



Helping women
make the right
connections

Hotwire

Newsletter

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Welcome to our August 2011 edition of HotWIRE

The promise of spring is in the air with yet another issue of *HotWIRE*. The past six months have proved exciting for WIRE overseas. In April this year WIRE had the honour of being invited by the All China Women's Federation to deliver a presentation at a four-day Domestic Violence Training Workshop held in ChangChung China. This event was part of the China-Australian Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program.

I flew via HongKong and Beijing to ChangChun in the Jilin Province, North China. My presentation was on the philosophy and practice of providing a specialist information and referral service. I was one of three non-Chinese participants which was a great reminder about being a stranger in a dominant culture. The other non-Chinese participants were the program manager from HREOC, and Diana Hamey, a lawyer representing Women's Legal Service NSW. We were, however, well taken care of with direct translations provided for all conference proceedings and our own personal interpreters for all other occasions.

Preparing for my presentation gave me the opportunity to think about the philosophy and principles embedded in WIRE's practice and reminded me to honour the WIRE women who came before us for the strength and respect they had embedded in our WIRE model.

It was great to see the commonalities irrespective of culture and country in people's commitment to responding to domestic violence. Committed to stopping violence from a human rights perspective, China has recently introduced protection orders similar to our intervention orders.

It was certainly an honour to have WIRE's work recognised internationally.

Following an approach by Sally Douglas, an ex-WIRE volunteer and WIC coordinator now living and working in Cambodia, WIRE has agreed to a partnership with the Women's Resource Centre in Cambodia which will explore a worker exchange program and mentorship. Founded in 2008 by American Judy Larkin, Women's Resource Centre in Siem Reap gives local women free and centralised information, referrals and support just like WIRE on an array of issues, especially the social and economic situations of women and their families.

We greatly look forward to working with women for women beyond our shores as well as at home. Roll on, Spring!

Samiro Douglas



When Will Women Get Equal Pay?

On 16th May 2011 Fair Work Australia (FWA) issued a landmark equal pay ruling in a case lodged by the Australian Services Union (ASU). FWA found that in the non-government social and community services sector,

“...there is not equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value by comparison with state and local government employment.”

FWA's interim decision recognized that perceptions of the social and community services sector's work as “female” work is an important factor in the lack of equal pay.

However, pay increases have been postponed until FWA receives submissions on how to implement pay equality. The next challenge now lies in all governments fully funding any pay increase recommended by FWA at the next tribunal hearing in August.

WIRE joined thousands of workers at the Melbourne Equal Pay Rally on 8th June 2011 to urge governments to fully fund the case outcome. Rallies were also held at 16 other locations across Australia on the same day. On 6th July 2011 the Australian Federal Government announced its commitment to provide extra funding for expected pay increases. The Victorian government has committed to \$200 million over four years to fund any pay increases, but has yet to commit to **fully** funding the recommended pay increases to be handed down by the FWA tribunal on 8th August 2011.

Pay equity is vital not only for workers in the social and community services sector, it is vital for all women if we are to change the social and economic conditions that cause and maintain gender disparities.

Today, women in Australia earn on average 18 per cent less than men—a gap that has barely changed since 1972 (see figures at right). **This year Equal Pay Day falls on**

1st September which marks the extra 63 days women must work to earn the same amount of money as men do in the same financial year (www.equalpayday.com.au).

Achieving equal pay is a right for all women and allows them to plan for and work towards stronger and more secure financial futures for themselves and their families.

As Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, stated last month:

“The tendency to dismiss the type of work performed by the SACS sector as ‘women’s work’, and remunerate it as such, is a large part of the problem. And this has a huge flow-on effect. Fair remuneration in the community sector is vital, not just for our progress towards equality today but to ensure that those men and women who do this critical work, the most difficult and the most compassionate work in our society, do not live in poverty in their twilight years.”

What the figures say...

- Across Australia, women's average full-time weekly earnings are 17.4 per cent less than men's, with this gap widening over the past year. This socio-economic discrepancy is well known to lead to poor health outcomes (WHO 2008).
- Women have significantly lower rates of superannuation savings than men, as well as lower median amounts —\$13,400 for men compared with \$6,400 for women. This results in many women living in poverty in their later years.
- In 2006, 87 per cent of one-parent families with children under 15 years were headed by women.

Did you know? In 1950 the average women's wage was 75% of the male basic wage!

Celebrating the Centennial International Women's Day: Health At Every Size

Sixty women between 19 to 87 years had lunch with us on Thursday 10th March 2011 to mark a hundred years of International Women's Day, and to celebrate the diversity of women's body shapes and sizes.

The **Health At Every Size** lunch held at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre was a partnership between WIRE and Eating Disorders Victoria. The fully-booked event encouraged women to embrace the diversity of natural body shapes and sizes, and debunked the myth that women can only be healthy at a certain shape, size and weight.

Speakers included **Dr Naomi Crafti** (second from left) from Eating Disorders Victoria; WIRE CEO **Samiro Douglas** (fourth from left); **The Hon. Mary Wooldridge MP**, Minister for Mental Health, Women's Affairs and Community Services (third from left); and **Julie Parker** (first from left) positive body image campaigner, counsellor and blogger. Comedian Kelly Nash hosted the event and had the audience rolling in laughter during the delicious two-course African lunch.



Of all 60 participants who had given feedback, 80 per cent found the content very useful and 90 per cent thought the level of the information presented was just right. 98 per cent of the participants also thought the presenters were very prepared.

The event was a resounding success. One participant aptly summed up the main message of the event:

"We are all beautiful, and beauty comes in all shapes and sizes. Thinness doesn't equal healthy!"

NEW Info Sheets

WIRE regularly publishes information sheets, guides and reports on women's issues in Victoria. In March 2011, we updated and reprinted three of WIRE's most commonly requested information sheets:

- **Separation: deciding to leave a relationship**
- **Separation and children**
- **Separation and property**

Helplines, contact numbers and websites of relevant community and legal services are listed on the back of each information sheet.

SEPARATION: DECIDING TO LEAVE A RELATIONSHIP

The break-up of a marriage or relationship can be a very stressful and traumatic time. Often coming at the end of a long and difficult process, the decision to leave is not usually an easy one, especially if children are involved.

This information sheet discusses:

- commonly held myths about leaving a relationship
- some practical steps to take
- housing options
- where to get legal advice

SEPARATION AND CHILDREN

When a relationship ends and children are involved, it is vital for parents to seek information and support when making important decisions and arrangements affecting their children.

This information sheet talks about:

- helping children understand and cope with separation
- reaching parenting agreements
- ensuring children's safety

SEPARATION AND PROPERTY

One of the most difficult issues to resolve when separating is the fair division of property. This usually begins around the time of separation and, sometimes, can go on for years.

This information sheet discusses:

- commonly held myths about separation and property
- how an agreement can be reached out of court
- how property is divided
- complications to look out for such as debts

ONLINE ACCESS Visit <http://www.wire.org.au/information-resources>.

REQUEST HARD COPIES Email your mailing address and required quantities to communication@wire.org.au.

These info sheets were kindly printed with a grant from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, and updated with the legal guidance from Nicholes Family Lawyers.

COMING UP AT WIRE...

- 17th Aug Free WIRE Seminar: *Parenting Adolescents* by Helen Rimington (Booked out).
- 1st Sept Equal Pay Day <http://www.equalpayday.com.au>
- 13th Sept/ 14th Sept Orientation sessions for WIRE Telephone Support Worker Training. Call 1300 134 130
- 15th Sept Free WIRE Seminar: *Women and Alcohol Use* by Ingrid Wilson.
- 12th Oct WIRE Telephone Support Worker Training starts.
- 24th Oct WIRE Annual General Meeting
- 16th Nov Free WIRE Seminar: *Disordered Eating* by Eating Disorders Victoria.

For information or bookings, please call 9921 0878, email inforequests@wire.org.au or visit <http://www.wire.org.au>.

Congratulations, Trainees!

Twelve trainees have successfully completed the first part of their telephone support worker training which started in June. Best wishes to all of you as you put your skills into practice in the coming weeks!

"A thoughtful and warm group whom we're sure will do wonderful work at WIRE," say Sally (Trainer) and Martine (Telephone Service Coordinator).

Want to join our phone volunteer training in October? Call **1300 134 130** to register to attend an orientation session on **13th or 14th September**.

Dear WIRE members + volunteers + supporters

Thank you so much!

for making our **phone room appeal** such a great success. From April to June this year, we received generous donations of **\$4,040.50** towards the refurbishment of our phone room for our phone room volunteers! Many thanks also go to our wonderful supporters (and runners!) who nominated WIRE as their charity of choice in the Melbourne Fun Run on 17th July 2011 and helped with the fundraising.

Women's Information Centre Update

Job Club: WIC continues to offer fortnightly Job Club sessions in partnership with WISE Employment on alternate Mondays. The next one is on 15th August 2011. **Interested in booking a free session?** Please call Jay, Gemma or Shannon at **9921 0878** or email inforequests@wire.org.au.

Our 9-year-old WIRE Champion!

Gemma McKibbin, one of our Women's Information Centre officers, shared her son's wonderful letter with us at WIRE and we thought we would share it with you!

Gemma's son, Luke, had written this letter to his school principal after witnessing a school incident involving some parents and their child.

Thank you Luke and Gemma for giving your kind permission to publish this letter. Nice work, Luke!

