

Australian Federation of University Women

A Voice for Graduate Women



Newsletter

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March 2007

A New Communications System for AFUW

For some time AFUW Council* has been concerned by the budgetary over-run incurred in producing two issues of *Graduate Women* a year. There was also a feeling that communications between the national body and the membership needed to be more frequent and more informative about activities. As a result, it was decided at the March Council Meeting that we would change our publication program, reducing *Graduate Women* to a single issue, but providing three Newsletters, to be published soon after each of the three Council Meetings. This is the first of the Newsletters. We envisage them as complementary to S/TA Newsletters, with more concentration on national and IFUW matters, but we'll be finding our way with content and feedback from members will be very welcome.

* Have you ever wondered just what Council is or does? At the end of this Newsletter is the section, **Know Your Organisation**, and this time round Council is the topic. Old hands can skip it, but it should help newer members or those whose involvement has been very much at local level to understand a bit more about the workings of AFUW.

Notes from the President's Events Diary

February 9–13: To Geneva for the IFUW Board and Committee Meetings. A busy time on the Status of Women Committee with preparations for the IFUW Conference in Manchester in August and preparation of the Plan for Action for the coming triennium, which is to have as its theme *Women as Agents for Change: Building Sustainable Futures*

March 1-2 saw members assembled at the new venue of the Y at Hyde Park (Sydney) in order to set AFUW's affairs in order with a succession of events: the Education Trust AGM, the AFUW AGM and Annual Dinner, and the first Council Meeting of the 2006–2009 triennium. Our guest speaker at the Dinner, Dr Carole Cusack, Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney, spoke on 'Religion: The News from Australia' and intrigued us with her challenging analysis of religious affiliations past and present, but her depiction of the current generational trend of non-joining, or at least of loose and fluid organisational connections, bore somewhat uncomfortably on the current membership problems of NGOs like AFUW.

March 8: Early morning start for the Melbourne International Women's Day Breakfast hosted by UNIFEM. AFUW is one of the sponsors of the event.

March 13: Joined about 80 women (and the occasional man) for the Melbourne launch of the HREOC report *It's About Time: Women, Work and Family* (see below for details)

March 22–24: To Queensland for the AFUW-Q President's Dinner: a very successful event, with guest speaker, Dr Julie Campbell, inspiring the audience with her energy and enthusiasm for life as a medical scientist and some very loyal AFUW members receiving certificates for their more than forty years of membership. Then on Saturday to the Gold Coast to meet Branch members for lunch by the sea. Many thanks to my hosts, AFUW-Q President Marion Jones and her membership, for their generous hospitality.

Advocacy: An Extract from the President's Report to the AGM

In the new Triennium, we've continued to advocate for a peaceful conclusion to the invasion of Iraq, especially in the light of the suffering of Iraqi women and children. In January a letter was sent to the Foreign Minister asking the government to use its influence with the American forces and the Iraqi government to prevent attacks on Iraqi women academics and students, apparently intended to prevent their obtaining an education (e.g. the massacre of students and academics at the University of Baghdad, during which most casualties were females, with witnesses asserting that they were specifically targeted). This issue has been referred by the IFUW Status of Women Committee to the IFUW President, with a request for our UN representatives to take up the matter for UN action.

A request to join Women with Disabilities Australia in advocating against involuntary sterilization of the mentally disabled was referred to Council members but as it was not possible to obtain consensus, the action was not taken. Council members did however respond positively to a request from IFUW for NFAs to urge their governments to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Disabled. A letter was duly sent to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition on 1 February [Parliament has since voted for ratification]. A letter also went to the Minister for Health advocating for Gardasil, the cervical cancer vaccine, to be included in the Commonwealth Vaccination program. Thanks to AFUW-Qld and AFUW-WA, who took up the suggestion of writing to State Health Ministers. A follow-up letter was sent on the importance of making the vaccine available to Indigenous communities. We sometimes think that advocacy letters drop into a deep well of silence, so it was pleasing, even if we can't attribute it solely to our urging, to find that the government moved so rapidly to make the vaccine widely available, and that we received a detailed outline of plans to make it available to Indigenous communities. A letter was sent congratulating the Prime Minister on the decision.

From the Department of Foreign Affairs, we received a substantial and prompt response to a follow-up of policy in a letter of 4 December urging that Australia ratify the UN Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms. We will monitor progress on this. Advocacy following up existing policies on the rights of women was undertaken in letters of 28 January to the Foreign Minister, expressing concern over reports of maltreatment of Fijian women protesting against the military coup in that country.

Vale Margaret Maxwell

Many of us had come to think of the energetic, much-involved and much-loved Margaret Maxwell as immortal. Her sudden death has been a sad blow to us all, but especially to AFUW-NSW. A full obituary in her honour will appear in the 2007 issue of *Graduate Women*.

Fellowships News

AFUW and Georgina Sweet Fellowships: This is the second year in which we are able to offer both Fellowships, thanks to the generosity of the AFUW-Qld, which has provided three years of funding for funds for the AFUW Fellowship. ***N.B. The Deadline for Applications for the AFUW Fellowship has been extended to 31 May.*** Applications for the Georgina Sweet close 31 July. Visit the Fellowships page of www.afuw.org.au for details.

A New Member of the Scholarship Family: Congratulations to Darling Downs Branch of AFUW-Qld, which will be awarding its first bursary after Easter. The bursary of \$500 will be awarded to a final year student at the University of Southern Queensland undertaking her final practical teaching session in a remote area school.

IFUW Fellowships

IFUW has announced that its 2008/2009 International Fellowships Competition is now open. The application instructions, deadlines and form can be accessed using the following links:

- Circular 07/2007 - 2008/2009 IFUW International Fellowships and Grants Competition
<http://www.ifuw.org/circulars/circular-2007-07.doc>
<http://www.ifuw.org/circulars/circular-2007-07.rtf>
<http://www.ifuw.org/circulars/circular-2007-07.pdf>
- 2008/2009 IFUW International Fellowships and Grants Competition - Announcement and Application Instructions: <http://www.ifuw.org/fellowships/instructions.doc>
- 2008/2009 IFUW International Fellowships and Grants Competition - Application Form <http://www.ifuw.org/fellowships/form.doc>

News from Council Committees

A very warm welcome was given at Council to the news that Dr Juliette Woods had agreed to be AFUW Convener for Status of Women Committee. Juliette is a specialist on water resources, especially the Murray-Darling System, the subject of a talk she will give to AFUW-SA on 24 April. As SWC Convener, she is experimenting with setting up a website dedicated to the work of the Committee: watch for an announcement that it's ready for your visit.

On the subject of the Status of Women, here is one for the **Reference List:**

It's About Time: Women, Work and Family is the end result of a consultative process launched by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) in 2005 with the discussion paper *Striking the Balance: Women, Men, Work and Family*. Its 921 pages tell us a great deal about how we live and the 45 Recommendations – many of them in line with AFUW policies – tell us how we might do it better. There's a mine of advocacy material here. It can be downloaded in whole or in part from

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sex_discrimination/its_about_time

or you can request hard copy from the Sex and Age Discrimination Unit, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Unit, GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001.

Conference News

Over the past six months, much energy has gone into preparations for the 29th IFUW Conference to be held in Manchester in August. At the October Council Meeting, we discussed our response to some proposed changes to the IFUW Constitution and By-laws, including changes to the dues system. The final form of these has since arrived and Rosemary Everett, as Resolutions Convener, is co-ordinating the views of S/TAs, so that we can reach a firm position on our voting at the June Council. NFAs are also invited to put forward policy resolutions, and, after considerable consultation, AFUW has forwarded 5 Resolutions, three initially proposed by AFUW-WA and two by AFUW-Vic. Their topics cover global warming, women's role in

disease prevention, the use of depleted uranium in weaponry, training of UN peace-keeping personnel in gender issues, and encouraging cultural diversity in the membership. AFUW members have also been active in other aspects of Conference. Kathryn Seymour has nominated as Convener of the IFUW Membership Committee, while Marion Jones and Jennifer Strauss are nominees respectively for the Fellowships and Status of Women Committees. Papers in the ID Seminars, of which Jennifer Strauss is the Co-ordinator, will be presented by Madeleine Laming and May Kentish and a joint paper by Tracey Bunda and Nereda White will be presented by Nereda, whose attendance at Conference is generously supported by the Australian Catholic University.

If Manchester whets your appetite for travel, or if you had to stay home in 2007, think about summertime in Spain, attending **Women's Worlds 2008**: 10th international interdisciplinary congress on women, Madrid, 3–8 July 2008. The Congress theme is *New Frontiers: Dares and Advancements*. This congress brings together women researchers and teachers and grass roots feminists. IFUW held panels and regional group meetings in 2002 and 2005. As IFUW coordinator for 2008, Anne Holden Rønning proposes roundtables or workshops on *Intergenerational Challenges: Women and Ageing*; *The Fight against poverty and exclusion as it applies to widows*; and *The Challenges of Diversity*. If you are interested in taking part or would like further information, contact her at: anne.running@eng.uib.no
Visit the Conference website for general information: <http://www.mmww08.org/>

Know Your Organization: The AFUW Council

What exactly is Council? What does it do? The ultimate governing body of AFUW is the triennial Conference of members: it alone has the power to change the Constitution, determine capitation fees, and pass Resolutions that will drive AFUW policy for the next three years. In between Conferences, the business of the Federation is conducted by Council. This consists of:

- four elected Office Bearers (referred to as the Executive) – the President, Secretary, Treasurer and Co-ordinator of International Relations, who is AFUW's connecting link to the International Federation and represents us on the IFUW Council;
- the Immediate Past President;
- the Presidents of the State and Territory Associations, who are Vice-Presidents of AFUW, and their proxies, who represent them in their absence;
- the Registrar;
- the Conveners of Council's Standing Committees (the policy committees: Education, Peace and Human Security, and Status of Women, and the administrative committees: Fellowships, Membership and Resolutions)

Council meets three times a year. In 2006 it first met by teleconference in an effort to reduce costs for AFUW and for Council members and at least one meeting a year will usually take this form. Its meetings hear reports, monitor the budget and the planning of the next triennial Conference, discuss issues requiring advocacy, and generally make decisions about AFUW activities. Council also decides on AFUW's position on constitutional and policy proposals put forward for the IFUW triennial Conferences and appoints the delegates to these.

Next Newsletter

This will follow the June Council Meeting. If you would have any comments or queries about anything in this Newsletter or would like any items included in the next, please send them to me by email to jstr0036@bigpond.net.au or as hard copy to 2/12 Tollington Ave, East Malvern 3145.

Jennifer Strauss, President, AFUW Inc
March 2007