



# Trust Women

Spring 2008

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Women - Third Forum -  
Keeping the Faith

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Level 1

388 Bourke Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000  
T: (03) 9642 0422  
F: (03) 9642 0016  
women@vwt.org.au  
www.vwt.org.au

The Victorian Women's Trust  
is inspired by the vision of a  
just and humane society in  
which women enjoy full  
participation as citizens.

Come to our third forum: *Dangerous and  
Persuasive Women: Centenary of Suffrage in  
Victoria 1908-2008 -*

## 'KEEPING THE FAITH'

**WHEN:** 29 November 2008

**WHERE:** BMW Edge Theatre, Federation Square

**TIME:** 2pm for 2:30 start

**ADMISSION: FREE!**

**B**ook now to reserve your seat for the Trust's third free forum celebrating 100 years of Victorian women's right to vote. The final forum, 'Keeping the Faith', looks at the challenges ahead from the perspectives of today's younger generation of feminists, including the YWCA's world president Susan Brennan (more speakers to be announced soon, stay tuned via [www.vwt.org.au](http://www.vwt.org.au)).

The second forum, held in June, provided a unique and entertaining oral and visual presentation - a journey across the century detailing how Australian women have done politics not only differently, but also very successfully. Drawing

on the works of significant feminist historians and the Women's Trust's own research, a unique, first-time and compelling public narrative was delivered, co-presented by radio presenter and journalist Angela Pippas, comedian and entertainer Tracy Bartram, social historian Adjunct Professor Judith Smart and Women's Trust Executive Director Mary Crooks.

The Trust's first and second forums were terrific successes - so make sure you don't miss out on this final instalment.

Book now - phone the Trust on 9642 0422 or email [women@vwt.org.au](mailto:women@vwt.org.au) to reserve your seat.

From left to right:  
Angela Pippas,  
Professor Judith  
Smart, VWT's Mary  
Crooks and Dur-e  
Dara, Tracy  
Bartram and  
Maxine Morand



"We have come a long way. There's a long way to go. I am pleased to report there is very much a bipartisan approach to abortion law reform. In terms of domestic violence reform, again, there is a huge effort on the part of the Government in addressing this issue that is still all too prevalent in today's community. One of the things that I'm very proud to have voted on, in my first term in parliament, is on removing the defence of provocation for homicide."

*Minister for Women's Affairs Maxine Morand, in closing the Trust's second forum.*

## WANT TO CELEBRATE IN A VERY SPECIAL WAY THE CENTENARY OF VICTORIAN WOMEN GAINING THE VOTE IN 1908?

## THE VICTORIAN WOMEN'S TRUST HAS COMMISSIONED KAVISHA MAZZELLA TO COMPOSE A WOMEN'S ANTHEM



*Kavisha Mazzella*

The anthem will be sung publicly for the first time on Saturday afternoon, 29 November at the BMW Edge Theatre, Federation Square, as part of the Trust's final suffrage forum.

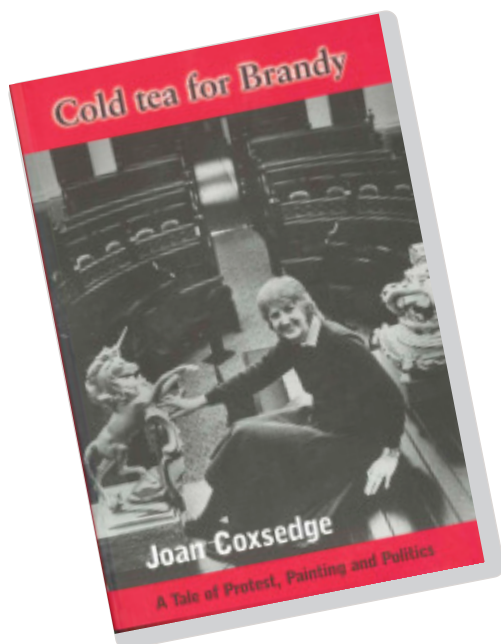
The Trust is calling for 300 Victorian women to be part of this first public performance of the anthem.

There will be four afternoon practice sessions at the Northcote Town Hall on 26 October, 2 November, 9 November and 23 November.

A practice CD will be available beforehand. Kavisha will also have a group session with choir leaders interested in teaching regional women the anthem so that they can also be part of the first public performance.

For further details and all other inquiries, email [mary@vwt.org.au](mailto:mary@vwt.org.au) or phone the Trust on (03) 9642 0422.

## COLD TEA FOR BRANDY- JOAN COXSEGE



*Joan Coxsege is a remarkable woman who has kept the faith over the years, travelled the world and inspired people who know her with the same commitment that she herself has always expressed so powerfully. Although the social democratic parties everywhere have ended up as the most powerful advocates of capitalism, she has helped us to understand that socialist ideas still have more to offer and that if you want them to prosper, you have to work at it.*

Tony Benn

*Joan Coxsege is one of the reasons for keeping faith in an Australia uncontaminated by reactionary politics and a supine media. Her autobiography is a wonderful read: a reflection of the struggles of that side of our society, young and old, that has kept its rage up and of which we all ought to be proud. I salute her.*

John Pilger

Joan's book is available through all good bookstores.

## POLICY WRAP-UP

The Trust has been busy on the policy front of late, lodging submissions to government reviews and being advocates on women's policy.

Submissions have been made to the Office For Women's National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children, the Productivity Commission's Review into Paid Maternity Leave and the Federal Government's Green paper on homelessness.

To help write the Trust's submission to the Council to Reduce Violence, the Trust was assisted by former student-placement and now family violence counsellor Fiona Link-Freeman and volunteer Crystal Bruton, as well as Trust Director Professor Marilyn Lake.

We thank them for their assistance and ideas.

The Trust will keep readers posted on any policy movements in these areas concerning women. For more information email [sarah@vwt.org.au](mailto:sarah@vwt.org.au) or phone the Trust on (03) 9642 0422.

## IN THE NEWS:

"Ms Crooks presented the Victorian Women's Trust case last week to the Productivity Commission and called for a minimum of six months' leave for all.

She told the commission that six months was the minimum for a mother to bond with a baby, to breastfeed, recover from the birth (especially by caesarean section), for parents to renegotiate their relationship, for siblings to adjust and for visits from nurses."

*Discontent over union maternity leave plan, Deborah Gough, The Sunday Age, June 1, 2008*

## VICTORIAN WOMEN'S BENEVOLENT TRUST GRANTS PROGRAM 2008

The Trust thanks all who submitted to our annual grants program and congratulates those organisations successful in receiving funding. We also thank the very generous contributions of our special supporters who have helped make these grants possible. Below is a summary of the successful projects.

**\$22,000** to Women's Health in the North (WHIN)

**Triple Ms: Modern Media Mediums**

This project will deal with young women's experience of intimate partner violence and how the media portrays the issues of violence against women.

Young women do not necessarily use or relate to the traditional language of domestic violence and there is a growing need to locate information targeting young women within a language to which they more closely relate.

The project will work with young women and research the use of new electronic media and social marketing. The project will identify gaps in communication with young women and investigate strategies to fill these gaps, including what language to use and how best to publicise the information.

The project will also work with local media to promote accurate and well informed reporting of violence against women in the northern region of Melbourne, as an important aspect of a broader understanding of violence in the community.

**\$22,000** to Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Inc. (ASRC)

**Women's Human Rights Advocacy Program**

The ASRC is committed to protecting and upholding the human rights of asylum seekers. It represents a practical and innovative community response to the plight of asylum seekers through direct assistance and advocacy as well as working towards legal and policy reform.

The women's program has been supported by the Trust for several years.

The importance of quality women's-focused legal advocacy throughout the refugee determination process that assists with both refugee and family law/family violence issues cannot be underestimated.

With the change of Federal Government the ASRC is also working towards systematic legal and policy reform in Australia. This includes lobbying to ensure that the process for women seeking asylum is gender appropriate, with greater recognition that family violence and other forms of gender based violence fits within the definition of the Refugee Convention. A further \$8,000 has been provided by the Melbourne Community Foundation in partnership with this grant.



*Photograph by Ponch Hawkes*

**\$9,000** to Matrix Guild

### Non-Heterosexual Women in Aged Care

Matrix Guild Victoria was founded in 1992, by and for the benefit of lesbians over forty years of age. They are committed to the support of appropriate care and accommodation choices for older lesbians in Victoria. This includes liaising with government agencies and service providers to develop more appropriate lesbian friendly services.

Aged and disabled lesbians are marginalised, often under privileged, discriminated against and alienated from or within existing services. Homophobic, ageist and sexist attitudes are often prevalent and exacerbated in the aged care industry.

The Matrix Guild has been conducting a study exploring the experiences of older non-heterosexual women as recipients of services and support for older people, as well as the perspectives of aged care service providers. They have received funding support for the research from the Reichstein Foundation.

This project will involve the co-ordination of the research data pertinent to older and disabled lesbians in aged care, and the production and printing of the report publication. Overall the project will bring the plight of aged and disabled non-heterosexual women to the attention of policy makers, and assist these consumers with sensitive support and services.

The proposed publication is a new approach to addressing issues faced by aged and disabled lesbians, as there has not been research or a publication incorporating research about lesbian issues in aged care in Victoria or Australia.

**\$13,800** to Women's Health West (WHW)

### Power On

Women with a disability are among the most socially and economically marginalised in the community and the western region of Melbourne has a higher than State average of women with a disability residing there.

Power On is a peer education program that assists women who experience mental illness to enhance their wellbeing through information and skills that allows them to identify and address their health needs and gain support from family, friends and service providers.

The project will develop a sustainable model of delivery that can resource mental health agencies in the region, and train peer educators to deliver the program with mental health workers acting as co-facilitators. As well as directly assisting women who experience mental illness in terms of increased control over their lives and enhanced wellbeing, peer educators will gain training and skills that are likely to assist them in obtaining future employment.

Mental health providers will benefit from the co-facilitator training and improved staff skills, as well as having access to peer educators and ongoing assistance from WHW, in a partnership that builds on feminist health promotion and advocacy principles. Power On will also assist people who care for or are significant in the women's lives, both in terms of structuring support for women, as well as through a carers program which is being developed. A further \$3,500 was provided by the Melbourne Community Foundation in partnership with this grant.

For more information about the Trust's annual Grants Program, contact Anne on (03) 9642 0422 or email [anne@vwt.org.au](mailto:anne@vwt.org.au)

If you wish to be alerted to the next grating round, sign up our E-Bulletin by emailing [women@vwt.org.au](mailto:women@vwt.org.au) or phone (03) 9642 0422 and register your interest.

**\$16,000** to Project Respect

**Advocacy Training for Women in the Sex Industry**



*Photograph by Ponch Hawkes*

Project Respect was established in 1998 and challenges exploitation and violence against women in the sex industry.

Women enter the sex industry for complex reasons but generally already experience a high level of vulnerability and disadvantage.

Project Respect has found clients consistently expressing a need for advocacy training. This project will include active participation by women involved in the sex industry and will assist them in areas such as assertiveness, self development, peer education and advocacy skills. Improved workplace safety is anticipated with women being better able to assert themselves and set boundaries with their clients.

The project will also focus on lobbying for improved workplace safety and input into key bodies such as the Prostitution Control Board. The advocacy training will have a particular emphasis on skilling the participants to campaign for public policy change, and gaining a better public profile with the aim of generating sustainable long term solutions to some of the problems of prostitution.

**\$14,000** to Rochester & Elmore District Health Service (REDHS)

**Women on the Move**

Rochester and Elmore District Health Service (REDHS) is located in regional Victoria in an area affected by long term drought, from which has followed major debt and poverty. Within this traditional rural community, more women seem to be disclosing domestic violence and mental health issues in their families.

The Women on the Move Project will develop sustainable women's networks and groups to help facilitate women's greater participation and voice in their community, as well as a better connection with each other.

The project will engage local women of all ages and include general open sessions as well as structured program groups. A focus of the project will be the active involvement in planning and organising social and cultural events, such as an International Women's Day event and a local Women's Festival.

By increasing women's participation in various networks and increasing their knowledge, skills and confidence, women will be in a much better position to initiate change, programs and policies that are important to them, their families and community.

**\$12,093** to Women's Health Goulburn North East Inc. (WHGNE)

**Common Cents**

This project will train women, in the Goulburn Valley and North East Victoria, who have experienced domestic violence or are on low incomes, to become peer financial educators and assist other marginalised women to improve their financial literacy skills, knowledge, self-esteem and confidence.

Common Cents will sit alongside the no-interest loan scheme (NILS) program for women leaving domestic violence. Women who apply for NILS

loans will be invited to participate in the Common Cents program.

In the short term, Common Cents will provide a comprehensive program of financial literacy and peer support that is beneficial and sustainable to low income, marginalized women. In the longer term it will aim to improve the social, economic and health status of women through long term financial security.

**\$20,000** to Women's Health Victoria (WHV) & Victorian Women with Disabilities Network (VWDN)

**Determined Divas: The Story of the Movement of Women with Disabilities in Victoria**

This project will document the history and work of the Victorian Women with Disabilities Network (VWDN).

It will produce a history of the VWDN, documenting their work over the past fifteen years and promoting positive images of women with disabilities - their diversity, leadership and participation.

Women with disabilities are more likely to be poorer, uneducated, unemployed and institutionalised than men with disabilities and other women in general. They can encounter discrimination on many levels and are at a significantly higher risk of violence and abuse.

VWDN believes women with disabilities must speak for themselves and that advocacy must be 'by women with disabilities for women with disabilities'. They stress the importance of publicising a positive message that challenges the stereotypes of disability and gender and believe that policy and practice in Victoria has been positively influenced by the advocacy work of their members.

**\$8,300** to Uniting Church Australia – Hotham Mission Asylum Seeker Project

**Asylum Seeker Women's Group**

The Asylum Seeker project aims to build a comprehensive framework of

community support to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for asylum seekers in Victoria, as well as advocate for the rights of asylum seekers in Australia.

The essence of the Asylum Seeker Women's Group is to create a sense of dignity, inclusion and empowerment for women asylum seekers who are denied any rights and entitlements. The Women's Trust has proudly supported this project for several years.

The women in the group come from a wide range of cultural, religious and social backgrounds and have fled their countries because of conflict, violence and often complex persecution. The monthly outings provide an important and rare opportunity for asylum seeker women to go out for a purely recreational reason, while being in a secure and relaxed environment.

Input from the women's group has been important in identifying core concerns with government policy as well as emerging issues and the impact of departmental practice, such as Bridging Visas and has greatly assisted the research and advocacy work of the Asylum Seeker project.

The women's group will continue to focus on activities that are conducive to social interaction and building friendships, while introducing new women into the group and debriefing those who have to leave Australia after a negative determination. It is anticipated the group will lead to the building of lasting support systems and renewed strength for the women, as well advocacy of the need for full rights for asylum seekers in Australia.



*Photograph by Viv Mehes*

## FOLLOW-UP - 2007 PROJECT

**R**esearching the Gaps project will explore the post-crisis supports needed to address the complex mental and emotional health needs which women and their children may experience following domestic violence.

**\$3,500** to Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service - Researching the Gaps

**Recovery Needs of Women in Domestic Violence**

The project is proceeding after initial funding by the Trust and expansion following a grant from the Reichstein Foundation. It will aim to assist women

in their journey away from violence by proposing an extended support model to meet fundamental needs, after crisis support, of women and children who have experienced long term and/or generational domestic violence.

The project will describe the needs of women on the Mornington Peninsula who have lived in families that have experienced generational violence. It will also identify the Mornington Peninsula's service delivery gaps and explore alternative types of services to meet these needs.

The research document will guide program responses and form a basis on which advocacy can be conducted to secure government and other funding support for the provision of effective extended support services.

## HEATHER OSLAND FOI DECISION



**T**he Victorian Women's Trust welcomes the High Court ruling in early August granting Heather Osland the right to continue her fight for access to documents relating to the State Government's denial of her Petition of Mercy.

The Trust provided out of court costs for this recent High Court appeal and sees the Court's 5:1 ruling as a significant step in the process of achieving some administrative justice for Heather.

"Heather's case touched the lives of many people in the community, particularly women who have experienced domestic violence, or know someone who has," Executive Director Mary Crooks said.

The Trust believes the release of the documents are important if women are to feel confident about the seriousness with which Government views the extent and nature of family violence.

"The Government was asked to show compassion to someone who experienced a brutal regime of domestic violence – until the community has answers as to why the Government failed to show moral leadership in relation to Heather Osland, then it is hard for the community to have confidence in their approach to family violence," Crooks said.

The Trust will continue to support Heather in seeking access to the disputed documents, and ultimately to help Heather move on with her life.

"The High Court decision provides Heather and her many supporters with some reward for effort in what has been a long, hard road to achieving justice," Crooks said, adding "and we will continue on that long road with her".

**For more information contact Sarah at the Trust on (03) 9642 0422  
or by emailing [sarah@vwt.org.au](mailto:sarah@vwt.org.au)**