

Australian Federation of Graduate Women

A Voice for Graduate Women



Newsletter

March 2010

Four months after the Triennial Conference and after the second Council Meeting of the 35th Triennium it is time to give you all a progress report. My thanks and admiration go to Merle Thompson who despite the upheaval of moving from her home of many years, hassles with broadband connections, telephone disconnections and computer and printer malfunctions has managed to get this first solo effort to you all by snail or email.

Progress since Conference

Our name change has been approved by the Office for Fair Trading and appropriate changes have been made to bank accounts, Trust Deeds, the website, email addresses and in all business affairs. The NSW Association has formalised the change and other states have the process underway.

Letters have been written to the ASX Corporate Governance Council, commending their decision to require disclosure to the market by all companies of the proportion of women at all levels from employees to directors within their organizations, and to appropriate Ministers about Paid Parental Leave (see advocacy on website <http://www.afgw.org.au/>)

At the Council Meeting Margaret Giles was welcomed as the new president of AFUWWA and Felicity Lord returned as Acting President AFUWSA until the vacancy is filled. Conveners were welcomed for the first time as voting members. Details of the new Women's Alliances had just been announced and this, together with the launch of the PFGWNet website, was celebrated over lunch. A cheque for \$9,400 was then given to the Treasurer for the AFGW Fellowship Fund representing the surplus from the Triennial Conference. This will be invested and more donations from members are encouraged.

Website <http://www.afgw.org.au/>

An upgrade is in progress as much of the material related to the past Triennium. The papers from the conference have now been included and photographs and a video are to follow.

The Objects of the Association failed to gain an adequate majority at the conference but the old ones needed to take account of the name change. Council approved a set of 'Working Objects' for 2009-2012, the 35th Triennium, and these can be found on the website. New Goals for the Triennium will be included and the changes to the Rules and change of Name are in the new document. We continue to be grateful to Jennifer Phillips for the vital part she plays in incorporating all these changes.

Committee function

Though conveners for Education, Status of Women and Peace and Human Security have been appointed at Federal level, as well as a Resolutions Convener, communication with STAs is still presenting problems.

An adviser on ALL these issues should be nominated by every STA.

Membership

AGM: The 2010 AGM of AFGW Inc will be held in Sydney on 29 October. With such advance warning we hope there is a chance that members outside Sydney will be able to attend and perhaps come as observers to the Council Meeting on 30 October.

Membership needs to be a focus of this Triennium. This is essential to our survival. Scrutiny of reasons for stopping membership is needed. It is something in which action has to happen at State level but it needs Council support.

Where are candidates for positions on Executive at State and Federal level? This is becoming more and more urgent.

We hope to arrange for a special session on this issue in association with the first Council Meeting of 2011.

Education

The launch of the 'My School' website, the National Curriculum, the green paper from the University of Sydney, the Melbourne Programme and all other changes planned or threatened mean we must all be extra vigilant in monitoring how these impact on the education of women and girls, surely still our main focus. It is good news that the Youth Allowances including the new student scholarships have now been passed by the Senate so students have clear knowledge of their funding for 2010.

Marion Jones, Fellowships Officer, is finding she is fielding queries about ALL scholarships and bursaries as well as AFGW awards. Can you please ensure an up to date version of your State awards is on all your websites so all she needs to do is refer questioners there.

I am keen to publish details of recent awardees in *Graduate Women* so PLEASE can you send me such information plus photos if available. Reports on what the women have achieved with the awards is particularly welcome.

Past winners of National Awards are to be listed on the website but there are a few gaps in our information particularly for those before 2002 so any help would be welcomed.

You are also reminded of the ACT Bursary which provides help for people outside the ACT needing to spend time doing further research in Canberra

Parental leave

Legislation on this issue will be presented in Parliament in the next session. While the proposed scheme is not perfect, it is the result of widespread discussion and the funding is established. There is facility for review and I strongly believe we should all be pushing for the introduction of such a scheme by 1 January 2011.

Alliances

The Office for Women has announced the new Alliances replacing the previous Secretariats which were funded to advise the Minister and were involved, among other things, in contributions to the Henry Tax Review and the Productivity Commission Research into Paid Parental Leave.

Three of these new Alliances are part of the previous model:

- **Economic Security for Women** (formerly S4W and led by BPW) will focus on improving women's economic security and financial independence. Dalma Jacobs and Tricia Blombery are ratified as our representatives and Dalma is heavily engaged in projects.
- **Equality Rights Alliance (ERA)** (formerly WomenSpeak led by YWCA) will address gender equality and leadership issues. Jenny Strauss and Jane Baker are ratified as our representatives and attended the final WomenSpeak meeting in Canberra and the launch of ERA. This meeting included a chance to visit parliamentarians to discuss Women's Issues for the election and provide them with information about the new Alliances.
- **National Rural Women's Coalition and Network** will provide a voice for more than 250,000 women in rural and regional Australia and fulfils the Government's election commitment to establish a national network for rural women.

Three are newly established:

- **Australian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Alliance** will engage with and advocate on behalf of immigrant and refugee women, with a particular focus on building leadership and advocacy skills among its members.
- **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance** will give Indigenous women a strong voice in Government decision-making.
- **Women Everywhere Advocating Violence Elimination (WEAVE)** will address issues of women's safety and the elimination of violence.

Total funding for the Alliances is \$3.6 million over three years.

Council considered the two Alliances to which we had nominated representatives were those that best reflected our interests.

This seems a suitable time to mention the **Working Objects of the 35th Triennium** which were accepted by Council:

- to unite the associations of graduate women in Australia for the furtherance of their common interests and for affiliation with the International Federation of University Women;
- to promote equitable educational opportunities and lifelong learning for women and girls;
- to encourage and enable graduate women to apply their knowledge and skills in leadership and decision-making in all spheres of public and private life;
- to promote the status of women and girls;
- to represent graduate women in national and international forums;
- to promote, nationally and internationally, friendship, peace, sustainability and human security.

IFUW

Although the early bird registration for the Triennial Conference closes on March 31 cheap fares to Mexico and special rates at the conference hotel are still available. Details for registration are available at http://www.ifuw.org/ifuw2010/docs/2010_registration_info.pdf.

Jane Baker, Tricia Blombery and Jenny Strauss were endorsed as Australia's delegates and enquiries are being made among others likely to attend to select alternate delegates and to nominate people to attend the training session.

- **Nominations:** AFGW submitted 3 nominations for IFUW positions (Jenny Strauss; Vice President; Tricia Blombery; Member Finance Committee; Marion Jones; Convener and Member of the Committee for the Award of International Fellowships).

- **Workshops:** Kathy Mumford in collaboration with WG-USA (Academic English for Refugee/immigrant Women); Michelle Imison involving a collaboration with other young members in the Netherlands, Sudan and Nigeria ("A Debating Workshop: Issues of Interest in the Empowerment of Young Members").
- **Resolutions:** 15 Policy resolutions have been circulated and will be sent to STAs for consideration in the near future together with proposed changes to the Rules and Constitution. Any feedback from STAs is welcome and should be directed to Dalma Jacobs.
- **DPI-NGO.**
Plans are underway for the **63rd United Nations Annual Department of Public Information (DPI) Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) Conference** to be held in Melbourne 30 August -1 September 2010. This will be only the third time the conference has been held outside New York. The general theme is Global Health.

Prof Sandra Legge, Head of Nursing at Cabrini, Melbourne, and Professor of Nursing at Deakin University and a member of AFGW Vic has been nominated by us as an IFUW delegate. Angela Mandie-Filer from PNG, but with family in Canberra, who has worked extensively in HIV-Aids has been suggested as another person from our region who could be usefully involved.

I am bitterly disappointed it is so close to the Mexican Conference that I shall still be overseas.

PGWNet

Jenny Strauss led a very successful cyber meeting of the PGWNet Council assisted by Deborah Haydon as secretary and Jane Baker and Dalma Jacobs as Australian Committee members. Despite cyclones and computer glitches a revised Constitution was promulgated, a Plan for Action proposed, participation from currently active member associations in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, New Zealand and Australia and single representatives from the Solomons and PNG achieved, with agreement that NZ would lead the group from late 2010. Plans were made to set up a website under the auspices of IFUW. This is now achieved - <http://www.ifuw.org/pgwnet/>. Continuing weather disturbance in Fiji and the Solomon Islands has slowed the choice of Teacher Trainees to be sponsored by AFGW but I am assured progress is being made. Susan Knights, a NSW member and with a daughter at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji has agreed to serve as the fifth member of the Australian Committee.

Jenny Strauss visited PNG in January and is optimistic that a branch may form there under Angela Mandie-Filer's leadership. However, she was appalled to find the extent of the problem of vaginal fistulae after obstructed labour in PNG and we plan to write to AusAID recommending the continuation of their programme providing help by funding visiting surgical teams from Australia. Jenny met such a team from Ballarat while she was there.

I realise I have frequently referred you all to the websites for further information and that some of you will be receiving this Newsletter by Snail Mail!

How I wish you were all like the 95-year-old dentist studying for his Masters by distance education and all on-line! Age is no excuse for excluding yourself from cyber-communication!

Jane Baker
28th March 2010