

hotwire

Steps to securing your financial future

WIRE is excited to be continuing our work in building women's financial knowledge and confidence, working in partnership with the Office of Women's Policy (Victoria) and the Queen Victoria Women's Centre towards the first ever 'Women & Money Month' in September this year.

WIRE has been contracted to finalise the development of training materials for a series of interactive group workshops that will be held in nine locations throughout Victoria in September. We are also recruiting, training and supporting the trainers who will deliver the workshops.

The learning from the project we conducted last year that resulted in the 'Women's Financial Literacy Research Report' and 'A Woman's Guide to Surviving the Money Jungle' (both available at www.wire.org.au) has been incorporated into the training material.

The workshops begin with women exploring how they learnt about money growing up and how this may affect their feelings and beliefs about money.

Our research suggested that women need to address these issues before they can move into learning and thinking about what they can do differently today.

To keep informed about the workshops and other activities planned for 'Women & Money Month' visit www.women.vic.gov.au, www.qvwc.org.au or subscribe to WIRE's free email bulletin via our website www.wire.org.au.

New fact sheets available

As a member of Security4Women, we assisted the Federal Office for Women and the Australian Financial Literacy Foundation in the development of their new *Women Understanding Money* fact sheets. Thank you to all the women who shared their stories with us, which appear as case studies in the sheets. There are 14 sheets covering a whole range of financial issues that women may need to consider at different stages of their life. You can access the sheets at www.understandingmoney.gov.au or order hard copies by calling (02) 6263 2111.

Women earn the same as men now, right?

We were thrilled to have Dr. Anne Summers as our speaker at the International Women's Day lunch we co-hosted with Queen Victoria Women's Centre (QVWC) on 4 March.

Anne reflected on 'Women – Connecting to our past, creating our future'. In reviewing how well women are doing today she pointed out that we seem to be actually losing ground in pay equity.

"Women earn 84 cents for every dollar earned by men, down from 87 cents in 2004," Ms Summers said.

"It seems the higher up you go in an organisation, the worse the pay discrimination is... female CEOs receive only 67% and Chief Financial Officers just 49% of the salaries of their male counterparts."

Anne then went on to inspire us all to action, outlining the many ways that we as women can work towards getting our voices heard at the highest levels of political power.

We were pleased to raise money at the lunch for the 'Women Taking Control' grants which will go towards supporting women's organisations.



Samiro Douglas WIRE CEO, Anne Summers keynote speaker, and Catherine Brown QVWC Trust

From the desk



We've just completed our 2008 satisfaction surveys and once again it looks like most of the time we get it right, with results confirming 98% satisfaction, which makes us all very happy!

Along with supporting women directly through the phone line and information centre, we are in the unique position of being able to act on the stories we hear to advocate for structural change on key issues, such as our work on financial literacy (see story on page 1) as well as the barriers women face in engaging in paid work.

To this end we have been working on creating more family friendly workplaces through our projects with women's small NGOs and women's small business.

Through our strong networks with other women's groups we were able to use the learnings from these two 'grass roots' projects to lobby the two major parties prior to the last election.

We were pleased that the Rudd Government recently announced they will support small businesses with grants of \$5,000 - \$15,000 to help meet the set-up costs of family friendly working arrangements.

While we also welcome the current government considering a model for paid parental leave and increased resources for

early childhood services, we believe that as it takes at least 18 years to raise a child, Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) and holiday care also need to be included to complete the suite of support systems for women and families balancing paid work and raising children.

It is worth noting that single parents in full-time and part-time paid work are the major users of the OSHC system (ABS 2002); perhaps unsurprising given the "Welfare to Work" legislation under which single parents are required to obtain at least 15 hours of paid work per week once their youngest child has reached the age of 6 years.

One way we have been getting this issue on the agenda is through our membership of the Security4Women secretariat; one of the four women's secretariats established to inform the Federal Government on women's issues.

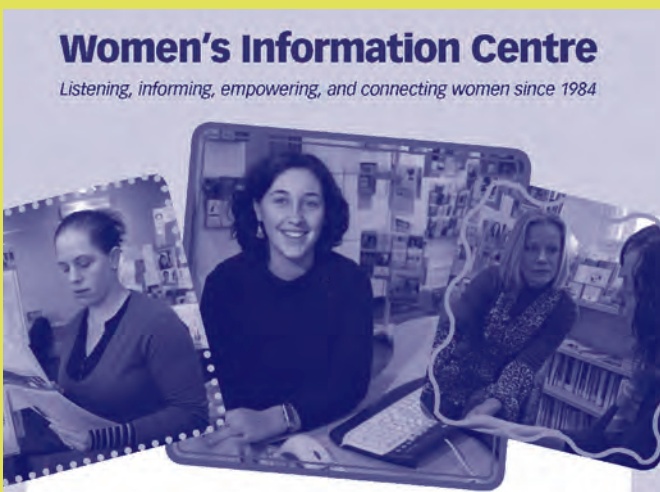
Security4Women tabled this as a Hot Issue for consideration at a recent meeting of the secretariats with the Federal Office for Women.

We are working with the secretariats to raise \$10,000 for a Newspoll survey to gather credible data to assist us in lobbying government. Keep your eyes on our website and email bulletin for developments.



Samiro Douglas
Chief Executive Officer

Many thanks



Once again we need to thank our members for their incredible support and generosity. We raised \$1323 from our last appeal for new signage for the Women's Information Centre. We have produced two mobile pull-up banners which will act as signage in the foyer of QVWC and can also be taken to special events and community information days.

Clothes swap

Anna Castles is a young architect who lives in Collingwood. After a close friend went through a tough time she wanted to do something to help other women in that situation. She struck upon the idea of hosting a charity clothes swap with her friends and enlisted the help of her friend Suzanne Rodda-Hopkins. They decided to donate the funds to WIRE. Thirty women came and they raised over \$1200! We are looking at whether we might be able to help other women take up this fundraising idea with WIRE.



The shopping begins at the 'Bower Bird' charity clothes swap

Abortion Law Reform in Victoria

The debate

By WIRE volunteer and media student Claire Varley

Abortion is a criminal act in Victoria but, under the common law Menhennit ruling, is permitted if the medical consequences of continuing the pregnancy outweigh the risks of termination.

Around 20,000 abortions are performed in Victoria each year and women and their doctors still risk prosecution.

Pro Choice Victoria spokesperson Dr Leslie Cannold points out that even if couples used contraception perfectly 100% of the time and there was no such thing as coerced sex, world-wide there would still be 6 million unplanned, unwanted pregnancies every year.

“Only about 7% of Australians don’t support abortion in any circumstance while 81% support a woman’s right to choose,” Dr Cannold said.

Dr Cannold said one of the options for reform is to transfer current provisions to the Health Act which will not remove the possibility of prosecution and will make things worse.

Right To Life Australia political campaign director Marcel White said Right To Life maintains that abortion should be a crime and should be included in the Crimes Act.

Victorian Premier John Brumby has stated that the debate in Parliament is likely to focus on Models A and B.

The Victorian Law Reform Commission’s Law of Abortion Report and an Information Paper are available at www.lawreform.vic.gov.au.

The options

On 29 May, the Victorian Law Reform Commission, at the request of the state government delivered a report which examines ways to reform abortion law.

The report gives the Victorian Government three options: Models A, B and C.

Model A provides doctors with the power to decide whether an abortion is necessary because the pregnancy poses a risk to the woman.

Model B gives the woman herself the authority to decide if an abortion is necessary up to 24 weeks gestation.

Model C would give women the power to choose an abortion at any stage of her pregnancy.

WIRE’s view

WIRE sent the following letter to all Victorian Parliamentarians outlining our response to the recommendations and urging them to empower women with the ability to make choices in their lives.

To the Honourable Member,

Decriminalisation of abortion: Respect women’s right to choose, advance Model C

The Victorian Government has said it intends to introduce a bill to decriminalise abortion this year. The Victorian Law Reform Commission’s Law of Abortion Report proposed three models that reflect the range of views presented during the extensive consultation process. The major difference between the three is the identity of the final decision maker and the circumstances in which an abortion is lawful.

As the CEO of WIRE – Women’s Information, whose vision is of a society where women are safe, respected, valued, empowered and free to make genuine choices in their lives, I urge you to do whatever you can to ensure that the Government advances a bill based on Model C – the only option which allows women to make their own choice about termination.

As a state-wide women’s service we receive nearly 20,000 contacts from women per year seeking information, support and referrals on a range of issues. From our experience talking to women we know that no woman makes a decision to terminate her pregnancy lightly. We believe that if she has reached this decision, at whatever stage of her pregnancy, it is well considered and the right option for her. We urge you to place this decision in the hands of each individual woman, not a physician.

Victorians have waited a long time for a Government to legislate on this issue. Let’s get it right for the women who have to have to make this decision.

Please urge the Government to introduce a bill based on Model C and support that bill when it comes to a vote.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this very important issue.

Yours faithfully,
Samiro Douglas

WIRE remembers...



Some of the founding mothers of WIRE gathered for the project are from left to right: Philomena Horsley, Chris Haag, Kay Setches, Carolyn Ingvarson (also project manager), Fleur Spitzer, Kerry Lovering, Rosemary Varty, Janet Horn and Gracia Baylor.

WIRE received a small grant from the Office of Women's Policy to celebrate 100 years of women voting in Victoria.

We worked with students from Santa Maria College to research the history of women's civic participation using WIRE as a case study.

The major output of the project will be a DVD of interviews the students conducted and filmed with some of the founding mothers of WIRE, due to be launched by the Minister later this year.

The project is well under way and has produced some wonderfully rich material from women involved about 25 years ago in the establishment and early days of WIRE. The students have been astonished at the stories and the passion of these women for bringing about change to the discriminatory society of the 70s and 80s.

Annual satisfaction survey

Why women called or visited

- >> "When I don't know where to go for info, WIRE is the first place I think of to call."
- >> "I was feeling powerless in my life."
- >> "I wasn't quite sure why I was ringing but I was lucky to get all these things."
- >> "Just needed to talk about it."

What they got out of it

- >> "I was happy to have my story listened to, this does not happen very often in life."
- >> "I felt much better to know there are other services that can support me through this."
- >> "I always thought I was to blame about the violence in our relationship, she explained to me that it wasn't my fault. I am not responsible for my ex's violence."
- >> "I've struggled with depression and WIRE has helped me to grow through my problems."
- >> "Coming from a rural area I know there are not many services that can support me. I ring WIRE when I want to have a conversation."

About the respondents

- 69% metro Melbourne
- 20% outer Melbourne
- 11% regional/rural Victoria
- 30% CALD backgrounds
- 53% in paid employment
- 49% had an income of less than \$20,000 per year.

Phoneline **97%** satisfaction
WIC **99%** satisfaction

Nice things they said about us

- >> "You guys go an extra hundred miles!"
- >> "The woman was very caring and really listened to get to the bottom of the situation. I got so much more than I'd expected."
- >> "Extremely supportive and great information."
- >> "I'm just glad you exist! Everywhere else I was getting dead ends."
- >> "I was really happy and impressed with the service provided, I felt like I wasn't being judged."
- >> "I really am very grateful that WIC does exist, it's been my hide-away/comforting/stabilising place since my arrival in Melbourne. So a BIG thank you to all the women who created this space, those who staff it at the moment, and those who support it financially!!!"

Any suggestions for improvement?

- >> "You need more funding and more paid staff! More people need to know about WIRE!"