



AUGUST 2020

Welcome

Well! What a year it has been since our last newsletter in February. We thought we would open with a snapshot of smiles from a recent staff and volunteer meeting.

In this edition of the Victorian Women's Trust (VWT) newsletter, you'll hear about all the developments from the past few months, including our response to COVID-19; *Feminist Fridays* live stream series; anti-racism resources compiled by staff, volunteers and supporters; an extra special bonus episode of *Money Power Freedom* on money and mental health; and so much more.

From all of us at VWT, thank you for your ongoing support. We hope you and your families are safe and well.

COVID-19 Update

We take the health of our community very seriously. Over the last few months, we have been monitoring the COVID-19 situation closely to ensure we are doing everything we can to minimise risk of infection.

This is an evolving situation that requires a careful and measured response, and we must all do our part.

That's why we have adopted a working from policy since late March.

We hope that in due time, and once it is deemed safe, we can return to our normal office arrangements. If you wish to contact VWT, please email women@vwt.org.au or call (03) 9642 0422.

While this might not be business as usual, our aim remains unchanged: full gender equality ensuring women and girls take up all of life's opportunities with respect, safety and dignity.

Jess Hill podcast in production

We have commissioned 2020 *Stella Prize* winner Jess Hill (author of *See What You Made Me Do*) and Georgina Savage (*Silent Waves* podcast) to create a podcast on love, power and violence.

The podcast will look deeply at the type of abuse that happens in private, and in public, searching the world for answers to the questions that continue to confound us. Why does domestic abuse persist? Why do people become abusive? And what can we do to prevent it?

The podcast is currently in production,

due for release early 2021.

Between the Leaves podcast

Between the Leaves is a poetry podcast, proudly presented by VWT. Hosts Hermina Burns and Ellen van Neerven handpick, recite and illuminate poems written by women and the gender diverse, as well as their own original works, moving through themes like love, race and feminism.

Hermina Burns is an Australian poet of migrant ancestry mostly from British and northern and eastern Europe. She grew up on a small farm on the Mornington Peninsula. Ellen van Neerven is an award-winning writer of Mununjali Yugambeh (South East Queensland) and Dutch heritage. They write fiction, poetry, plays and non-fiction.

Between the Leaves comes out September 2020.

→ Follow on Instagram:
[@betweentheleavespod](https://www.instagram.com/betweentheleavespod)

TOP: Janice Powell, Esther Davies-Brown, Janya Clemens, Casimira Melican, Robyn French, Maria Chetcuti, Tarik Bayrakli, Sanduni Hewa Katupothage, Claire Duffy, Ally Oliver-Perham, Gillian Barnes, Lieu Le, Aaryn Melzer, Sophie Bliss, Mary Crooks AO

Black lives matter. Aboriginal lives matter.

By Mary Crooks AO, executive director
Published on the Trust Journal 3 June 2020



Content warning: racism, violence

“Saying ‘black lives matter’ both literally and figuratively restores people’s dignity.”

– Alicia Garza, co-founder of Black Lives Matter Movement

“When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else’s oppression, we’ll find our opportunities to make real change.”

– Ijeoma Oluo, author of *So You Want to Talk About Race*

“The resounding call for truth-telling was at the heart of the Uluru statement, we are seeing it in treaty processes across the country, and in the protests and vigils which yet again are demanding justice and truth for too many lives lost in custody.”

– June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and a proud Bunuba woman

For nine minutes, the white police officer knelt on the neck of George Floyd and killed him. Mr Floyd was a lover of music, an athlete, and a father. A few weeks earlier we saw the footage of a former white officer, and his son, shoot dead a young black man as he went for a jog. These two deaths are part of a horrible and violent litany.

And then, there is the recent viral video of a white woman, Amy Cooper, calling the police in fake distress when a birding enthusiast, a black man, dared to call her out for letting her dog roam off leash in a public park. This revealing interaction is part of a continuum of white supremacy.

It is little wonder that America has gone up in flames – black hearts and souls wrenched yet again. Tempers flaring, cars and buildings in flames, people wounded; so much anger, distress and pain. This is a nation which has never found a way to reconcile its racist past, and escape from the shackles of white supremacy.

It is no accident that America’s venally incompetent President Trump, exhorts US State Governors to ‘dominate’ the protests, ‘get tougher, ‘you have to dominate or you look like a bunch of jerks’. Trump’s belligerent posturing is precisely what shackles American society – white hegemonic domination at the expense of racial fairness, justice and equality for all.

Watching these gut-wrenching images and stories and the justifiable anger on the news, we must remember the systemic racism that persists in our own country.

As another Reconciliation week came to a close, we noted there have been over 420 Aboriginal deaths in custody since the end of the 1991 Royal Commission. In May 2020 mining giant Rio Tinto blew up 46,000-year-old Aboriginal caves in Western Australia for profit.

On 2 June 2020, footage emerged out of Sydney of a teenage Aboriginal boy having his legs kicked out from under him by a white police officer. He fell face first. If this is how police officers behave towards Aboriginal boys on camera, it begs the question: how violent are they when the cameras are turned off? Furthermore, we would be hard pressed to find similar footage of a white boy in a private school blazer treated with the same casual violence.

If we are to move forward as a society, we must confront the deeply embedded, persistent stain of racism on our own shores. The land on which we work, sleep, gather and live was stolen by force, and it started the day Captain Cook fired his musket at Indigenous people after stepping onto their land. We must reconcile with the violent dispossession of our past and the ways it continues to inform our present day.

FOLLOW

Anti-racism
activists here
& abroad

WATCH

First Nations
documentaries
& films

READ

Anti-racism
books for adults

DONATE

First Nations
organisations

LISTEN

Anti-racism
podcasts

READ

Anti-racism
books for kids

Anti-racism resources

Our volunteers and staff have compiled a list of books, podcasts, activists and more from Australia and beyond to support anti-racism self education.

Here’s an excerpt:

FOLLOW

- Justice for Tanya Day
Facebook: @Justicefortanyaday
Instagram: @justicefortanyaday
- Koorie Women Mean Business
Twitter: @_KWMB
- Nayuka Gorrie
Twitter: @NayukaGorrie
- Rachael Sarra
Instagram: @sar.ra__
- Seed Mob
Instagram: @seedmob

DONATE + SUPPORT

- Deadly Connections
Website: deadlyconnections.org.au/
- Djirra
Website: djirra.org.au/
- FreeHer
Website: gofundme.com/f/bfvnvt-freethepeople
- Grandmothers Against Removals
Website: gofundme.com/f/paytherent-to-grandmothers-against-removals
- Pay The Rent
Website: paytherent.net.au/

BOOKS FOR KIDS

- *Fair Skin Black Fella* by Renee Fogarty
- *Sister Heart* by Sally Morgan
- *Sorry Day* by Coral Vass
- *Stolen Girl* by Trina Saffioti and Norma MacDonald
- *Welcome to Country* by Auntie Joy Murphy and Lisa Kennedy

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

- *Black is the New White* by Nakkiah Lui
- *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe
- *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia* by Anita Heiss (editor)
- *Heat and Light* by Ellen van Neerven
- *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman* by Aileen Moreton-Robinson

→ You can view the growing list on our website:
vwt.org.au/anti-racism-resources-from-australia-and-beyond/

If you have a suggestion to add to this resource, we’d love to hear from you.
Please email: women@vwt.org.au



Money Power Freedom podcast

Bonus episode: Money + mental health

We're excited to announce that hosts of *Money Power Freedom* podcast, Cal Wilson (comedian) and Santilla Chingaie (journalist and filmmaker) are back together for a special bonus episode: *Money + mental health*.

Concerned about the effect of COVID-19 on women's finances and psychological well being, Cal and Santilla spoke with special guests Georgie Harman (CEO, Beyond Blue), Fiona Guthrie AM (CEO, Financial Counselling Australia) and Julie Barrow (professional financial counsellor) to find out what listeners can do right now to look after themselves and their money. Here's a snippet:



Fiona Guthrie AM (Financial Counselling Australia) on navigating your way out of debt:
"A lot of the feedback we get is that people feel that there is no way through, but there almost always is. For example, it's worth knowing that banks and utilities and telcos all have legal obligation to provide you with hardship arrangements. That's a matter of just working out what's reasonable and affordable."



Georgie Harman (Beyond Blue) on supporting a loved one struggling with their mental health:
"Don't underestimate the importance of just a simple conversation. People often talk in my line of business about the fact that we need services. Of course, we need services, but you know what? Every single person who has recovered or is managing their mental health, that started with a conversation with someone."



Julie Barrow (financial counsellor) on practical approaches to debt and financial issues:
"Try and simplify things, try and find some breathing space, maybe write down in a journal what's happening,

what the situation is. If you're finding that you can't afford to pay for food on the table because of the amount of debts you've got, I would definitely encourage you to speak to the National Debt Helpline (1800 007 007) and speak to a financial counselor and just see what options that you may have."

We are grateful to our podcast partner Bank Australia who enthusiastically came to the party to support the recording of this special bonus episode.

Money Power Freedom podcast has been nominated for an award!

VWT staff Ally Oliver-Perham and Maria Chetcuti, co-producers of *Money Power Freedom* podcast, have been nominated for frankie magazine *Good Stuff* award.

These awards celebrate creative projects from across a wide range of industries, such as fashion, art, design, as well as writing and podcasts. This successful nomination is testimony to the hard work and dedication of VWT volunteers and staff. Winners will be notified on October 5 — fingers crossed!

→ Listen now via vwt.org.au/podcast or wherever you get your podcasts.

TOP: Cal Wilson and Santilla Chingaie *Image Breeana Dunbar* BOTTOM LEFT: Fiona Guthrie AM MIDDLE TOP: Georgie Harman MIDDLE BOTTOM: Julie Barrow



Trust News

Targeted Impact Grants

In June 2020, the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust (VWBT) awarded two grants of \$16,000 each as part of the inaugural *Targeted Impact Grants*. The purpose of the *Targeted Impact Grants* is to identify and fund circuit breaking projects that substantially address gender equality barriers and/or significantly improve the lives of Victorian women and girls.

The two projects were selected to address a growing community need for tailored employment support for women exiting prison. Australia's female prison population has increased by over 75% in the last decade. Employment has been identified as a key factor to addressing recidivism and turning that statistic around.

Two established community organisations, Fitted for Work and Flat Out are the recipients of these grants and each are offering tailored employment mentoring programs that address the specific service and support needs of women exiting prison. As we see with many projects that invest in women, we anticipate there will be knock-on benefits not only for these women but for their children and communities.

In addition to the *Targeted Impact Grants*, the VWBT will continue to give community grants through our annual Sub-Fund round. The 2020 Sub-Fund



round closed on August 24. The Trustees will make decisions on the successful grants by November 2020.

→ Visit our website for more details about grants: vwt.org.au/grants/sub-funds/

New faces to the VWT Board

It might not be business as usual right now, but that hasn't stopped us from welcoming new faces to the Victorian Women's Trust Board. We're excited to welcome Rana Hussain, (writer, podcaster, diversity and inclusion expert); Christine Gordon (programming manager at Readings); and Dr Cate Banks (senior lawyer with Justice Connect).

Rana Hussain is a diversity and inclusion leader making important inroads into Australian sporting culture and the community at large. Rana is a pioneering influence in AFL as one of a handful of women of colour in the industry. She's also a freelance writer, podcaster, and broadcaster, known for her work on the ABC footy podcast, *The Outer Sanctum*.

Chris Gordon is the programming and events manager at Readings and one of the founding members of the *Stella Prize*, established in 2013 to rectify a male dominance in awards, media and cultural attitudes. She's a champion of Melbourne writers, artists and performers, the people who make our city.



TOP LEFT: Rana Hussain
TOP MIDDLE: Christine Gordon
Image Breeana Dunbar
TOP RIGHT: Dr Cate Banks

Dr Cate Banks has worked as an intensive care nurse while studying law, a solicitor, mediator, academic researcher and lecturer. Currently Dr Cate Banks is a senior lawyer with Justice Connect, an independent, not-for-profit organisation that helps people and community groups connect with free legal help.

Here's to our newest Board members! Welcome.

Club Respect Panel of Expertise

Club Respect has launched a new initiative, the *Panel of Expertise*. You can ask the panel of community sport experts to answer any question you have about a situation affecting your sports club.

The *Panel of Expertise* is a free community resource, and includes panellists: Margot Foster AM, Julia Walsh, Libby Mears, Julia Symons, Christine Granger, Joe Ball, Phil Cleary, Peter Robinson, Brian Phelan, Paul Zappa, Rana Hussain and Pat Clancey.

→ Find out more: clubrespect.org.au/panel-of-expertise/



VWT Events

Catch up on past events on the Trust Women Journal

Truth, Power & the Law

On 28 July, VWT held an online panel discussion on sexual harassment and law reform with Bri Lee (writer and author of *Eggshell Skull*); Josh Bornstein (principal lawyer, Maurice Blackburn); Katherine Teh (founder, Futureye); moderated by Mary Crooks AO (executive director, VWT).

This session looked deeply at the entrenched culture of sexism in workplaces, such as the High Court; the pervasive silence that surrounds sexual harassment and abuse; the reticence of men in calling out abusive behaviours; and necessary pathways forward to ensure safety, dignity and respect for all.

→ Catch up on the webinar: vwt.org.au/truth-power-and-the-law-what-will-it-take-to-end-sexual-harassment/

Women Powering Climate Action

In March 2020, just as COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were coming into effect, the Victorian Women's Trust held a panel event at the Wheeler Centre, *Women Powering Climate Action*.

Featuring Amelia Telford (national director, Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network); Christina Hobbs (CEO, Verve Super); Petra Stock (program manager, ClimateWorks Australia); moderated by Mary Crooks AO (executive director, VWT).

The event was opened with a Welcome to Country from Leanne Miller, a proud woman of the Dhulanyagen Ulupna Clan, Yorta Yorta nation. Leanne is also the Executive Director of Koorie Women Mean Business, a longstanding Board Member of the Victorian Women's Trust, and an Inaugural Atlantic Fellow for Social Equity (2017).

To protect the health and wellbeing of staff, panelists and the community, this panel was a live stream event only.

Live streaming this event was made possible thanks to our live stream partner, Emma Whiting Travel & Cruise – a women-led business that firmly believes in supporting other women.

→ Missed it? Catch up with a captioned version of the live stream on the VWT website: vwt.org.au/missed-women-powering-climate-action-catch-up-now/



Feminist Fridays

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant a number of changes to the way we work and engage with one another. One of our major challenges has been finding ways to continue to connect with you, our community, at a time when we cannot gather as we used to.

That's why we created *Feminist Fridays*. Happening live on our Facebook page, *Feminist Fridays* were fortnightly conversations between feminists on the issues that matter. Running for roughly 25 minutes, these short, sharp conversations were intended to be enjoyed over lunch or with a coffee.

In this event series, we heard a conversation on footy and feminism between AFLW footy star Darcy Vescio and VWT board member Rana Hussain; a dialogue on violence and history between *Stella Prize* winners, Dr Clare Wright and Jess Hill; and our chair, Alana Johnson AM and writer Gabrielle Chan on rural recovery and the resilience of women in bushfire affected areas.

We also had the privilege of being a fly on the wall as leading Aboriginal women, Shelley Ware and Marlee Silva, talked about the importance of storytelling and amplifying the voices of First Nations women.

All up, we broadcast seven editions of *Feminist Fridays* and had the opportunity to hear from so many incredible feminists and joyfully connect



with our community at the same time.

It was very important to us from the outset that these *Feminist Fridays* were as accessible as possible. After each *Feminist Friday*, we have been providing the transcript on the VWT website as well as the video, so that you can catch up and watch in your own time.

Here's an excerpt from the fourth edition of *Feminist Fridays*, featuring Yumi Stynes (podcaster and author) and Prof Jane Fisher (professor of Global Health, Monash University) talking about motherhood in a pandemic:

"Prof Jane Fisher: I think that, the next thing that's really been very difficult for women, is that the mother's groups that are such an important source of support have not been able to meet in person. And so there's a WhatsApp kind of substitute, but I don't think it's a very good substitute for the kinds of things women need after they give birth.

Yumi Stynes: There are a lot of women at that time, sitting out in the park with their mothers group with the blanket out. That's the time that they are sitting out in the sun, literally getting sun on their bodies, and fresh air and a chance to just literally breath in. And they are missing that they are having to be stuck at home inside.

Prof Jane Fisher: And they are not having that opportunity for mutual peer-to-peer, 'how did you manage

this?' 'what's this been like for you?'.

Or having access to the child and family health nurse, who might be able to answer some of those questions. Those consultations have been very altered.

So I think you're right to raise this group, is a group with particular needs that have not been well met. And that might well take a toll further down the track.

Yumi Stynes: Is there anything that we can do as friends, partners or supporters of these women?

Prof Jane Fisher: Look, I think if you know someone in your circle who's pregnant or recently given birth, this is really a time to reach out intentionally.

And as soon as it's possible to meet in person so, to invite them over, to take meals to them, to go and see their baby, so you can witness this lovely event and celebrate this event in the way that usually the birth of a baby is acknowledged and celebrated. I think this will make an enormous difference, and I am hoping that very soon, normal, peer-to-peer meetings between people with new parents will be encouraged and permitted."

→ We will be pausing the *Feminist Fridays* series for a short while, but don't worry, there are heaps more VWT events and other offerings on the way. Join our online newsletter: vwt.org.au/sign-up-to-our-newsletter/

You can catch up on previous *Feminist Fridays* on the Trust Women Journal: vwt.org.au/blog/



TOP (left to right): Jess Hill & Dr Clare Wright; Prof Jane Fisher & Yumi Stynes; Rana Hussain & Darcy Vescio
BOTTOM: (left to right): Mary Crooks AO & Michele O'Neil; Alana Johnson AM & Gabrielle Chan; Jess Ribeiro & Ella Hooper

LEFT PAGE TOP: Bri Lee, Josh Bornstein, Mary Crooks AO, Katherine Teh
BOTTOM MIDDLE: Petra Stock, Christina Hobbs and Mary Crooks AO



\$15

Respect Safety Dignity A2 Poster by Michelle Pereira

Hop onto the VWT Shop to buy the feminist poster of your dreams.

We asked Michelle Pereira to create a poster that represented health & safety, a critical focus area of the Victorian Women's Trust.

Her peaceful artwork embodies our right as women, girls and gender diverse people to live our lives with respect, safety and dignity.

We now have three posters by Michelle Pereira for sale on the VWT Shop, each representing one of our critical focus areas for gender equality: equal representation; economic security; and now, health & safety.

Buy this new poster for \$15 or grab a bundle of all three for \$35 (saving \$10) – it's the perfect set! Every purchase supports the empowerment of women and girls.



\$35 excl. postage

Poster Bundle (3 pack – \$10 off full price)



\$30 excl. postage

About Bloody Time: The Menstrual Revolution We Have to Have



\$25 excl. postage

Money Power Freedom Tea Towel by Michelle Pereira