



## The F Word – Feminism

With this edition of Wholewoman news we go back of the roots of women’s health, exploring the relevance of feminism within today’s world. While feminist history illustrates the diversity of opinions within the movement, the majority of those who identify as feminist would subscribe to the basic view that women are entitled to equality in all aspects of life including socially, politically and economically.

Generally a feminist perspective includes an understanding of the inequalities between women and men and views these as having a basis in the unequal distribution of power. Traditionally feminism has centered around the roles, position and expectations of women and girls but many contemporary feminists have expanded feminist concepts to include concepts and ideas around gender stereotypes (ideas about how men and women are expected to act) and how these also impact on men and boys.

The piece below taken from an online article on feminism perhaps provides a bit of food for thought on what exactly a feminist is and isn’t...

“The definition of feminism does not ask for two forms of photo ID. It does not care what you look like. It does not care what color skin you have, or whether that skin is clear, or how much you weigh, or what you do with your hair. You can bite your nails, or you can get them done once a week. You can spend two hours on your makeup, or five minutes, or the time it takes to find a Chapstick without any lint sticking to it. You can rock a cord mini, or khakis, or a sari, and you can layer all three. The definition of feminism does not include a mandatory leg-hair check; wax on, wax off, whatever you want... The definition of feminism does not judge your lifestyle. You like girls, you like boys, doesn’t matter. You eat meat, you don’t eat meat, you don’t eat meat or dairy, you don’t eat fast food, doesn’t matter. You can get married, and you can change your name or keep the one your parents gave you, doesn’t matter. You can have kids, you can stay home with them or not, you can hate kids, doesn’t matter. You can stay a virgin or you can boink everyone in sight, doesn’t matter. It’s not in the definition. If you believe in, support, look fondly on, hope for, and/or work towards equality of the sexes, you are a feminist.”Sarah Bunting 2003, accessed via internet: <http://tomatonation.com/culture-and-criticism/yes-you-are/>

In this edition we explore some of your thoughts around feminism and some of the everyday issues women come up against particularly in relation to the media.

Jess Boccia



### *In this edition...*

#### **Features**

What Feminism Means to Me.....	2
Who Needs Feminism when you Empower Yourself with a Bra Top.....	3
Where Have all the Strong Women Gone .....	5
Bare Branches .....	7
Advocating for Equity in the Workplace.....	8
A Feminist Service at Work .....	9
Research Project.....	10

#### **Local Projects**

Greater Geelong, Queenscliff and Surf Coast.....	11
Moyne and Warrnambool .....	12
Colac and Corangamite.....	13
Glenelg and South Grampians and .....	15
Become a subscriber, it’s FREE .....	16

# What feminism means to me...

Feminism means to me a strength and courage that comes from knowing who you are as a woman and how you fit into the world. It comes from a myriad experiences that shapes a woman from the inside out. Its the learning about oneself the discovery of a voice that helps one to be seen and heard in a world that struggles to understand the wonderful contributions you have to make. Its about the journey, the lessons, the lives, the experiences that are all so interwoven into one beautiful tapestry. The tapestry that is the lives of women and children.

*Jackie Luscombe age 42*

I have worked in physiotherapy since 1991, in women's health since 1995, completed women's studies in 1996 and want to celebrate the changes I have seen in this time.

For me the Feminism means many things including that the Personal is Political.

I am seeing real positive changes in the dynamic of relationships between new parents.

Women who are also new mothers weekly say, "My husband/partner is great he always does all the household cleaning."

These men confidently join in discussions about household hints and baby care.

Often nobody in the group seems surprised.

It is the confident unspoken expectations of these women that tells me I am witnessing real change.

Thank You Feminism!!!

*Celia*

Feminism to me means being excited and thankful that God made me a woman. It means being proud of my differences, confident in my approach to challenges, aware of my shortcomings and totally appreciative of the wonderful man who enfolds me with his love.

*Cheryl Ford*



A soft, sensitive, warm lady who is independent, admires beauty, has a strong character, is fair and open to all opinions. Then could use all these qualities to make informed, wise decisions about any topic or debate that is of interest to her.

So many times the word Feminism is used to portray a fiery, independent woman who is calculating, has tunnel vision when it comes to women's issues and defends her rights to the point of aggression. There are two words often heard that many think are the same and that is aggression and assertion. They have both vastly different meanings and aggression seems to be used more so in feminist circles.

Feminism comes from the word feminine which means lady like, gentle and caring.

Who created the word feminism?? And placed a tag on it referring to the word as "Iron Lady Syndrome" one who finds the world revolves around their beliefs and will not compromise in any situation.

One who cannot see beauty in the world, life in the male species and love in their hearts cannot make wise, informed decisions about any subject, especially women's issues.

*Aileen*

# Who Needs Feminism When You Can Empower Yourself With a Bra Top?

There are some words I really loathe. Words I refuse to say out loud. Like panties. There are other words, I never spell right. Like business (or is it buisness?). Then there are words which have become meaningless over time. Like yuppie. And words which are chronically over-used, like 'journey'.

There are also words which just irritate me. Like 'empowerment'. What does it really mean? Why is it thrown about so gaily? And why has a generation of women rejected the word feminism and replaced it with this nambypamby term that stands for everything and nothing?

Feminism is a word in need of a makeover. And a spin-doctor. Sound philosophy, lousy image. So where did it all go wrong? When did a generation of women decide feminism meant hirsute and man-hating?

Lady Gaga, I'm talking to you. The creatively dressed pop star is leading the charge to make feminism a pariah with recent comments like this: "I'm not a feminist – I hail men, I love men. I celebrate American male culture, and beer, and bars and muscle cars."

Well OK, but none of those things actually preclude Ms Gaga from also being a feminist. In another interview she continued: "I think it's great to be a sexy, beautiful woman who can f— her man after she makes him dinner. There's a stigma around feminism that's a little bit man hating. And I don't promote hatred, ever."

I'm not really sure where to start with those sentiments except possibly here:

??

What a perverse definition of feminism Lady Gaga carries around under that platinum wig.

I've always thought feminism simply came down to two principles: equality and choice. Women's right to have the same social and economic opportunities as men and the choice to take those opportunities – or not. Is that so bad? So controversial? Something to be shunned or rebelled against?

I don't remember receiving the memo that said feminism precluded you from cooking a meal or having sex or loving beer or men or doing all those things at once if you want to.

Lady Gaga is not the first strong, successful pop star to say or sing some perplexingly retro things.

A few years ago, Destiny's Child released a song called Cater 2 U and Beyonce sang:

"My life would be purposeless without you....Do anything for my man.....I got your slippers, your dinner, your dessert and so much more.....anything you want just let me cater to you....I want to give you my breath, my strength...that's the least I can do.."

The song continues with Beyonce and her girls solemnly promising their men:

"I'll keep it tight, I'll keep my figure right, I'll keep my hair fixed...when you come home late, tap me on my shoulder, I'll roll over, baby I'm here to serve you."

When this song was released, I remember feeling confused. Slippers? Roll over? Serve you? Are we talking about a woman or a Labrador? And is this the same band who sang "I'm a Survivor" and "Independent Woman" because I have a bit of whiplash. Put down your microphones and pass me a neck brace, will you.

And so it is with Lady Gaga. Yet another independent woman rhapsodising about the joys of being subservient and powerless.



Is this the depressing new face of feminism? Is it empowering to fetch someone their slippers and lose weight for them and provide sex on demand? (frankly, I don't really want to have sex with anyone who wears slippers, I'm just saying...) Is that called girl-power?

Or has the role of domestic goddess become an ironic choice for a generation of women to whom the idea of ACTUALLY defining themselves by the way they pander to their men is absurd enough to be amusing?

Perhaps we've moved so far from our great grandmothers that we've romanticised what their lives were like when they had no choice but to fetch slippers. I wonder if they found it empowering.

I think the word feminism is a lot like the term politically correct. Both have been hijacked by the far right as a way to discredit very mainstream ideas about equality, fairness and common decency.

'Empowerment' sounds like so much more fun, doesn't it? If only it wasn't so often used to justify the desire of some women to swing around poles, get boob jobs or have threesomes. Nothing wrong with any of those things if they float your boat but they don't exactly help other women in a big picture way, do they? Not in the same way less sexy issues like maternity leave do.

As journalist Emma Young wrote recently:

"Feminism is associated with a dour and comprehensive agenda of concerns. There is negotiation of fair salaries, the tragically unequal status of women in less-developed nations, reproductive rights, the trafficking of women for sex work ... and the list continues."

And it WILL continue while women keep declaring themselves empowered each time they take their clothes off for a men's magazine or have cosmetic surgery. By all means get your boobs out but remember to care about the other stuff too. And don't be afraid to use the F-word.

*Mia Freedman*

[www.mamamia.com.au](http://www.mamamia.com.au)

*Book: Mamamia: A memoir of mistakes, magazines and motherhood*

---

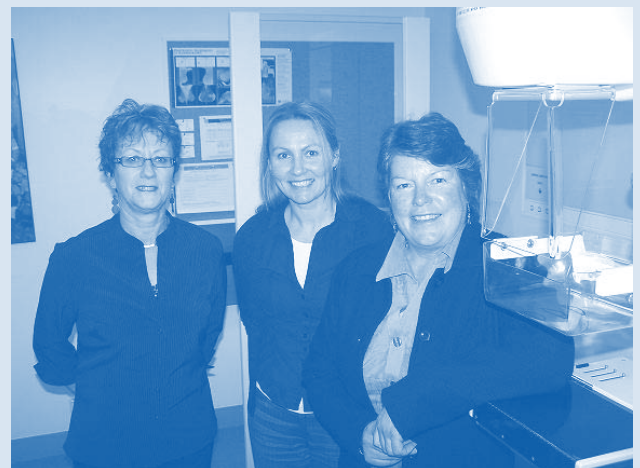
## *Introducing Carol Stewart*

Carol Stewart's role as part-time Health Promotion Officer at Portland District Health began in March 2010 incorporating Women's Health, BreastScreen Information Officer and Oral Health.

Originally from Melbourne Carol has lived in Portland for over 20 years, enjoying the relaxed country lifestyle with her husband while raising two children.

Carol holds a degree in Nutrition, a Graduate Diploma in Health Education and brings a broad range of community and health project skills to the position.

"As the Women's Health Resource Worker, I will be maintaining the profile of Women's Health as an important issue within the Glenelg Shire", Carol said.



*Carol (centre) at radiography with the Chief Radiographer and Breast cancer survivor*

# Where have all the strong women gone?

It would seem that it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide strong positive female role models for girls and young women who are growing up in a world where as women we are told we can have it all.

Enter the Twilight saga, written by a woman, with a central female protagonist and largely aimed at young women. Chances are if you know a teenage girl you've heard about Twilight. Perhaps you've read the books or seen one or two of the movies? Many women in their 20s – 50s also seem to be embracing the Twilight phenomenon as it allows them to escape daily life and become absorbed into a world of fantasy. While it can be fun to indulge in a little fiction we must look a bit deeper into the content of novels and movies such as those in the Twilight saga and think about the kinds of messages they are sending to our girls. We also need to remember that while it may be easy for us as adults to see the absolute fantasy of stories like the Twilight saga they can have a very different impact on young women who are still developing their ideas about relationships and the world.

So what exactly is wrong with Twilight? Well, put simply it portrays a strict adherence to rigid gender roles – a world where women are weak, passive, dependant and in need of a man, while men are strong, independent protectors of women (Sax 2008).

Mother of four Tanya has read a few of the books, seen one of the movies and is not impressed. She sees Bella as a character who places no value on her life outside of her relationship with Edward. Tanya points out that Bella's goals are always subjugated to Edwards and that throughout two entire books there is not one reference to Bella having any skill, interest or talent outside her relationship with Edward. Further Tanya sees Bella as being extremely submissive and overly accepting of the clear "role" of the males in the book to protect her.

Others have critiqued the books and movie for its portrayal of a clearly unhealthy relationship and the "stalker" like behavior of Edward, the vampire for which Bella is prepared to give everything, including her mortality (Clark 2009, Lewinski 2009, Walter 2009). Below is an excerpt from the fourth book in the series, Breaking Dawn where Bella after having sex

with Edward observes her bruised and battered body. This perhaps illustrates some of the cause for concern.

"I stared at my naked body in the full-length mirror ... There was a faint shadow across one of my cheekbones, and my lips were a little swollen, but other than that, my face was fine. The rest of me was decorated with patches of blue and purple ... Of course, these were just developing. I'd look even worse tomorrow (Meyer 2008)."

But surely the books and movies are just pure fiction and wouldn't actually be taken serious, right? A brief look at comments on one of the many Twilight fan sites would suggest otherwise. Young female readers write extensively about identifying with Bella, her feelings and actions. Many posts talk about being "in love" with Edward and hoping that the author will find a man like Edward. The romance of the stories and Edwards stereotypical attributes (being tall, hot and cool) alongside what is seen by readers as his "protection" of Bella feature in posts about why their authors love both Edward and the Twilight saga. It is not uncommon to find posts where writers refer to themselves as obsessed or "in love" and believing that the Twilight books or movies have changed their lives. Some of these writers appear to be in quite vulnerable positions themselves, writing posts about using Twilight to escape from the pain and suffering in their own lives.

So the question is what can be done about it? And how do we as women negate the influences of a story like the Twilight saga on the girls and young women in our lives?

The exposure of girls and young women to these stories is going to occur whether we like it or not. Where we can play a part is in taking an interest and making the effort to engage the girls and young women in our lives in conversations around the more problematic aspects of these stories. We can encourage critical thinking by asking questions such as "Can you see anything wrong with the way the characters behave?" or "What would you think if Bella was one of your friends and this



happened to her?." This ability to think critically about the things that are presented to us is essential for girls and young women in making their way through a world which often presents us with "stories" that portray rigid and unhelpful gender stereotypes.

Sarah mother of two girls enjoys the fantasy in Twilight and being able to reflect back on her own adolescence. Despite her own enjoyment of the Twilight saga she wouldn't encourage her daughters (aged 6 and 9) to read the series until she feels they are able to articulate and discuss why people may be concerned that the relationship between Bella and Edward is not a healthy one. Sarah would like to be able to explore these issues with her daughters and ask questions such as "why do you think people are concerned that Bella is so dependant on Edward?"

Perhaps the most important message for us as women is that supporting girls to grow into strong, independent, healthy women goes far beyond negating the influences of stories such as Twilight. The reality is it begins with adult women and the kind of role models we provide. While growing up in a world of increasing technology that often presents undesirable role models can be difficult, what really matters is that we present an alternate model of womanhood and form supportive relationships with the young women around us. While there may be a lack of strong positive women role models within stories and the media, there are certainly plenty of real women who can have a positive impact on the lives of girls and young women.

For more information on the Twilight saga you can visit the official website of the writer: <http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/twilight.html> or the website for the latest movie "Eclipse" <http://www.eclipsethemovie.com/>

Clark, K. 2009, 'Twilight's Bella Swan is a Feminist's Nightmare', 11 November 2009, accessed via internet: <http://screenrave.com/2009-11-11/twilights-bella-swan-is-a-feminists-nightmare/> 12/7/10

Lewinski, J. 2009, 'Top twenty unfortunate lessons girls learn from "twilight"', 25 November 2009, accessed via internet: <http://www.bspcn.com/2009/11/25/top-20-unfortunate-lessons-girls-learn-from-twilight/> 12/7/10

Meyer, S. 2008, 'Breaking dawn', Little Brown and Company, US.

Sax, L 2008, 'Twilight sinks its teeth into feminism,' Washington Post, 17th August 2008, accessed via internet: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/15/AR2008081503099.html> 12/7/10

Walter, N. 2009, 'Why is there so much movie violence against women?', The Guardian, 3 June 2010, accessed via internet: <http://www.ippf.org/NR/exeres/2C65B8E2-0C35-4D87-8161-B6674908511A.htm> 12/7/10

Photo © NASA

## *Introducing Sue Watt*

I have a back ground in health as a registered nurse and midwife, working in a metropolitan birth centre for many years. This developed an interest in community health and preventative health strategies.

I have been working as a community health nurse in women's health in Hamilton and providing services for surrounding areas for the last seven years. Moving away from the acute setting to working in the community with women from all ages providing opportunities to focus on maintaining and restoring health and wellbeing



# Bare Branches

**BY THE THIRD DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY THERE WILL BE 29-33 MILLION YOUNG SURPLUS MALES IN CHINA. THESE YOUNG BACHELORS ARE CALLED: 'BARE BRANCHES'**

My bare branches reach out across the night sky like a silver mountain range on black horizons. The night is clear and the stars look like dripping jewels. I imagine these stars dripping with the wisdom of ancestors, with lost forests and blown away leaves....over 200 million... leaves caught in gusts of wind and swirled like green confetti:

Up

Across

Away

I stand, ghost like, bare, but not alone. My hollows are murmuring with the breathing of lorikeets and cockatoos, wild bees and ringtail possums. SShh, you have to be quiet, listen... "in and out, in and out, in in, out, in, in and out"

A sugar glider lands with silent wings; its belly is full of nectar. Magpies respond in a mist of soft warbles. They are dreaming. Multicoloured beetles' abseil down my trunk to turn the soil, they are shy and work well in darkness.

Ants... thousands march with the rhythm of silent drums like black moving threads up and down my trunk. They work as if it is already too late.

Under the night I weep sapless tears for 200 million leaves: My leaves and Yours.

**THE UNITED NATIONS ESTIMATES THAT UP TO 200 MILLION GIRLS ARE DEMIGRAPHICALLY MISSING, LARGELY ATTRIBUTED TO SEX SELECTED ABORTIONS AND FEMALE INFANTICIDE**

I feel the soft warmth of dawn melt the sharp edges from my worries and little ants it can't be too late. March to the east and embrace the kaleidoscope of colours. Listen to the wakening wings of honey eaters and bees as they set off in mutual harmony across the Banksia filled paddocks. Look there; see the wild bees brushing their front legs against yellow flowering cones as they bathe in the sweet scent of nectar: They are in love and are preparing themselves for illicit encounters with their Queen. Hear the honeyeaters shrill as they clear their throats. In paired harmony they flitter from one stigma then another. Those cockatoos, over there, are cracking open cone pods. Block your ears... now...in readiness for their squawks. They love the sticky seeds coated in larvae.

**UNLESS THAT DAUGHTER IN UTERO HAS VALUE, SHE IS NOT GOING TO BE BORN. THE BRANCHES OF THE FAMILY TREE WILL NEVER BEAR FRUIT BECAUSE THE GIRLS WHO SHOULD HAVE GROWN UP TO BE THEIR WIVES WERE INSTEAD DISPOSED OF**

So little ants march with pride toward the east, weave your way through the continuous tracts of Banksia that flower in their millions right up to the horizon. Squint across the yellow coned flowers glistening in the sunlight. For these flowers are yours, the beetles and the possums the native rats and birds, gliders and bees. It is too late for ME, I stand a seedless sentinel. But you, you carry the spirit of inclusion in your souls. In your wisdom you have set goals you have learnt to work in harmony.

Each important

Each unbiased

I can only stand and listen to the wisdom of ancestors and my bare branches can only weep sapless tears.

Christine E Smith, Pennyroyal  
Image © freefoto.com



# The Geelong Trades Hall Women's Unionist Network: Advocating for Equity in the Workplace

It is difficult to believe that many of the issues affecting working women are still a long way from becoming reality. However, the past few months have seen a number of key issues rise to the top of the political agenda. The Paid Parental Leave Scheme was passed by both houses of Federal Parliament recently. This campaign, which has lasted 30 years, will now bring Australia in line with other countries across the world that have had this benefit for years. The Pay Equity Campaign, driven by the Australian Services Union is of great significance. The ASU and the Federal Government have reached an agreement which will see the social and community services sector as the test case for pay equity in the new Federal Industrial Relations system.

This agreement would provide unprecedented opportunity to argue for significant pay increases based on pay equity principals to flow to social and community sector workers. The pay equity case will seek pay rises based on pay equity and work value to support worker retention and address a chronic shortage in the sector by delivering substantial pay rises for the predominately female workforce. There are a number of hurdles in relation to the pay equity case. Firstly, the pay equity case must be won. Secondly, State and Federal Governments must fund the outcome.

The Victorian State Government has recently announced that it will fund the outcome of the pay equity case; this is a great win for working women in Victoria. There is yet to be an official announcement from the Federal Government.

The Geelong Trades Hall Women Unionists Network launched a campaign to have a clause for domestic violence leave to be included in workplace agreements for workers who experience domestic violence. Workers should be given a period of leave with pay and other relevant conditions, rather than use up their sick leave and annual leave as many are currently forced to do. Domestic violence is a serious community issue and a clause such as this is a positive response to the issue of domestic violence

Some Australian Services Union members have taken up these issues and have begun putting a domestic violence clause on the table at workplace negotiations in the Geelong region. We commend the ASU and its members for their initiative in moving this issue forward. If the ASU members are successful in having this clause included in an Agreement, it will be a first".

It is imperative that we continue to campaign to address the inequity faced by women everyday and to fight to leave a legacy for future generations of women.

Christine Couzens  
Vice President Geelong Trades Hall  
and Convenor Women Unionists Network

# *A Feminist Service At Work: Zena Women's Services*

Zena Women's Services Inc (ZWS) is based in the Geelong area and provides information and support to women and their dependent children, who have experienced domestic/family violence. The service also provides high security refuge accommodation to women assessed as being at high risk of further harm.

Zena has been delivering support services for over 25 years. Zena was formed through a merger between two programs; Morgana Women's Group which was established in 1985 to provide a safe refuge for women and children and the Barwon Domestic Violence Outreach Service which formed in 1991 to deliver outreach programs.

The name 'Zena' was chosen at the time of amalgamation from one of the many marginalised languages spoken in Australia and means 'women'. The merger created a new identity and combined the resources and practice wisdom of both programs. Zena, like its predecessor organisations, operated as a collective until 2008. While ZWS changed its governance structure, its focus and practice base remained firmly planted in feminist ideology.

Zena works from a feminist philosophy and is run by women solely for women and their children who have experienced or are experiencing or escaping domestic/family violence. Our focus remains on the rights of women and children to live free and safe from violence and abuse.

Zena Women's Services Inc. supports the right of all women and children to live without fear of violence and/or oppression. The organisation recognises that domestic/family violence is predominately perpetrated by men against women and children and condoned by social and political structures and community attitudes.

Our vision is: that women and children will live their lives free of the fear of domestic/family violence. Our mission supports our vision, which is: to work from a feminist perspective to support and promote the right of all women and children to live free from violence and abuse.

ZWS continues to provide information and support to women and their dependant children who have experienced domestic/family violence. ZWS continues to educate the wider community on the effects of violence and abuse on women and children and we still strive for change in community attitudes that allows violence to go unseen and unchallenged. In short, we provide a voice to women and children who have been silenced through acts of gender based violence that society still accepts as "just another domestic".

Zena Women's Services can be contacted on 5224 2903.

If you are being abused by a partner or family member you can contact Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (24hours) 1800 015 188

Other services you can contact:

Colac Area Health Family Violence Counsellor: 52325180

Emma House Warrnambool: 5561 1934

Hamilton: 5571 1778

Portland 5521 7937

# Research Project – Call for Participants

## Managing the Female Body: using female genital cosmetic surgery to fashion appropriate femininity

My name is Lindy McDougall and I am doing a PhD in Anthropology at Macquarie University, Sydney. I am interested in current debates around female genital alterations. The incidence of female genital cosmetic surgery, particularly labiaplasty, is rising worldwide and this surgery has attracted considerable attention in the popular press even though the number of women choosing surgery is small.

This study seeks to explore the reasons why some women are prepared to have cosmetic surgery on their genitals and discover what they consider to be the benefits of surgery. The research aims to understand how genital surgery is used by women to make them feel more 'normal' or less anxious about their genital appearance or, perhaps, to enhance their sexual appeal. I hope to hear from women at different stages of their reproductive lives in order to find out why some women decide that having genital surgery is the best option for them. The research seeks to understand how surgery is used by women to help them 'fit in' to their particular social worlds and also ensure that

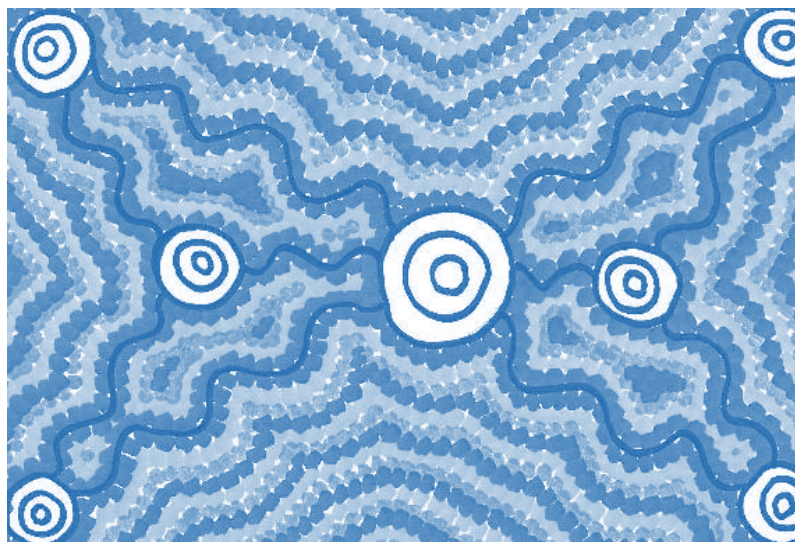
medical intervention in women's bodies remains open to public discussion. While the views of surgeons on these procedures are not difficult to obtain, the voices of women are missing in much of the academic literature with regard to female genital cosmetic surgery. Therefore,

**I am seeking women who have had, or are considering female genital cosmetic surgery to join the study. If you would be willing to be contacted for a telephone or in-person interview (or complete a questionnaire) about your experience of surgery, please contact:**

Lindy McDougall 0409 521481, (02) 9850 8040 or [lindy.mcdougall@mq.edu.au](mailto:lindy.mcdougall@mq.edu.au)

*If you agree to be interviewed or complete the questionnaire, the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not appear in any publication of the results. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to know more about the research.*

Below is an image from our postcard project which asked women to share their experiences of and feeling around inequality.



**BE STRONG**  
Warrnambool/Moyne

# Local Projects from Greater Geelong, Queenscliff & Surfcoast

## Postcards for Equality

Currently the Women's Health resource workers are working on a very exciting project called "Postcards for Equality". We have distributed 500 postcards to women in across the region and asked them to illustrate the postcards with their experiences of inequality. So far there have been a number of creative cards with very powerful messages received. We hope to share these with women across the region in the near future and use the cards as a vehicle for conversation around women and equality.

## Update on the G21 Freedom from Violence Action Group

The Freedom from Violence Action Group is working on the prevention of violence against women in in Geelong, Queenscliffe, Surfcoast, Golden Plains and Colac. The group have agreed to a Terms of Reference and developed an action plan. This year the group will host a Stop Violence Against Women: Month of Action running from Reclaim the Night on the 29th of March where the month will be launched until White Ribbon Day on the 25th of November. Organisations and groups are being asked to contribute a preventative activity to a month of action calendar which will be distributed prior to the month. Activities for this end of the region so far include a Sisters Day hosted by Zena Collective and a white ribbon day activity which will be organised by local men. Any groups, organisations or individuals interested in being part of the action group or month of action can contact me for further information.

## Reclaim the Night Collective

This year Reclaim the Night Collective are hosting a series of workshops and events collectively entitled "Reclaim Our Power, Respect Our Voice." We will shortly commence work with a number of women to create 2 songs based around respect, relationships and gender. In September we will be inviting all women to come together in a women's choir to learn these two songs and finally perform them at an event on Friday 29th of October to an audience of 200 plus women, children and men. If you would like to be involved with any of this process please contact me for further information.



*Jess Boccia*

A choir of 70 women sang last year at the "Reclaim Our Voice" Event. The event itself was a great success with around 300 women, children and men present. Join us this year as we sing songs created by women from our region. Send an email to [rtngeelong@gmail.com](mailto:rtngeelong@gmail.com) to register your interest and we will keep you posted with what is happening.

Look us up on [facebook](#) and become a friend –  
Reclaimthenight Geelong  
OR [myspace](#)  
[www.myspace.com/reclaimthenightcollective](http://www.myspace.com/reclaimthenightcollective)

## *Local Projects from Warrnambool & Moyne*

Since the last Wholewoman newsletter edition Noelle, Jess and I have been fortunate enough to attend and participate in the 6th Australian Women's Health Conference held in picturesque Hobart during May which was an inspiring and enriching experience. The conference included a plethora of women's health information, research and discussion presented by amazing women from around the country as well as some international speakers. Some of the topics ranged from political advocacy, violence prevention and local government led activity to sexual and reproductive health, feminism, disability rights, and very strong and influential contributions from Aboriginal women, across the conference program. The Resource Workers together presented on the BSW regional women's health model, some of the challenges, and the creative ways we have overcome them. We highlighted 'Morphed', the Gender and Diversity training and 'Postcards for Equality' as innovative projects.

A personal highlight for me was the arts program which included a conference choir, providing first hand evidence of how powerful community singing can be to uplift and socially connect women. There was also the 'Knitting Room', a "magnificent life-size walk through display reminiscent of a 1950's home" created from wool by Tasmanian nursing home residents, community members and groups using knitting, stitch and crochet. As an avid crochet fan, this project really resonated with me – it was one of the inspirations behind the local Panmure 'Hole Big Yarn' project (see [www.rav.net.au/projects](http://www.rav.net.au/projects)) so great to see first hand.

The Gender and Diversity training continues to roll on with local government and health service organisations participating in increasing numbers. The training has also been strengthened through continuous monitoring and evaluation and we have appreciated Jess' input, bringing fresh vision and ideas. The Gender and Diversity training is a unique program that has been developed by the BSW Women's Health Resource Workers over the past decade; it has evolved from a workbook written by Sue Dyson in 2001. The training challenges participants to identify and examine sex based as well as other types of discrimination, as it occurs in the institutions that influence our lives. These establishments include schools, the media, families, governments, the law and health and community services. Noelle and I have delivered training to over 60 participants so far this year, to South West Healthcare staff in Warrnambool, Macarthur and Camperdown, to

Darebin Council in Melbourne and Corangamite Shire Council staff. We aim to have the training formally evaluated and move towards accreditation, and also to train more facilitators across the region.

Initiated by the Integrated Family Violence Schools Project, another exciting training opportunity that I have been involved in, is contributing to the development and delivery of gender-based violence prevention education to BSW school nurses. Madeleine Kempster and I presented on the history and foundations of violence prevention and why schools are such an important setting for work aimed at changing the attitudes and beliefs that enable violence against women to occur with such frequency. There are a number of resources that can support schools to promote healthy relationships and non-violent norms, here are just a couple:

- Be the Hero! a violence prevention program designed for use in groups of young men. <http://www.bethehero.com.au/>
- Partners in Prevention: a Victorian network for schools and other practitioners involved in violence prevention activities <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/pip/>
- Love Controls, a ground breaking short film created by Women's Health in the North. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP\\_MuGJIAjA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP_MuGJIAjA)

The Women's Action Collective is planning a Reclaim The Night with a difference this year. In an event symbolising a return to the origins of RTN marches which asserted women's right to be safe and free to be in public spaces at any time of the day or night, we plan to host a Womyn's taxi rank late at night on Saturday 30 October. This activity has arisen from anecdotal reports that many women don't feel safe to go out at night in Warrnambool. Although we know that statistically women are far more likely to be physically or sexually abused in their own homes, being fearful of attack in public at night limits women's right to live free from fear of violence in their community. A shift in consciousness is needed to ensure violent men are held accountable for their behavior, rather than women victims being blamed for putting themselves in 'dangerous' situations.

*Rochelle Hine*

## *Local Projects from Colac and Corangamite Shires*

Attending and presenting at the 6th Australian Women's Health Conference in Hobart was one of the highlights of the past few months. The Conference Program was diverse, with a broad range of interesting key note speakers and a plethora of concurrent workshops and presentation sessions. There were many that stood out including a keynote address from Marsha Saxton, Senior Research and Policy Analyst, World Institute of Disability, USA, who began by asking us to imagine that the chair we were sitting in had wheels and that we couldn't move without it. She then asked us to imagine how we would get in and out of our homes, hotel rooms, showers, toilets, workplaces, cars and public transport, providing us with a brief insight into the barriers and difficulties people with physical/movement impairment face on a daily basis. Martha is a great advocate for women's empowerment and leadership and much of her presentation focused on this. She also raised concern about current medical procedures to determine the 'viability' of a fetus and the pressure placed on women to terminate when any 'abnormality' is found, and the ethical dilemma this creates for parents in a world that fundamentally misunderstands the nature of disability. This was particularly salient as Marsha has cerebral palsy.



Another highlight of the conference was a keynote address from Elaine Lomas, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organization (NACCHO) Canberra, about their collaboration with the Australian Women's Health Network (AWHN) on the development of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Health Strategy and Talking Circle. Elaine had a fantastic sense of humour, in fact the first part of her address was as funny as the entertainment provided by stand-up comedian Nelly Thomas.

Donna Stewart, Chair of Women's Health, University of Toronto, Canada, spoke about a strengths based focus on resilience in mental health. She described resilience as "the ability to withstand adversity in its many forms and maintain or regain mental

health". While women tend to be more resilient than men, according to the latest research, resilience is something that can be learned and promoted across populations. For more detail on the range of Conference Presentations go to [www.awhn.org.au](http://www.awhn.org.au) and click on the Conference link.

The further development of the Gender and Diversity Training Curriculum, its delivery and evaluation, is occupying much attention presently. Feedback from participants indicates that the training is highly useful for unpacking concepts of gender and sex, equity and equality and providing organizations with an opportunity to review their current policy and practice with a gender and equity lens, thus identifying opportunities for promoting more equitable and inclusive work environments. Each leaf in the picture (right) represents one of the many ideas that participants from Darebin Council came up with to promote gender equality and inclusion during the Gender and Diversity 'Change Tree Exercise'.



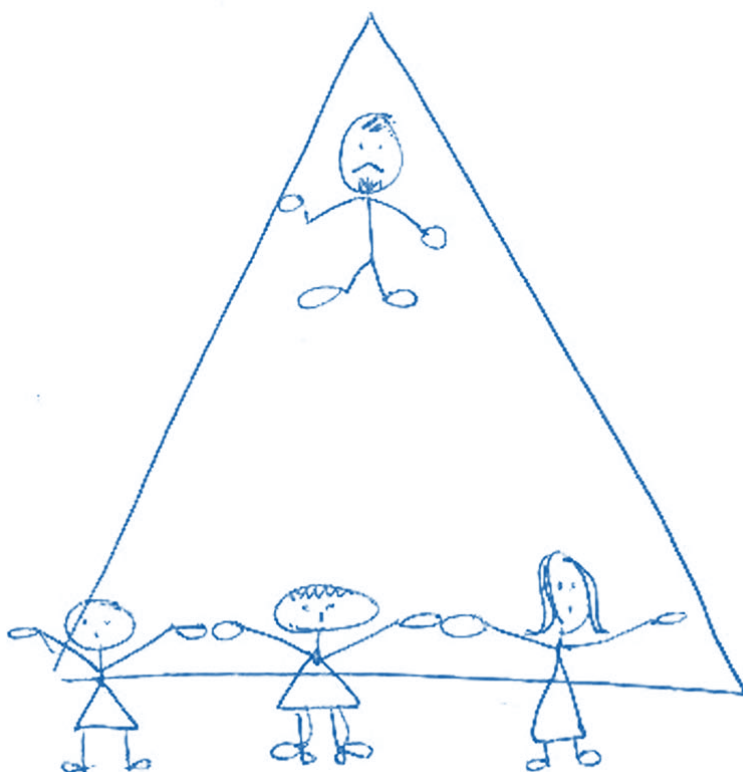
The Colac Otway Women's Healing Circle continues to be a source of inspiration, education, healing and connection for diverse women from across the district who meet on the fourth Wednesday of every month at (CNH) Colac Neighbourhood House. The circle is an inclusive place for women of all ages to share stories, skills, experience, and visioning. The next Circle will be a Full Moon Meditation Night on August 25 in the Botanical Gardens – weather permitting. For more info, contact Julie, Jenny or Noelle on 52325140 or just come along to the CNH House.

I recently attended the Vic Health Short course for preventing violence against women hosted by G21 in Geelong. This provided workers from a range of sectors including local government, health, community services and education with an opportunity to become familiar with Vic Health's "Framework for Action" to prevent violence against women and the broader determinants that contribute to it, including gender inequality and attitudes that support and reinforce rigid gender and social norms. For more info on the framework go to [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au)

Much of our women's health promotion work is focused on addressing this serious health and human rights issue. Forums for doing so that I am currently involved in include: G21 Freedom From Violence Action Group; BSW Integrated Family Violence Alliance; Heart of Corangamite -Respectful Relationship Working Group; Colac Area Health Family Violence Prevention Taskforce and supporting Local Government and other non-traditional partners to take a leadership role in the Prevention of Violence Against Women. See [www.lgpvaw.net.au](http://www.lgpvaw.net.au) for examples of this work across the state. Colac and District Rotary will host a White Ribbon Day Event on 23 November in Colac, to and raise community awareness about the health and social impacts of violence against women and sign a community pledge to 'not commit, condone or keep silent about' violence against women.

*Noelle Taylor*

*Our postcard project asked women to share their experiences of and feeling around inequality. This image is one of the postcards we have received so far.*



Men held "on top of the pile" in work as well as socially. Yet women seem to be the ones at "the face" working hard, juggling jobs and keeping the men supported in what they do.

Colac/Otway, Corangamite

# Local Projects from Glenelg and Southern Grampians

## Sister's Day Out

Recently I attended the 'Sister's Day Out' event in Heywood, run by The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria). At these events, indigenous women are pampered with hair and make-up makeovers, massages and manicures while they receive important messages around Family Violence.

These well-being workshops for young Koori women have gained widespread support from Victorian Aboriginal communities and are run regularly throughout Victoria.

The cultural aspects of the Sisters Day Out workshops are integral to strengthening the role Koori women have in relation to the family and community. The workshops build on self-esteem and identity, which reinforce women's entitlement to feel safe and secure in their roles as nurturers and leaders in the community.

Sue Watt (Southern Grampians Women's Health Resource Worker) and I were two of many service providers invited to promote our service and increase access of health information to indigenous women. The relaxed atmosphere made it easier for women to seek information about their health or book into long overdue mammogram and / or pap smear. The day was also a great opportunity to network with other health professionals.

## Jean Hailes Foundation Community Webcast

Dhauwurd-Wurrung Elderly Community Health (DWECH) will be hosting a Community webcast entitled Making your 40's Fabulous, on 1 September. The event will bring together local Indigenous and Non-Indigenous women in a supportive and social setting whilst having access to relevant, reliable and researched information.

The webcast enables local women to listen to women's health experts discussing issues that affect them in their 40's including: reproductive and hormonal changes, libido, contraception, sleep, emotional well-being and the importance of maintaining your health for the future. Presenters include Dr John D'Arcy, Dr Rosie King and Dr Elizabeth Farrell and there will be other activities to ensure a fun filled session of entertainment.

## Do you need a Guest Speaker

Portland District Health welcomes invitations from clubs and groups interested in women's health guest speakers. Ring 5522 1180 to find out more information on our active, fun presentations.

## BreastScreen Victoria

BreastScreen is a free breast cancer screening program for women. While screenings are primarily recommended for women age 50 to 69, women in the 40's and over 70 are still at risk of breast cancer and are

welcome to have a free breast screening mammogram with BreastScreen Victoria every two years.

There is a screening site at Portland and bookings for the Tuesday or Thursday morning sessions can be made by calling 13 20 50. No doctor's referral is required. At the appointment, a female radiographer takes two x-rays of each breast with each only taking a few seconds. The procedure is not painful and the radiographer is trained to make the experience as comfortable as possible for the woman.

The service is for 'well women' and BreastScreen Victoria encourages any woman who thinks she may have noticed an unusual change in their breast to visit her doctor as soon as possible, before making an appointment at BreastScreen Victoria.

Less than 1% of women who attend BreastScreen Victoria are found to have breast cancer. In 2009, there were 909 women screened in Portland and 6 malignant cancers were found.

## Diet No More

Within the Southern Grampians an excellent evening was held "Diet no more" strategies to free yourself from dieting. Over 60 women attended and heard about mindful eating, healthy diets and how to free yourself from the merry go round of dieting.

## Southern Grampians Women's Sport's Association

We were also able to support the annual general meeting of Southern Grampians women's sports association with a guest speaker on women's health raising the awareness on the importance of screening services and looking after themselves.

Within Barwon South west region of Victoria the number of women who undergo regular pap smears is only 62% and for BreastScreen only 65%. Unlike men who experience more fatal injuries and diseases, women experience a higher prevalence and incidence of non-fatal health problems, resulting in higher rates of disability burden for women. This means although women live longer, often more of their lives are lived with ill-health and disability (DHS 2005). There must be commitments from individuals and services to improve women's health status as well as improving environmental, social and economic outcomes for women.

A 10 point plan has been developed by Victorian Women's Health Services for Victorian Women's Health 2010-2014 [http://whv.org.au/static/files/assets/a258ddb9/10\\_point\\_plan\\_2010-14.pdf](http://whv.org.au/static/files/assets/a258ddb9/10_point_plan_2010-14.pdf) which includes strategies for moving forward.

*Carol Stewart and Sue Watt*

## Invitation to contribute

All comments, ideas, articles and profiles of outstanding women can be sent to any one of our team

Following are our contact details:

### Women's Health Resource Workers

**Jess Boccia:** Greater Geelong, Queenscliff and Surfcoast (Area 1)

Barwon Health Population Health Unit

Level 2, Kitchener House, Geelong

**Email:** Jess.Boccia@BarwonHealth.org.au

**Telephone:** 5260 3719      **Fax:** 5260 3780

**Noelle Taylor:** Colac Otway and Corangamite (Area 2)

Colac Area Health

2-28 Connor Street, Colac

**Email:** nmtaylor@swarh.vic.gov.au

**Telephone:** 5232 5147      **Fax:** 5232 5190

**Rochelle Hine:** Warrnambool and Moyne (Area 3)

South West Community Health Centre

279 Koroit St, Warrnambool

**Email:** rhine@swh.net.au

**Telephone:** 5564 4193      **Fax:** 5563 1561

**Sue Watt - Southern Grampians**

South West District Health

2 Roberts Street, Hamilton

**Email:** susan.watt@wdhs.net

**Telephone:** 5551 8450

**Carol Stewart - Glenelg**

Portland District Health

33 Otway Street, Portland

**Email:** cstewart.pdh@swarh.vic.gov.au

**Telephone:** 5522 1180      **Fax:** 5523 5130

## WHOLEWOMAN NEWS

Our next edition will be a calendar celebrating achievements of the service to date.

### EDITORIAL POLICY

The newsletter focuses on issues and events of relevance to women's health and wellbeing. Contributions need to reflect the empowerment emphasis of the Women's Health Program.

### DISCLAIMER

No responsibility is taken for the information found in this publication, which is adapted from material sent from a variety of contributors. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Resource Workers or the Barwon South Western Regional Women's Health Reference Group.

## Subscription Information

Name: .....

Position title: .....

Organisation: .....

Address: .....

.....

Tel:..... Mob:.....

Email:.....

I would like to receive the Newsletter

**Please send this form to:**

**Administrative Secretary  
Barwon-South Western Regional  
Women's Health  
2-28 Connor Street  
COLAC VIC 3250**

**or email details to:  
newsletter@wholewoman.org.au**