liaison person with State and Territory representatives of the Talking Circle and will organise meetings, visits and teleconferences, as appropriate.

At the Adelaide meeting, an AWHN Talking Circle partnership working group was formed to steer the project. Dot Henry and Marion Edmondson are the chairs of this group and other members are Sandy Angus from Queensland, Karen Glover, Jo Willmot and Sandy Miller from South Australia, Vicki Lambert from Western Australia and myself.

There is a small amount of money in the grant for consultations to be held at the State and Territory level. Unfortunately, it is not enough to fund a large forum but it will help some women to come together. Broadening effective participation, as much as possible, is key to the project and every effort will be made to achieve this. The assistance of existing Aboriginal health services and Aboriginal women's health workers will be enlisted. We are also hoping to enlist the support of NACCHO. We have informed them of the project and an appointment has been made for Jilpia Nappaljari Jones and me to talk with the executive director on 5 June 2009. We have to remember, however, that there are limits to the consultation and participation that can be promoted using a single grant of \$100,000.

Another purpose of the Adelaide meeting was to discuss the forms of Aboriginal women's participation in the Sixth National Women's Health Conference in Hobart in May, 2010. Decisions were made that a meeting would be held on the day before the conference and that papers of interest to Aboriginal women would be spread throughout the event and not confined to a special stream.

The first consultation for the new National Women's Health Policy was held at Parliament House, Canberra, on 12 March, 2009. 14 national groups attended including AWHN. A discussion paper, "Development of a New National Women's Health Policy, consultation discussion paper 2009" was launched. It is available on the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging website at <http://www.health.gov.au/womenshealthpolicy>.

The new paper focuses strongly on a social view of health and the social determinants of health, a position that AWHN strongly supports. Health inequalities between groups of women are seen as very important and those groups with the highest risk of poor health, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, immigrant and refugee women, women from disadvantaged backgrounds, including women experiencing homelessness, women from rural and remote communities and women with a disability, including mental illness, are singled out for special focus. Regrettably, women's mental health problems do not feature as prominently in the paper as they might but there is time for key issues to be raised in submissions to the consultation process (see outline below). We were told that a decision has been taken that sexual and reproductive health will not be a separate strategy but that policy will be subsumed under the new NHWP (and the men's health policy).

Minister Roxon attended this first consultation meeting for about three quarters of an hour. She said the Commonwealth wasn't afraid to make decisions that would not take effect until 10 or 20 years and was not afraid to work across Commonwealth/State/Territory boundaries. The Minister is aware that many factors affecting women's health are located outside the health portfolio, such as economic and physical security. Notwithstanding, she told us that she envisaged that the main thrust of the new NWHP would be largely inside the health portfolio, rather than intersectoral. In response to discussion, the Minister detailed existing Rudd government action in relation to Aboriginal health, including home visits for mothers and babies and money put into COAG agreements for teenage pregnancy and tobacco and alcohol abuse.

NWHP Consultation Process

March - June 2009

The next phase of the consultation process is that the Roundtable organisations are being asked to consult with their constituents, and then make a submission to the Department of Health and Aging by 1 July, 2009. However, we were told that **any group or individual in Australia** is welcome to present a submission to the Commonwealth during this phase.

June - September 2009

From the submissions that are received, the Department of Health and Aging will write a framework paper. This paper will form of the first draft of the new Policy.

October - December 2009

Consultation Forums will be held in the States and Territories. The Forums will be open to everyone but groups that have shown an interest in the new policy will be put on an invitation list. If you want to be on the invitation list for consultations, let us know by email at awhn@awhn.org.au and we will tell the Commonwealth.

January - June 2010

The final Policy will be written.

Issues Raised at the Roundtable

- access to services for rural women, including transport, infrastructure (e.g. safe houses and transport for women escaping domestic violence) and access to termination and sexual and reproductive health services
- increased education to promote natural fertility control and for the promotion of "responsible sexual behaviour"
- the need for a more integrated understanding of difference and different patterns of health and illness
- occupational health and safety problems of immigrant women and the need for more research on health outcomes for this group.
- advocacy to be funded as part of the new NHWP.
- violence against women, economic security, personal security
- the prevention of disease and health promotion.
- importance of national health priority areas

- women frequently die from conditions related to osteoporosis and elevated blood pressure but often don't get the appropriate checks at the level of general practice.
- obesity
- cultural and gender competence to be a significant part of into medical and health professional education
- problems for women doctors in training, including problems with selection processes. Suggested that "tea ladies" have more rights than female surgical trainees.
- need for a national sexual and reproductive health strategy, including the need for attention to pre-pregnancy issues and pregnancy loss.

AWHN has been keeping in touch with politicians on issues relevant to our concerns, as usual. For example, a letter went to Minister Smith about lifting the Ausaid restrictions on family planning programmes and we were pleased when this action was finally taken. We wrote to several ministers, including the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, about the importance of introducing paid parental leave, given that economic security is so important to women's health and well-being. We wrote a submission to the Senate enquiry into Genes Patents, pointing out the pitfalls likely to emerge from granting monopolies to private companies. We are writing to Minister Roxon concerning the Maternity Services Review.

May I take this opportunity to remind you that the call for abstracts for the *6th Australian Women's Health Conference* in Hobart in May, 2009, **will close on 1 June**.

Please get your abstracts in -- we want to see you in Hobart! Details can be found on our web site at <http://www.awhn.org.au/>

Gwen Gray

Convenor, Australian Women's Health Network
May 2009

Breaking news ~ We are delighted the Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce has accepted our invitation to be Patron of the Australian Women's Health Network.

THE NEW NATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH POLICY

MAKE A SUBMISSION

Deadline ~ 1 July 2009

The development of a new National Women's Health Policy (NWHP) is a milestone for Australian women's health and an objective that AWHN has worked for since 1995.

It is crucially important that you contribute ideas for the NWHP to the Department of Health and Aging before by 1 July, 2009, by writing a submission. It is from these submissions that the first draft of the new policy will be written.

Submissions are NOW OPEN. The closing date is 1 July 2009.

AWHN believes that the voices, perspectives, ideas and priorities of women's health services around Australia should be heard by the Commonwealth Government. The women's health services, where most of the expertise about women's health in this country is located, were not invited to the national consultation – because the services are State and Territory entities.

To facilitate the process of submission writing, AWHN has compiled a template which we hope will be useful for you. Please note that this template is intended as a guide only. We hope it will be a tool for stimulating thought, discussion and ideas. The template can be found on the website at <http://www.awhn.org.au/> along with e-mail and postal addresses for the submission.

Please feel free to distribute the template to other services in your networks.

The Department will also be holding consultation forums in the latter part of the year. However, the first draft of the policy will already be written. If you are interested in attending, please let AWHN know via email to awhn@awhn.org.au and we will forward your details to the Department.



CONFERENCE CONVENOR'S REPORT

Hello Everyone,

Interest and momentum is building around our Conference next year and it looks set to be our biggest one yet.

Abstract submissions are flowing in from around the country addressing an amazingly diverse and interesting range of topics. It's wonderful to know such important work is being undertaken and has reminded me of just how good we are at thinking and working 'outside the square'.

Thanks to all of you who have made submissions so far, and to those of you who are still thinking about it – get online and get them in! It's only 250 words and the closing date is **1 June 2009** so make sure you don't miss out. (<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/awhn2010/abstracts.php>).

With the recent confirmation as an invited speaker of renowned Alyawarre woman and Aboriginal health advocate, Pat Anderson, we are very excited about the keynote program. We are also honoured to have Cindy Shannon and Jo Willmot joining Pat in specifically addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's health issues. Other Australian leaders in women's health who are confirmed to speak are Fran Baum, Eva Cox, Melanie Heenan and Helen Keleher. We are particularly delighted with the calibre of international speakers who will attend. These include Lorraine Greaves from Vancouver, Cecily Kelleher from Dublin, Marsha Saxton from San Francisco and Donna

Stewart from Toronto. If you'd like more information about the speakers and their topics have a look on our website.

Don't forget, *Early Bird Registration* closes on **1 November 2009** and, for those of you whose organisation will be paying, if you get in soon there is still time to spread payments across two financial budget periods.

I look forward to welcoming you all to Hobart in May next year, warmest regards,

Kelly Banister

Convenor ~ 6th Australian Women's Health Conference

STATE ROUND UP

A.C.T

There is not a lot the report on the women's health front in the ACT.

Jilpia and I have distributed information about the conference.

I am very pleased that Dianne Collins, who is the deputy chair of the ACT Indigenous Elected Body and who works at FaHCSIA with the Indigenous Leadership & Engagement Group, is going to help Jilpia convene a group of interested ACT women to provide input into the large Talking Circle Aboriginal Women's Health Project.

Our local Women's Centre for Health Matters, continues to run a range of women's health projects and has a new executive director, Marcia Williams.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Aboriginal Women's Talking Circle

Vicki and Dot have been very busy with the Aboriginal Women's Talking Circle. Dot held a meeting at Manning Community Hall in early April to obtain feedback on state women's health issues and provide information about AWHN and the Aboriginal Talking Circle.

Support in organising the WA meeting was provided by the Office for Aboriginal Health – Department of Health WA.

Both Vicki and Dot attended the Adelaide Talking Circle Meeting April 17 and Vicki has completed a paper which is currently being circulated amongst Aboriginal Women's Talking Circle representatives for input and endorsement.

UN Forum

Dot is due to attend the UN Forum in New York, leaving next week, and will provide feedback on her return.

International Women's Day

A number of International Women's Day events were held, including one organised by the Office for Women's Policy.

TASMANIA

Hobart Women's Health Centre

The Hobart Women's Health Centre has continued to progressively implement the recommendations of the quality improvement audit it undertook last year, which is due for completion at the end of next month. The Centre also has a new Chief Executive Officer, Glynis Flower, who joined the team in March. HWHC is located in Hobart and is the only women's health centre in Tasmanian.

Conference Launch ~ International Women's Day

The AWHN Conference was officially launched at a popular International Women's Day breakfast held each year. Geraldine Doogue was charming as the event's guest speaker and shared the story of her personal journey to becoming a journalist and developing a political analysis with the more than one thousand women at the breakfast. AWHN was well represented with all Tasmanian members attending and information at every place

setting. The launch of our Conference was a great success – judging by the number of *Call for Abstracts* were picked up at the conclusion of the event and the many enquiries and discussions initiated at our information table - in spite of a minor, last minute hiccup (the Conference was written out of the Minister's speech at 6pm the night before!).

Safe at Home Review

The Tasmanian Department of Justice commissioned private company, Success Works, to review *Safe at Home*, the Tasmanian Government's integrated whole-of-Government response to family violence.

The first consultation and research phase has been completed and a discussion paper presenting the findings produced. The second round of consultations to consider the questions raised in this discussion paper is now currently underway, with review workshops on specific area's such as young people and children, police and the courts. The final report on the review is expected to be released in another few months.

It's proposed the combined outcomes of the review and the 2008 review of the *Family Violence Act 2004* by Urbis will be used to revise the legislative framework and integrated response to family violence in Tasmania.

Review of the Tasmanian Sex Industry Offences Act 2005

The report on the review, outlined in our previous report, is set to go through Cabinet very soon so there is no concrete news available at this stage.

Health Promotion Framework

Consultations are currently underway to support the development of a Health Promotion Framework being undertaken by Population Health & Primary Health Services, DHHS Tasmania.

Aboriginal Women's Talking Circle & 6th Conference

A lot of our work as AWHN rep's over the past four months has been focused on supporting the Aboriginal Women's Talking Circle Project (Marion) & organising the Conference (Kelly), which is addressed in more detail in the AWHN Convenor's and Conference Convenor's reports at the beginning of the newsletter.

QUEENSLAND

CEDAW Workshops

The YWCA has recently conducted CEDAW workshops in capital cities, and some regional centres, throughout Australia. The Queensland workshops were held on 26 and 27 February, in Townsville and Brisbane respectively. 'FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL: Using the UN to achieve local change for women' was a free one-day training workshop for health and community workers on the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

These workshops were presented to strengthen understanding of the UN Convention, provide an update on government policy agendas for women's human rights, and provide an opportunity for participants to discuss and present issues for inclusion into the NGO Shadow Report to the UN on Australia's implementation of CEDAW.

Queensland Election

Despite predictions of a likely change of government, Queenslanders voted to return Premier Anna Bligh's Labor government in the State election in March 2009. Nevertheless there have been some changes to portfolios, including the Minister for Health. Stephen Robertson, who formerly held this position, has been replaced by Paul Lucas, who commenced his term by conducting a Statewide listening tour.

International Women's Day

IWD was recognised and celebrated by many women's services and other groups across the State. Activities ranged from festivals to marches, to 'high tea', and included various forms of entertainment, plus information and learning opportunities for women. Some activities were impacted by the lingering threat of Severe Tropical Cyclone Hamish, which hovered just offshore as it travelled along most of the Queensland coast from 4-10 March.

New South Wales

Women's Health Policy Advisor NSW Department of Health

In the last restructure of NSW Department of Health the women's health policy advisor position became a generic position with responsibility for a number of portfolios. The position sits within the Primary Health and Community Partnerships branch of the Department. Following a recent branch restructure the previous incumbent (a woman) was not eligible to apply for the position due to industrial constraints and the successful applicant for the position is a man. The women's health sector in NSW has not had a chance to respond to the information yet as there has been no formal notification regarding the appointment but, we will be meeting mid May and will provide a response.

Women's Health Matters: NSW Women's Health Implementation Plan 2009-12

There has been no progress on the Plan since the December report. The Department are in the process of reviewing comments and the women's health sector hopes to participate in the completion of the final draft.

NSW State Budget – Cuts to NSW Health NGO Grants Programs

NSW Treasury has not rescinded the directive to NSW Health to cut 4% from NGO Health Programs which would total \$11 million. In consultation with the NGO Peaks, NSW Health

have committed monies to a scoping and review process which will take the best part of 2009 – the review will look at the aims and objective, efficiencies (of course) management models, service provision, role of peaks, it is quite through really. This will hopefully help inform NSW Health and the Minister for Health of the broad range of complex needs NGO's address on a daily basis. Women's Health, along with all other NGO's are assessing their reporting mechanisms to ensure they demonstrate capacity and complexity along with connection to community, evidence and research and best practice standards.

Homicide Review Board

The establishment of this crucial Board was announced on the 19 December 2009, with their first report due this April 2009.

The Premier asked the Director of the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Don Weatherburn to head an expert advisory group to review all domestic violence related homicides in the last five years.”

The expert advisory group will also include:

- Convenor of the Domestic Violence Coalition, Betty Green
- Chair of the Premier's Council on the Prevention of Violence Against Women,
- Lesley Laing
- Representatives of NSW Police, the Prevention of Violence Coordination Unit
- Departments of the Attorney-General, Health and Community Services.

“This review will examine the circumstances surrounding these deaths, identify common key risk factors, any gaps in the treatment of victims and recommend any changes to practices and procedures that would contribute to a reduction in preventable domestic homicides,” said Ms Verity Firth, Minister For Women NSW.

Women's Domestic Violence Advocacy Services

March 2009, NSW Government announced a funding boost of 2.6 million to expand this scheme to an additional 112 courts across NSW

COMING EVENTS

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Australian Section)



You are invited

to participate in a national consultation on

Women, Peace and Security

The key question under discussion will be:

Should Australia become the next country to develop a national action plan to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Consultation facilitated by
Professor Elisabeth Porter, University of South Australia
*Author of *Peacebuilding: Women in International Perspective**

Friday 5th June 2009
9.30am – 12.30pm
Tasmanian Women's Centre
140 – 142 Macquarie Street Hobart

*A discussion paper providing background for the consultation available at www.wilpf.org.au
It is not necessary to read the discussion paper before attending the consultation.
Copies of the discussion paper will be available to all participants on the day.*

*No cost but bookings essential for catering purposes.
RSVP by June 2nd specifying your name, city, organisation (if applicable) and contact details*

*phone (08) 8296 4357 or email wilpfaustralia@wilpf.org.au
Written responses to the discussion paper by June 10th also welcome at this email address
Further information on UNSC Resolution 1325 visit our websites
www.1325australia.org.au www.wilpf.org.au www.peacewomen.org/*

WILPF acknowledges funding assistance from the Australian Government through the Women's Leadership and Development programme

Don Dunstan Foundation ~ Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration

On Thursday **May 28** this year the **Don Dunstan Foundation** will hold its third annual **Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration** at **Bonython Hall** at the University of Adelaide at **7pm**.

The topic this year revisits Professor O'Donoghue's inaugural address '*Black and White Together*' and will feature **The Hon. Fred Chaney AO** with **Dr Jackie Huggins AM** addressing the specific topic **Bringing Black and White Australians Together**.

The annual *Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration* is conducted during Reconciliation Week in Adelaide at the time that marks the referendum to change the Australian Constitution to count Indigenous Australians as citizens. The Oration honours **Lowitja O'Donoghue AC, CBE**

DDF Board member, **Professor Roger Thomas**, Director of **Wilto Yerlo** at the University of Adelaide, will MC the Oration. The *Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration* is organised with the support of Wilto Yerlo, Reconciliation SA, and Yunggoendi at Flinders University. Professor Thomas said "This year the intent is take the discussion further on mutual responsibilities of black and white Australians working together for reconciliation. In choosing Fred Cheney and Jackie Huggins to jointly present this year's oration Dr O'Donoghue was seeking two people who come from either side of the divide. Here we have two people whose life work is a testament to what can be done in the country of the mind."

Dr Jackie Huggins is a nationally recognised and respected Aboriginal leader. She is Deputy Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at the University of Queensland. Dr Huggins is of the Bidjara (Central Queensland) and Birri-Gubba Juru (North Queensland) peoples. Her mother Rita, helped organise the 1967 referendum. Dr Huggins is an historian and published author. She was a member of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation for six years.

The Hon. Fred Chaney was born in Perth in 1941. Fred was involved in the Aboriginal Legal Service in a voluntary capacity in the early 1970's. Fred served as a Liberal Senator for WA and later in the House of Representatives (1974-93). Among his Ministerial appointments were Aboriginal Affairs, Social Security and Minister Assisting

the Minister for National Development and Energy. After leaving Parliament, Fred Cheney undertook research into Aboriginal Affairs policy and administration as a Research Fellow with the Graduate School of Management at the University of Western Australia. He has served as Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia Ltd from 2000 to 2005 and continues as a Director on the Board.

Tickets for the Lowitja O'Donoghue Oration can be purchase:

online at <http://www.mybookingmanager.com/lowitjaodonoghueoration>

at the Don Dunstan Foundation level 4 230 North Terrace or by calling **8303 3364**

Full Price **\$22.50 & \$17.50** for DDF Subscribers & people with Health Concession Cards

AWHN Bulletin is an online news digest from the Australian Women's Health Network, offering a combination of reporting on women's health topics and links to news stories and commentaries on issues in women's health. The bulletin is designed as a resource for an audience of policy makers, journalists, researchers, practitioners, and advocates. The bulletin aims to provide information and news on women's health issues.

Contributions may be sent to Vicki Lambert at roates9@bigpond.com All contributions are subject to editorial license to ensure that the AWHN'S principles are upheld through this bulletin.





Australian Women's Health Network Membership Form

ABN 84 238 300 000

TAX INVOICE

Please use this as your tax invoice as organisations will not be separately invoiced.
The information you provide us with will only be used for AWHN business.
Your contact details will not be sold or distributed to other organisations.

The following items are compulsory.

Email is the major form of communication with AWHN members.

Is this a membership renewal? <input type="checkbox"/>	Or a new membership? <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---

Individual Members	
Name	
Address	
Telephone	()
Fax	()
Email	

Organisation Members	
Organisation	
Contact Name	
Address	
Telephone	()
Fax	()
Email	

Signed: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Payment details (membership includes GST)	Amount
Individual	\$33
Student/ Concession	\$11
Organisation	\$77
Total enclosed	\$

Please note: Membership is for one year and is due on 1st July

Optional: Tick if you are an Aboriginal woman and would like to belong to the AWHN Aboriginal Women's Caucus.

More information is available at: www.awhn.org.au or email us at awhn@awhn.org.au

Send a money order or cheque with this form to:

Australian Women's Health Network
GPO Box 1160
Melbourne VIC 3001

Internet banking option:

(please email a copy of receipt)
Westpac BSB: 032-727
Account Number: 112835
Account Name: Australian Women's
Health Network

6th National Australian Women's Health Conference
Hotel Grand Chancellor
Hobart, Tasmania.
18-21 May, 2010.