



MAY 2022

We at VWT have never been busier.

In this edition of our mid-year newsletter, we take stock of some of the most exciting new projects in development here at the Trust, and reflect on some of our biggest achievements so far.

At time of writing, we are in the thick of running *Matters That Count*—our federal election initiative (pg 2).

We've kept a close eye on the lie of the land over the last few years, and have identified 8 core 'matters' causing unease in the minds of many thoughtful, compassionate Australians—especially women.

We've put together a suite of supporting material about these 'matters' so that ordinary people across the country can contact their local candidates, asking them to declare their hand on these issues of national importance.

Women may still be underrepresented in the halls of Parliament, but we can't afford to wait for gender parity. Women must be able to claim a voice on the matters that count to them the most.

On another major project, we're thrilled to announce that, thanks to the generous support of the Wood Foundation, we are about to start a total revamp of our website for teen girls, *Rosie*.

The studies have been done and proven what we already knew to be true: youth mental health is on the decline, and the consequences of the COVID pandemic have only made things worse. As with most things, this is felt most keenly by women and girls.

We will be updating and rebranding *Rosie* to make it fit-for-purpose in a post-COVID world. *Rosie* editor, Maki Morita, talks through the plans so far (pg 4).

We're also introduced for the first time to *Voices That Matter* (VTM), a project several years in the making (pg 8).

There are a number of books and records of significant speeches given throughout Australian history, but those given by women seem to make up only a tiny quantity.

VTM seeks to put important speeches given by Australian women back on the public record where they belong.

Inside there's also a progress report on construction at our new office space on Queens Parade in Clifton Hill (pg 9), we revisit *Here She Is!* (pg 10), and show how you can support our work this end-of-financial-year (pg 11).

Thank you again for your support of the Trust's work towards gender equality.

It's only with the support of people like yourself that we can continue to advocate for women, girls and gender diverse people across Australia.

TOP: On site at the Queens Parade office build
Image SHAPE Australia

matters that count

Matters That Count

Back in 1997, we commissioned a now famous poster: *Don't Get Mad, Get Elected!*

On the back of this early call to action we have sought to empower women at all levels, to claim a voice within what is still an overtly masculine political culture through initiatives such as the *Purple Sage Project*, *Watermark Australia*, the *Monster Climate Petition*, and our pioneering work in developing our model of Kitchen Table Conversations.

We prize our independence. We have entered the public arena at other times of great community unease, such as with the sexism and destructiveness which swirled around the Gillard minority government.

There is too much at stake to wait until the magic day when gender parity is finally achieved in the House of Representatives.

Women need to give urgent voice to their interests and concerns, muscle in on the national policy arena, and seek to elevate nation-building policies which would make an enormous difference in their day-to-day lives as well as achieve a far greater measure of gender equality.

COVID-19 exposed deep seams of gendered inequality for too long ingrained in our economy, our federal budgets and national policies affecting women specifically, and the broader community more generally.

The public furore eighteen months ago over sexual assault allegations, ongoing allegations about sexual harassment, the misogynistic nature of our political parliamentary culture, compounded the quiet fury felt by many women around the nation.

Australia is one of the richest countries in the world. While we can afford pretty much anything, we nonetheless do have to make choices.

Our close reading of the lie of the land over the past few years tells us that there are a number of issues causing great unease in the hearts and minds of many Australians, especially women.

Our collective sense of what makes a decent, fair and compassionate society is being eroded before our eyes.

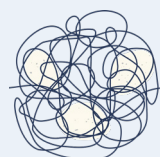
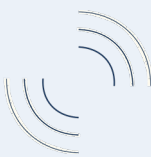
Our planet is in peril, yet leadership is wanting. Powerful calls for an Indigenous voice in our national parliament are summarily dismissed.

With this in mind, we set our sights on eight policy matters in particular which must be profiled in the forthcoming federal election:

- Strong and urgent action to reduce carbon emissions
- Enshrining in the constitution a voice for First Nations People
- Wage justice for people working in early years and aged care settings
- Re-framing men's violence against women and children
- Redesigning our childcare system
- Creating affordable housing for older women
- Ending the cruel treatment of asylum seekers
- Integrity and accountability of our elected representatives, public servants and political life

As prize-winning writer and poet, Alice Walker, said, "*the most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.*"

Our intention with this election initiative is to remind people that they do have power, and we've made it as smooth and easy as possible for people to use their personal power in their own electorates.



Don't get mad, get *involved* this election

mattersthatcount.com.au

TOP: Matters That Count logo, tagline and website

RIGHT: Website registration page, Summary Table, 'Explore the Matters' website page

We've asked people to screen candidates with the strongest chance of success, on the eight matters of critical importance.

The process takes a small amount of time, probably no more than two hours in total, and involves three steps:

1. Get together with a couple of friends who share the same concerns as us about the 8 matters

2. Contact two, or possibly three, candidates in their electorate who have the strongest chance of success, asking candidates to commit to working towards specific outcomes on each of the 8 matters

3. Share candidates responses across personal and professional networks until election day

At the time of writing, we have received registrations from 108 people across seven states and territories who are running *Matters that Count* in 55 separate electorates.

We expect these numbers to keep climbing and encourage you to run the process yourself and see what your local candidates will commit to taking action on.

→ We have been able to bring this federal election initiative to you because of the incredible contribution of volunteer **Anne Lewis** who has worked with VWT staff on a weekly basis since late 2021.

Equally, our slick and informative website and digital graphics were developed and designed by **Your Creative** who offered their expertise and time on a pro bono basis to bring this initiative to life.

→ You can find more information, a step-by-step instructional guide, and templates at: www.mattersthatcount.com.au





Revamping Rosie for a post-COVID world

BY MAKI MORITA, *ROSIE* EDITOR

Thanks to a generous grant from the Wood Foundation, *Rosie*—a harm-prevention initiative from the Dugdale Trust for Women and Girls—is undergoing a large-scale transformation.

In our latest project, we will be revamping the *Rosie* website to support the evolving needs of young women and gender diverse people in a post-COVID world.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on young people's lives. From transitioning to online learning to limited opportunities for socialising, as well as disruptions to home life and extracurricular activities, the past two years have taken a huge toll on their mental health.

While youth mental health was a growing problem before COVID, studies show that this has been further exacerbated by the pandemic.

According to a recent survey of 16–24 year olds ¹, 42% said their mental health issues had become worse due to the pandemic, and 11% said they were directly caused by impacts of the pandemic.

1 in 4 young Australians thought about suicide over the past two years, and 15% attempted self-harm.

Amidst a widespread sense of malaise and uncertainty, young women and gender diverse people are particularly vulnerable.

The pandemic has entrenched pre-existing inequalities, with economic disparities proving stark for this demographic—young women aged 15–24 years accounted for 7.5% of the labour force at the start of the pandemic, but made up 58% of job losses between June–September 2021 ².

Teens are already struggling, and a lack of opportunities is certainly not helping their mental health outcomes.

The social, educational, and economic implications of COVID for young women and gender diverse people have had a substantial impact on their self-confidence and drive to achieve future goals.

Adolescence is a time for learning, personal growth and exploring new avenues, but when the world is at a standstill, it can feel like nothing is moving forward.

This sense of halting is given voice by a young woman quoted in a 2020 Headspace report ³:

“Corona has impacted my school work, my actual work and has made it hard to believe that I will have the grades or the money to survive outside of year 12, let alone accomplish my academic dreams.”

— Female, age 15–17, QLD

¹ 'Urgent national priority': Pandemic's staggering mental toll on young Australians, Jewel Topsfield and Sophie Aubrey, *The Age*, published 27 March 2022

² Changing the Trajectory: Investing in Women for a Fairer Future, Leonora Risse and Angela Jackson, *Australians Investing In Women*, November 2021

³ Coping with COVID: the mental health impact on young people accessing headspace services, *Headspace*, August 2020



These stories and statistics emerging from recent studies inform the new directions in which we will be taking *Rosie*. By offering resources, activities and a sense of community, mental health and grassroots initiatives can boost the wellbeing and resilience of young people during times of crisis.

As a harm prevention initiative, *Rosie* will be stepping up to reimagine the ways in which we can support young women and gender diverse people in a post-COVID world, as well as teachers and parents in further offering that support.

Our project to revamp *Rosie* is currently in its early stages, where we are planning and exploring possibilities.

These include updating our resources and website design, engaging with new platforms to expand our audience, and providing opportunities for young writers and creatives.

In doing so, we aim to raise the profile of *Rosie* as a trusted online platform where young women and gender diverse people can go to feel seen and heard, discover a sense of belonging and community, and seek advice for the specific issues they are dealing with.

In tandem to this, we will be updating our resources for teachers and parents so they can understand, engage with and respond to the unique issues youth are currently facing.

We are incredibly grateful for this opportunity—made possible by the Wood Foundation—to revamp *Rosie* so we can work towards improving the wellbeing of young women and gender diverse people, who have lost two significant years of development.

This opportunity has come at a crucial time of flux, where young people are heading into a seemingly uncertain future, and they deserve all the support they need to thrive.

Rosie is a unique online harm prevention space that offers supportive web resources for young women and gender diverse teens, associated with the Dugdale Trust for Women and Girls and the Victorian Women's Trust.

→ Learn more about *Rosie*:
www.rosie.org.au

COMING SOON



A NEW PODCAST FROM
THE DUGDALE TRUST FOR WOMEN & GIRLS

HOSTED BY

JESS HOSKING
AFLW

+

TARIK BAYRAKLI
CLUB RESPECT

Smart Plays will be a series of short, sharp audio files that go to the heart of contemporary and sometimes controversial issues of sexism, racism, inclusion and respect in sport. We know sport is a microcosm of society—so play smart.

www.clubrespect.org.au



Grace Tame endorses The Trap

2021 Australian of the Year and advocate Grace Tame has named VWT's 10-part series *The Trap* as one of her favourite podcasts as part of Spotify's *More Than Talk* campaign, which launched on May 10th.

More Than Talk is a content series designed to help Australians discover podcasts to suit their varied interests. This 'podcast club' style series brings together a diverse range of media personalities and, along with host Melissa Leong, hosts unfiltered conversations, discussing their favourite podcasts and how and when they consume them.

Tame, Indigenous comedian Steph Tisdell, and former Soccerroo and human rights activist Craig Foster, each feature in an episode of *More Than Talk*, which will be released individually from May 10th in a multi-phase approach.

The Trap, hosted by Jess Hill and released by the Dugdale Trust for Women and Girls (of which VWT is trustee) in late 2021, is a harm prevention podcast about love, abuse and power.

It seeks to answer 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?

Featuring a range of voices from victim-survivors, frontline workers, activists and experts, *The Trap* goes deep on the crisis of domestic abuse in this country.

Production of *The Trap* was made possible thanks to the support of donors, with special thanks to the Phyllis Connor Memorial Trust of Equity Trustees Limited, Jo Baevski, a private donor, and the Bokhara Foundation.

Tame's episode of *More Than Talk* features a conversation between her and Leong about the importance of *The Trap*'s message, and will be supported by a public relations and social media campaign from Spotify—so we can expect to see a lot of Grace and *The Trap* over the next few weeks.

VWT thanks Grace Tame and Spotify for their support of *The Trap* and its grave, urgent message—that we can and we must act to end domestic abuse now.

WHERE TO LISTEN

More Than Talk is available on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcvovvZo8iM>

The Trap is available on your favourite podcast platforms or by visiting our website:

www.vwt.org.au/thetrap

In addition to each of the episodes, there is a range of related resources, show notes and support services.

→ Have you seen Grace in the news or in your socials feed talking about *The Trap*? Let us know at comms@vwt.org.au

Introducing: Voices That Matter

Existing collections of important Australian speeches relegate impressive and notable women's speeches to about one-tenth of the overall inventory.

You'd be mistaken for thinking that women have had very little to say on important issues and played few, if any, roles in nation building. Women's voices and contributions have been largely excluded from the public record, their roles have been minimised and rendered essentially invisible.

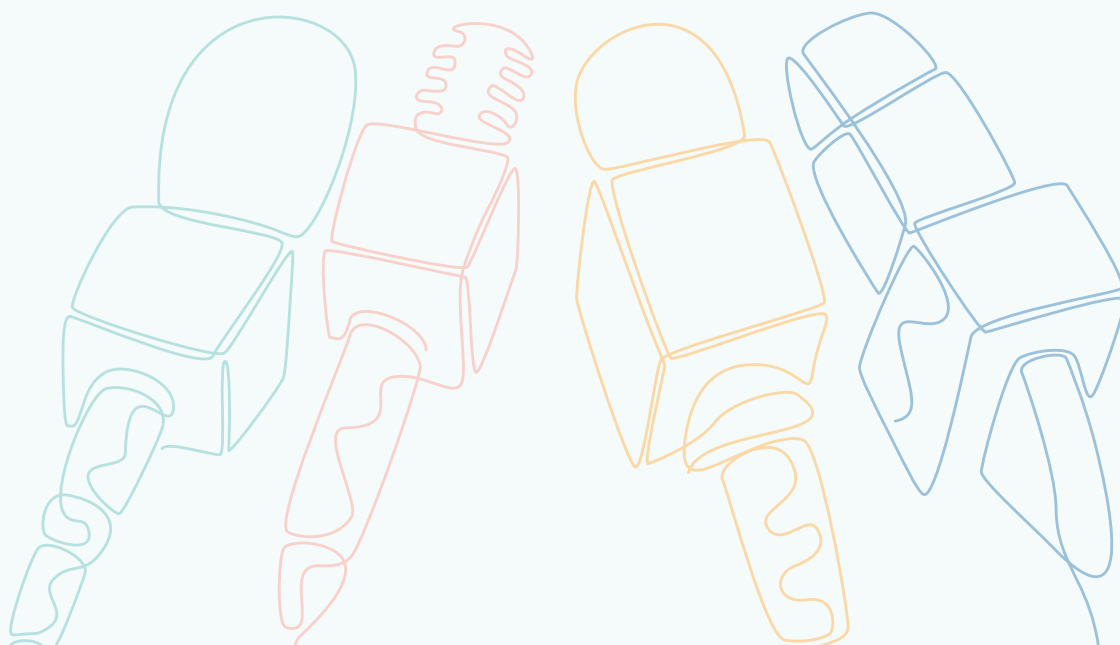
The *Voices That Matter* (VTM) initiative has taken shape to correct the record on women's contribution. It will publish examples of women's important speechmaking in Australian society, and disrupt the long established and untruthful notion that men have exercised all the power and ideas over many generations.

VTM will provide an accessible array of speeches made by women across Australia, on every conceivable issue and at any point in our nation's development. This collection will be available online and accessible to all. The living, breathing quality of this collection means that members of the public will be able to submit speeches made by Australian women that they come across that were significant, powerful or discomfited the dominant order.

Volunteers Ruth Fincher and Robyn French have spent many hours identifying over 100 possible speeches for inclusion in this project. Many of the most important ones have no audio recordings, especially some of the earlier speeches made before TV and radio.

To bring the speeches to life, another volunteer—Posy McCaughey—is enlisting the assistance of 20 young women to act as narrators for some of those missing recordings. These recordings will create a lively document where readers will be able to more strongly connect to some of the oldest and most fundamental disruptors of patriarchal Australian society.

We aim to have VTM live in the second half of 2022.





Our New Office: Progress Report

In 2019, before COVID-19 had spread across the world, the Trust had already made the decision to implement flexible work arrangements for all staff and were planning our transition to a mix of home and office work for the team.

Like everyone, the arrival of COVID-19 forced us to move more quickly to this model of work.

It also meant we were contemplating what type of office, size and location would be required for the Trust team now and into the future, where collaboration, events and products are delivered as much online as in person.

It quickly became clear that paying for a while office floor in Melbourne's CBD was no longer the best use of our limited funds.

A long-time donor to the Trust, Hilary Irwin, understood the challenge we faced and, in an incredible act of generosity, decided to sell two of her investment properties, donating the proceeds of the sale to the Trust to purchase an office space of our own.

This once-in-a-lifetime gift has enabled us to purchase two small-but-mighty ground floor retail units of Queens Parade in Clifton Hill.

We had help early in the design development phase from Dimase Architects, who worked with Trust staff, board members and volunteers to co-create a draft office layout.

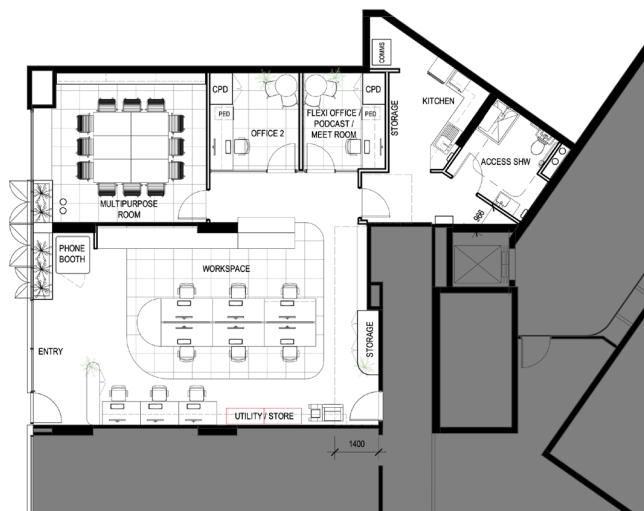
As a team, we understood our new office would be considerably smaller than what we were used to, however it was essential that our work spaces were designed so that they could be used in a variety of ways, and flex to the needs of changing projects and initiatives over time.

As this project evolved, we engaged Siren Design, a female founded and led architecture firm, to finalise the layout of the office and bring it to life with interior finishes and fixtures.

At the same time, we contracted SHAPE Australia as our builders and we look forward to developing an ongoing partnership with Shape that outlasts this particular project.

At the time of printing, we are mid-way through the construction phase and hope to be operating from our new office by mid-year.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Siren Design and SHAPE Australia for their generosity and expertise – with their support we are able to realise our ambition for a purpose-built, truly contemporary home for the Trust, now and into the future.



TOP: VWT and Shape Teams Image SHAPE Australia
BOTTOM: Queens Parade Floor Plan



ABOUT

CONTACT

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Here She Is!

Take a moment and think of a time when you looked at the speakers list of a conference you thought looked interesting. What was the ratio of women speakers to men?

Was there a range of ages, nationalities, and ethnicities represented on the speakers list?

Frustratingly, the answer to these questions is often; few if any women compared to men, and very little other diversity.

Conference and event organisations, media organisations, and executive recruiters argue that they can't find enough women with the 'right' expertise.

In our office discussions, the idea for a directory of women was imagined, the concept being, 'you're having trouble finding a woman speaker, well...*Here she is!*'

Initially launched in 2013 on International Women's Day with a grant from the US Consulate, Here She Is is a website designed to address the absence of female keynote speakers at major conferences, women presenters at events, the lack of women in leadership positions and a media environment largely lacking women's voices.

Thanks to a further generous grant in 2017 from the Victorian State Government, the Trust was able to relaunch Here She Is and incorporate it into our website.

Women and non-binary people are welcome to submit information about themselves, their areas of expertise and a photo.

We create online profiles for each person that are searchable via the Here She Is directory: you can search for someone by name, by area of expertise or industry, and by location.

Here She Is is Australia's largest online directory of women and we currently have over 720 active profiles.

We encourage you to use this directory to connect with women for speaking opportunities, company directorships and mentoring.

If you're interested in joining Here She Is, please add your profile today or encourage women in your life to do the same.

→ Head to our website at:
www.vwt.org.au/directory/

EOFY at the Trust

There has been much talk in the lead-up to and during this federal election campaign about the 'women's vote' and 'women's issues.'

Childcare. Aged care workers. The crisis of men's violence against women. Homelessness among older women rising at a staggering rate.

The COVID-19 pandemic did much to illuminate some of these problems, as well as some of their solutions.

And yet, so little is done. Change happens at a glacial pace. The silence of politicians on issues of gender equality remains deafening.

We need your help to keep these issues at the top of the agenda. Will you consider a tax-deductible donation to the Trust this end of financial year?

The Trust can be proud of its 37-year history of fearless pursuit of gender equality. In that time, we have achieved so much together, and gains have been made.

In the last year, we have staged events about childcare reform, film screenings and book launches; we have produced and broadcast podcasts that change the conversation, including our series on domestic abuse, *The Trap*.

Most recently, we've run *Matters That Count*—an initiative that empowers women to get involved in democracy and presses our representatives to act on the issues that matter to us.

And that is not to forget our grantmaking—in the last year, we have granted out more than \$300,000 to community programs advancing feminist causes.

We mustn't allow those in power to neglect the cause of gender equality, and that work only happens thanks to your generous support.

Please consider a donation to the Victorian Women's Trust before June 30.

Your gift will help the Trust to continue its crucial work towards equal representation, economic security and health & safety for the women of Victoria and across Australia.

Best wishes,



Mary Crooks AO
Executive director

BOTTOM: Maria Chetcuti and Supriya Singh Image Breeana Dunbar



Don't get mad, get elected!

Get 2 for 1 when you buy our original and contemporary 'Don't get mad, get elected' posters together.

In 1997, we commissioned this now iconic artwork from Carol Porter. It's reprinted on this poster with permission from the State Library of Victoria. In the years since its inception, this poster has been seen in the halls of Parliament and in the media, becoming a battle cry for women in politics who challenge the status quo.

Michelle Pereira's contemporary rendition features the same message and reflects the diversity of our community today. It's an excellent reminder that if you're fired up about the state of Australian politics? Well, good—get mad and then go get elected!



A special 2022 federal election offer from VWT!