



VICTORIAN
WOMEN'S TRUST

NEWSLETTER |
AUTUMN 2017





A WONDERFUL YEAR AHEAD



2017 at VWT continues apace with ongoing circuit-breaking work through our grant making, harm prevention initiatives and advocacy, as well as many exciting happenings in the year so far.

Late last year, we met with two remarkable young women, Lorraine and Kapambwe, who have established **African Family Services** (AFS). We are thrilled to be able to create a two-year incubation opportunity for **African Family Services** during which they can extend their important work supporting African women and families. Under this arrangement, Lorraine and Kapambwe will use our office space, as well as be mentored by staff in practical ways that increase their operational capacity. Welcome Lorraine and Kapambwe!

We are also delighted to announce the launch of a VWT-funded documentary '**Grace Under Fire**'. Based on the research by Breakthrough 2016 speaker Dr. Skye Saunders, author of '**Whispers from the Bush - The Workplace Sexual Harassment of Australian Rural Women**', the film follows the true story of 20-year-old Victorian woman Grace, who was forced to confront workplace sexual harassment in the close knit country town she grew up in. Assisted by Isabelle Lane, a recent journalism graduate, Madeleine Martiniello creates a disturbing but important film to open a national dialogue about sexual harassment in rural Australia, and how we can create workplaces where everyone is treated with equality, dignity and respect.

Lastly, growing from our exhibition **Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives**, which celebrated women's contributions since Federation and committed their legacies to the public record, the VWT has recently partnered with La Trobe University to create the, **Square the Ledger**, project. Launched this year on International Women's Day **Square the Ledger** will capture the remarkable stories of women who have graced the halls of La Trobe University. The project is currently seeking nominations of women who are making a difference, building and sustaining communities, innovating and achieving in quiet and not so quiet ways who have, time and time again, been overlooked for public recognition.

At the closing ceremony of **Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives**, in 2002, we argued that an important measure of human rights equality lies in the truthfulness of the public record: 'When women are accorded a proper part of this record, when their enormous contribution to families, communities and society are accurately represented, they will have achieved an inclusiveness that is a pre-condition of equality.'

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Mary Crooks'.

Mary Crooks AO
Executive Director

BREAKTHROUGH - SETTING THE AGENDA FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

By Ally Oliver-Perham

Digital Advocacy & Engagement, Victorian Women's Trust

While the Breakthrough event of 2016 might be over, the journey has just begun. As an advocate for women and girls for over thirty years, the Victorian Women's Trust has always been in the corner for women. We've been demanding better policy outcomes for a stronger society and making sure women's experiences are front and centre. But given the stagnation on so many fronts in Australian society—short changing women's pay, the prevalence of violence and harassment on the streets, in our homes and workplaces, the increasing costs of child care, unpaid work, the lack of a truly representative body with equal numbers of women and men— Breakthrough 2016 was a no-brainer. We needed to come together with others to talk about the big and important issues which are defining our times. We cannot allow stagnation to become the status quo. We deserve better!

For those who were not there, Breakthrough was a two day, gender equality event at the Melbourne Town Hall and surrounds. Featuring 130 or more speakers, an audience of 1000, Keynote and Breakout sessions, it was “the biggest gender equality event in our nation's history,” (The Age, Nov 28). It had clear and passionate feminist energy underpinning every aspect of it and it will not rest there. Since the event concluded, we have released footage of two thought provoking talks from Breakthrough 2016. Firstly, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek, who spoke with bold conviction on the topic of equal representation, and secondly, Dr. Richard Denniss, who gave a blistering attack on economic security.

As Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Tanya had a lot to say about the role of women in government and remaining vigilant about our rights. Tanya said, ‘...we cannot take progress for granted. We have to keep prosecuting the case, that democracy is better and stronger when it is more representative. There is no more important a time to have a greater number of women in leadership positions, because the laws that women have fought for can be unwritten. So women need to stand their ground, and we need to do it in a way that brings more people in.’ Tanya also pointed to the importance of setting targets and being prepared to be judged by them. ‘The fastest way I think of getting to critical mass is setting that target, because it promotes a virtuous cycle

of change. You get that critical mass and that makes it easier for the next lot of people. The real power of targets is not the rule change itself; it is the culture change that it drives. It changes people's mindsets. It removes the permission to say that there are no suitable women.’

Richard, speaking on the topic of ‘Money. Power. Freedom.’ took a slightly different tack. ‘I want to tell you a story of lies and deception. It's not Game of Thrones; it's the Australian policy process. So basically I want to spell out what I think are the three big lies that are used to not cover up, but to silence; they're different. The three big lies that are used to silence our public debate when it comes to issues of gender inequality in Australia, and one big truth.’ With great humour and sarcasm, Denniss told the crowd not to, ‘... go into the caring professions..don't take time out of the labour market to care for children..[or] when you're older to care for your parents’—in short ‘be a man’. Richard Denniss' talk highlighted the systemic barriers we are up against and our need to reimagine social structures for a fairer future.

More footage and audio from Breakthrough 2016 will be released in the coming weeks. As a small outfit, these things do take time, but we will make them available as soon as possible. Stay tuned also for the next stage of Breakthrough, in which we take the passion, energy and ideas from this inaugural event and create real policy actions for a brighter tomorrow for women and girls. Already we have a team of dedicated volunteers and staff furiously researching and planning the next steps, and very soon we will be looking to you for ideas and input. Watch this space.

Tanya Plibersek and Dr. Richard Denniss' keynote presentations are available now:

www.vwt.org.au/tanya-plibersek-rightful-place/

www.vwt.org.au/richard-denniss-money-power-freedom/

Below (left to right): Tanya Plibersek (Image by Breeana Dunbar) Dr. Richard Denniss (Image by Breeana Dunbar)



MY FEMINISM

By Maxine Beneba Clarke

My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit – Flavia Dzodan

The local women's march is pink-dressed, determined, alive. The cheering chanting mass streams past the inner-Sydney sights. A bold sign centre-crowd floating up on high says: ***I'll see all you nice white ladies at the next Black Lives Matter march, right?***

My feminism is intersectional, or my feminism is a lie.

Half a million knitted pussycat hats walk angry-calm on Washington. They chant: ***"We're women. United. We'll never be defeated."*** My feminism is the black sister: white cap; fierce as— you know the one. There she is, nonchalantly sucking on a lollipop while bearing a hand-painted placard that says: ***Don't forget, white women voted for Trump.***

My feminism will be intersectional, or my feminism is done.

My feminism does not feature in the ***Suffragette*** credit-roll. My feminism is not a scroll of the places and dates white women got the vote; does not holler across the loud promo t-shirts that say:

I would rather be a rebel.

I would rather be a rebel, than a slave.

My feminism can love Emmeline Pankhurst for what she did, and still roll its eyes at Emmeline Pankhurst's phrasing.

My feminism can respect Germaine Greer's legacy, but detest her transphobic ways.

My feminism will be critical, and analytical, and brave.

My feminism will not reveal itself as White Feminism at 13, Queer Feminism at 25, and POC, or Aboriginal or First Peoples, or Disability Feminism if you ***identify***, are ***ultra-left***, are ***bleeding-heart***, are ***so inclined***.

My feminism will always question.

My feminism must get wise.

My feminism will not claim that nuance is ***divisive***.

All feminism is flawed, but my feminism will ***try***.

My feminism would not anti-think-piece Beyonce's pregnant glow, because my feminism remembers the brown children bought and sold.

My feminism slips unseen through the bars and razor wire.

My feminism will amplify the songs of the silenced.

My feminism is pro-choice, but does not endorse Lena Dunham's abortion wish.

My feminism says termination is not some kind of Vintage Girl Guide Collar Pin.



Above: Maxine Beneba Clarke
(Image by Nicholas Walton-Healey)

My feminism does not shout down pro-lifers who shame abortion, then shame abortion grief, or regret.

My feminism will be kind.

My feminism is complex.

My feminism does not complain about middleclass childcare fees, without campaigning for the women who childcare on a minimum wage index freeze.

My feminism does not go smashing glass ceilings at the same time it builds glass walls.

My feminism will be class aware, or it will have no class at all.

My feminism screams about equal marriage rights in the country where I live, while in the country of my parent's birth, corrective rape is still a thing.

My feminism is fierce.

My feminism crossed oceans.

My feminism learnt to swim.

My feminism is uneasy by unceded land; was sung by Audre Lorde; knows Wilma Pearl Mankiller.

My feminism haloed Harriet Tubman and signed the Statement at Combahee River.

My feminism says ***no woman left behind***.

My feminism says the strongest will go find her.

My feminism's the underground railroad out.

My feminism will ferry us through all of the doubt.

My feminism seeks to lift ***all*** women up.

My feminism ***must*** be strong enough.

My feminism is strong; fierce; burning; ***alive***.

My feminism will be smart, intersectional and kind.

My feminism is truth: that bold sign up on high.

It's inevitably flawed, but will always try.

My feminism can smash glass ceilings ***and*** walls.

My feminism is wondrous, and will elevate us all.



Top left (left to right): Dr Jackie Huggins AM, Aseel Tayan, Michelle Kleinert, Alana Johnson, Evelyn Tadros, Varvara Ioannou **Top right:** Varvara Ioannou, Dr Jackie Huggins AM, Alana Johnson (Both images by SBS Greek/ Panos Apostolou)

Middle: Maddy Crehan, Casimira Melican, Grace Mountford, Naida Beltrame, Esther Davies-Brown, Ally Oliver-Perham **(Front left)** Ella Hooper, Amanda Barbour, Dame Quentin Bryce, Mary Crooks AO, Maria Chetcuti (Image by Melissa Hobbs Business Photography)

Bottom (left to right): Mary Crooks AO, Kate Jenkins, Fay Marles, Vic Marles (Image by Carolun Munckton)

VWT OUT AND ABOUT

ENJOYING FOOD FOR THOUGHT ON IWD

VWT Convenor, Alana Johnson, was a guest speaker at an International Women's Day event organised by the Food for Thought Network, a non-profit women's network whose mission is to promote awareness about both the barriers and enablers to women's development; thus inspiring positive change in individuals and the wider community.

Alana was one of four extraordinary speakers at the lunch event held at Manningham City Council Function Centre on Sunday 5 March. Other speakers were: Dr Jackie Huggins AM, Co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First People; Evelyn Tadros, barrister, lecturer, Founder and Chair of the Human Rights Arts and Film Festival; and Councillor Michelle Kleinert, Mayor of Manningham.

This year's IWD theme was #BeBoldForChange – calling upon men and women to join forces and be leaders within their own spheres of influence to take bold, pragmatic action in accelerating gender equality, so the breadth of speakers and their experiences was fully on show at the event.

The conversation between the speakers was ably led by MC, Maria Dimopoulos, a recognised expert specialising in the intersections of cultural diversity, gender equality and the law.

Around 100 women and men enjoyed the event and the speakers' in-depth and wide ranging conversation about gender equality and women's issues.

The 2017 IWD event was one of a number of events that Food for Thought runs each year as fundraisers. We are very grateful that the Network has donated \$500 raised from the event to the Loula Rodopoulos Sub-Fund, which will give its first grant this year. We look forward to future partnerships with the Food for Thought Network, which was founded by Varvara Iannou in 2001 as an inclusive Greek Australian Women's Network to connect generations, professions and cultures. Thank you Varvara and members of Food for Thought.

MEETING QUENTIN BRYCE

On Thursday 6th April, ten lucky members of the Trust team had the pleasure of attending a Business Chicks breakfast in honour of Dame Quentin Bryce AD, CVO. The lucky ten consisted of staff, volunteers and board members. Dame Quentin has recently launched her new book ***Dear Quentin: Letters of a Governor-General***, featuring more than fifty handwritten letters written to Australians in her time as the first female Governor-General of Australia.

A MEMORABLE OCCASION

The Trust is grateful to count Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins as one of its friends. She was a valued speaker at our Breakthrough event last year and is a tragic Carlton Football Club follower (and board member), just like Mary Crooks. Prior to joining the Australian Human Rights Commission, Kate spent three years as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner and for this reason it was an absolute pleasure to get Kate together with one of her heroes: Fay Marles, the state's first Equal Opportunity Commissioner.

Over an informal lunch, Fay told us stories of her childhood days of canoeing down the Yarra River as well as some of the challenges of bringing the Equal Opportunity legislation to life in the mid 1970s.

A big thank you to Fay's daughter Vic Marles (a previous VWT director) for organising this lovely occasion – it was great to bring together two inspirational advocates for gender equality and equal opportunity.

ROBYN MASON'S REMARKABLE LEGACY

By Carolyn Munckton

General Manager, Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust

Robyn Mason passed away in October 2016 at the age of 65 and she is sadly missed by many, but she has left an enduring and remarkable legacy with the Victorian Women's Trust.

The Trust kicked off 2017 by honouring Robyn and launching the Sub-Fund in her name which will support initiatives that focus on the safety of regional and rural women, a great passion of Robyn's.

This is the first sub-fund of the Dugdale Trust for Women & Girls and it will make a very important contribution towards funding VWT initiatives around violence prevention, improving lives and opportunities for women and girls in rural and regional Australia.

Robyn was a proud feminist and a long-time supporter of VWT. Robyn's intellectual life and her working life were always directed at achieving important societal shifts and changes for the better, especially for women – and there were significant periods when she personally lived on the frontline of those changes.

To keep the memory of Robyn and her work alive, the Trust commissioned writer and researcher Susan Powell in early 2016 to put together a major essay which included interviews with Robyn and many people that were close to her throughout her life.

This insightful and celebratory essay adds to the collection of publications that the Trust has produced to ensure that the life and work of many 'behind the scenes women' are put on the public record.

The launch in early January was held at Robyn's former school, Loreto College Ballarat. Robyn was a proud Loreto alumnus, taught by the Loreto Sisters for her entire schooling.

We were joined at the event by Robyn's mother Dorothy and son Will, many of her friends and colleagues including Federal Member for Ballarat, Catherine King, who described how she had benefited from Robyn's mentorship in her early days as a social worker and later as a major supporter of Catherine's political career.

Robyn's long-time friend, Maree Harris, spoke at the event of Robyn's belief that Loreto College was foundational to everything she did with her life. Maree met Robyn in 1968 when they were both in the Young Christian Students and she remarked that she saw great similarities between Robyn and Mary Ward, one of the founders of the Loreto Order who was described in a



book titled ***Faithful Dissenters*** as “no ordinary woman”, one who “possessed more than woman's share of courage and persistence”. Maree said that Robyn was a woman who never gave up on what she believed in and pursued it – even while dying. The Loreto sisters have always had a strong commitment to social justice and according to all who knew her that was Robyn through and through.

Before she passed away, Robyn explained to Susan why she set-up the Sub-Fund, “It was money I was going to use for my retirement and now I'm not having a retirement so I'm giving it to an organisation through which women's lives will be changed. I wanted to inspire young women especially – to say to them – ‘Go change the world because it really is worth it. Don't give up! For me it comes back to the fact that if we don't get women's safety right then we're not going to make progress on anything else. Women need to be safe from violence and harm before we can get other things happening for them.’”

Thank you Robyn for caring about the safety of women in the future.

Copies of the essay about the life of Robyn Mason are available from the Trust office.



SUPPORT THE ROBYN MASON SUB-FUND

We welcome donations to the Robyn Mason Sub-Fund from friends, family and colleagues of Robyn's and from anyone who cares about the safety of women and girls, particularly those living outside metropolitan areas.

All contributions help build the financial strength of VWT through its harm prevention arm, the Dugdale Trust for Women & Girls.

Donations can be made via our website www.vwt.org.au, over the phone (03) 9642 0422 or by completing the donation form on page 19.

Previous page: Robyn Mason Sub-Fund Launch Booklet (image by Carolyn Munckton).

Current Page Above (left to right): XXXXX, Mary Crooks AO, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, Alana Johnson

Current Page Below: Robyn Mason Sub-fund launch

AROUND THE TRUST

POLICY SUBMISSIONS

Policy submissions are an opportunity for us at the Trust to advocate on issues that go to the heart of gender inequity. The following submissions focus on paid parental leave policy, child care policy and the gender pay gap.

March 2017 Social Services Legislation Amendment (Omnibus Savings and Child Care Reform) Bill

The Trust's submission addressed the schedules in the Bill which focused on Australia's child care and paid parental leave (PPL) schemes.

In our submission we argued that Australia's childcare system should:

- guarantee children's universal access to early childhood education and care regardless of the work status of their parents; and
- recognise the enormity of women's unpaid caring contributions to our society (estimated at \$650.1 billion in 2012).
- Additionally, we argued that Australia's PPL system should:
- prioritise the wellbeing of both the parents and child by allowing sufficient time for breastfeeding (where possible) and bonding to optimise health outcomes;
- support the workforce participation of parents/fathers by recognising and reducing the substantial financial and career penalties currently borne by women who have children; and
- recognise the equal role in child nurturing and caregiving for men with the implicit recognition of the positive effect on society as a whole, that men have when they are actively involved in the lives of children (whether their own or not).

Our submission emphasised that the benefits of a flexible and generous social security system are then manifest at every level of society with benefits reaching far into Australia's future.

The Trust's concerns about the reduction in the number of paid parental leave weeks available to mothers as well as the positive outcomes for both parents and children that occur in the first 6 months of the child's life were referenced in the Committee's final report.

2017 Gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic security

In our submission we stated that in order to remove structural inequalities which segregate our workplace along gender lines and contribute enormously to the gender pay gap, there needs to be a complete overhaul of the norms which dictate our working lives. Combined with this is the need for visionary leadership, innovation and public debate to ensure women can achieve the same degree of economic security throughout their lives as men.

Pleasingly, Mary Crooks AO and Policy & Advocacy Officer Casimira Melican were invited to give a presentation to the Senate Committee and to answer questions about the issues brought up in our submission on 10 April 2017.

In the hearing we focussed on the importance of Government policy incorporating women's lived experiences of work and emphasised that workplaces were the key site for improvements to women's economic security and equality.

Our Advocacy section of the VWT website is live!

Go to <https://www.vwt.org.au/policy-advocacy/> to find all of our policy submissions made since 2015. If you would like to know more about older submissions email our Research & Advocacy Officer, casimira@vwt.org.au or call the Trust on (03) 9642 0422 to request a copy of the submission.

Bottom left: XXXXXXXX and Justine XXXXX (Image by Casimira Melican)
Bottom right: Squareweave Process (Image by Casimira Melican)

ROSIE

The Rosie Respect website was initially set up to provide a unique online space where young women can connect with the best web resources out there, helping them to navigate life's tricky situations. Now we believe it's time to take it to the next level and bring Rosie into the classroom.

Rosie in the Classroom will be an educational program based on the Rosie Web Video Series and www.RosieRespect.org.au. The program will be made up of a series of modules, based around informative Rosie videos, assisting teachers to talk about difficult but important topics such as respectful relationships, bullying, sexual harassment, and sexting.

Aimed at secondary students of various ages, each module will seek to assist students to develop an in depth understanding of their important role in creating an equal society, as well as helpful harm prevention strategies they can employ in their own lives (where appropriate).

Our education expert will distil these aspects into the educational modules, which will be freely available from our website. Throughout 2017, we will be promoting the resources throughout our networks and we will be working alongside state-based educational departments to ensure this resource is widely distributed throughout the country.

According to the Five Year Mental Health Youth Report from **Mission Australia** and the **Black Dog Institute** there are more people in the 15-to-19 age category in psychological distress than there were five years ago. And according the Australian Bureau of Statistics "Females aged between 15 and 19 years were seven times more likely to have been a victim of sexual assault compared to the overall population". These concerning statistics emphasise the urgency of instilling respect and equality within the Australian education system. **Rosie in the Classroom** aims to do just that.

CLUB RESPECT

As the development of our Club Respect violence prevention initiative enters its second year of funding, we are excited by the position we are in to cut through with a circuit breaking resource. Club Respect will be a digital platform that engages, empowers and supports grassroots sports clubs to embed a culture of respect and harm prevention in all their practices.

Along with our extensive literature review and sports audit analysis, we have continued to 'sit at the feet'

of grassroots clubs as part of our powerful method of public engagement. We have met with incredibly hard working, focused and dynamic people involved with community sport in our quest to understand how people deal with issues at their clubs, what resources would engage them and how they can best be encouraged to take action to prevent violence against women and children in the community. We have also continued to meet with our Critical Friends Group and draw from their extensive personal and professional sports expertise, as well as furthering relationships across a number of sports and organisations.

We are now on the threshold of putting our research, knowledge, ideas, experiences and collective wisdoms into creating the Club Respect digital platform. To this end, we have engaged with Square Weave, a leading digital design agency, to assist us with website management, strategy and creation. We are soon to embark upon content creation, testing of materials with our target audience of people involved in community sport and preparing to launch Club Respect into the sports stratosphere!



BOARD NEWS

NAIDA BELTRAME JOINS THE VWT AS OUR NEWEST TRUSTEE

We're very excited to welcome our newest trustee Naida Beltrame to the VWT Board.

Naida is a tax specialist whose career has focused on supporting high net-wealth individuals with tax advice, and securing funding for companies ranging from startups to multinationals for their investments in research and development. Former roles have included 11 years at Deloitte and Ernst & Young. Naida has had a lifelong passion for supporting human rights, particularly those of women, children and minorities.

Naida has been a board member of a number of organisations that give a voice to such minorities who are under-represented or disadvantaged, including the East Timor Hearts Fund and Diaspora Action Australia. In her capacity as finance director for such organisations, Naida has worked to establish, support and deliver on their key strategic priorities.

Naida is an Australian-born daughter of Lebanese migrants who saw in Australia the opportunities for a better life than that surrounded by war. Having lived in Lebanon, Naida's natural fire for gender equity was further stoked. It clarified Naida's resolve that women and girls have the ability to choose their own destiny and access all opportunities, unencumbered by their gender in any way; that to raise reserves of strength and the standards that women and girls accept was critical for this to eventuate.



Naida sees her most recent board position at VWT as an exciting opportunity to build on the strength of VWT's past and deliver on its critical purposes to support women and girls in these ways well into the future.

Naida currently provides tax advice at Beltrame Consulting, is a senior R&D tax specialist with GrantReady and a registered tax agent at H&R Block.

A member of Chartered Accountants Australia & New Zealand and a registered tax agent, Naida has a Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Commerce and Diploma of Arabic from the University of Melbourne.

Welcome Naida!

CONGRATULATIONS PADMINI SEBASTIAN OAM



Warm congratulations to VWT Board Member Padmini Sebastian OAM, for receiving a Medal of Order of Australia at the Australia Day Honours earlier this year. Padmini was honored for her service to the community of Victoria and multiculturalism. Padmini has led the award winning Immigration Museum of Victoria for over 13 years and has worked extensively in the cultural and community sectors. Congratulations once again to Padmini on this amazing achievement.

Left: Naida Beltrame (Image by Breeana Dunbar Photography).

Right: Padmini Sebastian OAM (Image by Breeana Dunbar Photography)



GRACE UNDER FIRE

Above: Grace Bramwell (still from Grace Under Fire)

By Isabelle Lane

In April last year, VWT Executive Director Mary Crooks, contacted me with an idea for a short film that would help spark a conversation on the underreported issue of workplace sexual harassment in regional and remote Australia. The idea was inspired by a book titled ***Whispers from the Bush***, in which Australian National University academic Dr Skye Saunders investigated sexual harassment in rural Australian workplaces. Dr Saunders findings were shocking: 73 per cent of rural women reported experiencing sexual harassment in their workplace.

Initially, I was overwhelmed by the scale of the issue, and the responsibility of doing justice to these women who too often had their voices silenced. Self-doubt crept in, and I thought about handballing it to an older, more experienced journalist. Then, reading through the brutal accounts of workplace sexual harassment experienced by women my age and younger, I got angry, and decided I had to help end the eerie silence around this issue. Over the course of the next few months, young documentary filmmaker Maddy Martiniello and I travelled around country Victoria, and spoke to women of various ages and occupations. We found that these women loved their communities, but were being let down by them when it came to safe workplaces free from sexual harassment.

Grace Under Fire is the result of our work. It tells the story of 20-year-old Grace Bramwell, who grew up in a tight knit community in East Gippsland, and who had felt a sense of pride about being a country kid.

After graduating high school, Grace got a summer job at the local pub, aiming to save money before starting

university. On her first shift, it was clear that something was off. The boss made salacious comments about Grace's appearance, and she felt increasingly uneasy. In one instance, he renamed the tip jar "the tit jar", and suggested she parade it around in front of the pub's customers.

When Grace mustered the courage to confront her boss he became angry, blamed his scandalous behaviour on her, and fired her.

Now in the midst of a law degree at a prestigious Australian university, Grace still grapples with the sexual harassment she experienced in her first job. When interviewing Grace for the documentary, I was struck by her poise, strength, and determination to tell her story so that future generations of young women don't have to endure the sort of harassment she faced in her first job.

"The most important thing for anyone in these situations is that they can impart their experiences and speak freely about them as I'm doing right now, so that there's not that assumption that living in the country equates to having to deal with injustices," Grace told us.

"Despite being outlawed for over 25 years, sexual harassment remains a problem in Australia," the Australian Human Rights Commission states. Workplace sexual harassment is prevalent across Australia, and the situation is particularly dire for women in isolated parts of the country. It's time for the nation to have an honest dialogue about this issue, and to take the steps needed to eradicate this blight on society.



Above (left to right): Jess Browning, Jan Browning, Amanda Barbour, Casimira Melican, Ally Oliver-Perham, Christine Cummings Middle front row (left to right): Maria Chetcuti, Bryony Green, Esther Davies-Brown, Baby Tamas, Janya Clemens (Image by VWT)
 Bottom left: Ged Kearney (Image by Casimira Melican)
 Bottom right (left to right): XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, Clare Wright, Mary Crooks AO

VWT EVENTS

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY TO SQUARE THE LEDGER

La Trobe University, together with the Victorian Women's Trust, have created **Square the Ledger** – the first University project of its type to trace and document the role and impact of its female graduates, staff and administrators.

Square the Ledger is based on the highly successful Victorian Women's Trust project 'Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives'. It will look beyond the high achieving women of La Trobe also recognising the 'ordinary' women of the University whose contributions have largely gone unheralded.

Square the Ledger was launched at Queen's Hall in State Parliament on the highly significant date of Wednesday, 8 March – La Trobe University's 50th anniversary and International Women's Day. Speakers at Square the Ledger will launch included La Trobe Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Betty Leask, La Trobe historian, author and broadcaster Dr Clare Wright, Victorian Women's Trust Executive Director Mary Crooks and Victorian Bar Chief Executive Officer Sarah Fregon.

La Trobe Vice-Chancellor Professor John Dewar said "La Trobe women have played and continue to play an important role in our local communities, our cities and our nation, but their achievements have not always been adequately acknowledged. A small number of La Trobe women are well known, but there are many more who have made an enormous impact on Australia's social fabric without any recognition. Square the Ledger is about acknowledging, honouring and celebrating the women who have worked and studied at La Trobe over the past 50 years. Importantly, it is also a commitment to future generations of La Trobe women that they will be properly recognised."

To nominate someone you know or share your own story of life at La Trobe and since, visit www.50years.latrobe/square-the-ledger/

IWD BREAKFAST

Early on the morning of International Women's Day, a full house gathered at the Australian Council of Trade Unions for the Victorian Union Women breakfast with Anne Summers. The day before Anne had launched The Women's Manifesto, to be added to and championed not just by her but all Victorian women, 'I'm not calling it my document, I'm calling it our document.' Anne spoke of her top four principals for women's equality:

- Financial self-sufficiency
- Reproductive rights
- Freedom from violence
- The right to fully participate in all areas of public life.

You can read the Feminist Manifesto at <http://www.annesummers.com.au/speeches/the-womens-manifesto/>

Ged Kearney, the President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions gave an inspiring speech about the need for change, reminding us all of the importance of IWD, 'The intersection between the fight for worker's rights & fight for women's rights is a collision that has started revolutions.' As proud as women are of our history of marching and advocating for what we believe in, the closing message of the breakfast was that we can't let progress stall. Wil Stracke said it perfectly, 'every year we go to a breakfast on IWD and talk about our inequality. Then 6 months later on Equal Pay Day we sit around eating cupcakes, celebrating our inequality again, year in, year out.' The breakfast ended with some roof-raising chants and fist pumping. We left inspired by all the strong women around us, ready to continue the fight towards gender equality.

IWD RALLY AND AFTER-PARTY!

International Women's Day this year was as busy as ever for the Trust. The day saw staff and volunteers alike to-ing and fro-ing from one feminist event to another. During the afternoon a big team of staff and volunteers marched together at the IWD rally from Parliament House to Victorian Trades Hall in Carlton. Among the 2000 strong Melbournians walking for equality, some of the handmade signs included "Girls just want fun(damental) rights" and "sushi rolls not gender roles".

After the excitement of the rally, the VWT team headed to the Queen Vic Women's Centre for the rally after-party, a joint event between the International Women's Development Agency, Queen Victoria Women's Centre and the Victorian Women's Trust. The event saw speeches from VWT Chair Alana Johnson and IWDA CEO Joanna Hayter as well as beautiful music by the very talented Selina Jenkins. The night was a great coming together to celebrate achievements for women in Victoria by three organisations.

AFRICAN FAMILY SERVICES

Lorraine and Kapambwe are the founders behind African Family Services, the new not-for-profit service that will be working out of the Victorian Women's Trust Offices as of April this year.

The VWT's Esther Davies-Brown had the chance to interview Lorraine and Kapambe and discuss the great work that African Family Services provide to the African-Australian community.

Could you tell me a bit about African Family Services and the work that you do? What influenced you both to start African Family Services?

Kapambwe: African Family Services is a start-up, not-for-profit organisation, working with African women and their families in areas of Family Violence, Mental Health, Social inclusion, Community and Career development.

Lorraine: What influenced me to start, well basically I came here as an international student, I came when I was 18. I don't have any family here, I just came on my own to study. All I thought was that I was just coming for school and that's it, but then I experienced a lot of cultural shock getting here. I came straight from home so I didn't know anything about budgeting or finance, so half of the time I would find myself so broke.

Sometimes I would feel really isolated and sometimes I would feel like I can't really talk to my family about things because they wouldn't understand. You're basically supposed to be grateful that you're overseas and you're in a better place.

Once finishing school, I struggled a lot as well to get a job, because I had limitations around my visa status, so I couldn't get a job in my field for 3 years because they would say "You don't have permanent residency". I couldn't get placement, because I didn't have permanent residency as well when I was at uni. So I had that disadvantage as an international student and trying to transition into the workplace. Over time I found myself doing a lot of volunteer work where I gained a lot experience and then I became overqualified. So you



Left to Right: Kapambwe and Lorraine

find there are a lot of African migrants who might be skilled, who have all this expertise, but they can't find employment because there are gaps in services that actually don't support or recognise active participants in the community that can do more than what they are doing. So that was my experience around that.

And then over time with working with Kapambwe, who's done social work, we then started realising with a lot of social integration issues, people then go into depression, youths start abusing alcohol, other people start getting into illegal marriage status just to retain residency.

So with men, they can be really emasculated by coming here, trying to settle, not working in their field, or maybe their skills not being recognised. And sometimes it's not even that, sometimes it's not understanding the work culture in Australia because it is quite different. So you'd struggle with interviews, resume writing, not having that support. And that's how we started.

What do you believe are the biggest issues that women are facing in the African community?

Lorraine: Women - they're in different segments. I think for mothers it is family violence and not being able to leave their situation because they rely on the partner for finances. They want to be able to retain the family structure, they don't want to shame the family, because there is the bride price in traditional marriage that puts the family affairs first before the woman's needs. And also isolation, not knowing what to do,

where to find access to support...or knowing where to find it but then having services demand you leave your situation before you get support. So I think that is the biggest issue for women, sometimes they know there is a problem, they want it to go away, but then there are no services available that are actually culturally sensitive to their needs.

With young women I think there are also social assimilation issues, there is a lot of education that needs to happen around sexual health. A lot of women come here, and we don't really talk about sex that much at home, we don't really get that education in school. And sometimes you come from very conservative families, so you come here and you're exposed to a different world and you have no one to be the decider for what you do. You actually go out into the world and sometimes girls get pregnant, they become single mothers, they feel very isolated, they don't have that

support. A lot of single mothers, especially young girls, suffer from postpartum depression and don't have that adequate support to really help them. So it becomes a cycle of events where you then get into depression and poor mental health. So it varies depending to the target group.

Kapambwe: I think overall the biggest issue that women are facing is integration into the wider Australian community, acceptance into the wider Australian community and a lack of cultural awareness by service providers when working with African women.

Could you talk a bit more about the issue of family violence in the African-Australian community?

Lorraine: Family violence became one of the most common trends that we recognised within our own community, because it is an act that has always been accepted in different African countries. There is a role men play, and because of traditional culture, bride price, there is a certain ownership. Some, not all of them, but some men take that on, and women have always been taught to be resilient, have always been told to value family first and put the family first before anything else. So a lot of women, even if they do want to leave, they wouldn't know where to start, because some of the services that are available here are not available back in Africa. Or if the services are available sometimes they are not culturally appropriate or sensitive to people's difference and diversity.

Another challenge that we've found around family violence is mainstream support services want you to

leave your situation. They will give you all the support in place, finances, linking you with legal services, as long as you leave. What the white Australian community doesn't understand is that when it comes to working with culturally diverse communities, sometimes leaving is not the first option. Sometimes it takes a lot, there are so many factors that come in place, factors of isolation, factors of culture, am I shaming my family by exposing what's going on? Will my kids be able to cope well? So a lot of women sometimes want help so that at least they can see the light at the end of the tunnel before they actually make the proper steps to leave.

We want to be in a position where we actually equip women with safety and tools, we equip women with knowledge, education, raise awareness, and make the community understand that you're not alone when you are going through certain things. There are organisations such as us that you can reach out to, that are culturally appropriate and sensitive and willing to work with you in whatever capacity and stage that you are at in your life.

How does your work specially combat those issues that African-Australian women face?

Kapambwe: African Family Services has a rich, in-depth knowledge of these issues and bridges the gaps in services by providing women with services from a cultural lens in an appropriate cultural space taking a holistic approach. African Family Services gives these women a platform to be able to retain their culture whilst residing in Australia as it is an integral part of their health and wellbeing.

Lorraine: I think with the African-Australian community there is that strong sense of family structure that is very valuable, and sometimes people go through so much just to retain that. So how do we then channel that commitment and bond and educate not only the woman but also the man and also educate parents on the impact of family violence and strategies to have positive communication techniques. So African Family services is really not there to re-invent the wheel but just to add on to some of the support services to give everyone that opportunity to be able to access support that is relevant to them. The idea is just to empower our own community and socially integrate in a positive and effective way.



THINGS THAT ARE NOT MY JOB

Nayuka is a Gunai/Kurnai, Gunditjmara, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman. She works for Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network as a Project Manager and is a freelance writer.

There are some things in life you have to do. In my own life there are certain things I can't get out of no matter how hard I try; showering or eating when I'm sad, rent, my family group chat, capitalism, staff meetings, living within earshot of the Nightcat's Sunday night salsa nights, to name a few. There are some things however that are optional.

I started freelance writing last year. It was also accompanied by a few television appearances. Most of my writing centres on feminism, colonisation and self-determination. I write when I'm angry or sad or trying to understand the world. Sometimes I'll write so that settlers understand their moral obligation to my people. I do this out of obligation to my people, not to the settler.

But often it is not seen this way. I was frequently the only black kid in the classroom. Whenever I was lucky enough to see my reflection in the curriculum I was expected to be both the pupil and the teacher. If there was any black content in the classroom, the class would turn to me expectantly. The teacher would ask, "is there anything you would like to add Nayuka?" Sometimes I would shrug, sometimes I would add something. I was the 'teacher' insofar as the actual teacher was unchallenged by the content. A troublemaker if I referred to invasion. A troublemaker if I made the settler teacher uncomfortable.

When I write something on the internet or am on the television I will get a flurry of tweets or messages from people. Some will be generally supportive. Some will

be unsolicited advice. Some will be angry and will be an essay much longer than the original piece I wrote. Sometimes I will get linked to random conspiracy theories. Others, (if I'm being honest, mostly white men) will demand answers from me, or some might ask me to answer questions for their essays, (white women). They demand answers. Like I owe it to them.

But the oppressed do not owe the oppressor anything. I don't owe white people anything. I don't owe men anything. I don't owe strangers anything. It is the luxury of the privileged to expect things, to feel entitled to things. Cis men often expect people to put out. White settlers expect black people to not remind them of invasion. Rich people expect poor people to get out of their way. Heterosexuals expect queers to not make them feel uncomfortable with their hot queer love. People in power expect everyone else to be grateful for scraps.

The other night I was out and a white man who vaguely knew of me came up and asked for a hug. I said no and there was a very awkward three seconds that followed. When you decide not to play into the dynamics society expects you to, the response is interesting. It ranges from confusion to anger. The irony of this is that the scale of justice is skewed to the oppressed. It is our existence and our oppression that enables privilege. In January I was at a museum in Brussels. I was pretty depressed in general but there was a Congolese art exhibition from the late 19th – early 20th century that made me cry. There were photos from the Congo that reminded me of old mission photos. I realised although I had questioned and challenged white supremacy, I still seek to make people comfortable; letting comments go, dressing differently, speaking in my best 'white' English. This year I pledge to stop doing the things that are not my job.

*Above: Nayuka Gorrie
(Image by Kiernan Ironfield)*



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