



## New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women (Inc.)

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### NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2013

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013

The Annual General Meeting of the Canterbury Branch of NZFGW Inc. will be held on **Thursday 24th October 2013 at 7.30 pm** in the Staff Room, Rangi Ruru School, Hewitts Rd.

The business of the meeting will be:

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the previous AGM
2. Presentation of Annual Reports and Financial Statements
3. Election of Officers
4. General Business

New members are most welcome on the committee and nomination forms are in the last newsletter or obtainable from the secretary. Nominations can also be taken from the floor at the AGM.

At the conclusion of the meeting there will be a short talk from a YMCA speaker who will tell us about the organisation's activities, particularly about their very popular week long school holiday camp at Wainui. From the age of nine years children can come to this camp and participate in an array of fun activities led by outstanding local and international volunteer instructors. A strong focus is on social interaction and as the children grow into teenagers, leadership development and goal setting are incorporated into the programmes.

The YMCA receives an annual donation from the Trust Board towards the cost of running the camps and to contribute to the YMCA's mission to build strong people, strong families and strong communities.

#### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to new member, Nadia Sole who has a BA in Geography and a Graduate Certificate in Antarctic Studies from the University of Canterbury.

#### FROM THE TRUST BOARD

The next meeting will be on the 30<sup>th</sup> November when the Sadie Balkind applications for 2013/14 will be considered. The University of Canterbury together with nearly all NZ universities now advertise their scholarships/awards on an externally managed site – NZUniCareerHub and the Trust Board has registered as an advertiser to use this site.

#### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN REPORT (Marlene Smith)

The September Suffrage meeting was a pleasant occasion and well attended. Of special note were the talk given by the guest speaker, Joanna Norris, editor of *The Christchurch Press*, the presentation of the Kate Sheppard Memorial Trust Award to Sylvia Nissen and the presentation of the Lois Middleton Memorial Awards to Tierney Reardon (13) and Lucy Tohill (17) for their poems *March of the Suffragettes* and *To my Daughter*. The poems appeared in the *Go* supplement to *The Press* on Friday 20 September and in the October issue of the NCW publication *The Circular*.

## Notes on Action Items:

- **Discussion Document on Flexible Superannuation:** Our population is ageing with 14% being 65 or older, and at the current rate will rise by 21% by 2031. From the viewpoint of the cost of Superannuation, this forecast for the population is considered alarming. The Flexible Superannuation Discussion Document arises in response to that alarm. Flexisuper is presented as a plan to give people choice about when they want to retire. Between the ages of 60-65 people can choose to retire at a lower level of Super, the level determined by age with the lowest, about 73% of the current rate, set for people who retire at 60. The level rises each year until age 65, the current rate. Retirement can be put off until age 70, with the level of Super rising each year, with the top level being 160% of the current Super.
- **SOP – Animal Welfare Amendment:** Explanatory note to SOP Amendment Bill to prohibit use of animals in researching or testing any substance to which the Psychotropic Substances Act 2013 applies.
- **Vulnerable Children Bill** is a follow up of the Green and White papers on Vulnerable Children (feedback from the Canterbury NCW branch was sent in some time ago). The Bill will result in two new principal Acts: the Vulnerable Children Act and the Child Harm Prevention Act. These can be viewed on [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz)
- *The Circular* records that last month NCWNZ made written submissions on the following:  
NZ International Convention Centre Bill 140-1; Public Safety (Public Protection Order) Bill 68; Victims Orders Against Violent Offenders Bill 126-1; Marine Legislation Bill SOP 347.  
To read the full submissions visit [www.ncwnz.org.nz](http://www.ncwnz.org.nz) (Members' Area).

## Other items of interest:

- Newsletter from AvON (Avon – Otakaro Network) - \$15 million has been committed to connect the city to the sea along the Avon / Otakaro corridor and it is urging residents in ChCh east to get involved in making sure this funding works for their communities and all of ChCh
- Link to an interview with Mary Gavin, Nelson, a Board Member of NCWNZ. Mary was interviewed by Noelle McCarthy on 27 Sept about Mary Ann Muller, an early Nelson suffragist.  
[www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/afternoons/audio/2568930/women's-suffrage-mary-ann-muller](http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/afternoons/audio/2568930/women's-suffrage-mary-ann-muller)
- Please take time to watch the advertisement for Children of Prisoners Week on [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKjCuluMVcc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKjCuluMVcc) It is a very special advertisement by a group of Auckland advertising agency people for free.
- *The Circular* gives information about a one-off reproductive rights book and information tour of NZ called the *Prochoice Highway: On the Road for Reproductive Justice*. An author talk and discussion "Why is Abortion still a Crime?" with Alison McCulloch will be held on Mon 11 November at 12 noon at the Family Planning Building (upstairs to the left), 9 Washington Way (off Moorhouse Ave), ChCh.

### WEA COURSE

#### LINCOLN EFFORD MEMORIAL LECTURE

**"The promise, progress and paradox of women's rights and social justice in New Zealand" - Judy McGregor**

**Thursday 7 November, 7.30-9pm  
At the WEA, 59 Gloucester Street**

Professor Judy McGregor, heads the School of Social Sciences and Public Policy at AUT and is a former Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner in the New Zealand Human Rights Commission.

All Welcome!

To register for this event or for further information phone the WEA at 366 0285 Email [admin@cwea.org.nz](mailto:admin@cwea.org.nz)  
Web: [cwea.org.nz](http://cwea.org.nz)

## FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

**APOLOGY:** *The report on the IFUW Conference in Turkey in the last newsletter was mistakenly attributed to Dorothy Meyer but was actually written by Ann Pomeroy.*

**SPORT, GENDER AND THE MEDIA** *Shirley Gillett (CIR NZFGW Otago branch, selected in 2013 for the New Zealand field hockey veterans team to play a three test series against Australia)*

Nearly three years ago at the IFUW conference in Mexico I conducted a workshop around gender, sport and equality which questioned the progress made on the media's coverage of sportswomen. Before leaving Dunedin I gathered together about twenty copies of the sports sections of the Otago Daily Times (ODT) which I took with me. Workshop participants were asked to identify male and female based sports articles in the ODT using a different colour highlighter for each.

We were surprised to see the predominantly male content. When I described this to the sports editor of the ODT on my return he explained there was a genuine attempt to include photos and examples of women's sports, such as netball, but the readership, including the females, wanted to read about rugby and sportsmen. Surprising? No! This example illustrates quite clearly that media attention and feedback, and possibly funding within the sports arena, favours men. This unequal visibility may influence self image and opportunity for women by the prominence of male sporting models and a deficit model of women in sports.

This disparity is paralleled elsewhere. Speaking at the International Women's' Day Breakfast in Dunedin on 8 March 2013, Local Dunedin MP Claire Curran explained that parliament is, if anything, more sexist and more male oriented now, than it was several years ago. Identifying discriminatory patterns in sports is critical to addressing them in society. This is not just because of the passion and share of attention sports commands in contemporary media, but to maintain societal well-being there is a need to recognise diversity, and discourage discriminatory practices in every sphere. It is both a national, and an international issue and my small exercise with the ODT could possibly be replicated in many countries, although our participant from Uganda explained that in her country sport for girls was favoured, visible and not minimised.

What the workshop revealed was that in the sporting context the portrayal of gender imbalances is seen as normal discourse and contributes to power imbalances. In other words, sports institutions and media coverage in New Zealand reproduce gender inequalities and, if the ODT editor is correct, the New Zealand public actively participates in this re-production.

Not only is the actual coverage of female sport poor, but the tenor of the coverage is also inadequate. For instance Dr Farah Palmer, former captain of the Black Ferns and three times Rugby World Cup winner, commented "female athletes get more media coverage for issues regarding their relationships, looks, and out-of-sport lifestyles than they do for their athletic prowess" (ODT, June 27, 2013).

There is no doubt that women are participating in sport far more now than ever before. For example, when women first took part in the 1900 Olympic Games in Paris there were 22 women, from a total of 997 athletes (2%). In 2012 the Olympic committee was congratulating itself that a new record had been set for women's participation at the Olympic Games. Of a total 10,864 athletes, 4,412 (41%) were women. However, only 17% of the accredited print media covering the Olympics were female.

Socially and culturally, sport is synonymous with many masculine attributes and characteristics: competitiveness, independence, a culture of drinking, and individual endeavour such as evidenced in Mulgan's book *Man Alone* or Jock Philips' *A Man's Country?* the concept of mateship, and common behavioural codes summed up in clichés such as "toughen up" and "man up" or the coded statement "what goes on tour stays on tour".

However, stereotypical behaviours and attributes do not provide a valid reason for repeatedly excluding women (or competitors from the less popular sports) from media coverage. In her article<sup>1</sup> on girls and gender characteristics. Alison Jones explains the complexities of gender in terms of the self occupying a number of different/alternative spaces and multiple subjectivities. I can relate to that as, when young, I was described as a "tomboy" (I never feel better than when I put my shorts on), made to feel guilty about being competitive, first experienced the "invisibility of being a woman" when in a mixed sex hockey game the men repeatedly passed the ball to each other, and later at the privileging of males in coaching appointments at higher levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Gender and Education, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1993. 157. Becoming a 'Girl': post-structuralist suggestions for educational research.

What I do believe matters is allowing women to perform, excel, and enjoy the sporting world should they want to, together with the obvious benefits of sport: health, fitness, fresh air, freedom, personal satisfaction of achieving a goal, endorphins, team camaraderie and the exhilaration of winning.

As a key presenter of public discourses the media controls what is seen as the truth and what is possible. As such it has a responsibility to increase its coverage of women's sports and change the way it portrays women and girls, sporting or otherwise.

## **Bill on the EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ACT**

NZFGW submission to the Transport and Industrial Relations Select Committee: 2 September 2013

Elizabeth Eppel, National Secretary and Christine Ross, CIR from the National Executive of the New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women spoke to NZFGW's written submission (copy is available on the website) to the Transport and Industrial Relations Select Committee on the proposed amendments to the Employment Relations Act.

In summary, we submitted that some of the proposed amendments to the Employment Relations Act being considered by the Committee work against a spirit of partnership for economic development that exists between employers, employees and the citizens of New Zealand.

NZFGW is one part of that wider New Zealand society which does its bit to help make New Zealand workplaces more productive and prosperous. For over 90 years NZFGW has been supporting women to reach their potential, and gain financial independence through tertiary education. Today we support women to achieve through education with grants and scholarships totaling approximately \$1.7 million annually.

Therefore, we are concerned that some of the proposed amendments undermine our efforts by shifting a delicate power balance between employees/employers and what is in the longer term interests of developing a creative, vital and internationally competitive economy. Employees are not the enemy of economic development and competitiveness – they can be part of the solution.

Although the educational achievement of younger women matches and sometimes exceeds that of men, there are a lot of women work areas that will be disproportionately affected by the amendments and women are more likely to be re-entering the workforce after a break, be in a lower earning service job and a therefore be more affected. In particular: The proposed amendment to s5 should be dropped because it will undermine the collective bargaining process and will have a disproportionate affect on women by making it easier for employers to not conclude bargaining and to make unilateral changes to employment conditions that affect flexible working arrangements and other family-friendly work conditions.

This proposed amendment may also bring New Zealand into conflict with its obligation under the UN Convention for the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The proposed Amendment to s5 will not meet the test set by CEDAW that the signatory governments should ensure that any reform to the bargaining arrangements does not negatively affect women's employment and trade union rights. New sections 44A and 44C (MECAs) should be abandoned as a retrograde step and because they are also potentially unable to meet the CEDAW test (they have a disproportionate impact on women who make up 57% of union members in New Zealand).

Proposed amendments to sections 59B, 62, 63, 63A, 65, and 67A which remove the protection of the collective agreement from new employees for their first 30 days, should also be dropped. Women are frequently offered lower starting rates than men doing the same job and women, and lower paid women in particular, are likely to be more vulnerable in their first 30 days. In all of these sections mentioned so far, the status quo should prevail.

We support the proposed amendments to s69 which would extend the availability of flexible arrangements to all workers. We trust that the Select Committee will carefully consider how to mitigate the potentially negative impacts unreasonable employer refusals may have on an otherwise positive proposal.

The Committee thanked us for our submission and asked follow up questions about the importance of CEDAW and the disproportionate effect of the proposed changes on women.

***Disclaimer: while every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information in this newsletter, neither NZFGW Canterbury Branch nor the editor accepts any liability for any errors of fact or opinion.***