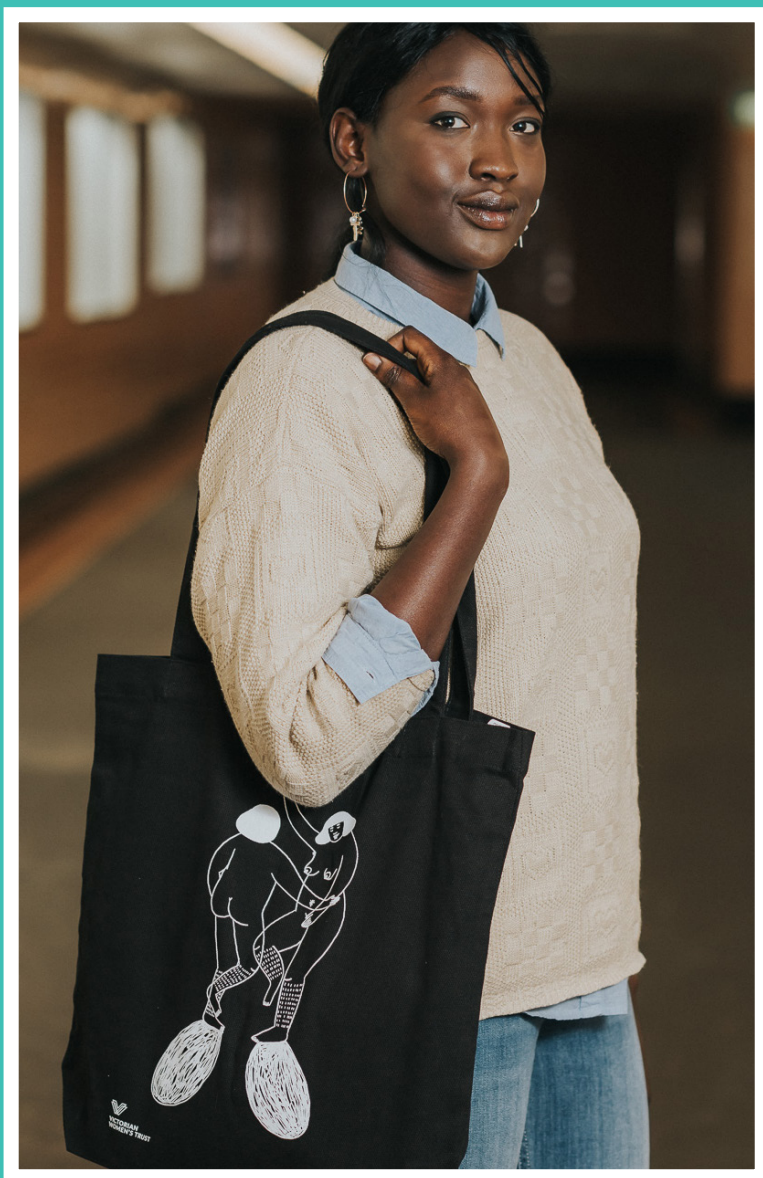




VICTORIAN
WOMEN'S TRUST

NEWSLETTER |
SPRING 2017





VWT volunteer Emmanuela looking gorgeous with our new Frances Cannon x VWT limited edition tote bag! Each bag directly supports our work.

Pick up yours today: vwt.org.au

FROM THE CHAIR



I am sure you will all join with me in noting the huge loss to the gender equality movement of Victorian State Government Minister, Fiona Richardson. It is sad but also a fitting tribute to her leadership that one of her final acts was the establishment of the Ministerial Council on Women's Equality – a body charged to provide advice to the Minister on the implementation of 'Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy' and to provide a gender lens on all government decision making. VWT Directors Leanne Miller and myself have been appointed and along with the other appointees, we will strive to realise her vision for this important venture.

As you know, the Victorian Women's Trust now has a proud thirty-two year history in working for gender equality and advancing the status of women through its policy work, research, advocacy, grants making and public initiatives. Few organisations could boast of this relatively long life without going through periods of challenge and even dark times. We are no exception.

Over the past two and a half years, our Executive Director, the Board and our organisation have been subjected to a protracted campaign by a small group of women which took root after the dismissal of a staffer.

Sadly, much of the focus of this campaign has been directed at our Executive Director who has been, and remains, an exceptional manager and leader of our organisation. Despite the given claims being made about Mary and the VWT being readily countered with factual evidence and measured responses, the defamation continued, culminating in Mary's decision to take legal proceedings against Ms Hutch Hussein in March of this year.

This defamation action has been settled. Mary sought a formal apology which she can now distribute as she sees fit. We think it is important that this newsletter of the

VWT provides an account of this defamation action as well as the apology provided by Ms Hutch Hussein.

It is testimony to Mary's leadership and the talent and capacity of the VWT staff that throughout this unfortunate saga, they all remained focused on doing great work week after week - culminating in our amazing *Breakthrough* event late last year; as well as all the other initiatives at play in the life and work of the organisation.

One of these great initiatives was to fund the film *Grace Under Fire* and assist in shining a light on what has been a hidden issue for rural women. On behalf of VWT, I recently hosted a screening of *Grace Under Fire* and a discussion of sexual harassment in rural workplaces at the annual conference of Australian Women in Agriculture in Brisbane. It was a terrific opportunity for VWT intern Sophie Bliss to attend the conference and write about this issue and I invite you to read her blogs on the VWT website.

As a country woman, I am thrilled also to see a range of Trust initiatives supporting regional Victorian women, including the VWBT's granting round for 2017 which will enable many exciting regional projects such as the Stella Prize 'Girls Write Up' workshop in Wodonga; and the making of a video for the *Invisible Farmer* project which is now being exhibited at the Melbourne Museum.

I commend this latest action-packed newsletter to all our friends and supporters.

Alana Johnson
Chair

FRANCES CANNON x VICTORIAN WOMEN'S TRUST



This spring, we've collaborated with Melbourne based artist Frances Cannon to create a limited edition ethical tote bag that celebrates the beauty + power of friendship.

Available in black or white, each bag supports the work of the Victorian Women's Trust, Australia's leading gender equality advocate.

www.vwt.org.au @VicWomensTrust

Images: Breeana Dunbar Photography

EXCITING VWT NEWS!



CONGRATULATIONS TO LEANNE MILLER ON HER ATLANTIC FELLOWSHIP!

VWT Board Director Leanne Miller has been accepted to the *Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity* program, run by The Atlantic Philanthropies. The Atlantic Philanthropies are a US-based charitable foundation dedicated to advancing opportunity, equity and human dignity. The program is empowering a new generation to advance fairer, healthier, more inclusive societies.

Atlantic Fellows are dynamic emerging leaders – activists, artists, journalists, health professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers, teachers, lawyers and others – with innovative ideas and the courage, conviction and capacity to bring lasting improvements to their communities and the world. Fellows work together across disciplines and borders to tackle some of today's most pressing issues: systemic inequality and racial equity; barriers to full participation in democracy.

The *Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity* program will develop up to 500 Atlantic Fellows who will lead transformative social change to achieve improved community health and wellbeing outcomes for Indigenous (Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori peoples) and marginalised communities within Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region. From all of us at the Victorian Women's Trust – congratulations Leanne on this amazing achievement!

VWT BOARD MEMBERS APPOINTED TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S EQUALITY

VWT Chair Alana Johnson and Board Director Leanne Miller have both been appointed to the inaugural *Ministerial Council on Women's Equality*. The council will report to the Minister for Women and Prevention of Family Violence, ensuring that real Victorian women's voices shape the direction of Victorian Government reforms. Alana and Leanne along with 19 other members of the council will provide expert advice on the implementation of '*Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*' and the future directions for gender equality in Victoria. Congratulations Alana and Leanne – we know you'll make an invaluable contribution to the Council!



WE REACHED OUR TARGET! THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH US

On Friday 1st September, there were whoops, yells and squeals of delight at VWT HQ as we watched the donation count climb and climb – and then finally pass our target for our *Let's Breakthrough* campaign!

Thanks to your support, we raised a total of \$27,000 for women's economic security and safety! This is a wonderful outcome that says so much about our community, what we stand for and our united vision for a fair future.

Now that we've passed that hurdle together, it's time for the work to begin. We are so excited for the next phase, made possible by your generous support. From everyone at the Victorian Women's Trust – thank you.

AROUND THE TRUST

CLUB RESPECT

It has been a busy few months for the team as we get towards the business end of the new digital platform build for *Club Respect*, a program making violence unacceptable in community sporting clubs by embedding a culture of respect that is deeply entrenched in attitudes and behaviours both on and off the field.

We have entered into a digital services agreement with design agency Squareweave whose mission is to enable the Australian social sector and for-purpose organisations to fully harness the power of digital innovation.

We are melding the wisdom of community coaches and parents, with the decades of violence prevention work of the VWT and sports administration experts to finesse the digital platform at each iteration. Building on our extensive 'sitting at the feet' of community clubs, we will be testing *Club Respect* on members of our target audience to ensure it is able to gain the community traction necessary to reduce violence in our communities.

On September 27th we met with our Critical Friends Group, which as always provided a great value-add and an expert lens over our processes.

Club Respect will launch in the first half of 2018. We have been finalising our outreach strategy for the post-launch stage of the project. We are currently negotiating a license agreement with NIRODAH to operate the *Club Respect* outreach once our digital platform is live and launched. NIRODAH is recognised as one of Australia's most experienced and innovative companies in the violence prevention field, delivering evidence based and highly engaging respectful relationship, bystander training and emotional intelligence education in schools and sports clubs.

Grace Mountford from the *Club Respect* team has been offered an exciting position in the Family Violence policy arena. She has had a great 18 months within the VWT team and we wish her all the best in her new role.

NEW THINGS COMING FOR ROSIE

It's been an exciting few years for *Rosie*! Since its launch in 2014 the *Rosie* website has had 3,949,000 visits, we've launched an app, we've published nearly 20 blogs written by teenage girls, filmed an original *Rosie* video series and created an educational module for teachers. And the good news just keeps coming - soon we'll be launching a fresh new *Rosie* website!

Access to quality information and resources around areas such as relationships, sex education, mental health, worker's rights, women's rights (and more) isn't always easy, especially for teenage girls. And especially for teenage girls living in rural areas. *Rosie* is bridging that gap. We provide girls with the knowledge and resources they need to become empowered, confident young women.

The new website will be packed full with brighter colours, more videos, more articles and more life. It will also be easier to navigate so that the resources we provide can reach even more girls around Australia. Because girls everywhere deserve better.

The new website will be up and running in November, so keep an eye out! We can't wait to share it with you.

Keep an eye out here: vwt.org.au/projects/rosie

HERE SHE IS

Since launching on 8 March 2013, *Here She Is* has become a valuable public resource to help people and organisations connect with capable and successful women.

The Victorian Government's *Gender Equality Strategy* has recognised the important need for a successful directory of women. With this in mind, we were delighted at VWT to receive financial support from the State Government to refresh the site and help us to promote and market it in the months to come.

To this end, we have merged *Here She Is* to be part of our revamped and current Victorian Women's Trust website. This will mean greater accessibility and traffic flow to the directory.

We hope readers will consider uploading their profiles to the directory.

You can take a look at the new digital platform at: vwt.org.au/directory/

We are very excited about this next step for *Here She Is* and want to grow this initiative as much as possible in order to assist the achievement of equal representation for women in our country. Please spread the word amongst your personal and professional networks.

WARATAH

The Waratah Project is nearly at the end of the all-important writing stage. Karen Pickering, Jane Bennett and Mary Crooks AO are working intensively together to polish the final manuscript.

We are lucky to have a fantastic writing team in Karen and Jane. Karen bringing her amazing feminist acuity and Jane her wealth of menstrual health knowledge and accuracy in shaping the qualitative data of the project

We are *all* excited to be at the completion stage of this groundbreaking project and are happily anticipating the birth and impact of this intriguing baby. The landmark document is on track to be published in early 2018. We can't wait!

POLICY SUBMISSIONS

The Trust believes that our policy submission are key to our role as an advocate for women and girls in Victoria. The Trust submissions focus on issues which we believe go to the heart of gender equity-economic status, discrimination, poverty, and unfair treatment under the law.

Labor Party's *Setting The Agenda*

SUBMISSION BY CASIMIRA MELICAN & MARY CROOKS AO

In this submission, we wanted to share our learnings on what it will take to achieve true gender equality in this country. Recalling Santayana's famous dictum that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it, we have chosen to go back and reflect on the *1943 Women's Charter*.

More than sixty years later, we are provided with a stark reminder that we have not yet achieved many of the Charter's resolutions, despite the fact and that the reforms featured in the Charter 'will benefit not only women, but every man and child.'

In the submission we argued that a substantial narrative shift and policy response is required to engender change and new ways of thinking about those thorny issues that have persisted despite women's best efforts.

We believe Labor has a unique opportunity in *Setting The Agenda* to build momentum and a political appetite for bold, sophisticated and measured policies which lead to gender equality and to real and lasting and positive change.

The Trust received fantastic feedback from Tanya Plibersek's office, 'thank you and your team for your excellent submission to our Setting the Agenda consultation...loved the approach you took reflecting on the 1943 Women's Charter. Looking forward to hearing more of VWT's ideas!'

1800 RESPECT Domestic and Sexual Violence National Counselling Service Inquiry

SUBMISSION BY GRACE MOUNTFORD & MARY CROOKS AO

This Senate inquiry focussed on the 1800 RESPECT Domestic and Sexual Violence National Counselling Service, and submissions were asked to consider whether the 1800 RESPECT service is meeting the needs of women and their children experiencing violence.

In our submission, we identified four operating principles which we believe are non-negotiable in the review and ongoing operation of an effective, responsive national counselling service:

1. The service must at all times be underpinned by deep conceptions or understandings of people's actual lived experiences; how these can vary profoundly; and how some groups of women are 'multiply burdened' due to a compounding interplay of gender, race, ethnicity, class, disability and/or geography,
2. Callers must at all times receive a high quality, trauma informed response,
3. Callers must at all times be safe using the service and trust that their privacy is not at risk,
4. Call operators must be guaranteed occupational health and safety.

Learn more about our policy submissions and advocacy at: vwt.org.au/policy-advocacy/

HOW TO BE A SUPER SMART WOMAN

Esther Davies-Brown had the chance to interview Pauline Taylor, the author of new book *How to be a Super Smart Woman, New Strategies for Superannuation*, published by ThreeKookaburras in October.

I'm in my 20s, I haven't thought much about my super yet, what advice would you give me and other young women in my position?

Yes, well the earlier you think about your super the better because you get compound interest so you are earning a return on your return. Using the co-contributions scheme by government if you're on a lower salary could mean getting 50c from government for every dollar you put in to boost your super early.

The other thing to think about is looking at your fund statement, what is coming in in terms of the investment returns and your employer contributions and also what is coming out in terms of fees and insurance premiums and work out whether this is right for you. You can use comparison websites to compare the performance of other superfunds, and most people are able to change their superfund. So if you are not happy, you might want to go to another fund.

You also need to check what sort of investment option you've got, you might have just been put into the default option. Markets go up and down, and if you are young, you're in super for the long run, so you might want to think about a higher growth investment option. Or you might want to think about an environmentally friendly option or a socially conscious or socially responsible option, and more of the funds are offering these as an investment choices so shop around.

Consolidate your funds into one fund if you've been working in a few different jobs. This means you are paying more than you should really on fees, and insurance premiums, and you might have insurance policies that you don't need that you are paying for.

On the other hand, what advice would you give to older women who feel like they have missed out on accumulating a decent super balance, is it too late?

Well it is never too late, but it does get harder as you get older because there are limits on additional or voluntary contributions, there are rules about that you need to understand. However, there are some new catch up rules starting from next year where you can choose to put lump-sums and contributions in at a time that suits you.



If you have investments outside superannuation you might think of selling these and putting them into super, to provide you with an income stream in retirement. So, for instance you might have an investment property, or some investments outside super, best to perhaps think about putting them all into superannuation when you're older so that you've got this regular income stream to facilitate living in older age.

If you've got a partner, you might want to think about equalising your balances, if one has got a lot more than the other. Because sometimes there can be advantages with Centrelink, with managing your super to get the best option from Centrelink. On Centrelink, they provide free seminars and financial advisors that you can make an appointment to find out what your options are to organise your assets and increase your pension payments.

For women in their late 50's, consider accessing your super while you're still working. This can be done with a transition to retirement income stream. So you have to take your super payments as a pension, but you can draw up to 10% of your fund, and that can help you reduce your mortgage and other debts. I remember one woman at one of my seminars was going to do that to get her mortgage out of the way and then continue to work using this transition to retirement income stream because it is very important to be free of debt when you retire.

If you are into your 60s you can continue to accumulate super even if you have retired. You might be able to do some contract or temporary work, and that might help you to meet the work test, to put a little extra into super from the extra money that you have made.

For women that are self-employed, there are capital gains tax concessions, you can sell your business and particularly if you've got business premises and were planning on using those profits in your retirement, you can talk to your accountant about getting tax concessions for putting that money into superannuation.

How much money do people need for a comfortable retirement? Shouldn't the government take care of people with the pension?

Well, the *Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia* have done an estimate and they estimate that a single person needs \$545,000 for a comfortable retirement, but look there are so many estimates of how much you need. And it is very much up to the individual, so much depends on your personal circumstances, where you're living and how you plan to live in retirement. And even though we've had compulsory superannuation now for more than 20 years we've still got a lot of people relying on the age pension.

This is not ideal because our age pension is really just a safety net. It does not provide you with enough for retirement. To have so many people relying on the Age Pension is not desirable, because we have an ageing population, and in the future we are going to have more elderly people living for longer and relatively fewer young tax payers that are going to be able to support them, so it's just not going to be sustainable into the future. So the government needs to reduce dependency on the Age Pension to pare back its spending and balance its budget and the best way to reduce spending on the pension is to help those who rely on it most, and the people that rely on it most are women. So, helping and supporting women is not just a matter of fairness and justice it actually makes sound economic sense.

At VWT's *Breakthrough2016* event Dr. Richard Denniss, chief economist at The Australia Institute gave tongue-in-cheek tips for women about super. What do you think about the way the current superannuation works (or doesn't work) for women?

Well I attended *Breakthrough* and I heard Richard make that speech, and I totally agree with everything he said. Our system was designed for people who work continuously, who don't take career breaks and women work differently. So we need to reform the system and advocate for change.

We know that fairness and justice can take a long time to happen, those of us who were marching in the 1970s for equal pay know sometimes things don't just happen. And in the meantime we have to manage the best we can. I think we should concentrate on positives, so the compulsory superannuation guarantee has meant that many many more women now have at least some super, whereas we didn't in the past. We are generally much better off than our mothers were. So, we really need to value that super, it is such an important asset, it is probably second to our home, and if we don't have a home it is our most important asset, we need to nurture it

and help it to grow. The other positive about the system is that it gives us a lot of flexibility, and flexibility is so important for women. For example, we can choose to make additional voluntary contributions at a time that suits us, not only when the government says we have to. For example, if you are returning to full-time work if you have been working part-time or if you are returning to the paid workforce, or if your children are no longer dependent and suddenly there is more income to be putting into super. So to choose a time that suits you best, bearing in mind those limits on contributions can be better for many women.

Of course, many women simply can't afford to put anything at all into their super, they can't make a voluntary contribution and some of them are out of the workforce caring for kids and not in formal work. But even if you are in this situation you can manage what you've got and check that what you have is still growing by looking at your investment options and checking your fees and insurance premiums.

How do you think we can push for long term reform so the system works for everyone?

Well to advocate for reform, we really need to understand what needs to change and why it needs to change. And more women need to be aware of the fact that the system works against them, many women don't realise this until they are much older. If we are going to advocate for change, we need to be aware of how it works. It's not just about women choosing to work part-time or take time out of the workforce or to work in a lower paid industry. The really important factor is how the tax system impacts on the super system and creates major distortions. Because the tax system encourages people on high incomes with large balances to contribute more to their super and it does nothing to help those with low balances and low incomes to contribute more. So we need to turn this around, we need to reverse this, so that the tax concessions and benefits go to people who need them, to those on the low balances. So that not only do we have a fairer system but we have a system that is working to reduce reliance on the pension. So, we can do this by reforming the tax of super, through tax rebates and supplements to carers, so there is a lot to be done, it can be done.

Pauline Taylor is not a licensed financial adviser. These comments are of a general nature only and do not constitute personal advice.

You can purchase a copy of *How to be a Super Smart Woman* at: threekookaburras.com

OUT + ABOUT

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE 2017 CONFERENCE



Above (left to right): Alana Johnson, Dr. Skye Saunders and VWT Intern Sophie Bliss

Victorian Women's Trust Chair Alana Johnson attended the 2017 *Australian Women in Agriculture Conference* on the 22-24th September. One of our great VWT interns Sophie Bliss was lucky enough to accompany Alana at the conference.

Taking place in Brisbane from 22-24th September, the conference had a strong focus on the diversity of skills and contributions made by women in agriculture cross-sectors, especially those that demonstrate diversity, sustainability and entrepreneurship.

Alana hosted a screening of *Grace Under Fire* at the conference and a panel discussion with Dr. Skye Saunders on sexual harassment in rural workplaces. Keep an eye out for Sophie's upcoming piece about the conference on the VWT blog soon.

WOMEN'S FUNDING NETWORK 2017 SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

In early September Executive Director Mary Crooks AO spoke in San Francisco at the *Women's Funding Network Conference*. The conference theme was *Tools for Turbulent Times*, an understandable title given the current political climate over there. Mary co-presented a workshop with President & CEO of the Women's Foundation of Greater Kansas City, Wendy Doyle. Wendy discussed her organisations impressive equal representation initiative called the *Appointments Project* and Mary discussed the VWT's newly relaunched *Here She Is* initiative.

Find out more about the *Appointments Project* here:
womens-foundation.org/a-p/

SOLVING THE CASE OF THE MISSING WOMAN

By Tracey Spicer



"We can't find enough women. Where are all the women?"

This question is asked at the *Financial Review Westpac 100 Women of Influence* dinner, where there are almost one thousand representatives of this gender. The interlocutor is the Fin's business editor, who laments that the paper is perceived as being "too blokey". His pained expression seems to suggest the problem is intractable.

Certainly our *Mates Over Merit* report, conducted by *Women in Media* and *iSentia*, reveals almost four-in-five finance stories are written by men. This is not the fault of our educational institutions, which for 30 years have pumped out mainly female journalism graduates. And it's not the fault of women in the media and business for failing to 'lean in' far enough.

It's a confluence of power and privilege, which structurally excludes women. Witness the private schoolboy institutions like *Macquarie Bank*, where cutting off a woman's ponytail is a bit of jolly good fun. Or the newsrooms where 'fuckability' is a key factor for female success, while men retain the bulk of plum pipeline roles in business and politics.

So, I breathe deeply before answering Sherlock Holmes' query about The Case Of The Missing Women.

This particular editor takes the path of least resistance: blithely hiring blokes, and quoting fellow members of the boys' club, because it's easier. It's unconscious bias, writ large. His finger-pointing at the banks for only recommending male talent doesn't ring true. For all of its faults, the financial services industry is desperate to promote women. (Or at the very least appear to be female-friendly...)

Then there are the twin pressures of trolling and toiling: women are shot down for putting their heads above the parapet, or too busy doing unpaid work to 'waste time' being interviewed. It's a complex set of factors with a simple solution: targets to amplify women's voices.

(Interestingly, female journos are twice as likely to quote female sources as male journos.)

Both the *BBC* and *Bloomberg* have set such strategies. Former *Bloomberg* editor Matthew Winkler demanded at least one woman be interviewed for each enterprise story – a quota for quotes. And the *BBC* is aiming for 50/50 gender representation on air by 20/20. Already, the revelation of a wide gender pay gap at Britain's

national broadcaster has prompted one well-paid man to stand aside from his prime-time hosting role to make way for a woman.

But we also need easy-to-use lists of female 'talent' so time-poor reporters avoid the usual suspects. This is what makes the directory *Here She Is* from the Victorian Women's Trust so important, especially in raising the profiles of marginalised women. Our new *Women in Media* website, being launched next month, will also contain links to databases with a diverse range of women.

Still, we should confront an uncomfortable question: Are white women slowly becoming the new white men?

At the vast majority of conferences, I look around and see women like me: a homogenised group of able-bodied, cis-gendered, heterosexual people, pale with privilege.

The problem with power is not only that it corrupts. It is, as historian Henry Adams attests, "a sort of tumour that ends by killing the victim's sympathies". An article this week in *The Atlantic* highlights research by psychology professor at UC Berkeley, Dacher Keltner. He's found subjects under the influence of power, "act as if they've suffered a traumatic brain injury... becoming less adept at seeing things from other people's point of view". And Sukhvinder Obhi, a neuroscientist at McMaster University in Ontario, says power, "impairs a specific neural process, 'mirroring', that may be the cornerstone of empathy".

Through *Women in Media*, we're trying to tackle this by speaking to CEOs about inclusive strategies, funding scholarships for mid-career women from different communities, and diversifying our own structures and committees. There are also personal pledges we can all consider, including boycotting events with little diversity, giving up our place on panels to women of colour, and asking to hear from those who are marginalised.

Writer, speaker and appearance activist Carly Findlay has some sage advice.

"Don't take on a story about a marginalised person or their issues if you know there's someone in that community who could write it," she says. "If you have an audience, tell them about women they might not have heard from before. Share work from LGBTIQ people, women of colour, disabled women and CALD women."

In other words, don't act like privileged white men. Refuse to take the path of least resistance. In fact, #SuggestASister to take your seat. And use the wonderful resource offered by the Victorian Women's Trust.

The day after the *100 Women of Influence* event, I email our friend the business editor with some suggestions. He responds with a brief, "I'll look into it". I'm yet to hear back. It seems he may never solve the millennia-old mystery of the 'missing women', until he chooses to look outside his own pocket of privilege.

Tracey Spicer is a television, radio, newspaper and online journalist and now a highly sought-after writer, speaker and trainer.

You can join *Here She Is* at:
vwt.org.au/directory

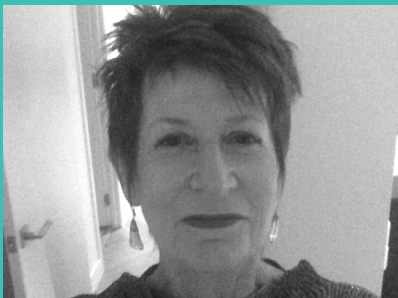
VOLUNTEER SNAPSHOT

Another newsletter, another snapshot of our fabulous volunteers! Interested in volunteering with the Trust?
Visit: vwt.org.au/volunteer/



CLAIRE DUFFY

Claire has worked and studied in the fields of literature and writing since 2004. She completed a BA Honours in Professional and Creative Writing in 2011 and is currently completing a creative practice PhD focussing on humour in contemporary feminist literature. Her short stories aim to use literature's power to unsettle social attitudes. Claire has been volunteering with the VWT since May 2017, putting her fantastic skills to work helping with writing and editing our publications.



JAN BROWNING

Jan started volunteering at the VWT in September 2013 in response to the *Credit Where Credit is Due* newspaper campaign. The campaign spoke to Jan of the achievements and poor treatment of Julia Gillard and she contacted us the day that it appeared to volunteer. Jan currently volunteers on *Club Respect* addressing and reducing violence and abuse against women by targeting community sporting clubs throughout the state. It's an exciting project and she feels privileged to be working alongside the rest of the *Club Respect* team.



CHRISTINE CUMMINGS

Christine commenced volunteer work in December 2016 after moving to Melbourne from Canberra. Her background was with the National Film and Sound Archive and she loves music and has made a bit of art in her time. She enjoyed archiving the maverick *Breakthrough 2016* event, has been part of the Gender Equality Films research team identifying historic footage of the Victorian-based Australian womens' movement and loves working with the VWT team. She will start her new role at the National Archives of Australia in mid-November, best of luck for the future Christine!



KAREN LARGE

Before coming to the Trust Karen was the State Director of the Victorian and Tasmanian Office, Commonwealth Department of Health. Looking for new challenges in her retirement, Karen came on board to be the lead researcher on the Trust's *Our Voice Their Safety* campaign. Karen recently worked on a short video documenting the many achievements of Australian women over the past 150 years. The video was one of the many highlights at Eve Mahlab's 80th birthday celebrations organised by the VWT in June.



DENISE KEIGHERY

Denise Keighery, along with Pam Carty-Salmon, has been working on *The Waratah Project*. Denise and Pam have been undertaking a huge amount of processing qualitative data for the project in preparation for the writing phase, which is currently underway.

JOURNEYING TOWARDS PRIDE

by Jordan Raskopoulos

I was on tour with my band. It was a long tour. We'd spent a month performing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, a week in Germany and were now in the middle of several weeks travelling around the UK. Touring life isn't as glamorous as it may seem. Most of my days were spent quietly sitting in the back of a van with my thoughts...and my Nintendo DS.

I spent a lot of time thinking during that tour (and a bit of time playing Ocarina of Time). And my thoughts often gravitated towards the feelings that I had around my gender identity. These were feelings I'd had since I was a child. I came to the conclusion that I was miserable living as a man and that I'd grown progressively more unhappy and emotionally repressed throughout the course of my life. Then, one night, alone, in a hotel room in a seaside town in the north of Wales after a pretty mediocre gig I realised that eventually my dysphoria would get the better of me. I couldn't hide it forever. I wasn't suicidal but I could in that moment see a future where I might be, so I asked myself this question, "trans or die?" I chose to transition because I didn't want to die.

See people think it's about choosing between being male or female. Picking one over the other but that wasn't the case for me. It was a choice between personal acceptance and oblivion; trans or die

It's been three years since I made that decision. I was 32. I sometimes wonder that if I'd been able to speak about it when I was younger, would I have been living a happier life sooner? The unfortunate answer to that question is I don't know and I don't think so. I think that If I'd come out twenty years earlier in 1994, when I was 12, I would have had a very difficult time. I don't think I'd have had the emotional support I needed, I doubt that I'd have had as much success at school or been able to form the friendships that I have. I think I would have struggled to get to university, and I very much doubt that I'd be enjoying the status I enjoy today as a world famous internet funny person.

And it saddens me. It saddens me that I enjoyed, and still enjoy to some extent, a level of social privilege that would have been denied to me had I simply been honest about my feelings when I was a child. And knowing that sucks.

There are too many young people out there right now struggling with shame. I know that these very public and ongoing debates about marriage rights, the validity of rainbow families, the acceptability of LGBTQIA+ anti bullying programs, and the appropriateness of queer lives, fuels that shame.



Cis gender, heterosexual, non-queer muggle people in my life have asked me what connects the letters of the rainbow alphabet. Why is gender identity lumped in with sexual preference and people who are intersex? Aren't they different things? And the answer is really quite simple. We stand together because we all share the experience of living in a society that encourages us to be ashamed of who we are. This is why pride is such an important word for our community because pride is the opposite of shame. And the journeys of queer people are quite often journeys from shame towards pride.

For me, I was ashamed of being trans and I tried to hide it, ignore it and wish it away. I reached a point where I had to accept it and do something about it and I could have stopped there. I could have ducked away from public life, hidden my trans status and attempted to live my life masquerading as a cisgender person. But I decided to continue on my journey and I'm now at the point where I'm proud. I like being trans. It's really hard sometimes, but on the whole being trans is bloody excellent. I don't want to shut up about it. I have an amazing perspective on a whole bunch of things. I know that getting hit in the balls hurts more than being hit in the tits. I know that! I've experienced both! How cool is that? Being trans has allowed me to speak out and help people. I don't want others to struggle as much as I did. I'm so glad to be proud and I am so thankful to have gotten to where I am right now. I almost didn't.

Jordan Raskopoulos has found world wide success as a Comedian, Singer, Actress, Radio Host, Speaker, Writer, Voice Over Artist, Events Host, Panelist, Commentator, Improvisor and Advocate. Jordan is best known as the front-woman for comedy rock group *The Axis of Awesome*.

2017 GRANTS

By Carolyn Munckton
General Manager, Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust



The 2017 grants from our community grants program and from our Sub-Funds once again show the myriad ways that the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust encourages and facilitates social investment in women and girls in our state.

The 2017 General Grants this year focussed on supporting and improving the lives of women and their families in regional Victoria. In particular, many grants were to promote social inclusion and community cohesion. Many of the funded projects address the needs of refugee and migrant families, or women or girls who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

This year we invited a number of other philanthropic foundations to co-fund with the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust. We are very grateful to the following foundations for assisting us to invest in the future of women and girls: Australian Communities Foundation, the Grosvenor Foundation, the Alfred Felton Bequest, The William Buckland Foundation, RE Ross Trust and 5point Foundation.

The outcome of this brokerage work meant that 14 projects could be fully funded, 10 in regional Victoria and four in metropolitan Melbourne.

Through our work, the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust has delivered just over \$250,000 in project funding to community organisations supporting and empowering women and girls.

GENERAL GRANTS

2017 Flagship Grant Primary Care Connect – Khanuma (ladies in Dari)

\$25,000 total grant – supported by the Grosvenor Foundation and a generous donor

Khanuma will address social isolation amongst refugee women in the Shepparton community. While creating and developing friendships and connections, the women will be setting a foundation to address past traumas by engaging in a safe and inclusive environment. They will begin conversations about their personal challenges related to their experiences as refugee women; sharing and normalising their stories. Women will have opportunity to further explore their own individual trauma more thoroughly through individual counselling with dedicated trauma counsellors. These experiences will be shared with the broader community to assist in positive cultural sharing within a trauma informed framework.

Multicultural Arts Victoria – Beads of Culture

\$10,080 grant

Beads of Culture will uncover practitioners of traditional cultural beading skills within the many cultural groups who live within the Goulburn Valley Region, in particular, newly arrived refugee, emerging multicultural and Indigenous communities. Women from these communities will come together in a series of hands-on workshops to share, rediscover and reinterpret traditional bead making, sewing, threading and use. Participation will be facilitated by lead artist/community cultural development practitioner from Kaiela Arts who will guide the project towards a large exhibition that will express the diverse cultures coming together in an inclusive and contemporary installation.

Gippsland Disability Advocacy Inc – Sustaining Enabling Women in Gippsland

\$17,370 grant

Enabling Women in Gippsland is a community leadership program that empowers women with disabilities to have a voice about issues that relate to them and other women with disabilities and have influence in Gippsland communities. The program is based on that developed and delivered by Women with Disabilities Victoria.

The Stella Prize – Girls Write Up Wodonga

\$10,000 grant


Girls Write Up is a day-long festival for teens that teaches empowerment through writing and sharing stories; explores the relationship between language, gender and power; and examines the effects of unconscious bias on our sense of self.

Girls Write Up Wodonga is a regional pilot of a highly successful program, and aims to ensure that 50 percent of participants are from a low socio-economic or otherwise disadvantaged background.

The Boite – Diversitat joins Boite Millennium Chorus

\$3400 grant – funded by the Australian Communities Foundation

Up to 15 regional refugee women and children joined in the *Boite Millennium Chorus 2017*. The *Boite Millennium Chorus* presents a concert of 300 community singers with culturally diverse songs and musicians, and is socially inclusive to people of all genders, ethnicities, and abilities. The Boite partnered with Diversitat in Geelong, to involve local refugee and migrant families with The Boite Geelong regional choir through rehearsals and the grand performance at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre in August 2017.



Centre for Farmer Health – From Inside the Farm Gate: Rural Women’s Stories of Thriving and Surviving

\$15,000 grant and an additional \$30,000 grant from the William Buckland Foundation

Victorian farming women from rural communities experiencing tough times will participate in a digital storytelling workshop to tell their personal story of facing socio-economic disadvantage and challenges to social and emotional wellbeing. The workshop will provide opportunity for ‘invisible farmers’ to share experiences in a safe, trusted, peer supported environment – facilitating emotional expression without judgment, building self-confidence, a sense of achievement and encouraging positive social contact. The resulting stories will be publicly exhibited to rural and urban audiences – giving voice to an unheard group of Victorian women, encouraging mutual reflection, empathy and understanding.

Council of Single Mothers and their Children Vic (CSMC) – Supporting Single Mothers in Regional Victoria

\$15,160 grant and an additional \$15,000 grant from the Felton Bequest

The project will create support networks for single mothers in targeted regional Victoria communities, connecting them to one another, local services, their broader community, and CSMC specialised support services.

Single mothers in regional Victoria are dealing with intersecting issues including greater social isolation than metropolitan single mothers, in particular if they have recently moved to regional areas in order to obtain affordable housing, as is an emerging trend.

CSMC will use technology and place-based supports to reduce the social isolation these women encounter, foster mutual support and increase utilisation of our statewide support and referral service.

Gateway Health/Albury Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council Inc. – Multicultural Women’s Circle

\$5430 grant and matched co-funding from 5point Foundation

The *Multicultural Women’s Circle* is a pilot mothers’ support group for migrant and refugee women in the Wodonga area. The group will meet weekly for two hours to provide support and social opportunities to mothers experiencing isolation. The group will run during Victorian school terms. Each fortnight will provide an information session and networking opportunities for the women, including local women presenting topics such as education and employment pathways, women’s

health, family violence education, mental health, maternal child health, art, yoga and mindfulness, etc.

Diversitat (Geelong Ethnic Communities Council)– Stepping Forward

\$9000 – a partnership grant with the Australian Communities Foundation

The program will seek to engage girls across new arrival communities to form three of four netball teams that will join the Corio Netball Association in the Northern suburbs of Geelong for the 2018 season. All players will be from a refugee background and funding will support skill development, uniforms and transport as well as promote opportunities for social inclusion, increasing self-esteem and building cultural understanding. The aim is to increase the confidence of new arrival young women to interact with the wider community by promoting a healthy active lifestyle; addressing the benefits related to physical activity, healthy eating and community connectedness through playing netball. *Stepping Forward* will highlight the opportunities for girls and young women encouraging participation in community netball as a means of personal development in a safe and supportive environment; building new skills and community networks and participating in mainstream society.

Helping Hoops – Helping Hoops Future

\$5000 grant – funded by the Grosvenor Foundation

Helping Hoops Future is a free female-only multicultural basketball program for young people aged 14-21. Participants have come from *Helping Hoops* community programs and now desire a more challenging and targeted experience. The program runs every week for two hours and is overseen by a coach, whose position has previously been funded through Victorian Women’s Benevolent Trust grants. *Helping Hoops Future* includes a partnership with Victoria Police and Melbourne Boomers WNBL basketball club.

University of Melbourne – The Lullaby Playgroup

\$10,890 grant – a partnership grant with the Australian Communities Foundation

This project involves the development of a regular playgroup hosted by Fitzroy Primary School. Local mothers will bring their young children (0-6 years) to weekly two-hour playgroups, during which the children and mothers will engage with other attendees (of various culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds) over the sharing of songs (lullabies, nursery rhymes) and food. The project will facilitate positive intercultural communication, English language development, and participants are invited to teach others songs in their language, and share food they’ve cooked. This playgroup

Continued

GENERAL GRANTS

Continued

will provide pilot data for researchers to use to develop a community music playgroup model that can be tailored to and implemented in other schools.

Brotherhood of St Laurence – Stepping Stones to Small Business

\$25,000 grant – a partnership grant with the Australian Communities Foundation

The project aims to help women from culturally diverse backgrounds to develop the capacity to become financially independent by assisting them to establish viable businesses, and to enable their social and financial inclusion in order to increase their economic participation, improving the situation for the individual women and their families. This will help them settle happily and independently in their new community.

MacKillop Family Services – In Safe Hands, Cara at MacKillop

\$12,500 grant and an additional \$12,500 grant from the RE Ross Trust

In Safe Hands is a young mums parenting program run out of Morgan House; a 'Mums and Bubs' residential unit. The program runs weekly offering young women and their partners (if appropriate) the opportunity to participate in a range of therapeutic services including self-development and educational opportunities. Different topics are covered each week such as SIDS safety, infant CPR, baby development, feeding and sleeping routines, introducing solids, attachment theory, and bonding through play etc. It is a safe, non-judgemental environment where young vulnerable mothers can share parenting experiences and learn from one another.

The Centre for Participation – Horsham Hospitality Workforce Pathways

\$10,522 and an additional \$13,000 grant from the RE Ross Trust

Of the 300 migrant and refugee families in Horsham, there are 50 women who self-identify in need of social and vocational support. This project provides for 20 women to increase their confidence in English, customer service, hospitality skills and to become work ready.

Participants will complete the *Centre for Participation's* English courses, seven hospitality units and First Aid training. Volunteers will support learning and social inclusion. Hospitality partners and the Centre's 'Harmony Food Van' will provide valuable work experience at local cafés and field days. At the end, it is hoped that participants will be ready for employment, enterprise and for a pathway to further hospitality study.

SUB-FUND GRANTS



PRUE MYER SUB-FUND

Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services – Developing Financially Wise Women

\$9100 grant

This project will provide financial literacy training for refugee women from African, Burmese and Iraqi backgrounds leading to a train-the-trainer model. Women will be able to take greater financial control of their lives, leading to financial security for themselves, their families and more opportunities for engaging in the wider community. The program will coincide with the homework club in St Albans where many of the women currently bring their children. The program has two parts: teaching financial literacy followed by mentoring to utilise the skills learnt.

Youth Plus Foundation – St Joseph's FLC Girls to the Front Circus Training

\$5000 grant

Working with trainers from the *Women's Circus* in Footscray, the program will engage young women from St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre in North Melbourne and train them in circus skills. The school will work with qualified trainers from the *Women's Circus* to engage disengaged students in learning that is hands-on, meaningful and enjoyable, with the intention of showing them that they are able to achieve anything they set their mind to.

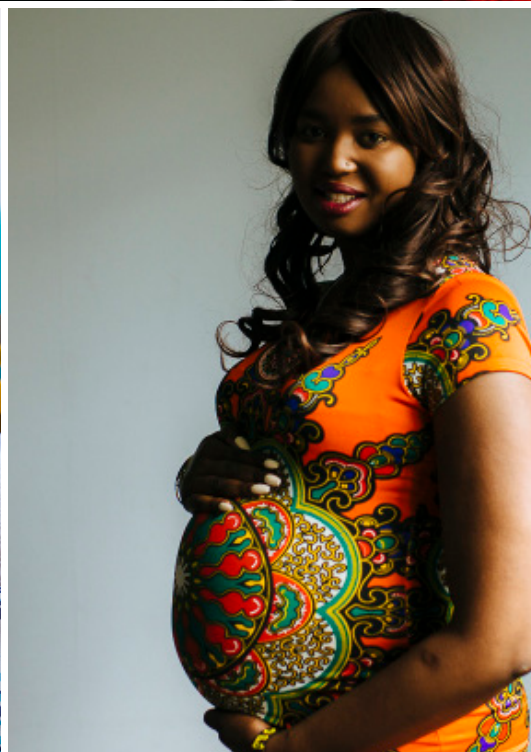


CON IRWIN SUB-FUND

Deakin University – Sexual Lives & Respectful Relationships (SL&RR) Peer Education program

\$6190 grant

Deakin University's *Sexual Lives & Respectful Relationships* (SL&RR) Peer Education program is a sexuality rights and violence prevention program for people with an intellectual disability in the community. In October 2017 Deakin will host the first SL&RR professional development day. The day is an opportunity for information sharing, professional development and networking for the SL&RR trainers, with a focus on developing group work and facilitation skills. This grant will make it possible for SL&RR Peer Educators (people with intellectual disability) to attend and be part of the development day.



SUB-FUND GRANTS

Continued

Fitzroy Legal Service – Migration and Family Violence Legal Support Service

\$7926 grant

This grant will assist Fitzroy Legal Service to meet current and anticipated future unmet need relating to assistance for victims/survivors of family violence, particularly women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. It will fund training and registration for two family violence lawyers to become registered migration agents, as well as registration through the Migration Agents Registration Authority which is required for a lawyer to provide migration advice.

Janet Clarke Hall – Respectful relationships education for young men and women living and studying at Janet Clarke Hall, University of Melbourne

\$3000 grant

This project will enhance the College's current program and commitment to building and maintaining a respectful and safe community through JCH's orientation and transition programs. The main aim is to devise a program that can be used as a model or blueprint for other residential colleges nationally, to enhance awareness around respectful relationships in order to prevent sexual violence and better support survivors.



ESSIE BURBRIDGE SUB-FUND

**Community Music Victoria Inc
– Voices of Peace: an Assyrian
Chaldean Women's Choir**

\$3600 grant

Voices of Peace will empower recently arrived and settled Assyrian Chaldean refugees to establish a Women's Choir. This project, supported by a partnership between Community Music Victoria and Foundation House, will involve leadership training, provision and development of resources and opportunities for wider social connection.

Wellsprings For Women – Living, Learning, Belonging

\$6115 grant

Living, Learning, Belonging is a program for women of diverse backgrounds to come together for a common purpose of building and strengthening their sense of belonging to Australian society. This will be done through regular workshops, deliberations, meaningful engagement, facilitated by experienced group moderators. Apart from exploring and unpacking the diverse cultures the women come from, additional learning will take place around the challenges the women

are facing in their daily life in Australia, such as parenting in a new culture and understanding Australian services and systems.



JOAN HUDSON SUB-FUND

**National Council of Jewish Women
– Caring Mums**

\$5000 grant

Caring Mums is a confidential, home-based, free-of-charge and non-denominational program that provides emotional support to mums of newborn babies and women during pregnancy from a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. *Caring Mums* plans to reach out to support additional vulnerable, isolated and at-risk women in a new geographical area and continue and extend the capacity of the program. It will promote the program locally, training local residents as volunteers to add to its already diverse volunteer pool.

Birth for Humankind – Birth Support Program for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, Vulnerable Women

\$1738

The birth support program gives women experiencing financial hardship and social disadvantage access to free pregnancy, birth and early parenting support. By coming alongside vulnerable women in a critical juncture in their lives – as they navigate pregnancy, child-birth, becoming mothers and the newborn period – *Birth for Humankind* turns what might have been a very lonely, overwhelming time into a time of celebration and validation, contributing to and creating happier and healthy mums and babies.



FAY MARLES SUB-FUND

**Swinburne University of Technology
– Implementing International Sex
Discrimination Policies: the Power
of the Foreign Affairs Minister**

\$7039 grant

This research will examine the enablers and barriers of implementing international sex discrimination laws and the outcomes to provide women with equal rights and opportunities. The research will analyse best practices and outcomes, and will make recommendations to strengthen human rights policies for women in Victoria and across Australia.



JEAN MCCAUGHEY SUB-FUND

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand – Welfare to Work and the Experience of Marginalised Single Mothers

\$7500 grant

The *Welfare to Work* and the *Experience of Marginalised Single Mothers* research project aims to examine and understand the lived experiences of 20 single mothers with school aged children who are on the Welfare to Work program as part of their mutual obligation to receive Parenting Payment Single or Newstart Allowance. The project will expand upon a preliminary study undertaken by Good Shepherd in 2017 that investigated how the *Welfare to Work* program impacts on the financial security and self-reliance of single mothers. This next iteration will reach a more diverse cross-section of marginalised single mothers.



CHRIS FRIDAY SUB-FUND

Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association – Women and Family Support Fund

\$2715 grant

To provide monetary support for Aboriginal women and their children fleeing family violence by helping them to pay bonds.



LOULA RODOPOULOS SUB-FUND

Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre – Wonderful Women's Health: A Social Inclusion Program for Women with Mental Health Issues

\$4000 grant

The *Wonderful Women's Health Project* will involve strengthening the social inclusion partnership between Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre and local mental health agencies in the Flemington area, including: Norfolk Terrace Community Care Unit, Arion Park, Cohealth and Waratah Mental Health Services, to ensure a supported transition back into the community for women with more serious mental health issues. The project will develop four new programs for women with mental health issues: creative writing, art therapy, anxiety support group and a singing group.

Writers Victoria – Digital Writer in Residence

\$2000 grant

Writers Victoria will offer a six-month digital residency for a Victorian women writer. The residency will include: paid commissions, professional development training, profile-raising and facilitated networking opportunities. Commissions will be published through the Writers Victoria website and partner outlets to be brokered in consultation with the resident writer, according to her interest areas. While open to all female-identifying writers, priority will be given to writers facing intersecting barriers to participation in the literary industry, particularly single mothers.



FLEUR SPITZER SUB-FUND

Family Life – Catch Up: Securing Futures for Vulnerable Older Women

\$5419 grant

With older women who are already engaged with the organisation, Family Life will co-design *Catch Up*, an empowerment program for older women from diverse backgrounds. The 300+ women volunteering with Family Life's Op Shop social enterprises and services, mostly who are over 60 years of age, will be the research partners to understand better the needs, barriers and gaps. Together they will customise a response that helps older women to draw on and navigate what is already available, and resource them to 'Catch Up' on ageing with financial and housing security, dignity and community support.

DEFAMATION: SERIOUS BUSINESS

By Mary Crooks AO
Executive Director, Victorian Women's Trust

Dear friends,

The VWT Board and I wish to provide friends of the Trust with the context for the defamation proceedings I initiated earlier this year against Ms Hutch Hussein, following which I received from her an unreserved apology.

For the first time in nearly thirty years of operation, in December 2014, the VWT dismissed a staffer. This prompted an allegation of bullying against me, as Executive Director. Subsequently a claim was filed in the Fair Work Commission against the VWT. The Board settled the matter some 18 months later, but confidentiality requirements restrict me from disclosing the reasons for the dismissal and the terms of settlement.

Not long after this termination of employment, in early 2015, friends and colleagues alerted me to a whispered smear campaign against me, alleging serious bullying and harassment and other untruths such as that I was about to 'face charges' and would soon be exposed in the media. The talk, generated by a handful of women, was spreading to an ever-widening public. People close to the VWT or who had worked alongside me for many years contacted me to express their outrage and distress, and to offer support.

In November 2015, Ms Hussein approached the VWT seeking a meeting to discuss 'concerns about the management and governance of the Trust'. Unhesitatingly, Board Chair Alana Johnson and I agreed to meet. At the ensuing meeting on 21 December 2015, Ms Hussein, along with Kay Setches and Marilyn Beaumont, tabled two unsigned documents containing damaging claims. The earlier whispered allegations of bullying had now taken written form, accompanied by other accusations such as that the VWT was in breach of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) standards; that it was engaged in 'mission drift'; that it was poorly led, managed and governed; and it was undertaking 'questionable' project initiatives.

The gravity of these accusations clearly warranted VWT's conscientious, factual, accurate response.

In February 2016, we delivered such a response - a comprehensive 70-page treatment comprising a judicious fifteen-page letter from the Board which was a measured, evidenced rebuttal of every claim and allegation; a thorough self-assessment of our performance against ACNC standards, which demonstrated that the VWT met and exceeded each standard, a position affirmed to us by the ACNC itself; and a detailed treatment of our activities over three

decades which emphatically debunked any notion of 'mission' drift, and less than exemplary leadership, management or governance.

The Board letter also pointed out that staff had initiated a signed letter to the Board expressing their outrage and deep distress over claims that I was a bully.

Ms Hussein responded by dismissing all provided evidence in an email to members of a group calling itself the 'Renewal Group'. The twelve recipients included two former short-term contractors to the VWT. One of those had chosen to be a witness against the VWT in the Fair Work case.


The email, sent by mistake to the VWT, characterised the Board's response as 'breathtakingly poor', 'laughable' in parts, and accused me of 'duping the Board'. The group was reminded of Edmund Burke's maxim that all it took 'for evil to flourish was for (good women) to do nothing' and that they would continue to 'shine a light on the untoward things going on in the organisation.'

The VWT again attempted to resolve this disturbing ongoing attack, inviting members of the group to a structured meeting at the home of one of the early architects of the VWT. Invitations to a meeting in April 2016 were sent to most of the 'Renewal Group'. All were declined.

In early 2017, Ms Hussein circulated an anonymous four-page document entitled 'Troubles at The Trust'. It came just six weeks after our nationally acclaimed two-day VWT Breakthrough event at the Melbourne Town Hall in late November 2016. This electrifying gender equality program was widely applauded as a showpiece of inclusiveness, with 1000 attendees and 130 speakers led and organised collegially by the VWT staff, Board, external partners and dozens of volunteers.

Despite the Board's previous, accurate and compelling evidence a year ago, this new document repeated the previous suite of claims which were shown to have absolutely no foundation, and dramatically escalated others. Under a sub-heading of Toxic Workplace Culture, the document claimed that 'during the past twenty years [my tenure as Executive Director], there had been numerous staff (15+), volunteers, interns and organisational collaborators who had alleged bullying and mistreatment, often repeatedly.'

I had previously resisted taking defamation action in the interests of harmony in the broad women's movement. But this brazen, baseless and shameful allegation of a toxic workplace, with a regime of bullying and mistreatment of people either by me and/or on my watch, changed my position - for all time.



In March 2017, I commenced defamation action against Ms Hussein. Five months later, Ms Hussein through her lawyer requested a without prejudice conference to effect possible resolution. The terms of a public apology were agreed, which included that it extend to past and present staff because the allegations had badly slurred both me and the staff's contributions and performance. I also required that the adjectives 'talented' and 'collegial' be used to describe staff, because they are hugely talented and because I as Executive Director, and the VWT as an organisation, have always embedded a genuinely collegial workplace culture offering no room or oxygen for bullies.

The matter was settled in late August 2017. A term of the settlement is that I can distribute the Apology below as I see fit. Otherwise, both parties are expected to strictly observe all other terms of the confidential Deed of Agreement.

Earlier this year, former head of the FBI James Comey was seriously defamed by President Trump. In his emotional statement of evidence to the US Senate, Comey said he was sorry his workplace had to hear allegations of mismanagement; and he was sorry the American public was told them.

I felt his pain.

Taking a leaf from his book, I am sorry that our staff, Board members, donors, volunteers, interns, supporters, legal counsel, auditors, families and personal friends who have all value-added over many years to our successful journeying for women and girls had to hear such baseless allegations about me and our fine organisation; and I am sorry that the Victorian public was told them.

**CORRECTION AND APOLOGY TO MS MARY CROOKS AO
AND TO THE STAFF AND BOARD OF THE VICTORIAN WOMEN'S TRUST
(VWT)**

I authored and published an unsigned document entitled 'Troubles at the Trust' concerning the Victorian Women's Trust.

I am remorseful about authoring and publishing this document and for the damage it has caused.

I unreservedly withdraw the document with immediate effect. I now provide an unqualified acceptance that the allegations are untrue. I regretfully acknowledge that in making them, I relied on sources which lack credibility. All statements contained therein are hereby retracted.

I apologise to Mary Crooks AO for causing harm to her personal and professional reputation. I apologise for also impugning the reputation of the past and present talented and collegial staff of the VWT and the VWT Board.

Yours Sincerely,



Hatice "Hutch" Hussein



SQUARE THE LEDGER

As part of its 50th anniversary, LaTrobe University have partnered with the Victorian Women's Trust to capture the stories of women.

As well as aiming for the rightful inclusion of women's achievements and contributions, the project seeks to shift perceptions of the potential of girls and women, and review traditional categories of achievement written into our cultural history.

You may find yourself thinking about someone you know, a quiet achiever or a bold boundary pusher that deserves recognition and celebration. We need to know about her! Please visit the site below to nominate someone or share your own story of life at LaTrobe.

[LEARN MORE](#)

50years.latrobe/square-the-ledger/

"When women are accorded a proper part of the public record, when their enormous contribution to families, communities and society are accurately represented, they will have achieved an inclusiveness that is a precondition of equality"

- Mary Crooks AO, Executive Director
Victorian Women's Trust



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9/313 La Trobe Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000
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VICTORIAN WOMEN'S TRUST

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