



VWT staff team, June 2025. IMAGE BY BREENA DUNBAR

**Hello friends. It is an absolute honour to be writing to you.**

I'm thrilled to have stepped into this role and want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the VWT team for such a warm welcome. From day one, it's been clear that there's no place I'd rather be. I'm deeply inspired by the Trust's courageous and impactful work — and the remarkable community that makes it all possible.

With your continued dedication and support, I'm excited to build on the powerful legacy of this organisation and work together to create lasting, meaningful change.

Firstly, we pay our respects to devoted feminist, Geraldine Rimmer-Robertson who passed away in June of this year. Before she died, Geraldine penned a series of vignettes about her experience of feminism throughout her life, from which VWT was honoured to produce a limited number of printed booklets. They are a warm, funny and illuminating read.

Throughout the first half of the year, the Trust delivered our *Trust Women* policy webinar series, focusing on six, key feminist policy areas.

In April, we joined with friends and supporters at The Wheeler Centre to launch Judith Brett's latest book, *Fearless Beatrice Faust*.

Just as my journey begins, the Trust is saying farewell to three excellent staff members; Tarik Bayrakli, Gillian Barnes and, of course, my esteemed predecessor, Mary Crooks AO.

I owe such immense gratitude to Mary; for her leadership of this powerful organisation for the past 28 years, and for the trust that she has placed in me.

I would love the opportunity to meet you at the VWT's 40th birthday party in October, the details of which can be found at the back of this newsletter.

Thank you for your ongoing support of VWT.

**Kirsten Abernethy**

Executive Director

*Victorian Women's Trust*

# Trust Women Webinars

From February to June 2025, the Victorian Women's Trust hosted *Trust Women: Lunch Break Sessions* — a new webinar series designed to break down some of the most important gender equality policy challenges facing Australia today. We delivered six expert-led discussions on the following key issues:

## 1 **Energy: Is Nuclear an Option for Australia?**

Featuring Wendy Farmer (Voices of the Valley), Alex Engel-Mallon (Climate Council), and moderated by Mary Crooks AO.

## 2 **Early Childhood Education and Care: Making a Fairer System for Families and Children**

Featuring Maddy Butler (The Parenthood), Dr Luara Ferracioli (University of Sydney), and moderated by Mary Crooks AO.

## 3 **Reproductive Justice: Abortion Access in Australia**

Featuring Dr Pallavi Desai (RANZCOG), Prof Sandra Creamer (Australian Women's Health Alliance), and moderated by Madison Griffiths

## 4 **Housing Security: Navigating the Crisis in 2025**

Featuring Roberta Buchanan (Women's Property Initiatives), Kate Whittle (YWCA) and moderated by Mary Crooks AO.

## 5 **Youth Mental Health: How Can We Better Support Teens?**

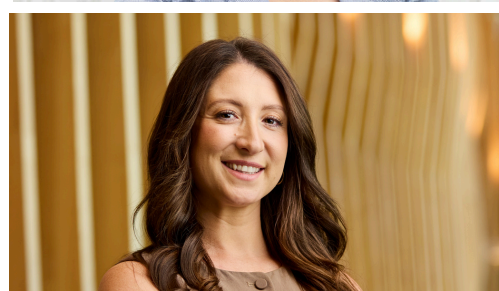
Featuring Dr Louise La Sala (Orygen), Dr Christine Grove (RMIT and Monash), and moderated by Elfy Scott.

## 6 **AI and Tech-Facilitated Abuse: What Does the Future Hold?**

Featuring Bec Martin (Evolve), Ani Lamont (eSafety Commission), and moderated by Dr Emma McNicol.

Watch all six webinar recordings

→ [www.youtube.com/@vicwomenstrust](https://www.youtube.com/@vicwomenstrust)



From top: Webinar guests Wendy Farmer, Maddy Butler, Dr Pallavi Desai, Roberta Buchanan, Dr Louise La Sala, and Bec Martin.  
IMAGES SUPPLIED





Top: Judith Brett at the book signing table  
 Right: Sally Warhaft on stage at the Wheeler Centre  
 Bottom: A stack of the books, ready for signing  
 IMAGES BY BREEANA DUNBAR

# Fearless Beatrice Faust Book Launch

On Wednesday 30 April, over 200 people gathered at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne to launch Judith Brett's feminist biography, *Fearless Beatrice Faust: Sex, Feminism and Body Politics*, published by Text Publishing.

Judith spoke with broadcaster and writer, Sally Warhaft, about who Bea Faust was in both the personal and the public, what we can learn from her, and what she might have thought of feminism as it stands today. It was a bold, unflinching conversation about a truly fearless feminist.

In addition to the central conversation, Sally White spoke of her time working alongside Bea Faust as they founded the Women's Electoral Lobby in the 1970s.

Copies of the book were available to purchase from bookseller, Readings, which Judith generously signed following the talk.

*The launch of Fearless Beatrice Faust was made possible thanks to the generous support of private donors.*

**Watch the full event recording**

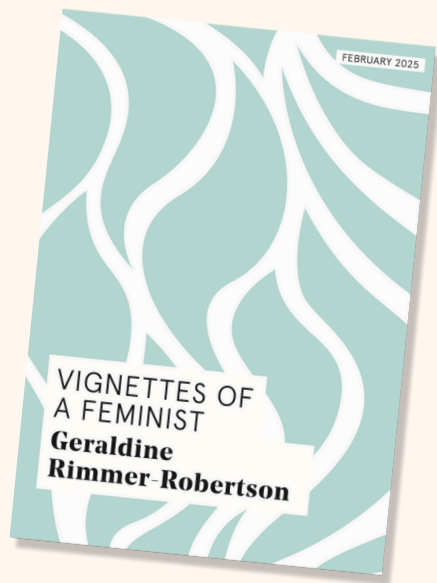
→ [www.youtube.com/@vicwomenstrust](https://www.youtube.com/@vicwomenstrust)

# Vale Geraldine Rimmer-Robertson

**Born in 1942, Geraldine Rimmer-Robertson was a devoted feminist who passed away in June 2025.**

Before Geraldine died, Mary Crooks AO (former VWT Executive Director) encouraged her to document what it was like to grow up in Melbourne during a time of immense social upheaval, and to share her reflections of the women's liberation movement in the 1970s.

Rising to the challenge, Geraldine penned a series of candid snapshots from her life. Witty and often very funny, *Vignettes of a Feminist* was published by the Victorian Women's Trust in a limited run for her friends and family. In this unique collection, Geraldine offers keen observations of a changing society and women who dared to defy expectation.



Limited copies of *Vignettes of a Feminist* are available from the Victorian Women's Trust, free of charge (excluding postage).

To obtain a copy, please get in touch with our team  
→ [women@vwt.org.au](mailto:women@vwt.org.au) or (03) 9642 0422

## #14

My Auntie Rona was a tall, straight intellectual. Not a housewife at all, I thought, not a real aunt. She took me to the beach for no other reason than I wanted to go.

Also she, like my cuddly housewife Auntie Marg, stood up for me when I needed it.

Loving both my very different aunts with a passion, I told everyone who would listen about my glorious aunts. Mum didn't seem too happy about it, though.

## #22

We have other precedents for galvanising ourselves and each other.

Edith Morgan explained 'I have a strong belief that unless you look politically at what you are doing and understand the power structures you are not going to get anywhere really'.

Then I heard the slogan 'the personal is political' and wow, my world has never been the same.





From Top. IMAGES BY VLADA KARPOVICH, XAVIER LORENZO, ALENA SHEKHOVTSOVA and MARTIN PRESCOTT

# Maternity Care in Australia: Is the system working?

By Devini Raj Kumar



**"THE BIRTH CULTURE WE HAVE  
ISN'T WOMAN-CENTRED, IT'S  
ABOUT HAVING A HEALTHY BABY  
AND PUSHING THE MUM TO THE  
WAYSIDE."**

**– Amber-lee Buendicho,  
Founder of The Power of Birth**



In a healthcare system that has been shaped by medical misogyny, women are frequently characterised as incapable and entirely dependent on medical professionals. Quality maternity care safeguards the physical and mental wellbeing of mothers and their babies; positively shapes the maternal bond between the mother and child; and fosters a sense of agency for new parents.



The national strategy 'Women-centred care: Strategic directions for Australia's maternity services', released in November 2019, outlined the future of Australia's maternity services. Since its release, notable publications such as the Australian Birth Experience Study, the NSW Birth Trauma Inquiry, and Deakin University's national survey on maternity care experiences have questioned the effectiveness of the strategy.

Each publication emphasised the need for informed consent, better education, continuity of care, and better support systems, indicating that Australian maternity services *did not excel in any aspect* of the national strategy.

These publications, along with direct concerns raised with the Victorian Women's Trust, compelled us to create a space for women across Victoria to share their own maternity care experiences.

In 2024, we conducted a survey to better understand the current state of the sector.

The responses reveal a collective story of a system that, despite the dedication of many healthcare professionals, has left too many women feeling disempowered, disrespected, and unsupported.

This is an edited excerpt of a larger blog piece by Devini Raj Kumar.

**Read the full article on our blog**  
→ [www.vwt.org.au/blog](http://www.vwt.org.au/blog)

# News & Events

## Walk for Truth

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, VWT was proud to join the final leg of the Walk for Truth, the 500km walk from Portland to Parliament to mark the closure of Australia's first formal truth-telling process, the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

Naarm generously brought out the sunshine for us as we huddled in beanies and scarves with a few thousand others at Kings Domain for ceremony, speeches and dances. In a public display of support for Treaty, the crowd walked together through the city to the steps of Parliament House.

**"SOME WILL SAY THIS IS DIVISIVE. I SAY THERE IS NOTHING MORE UNIFYING THAN WALKING SIDE BY SIDE, LISTENING TO EACH OTHER, AND WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SHARED FUTURE."**

**– Travis Lovett, Yoorrook Justice Commissioner**



VWT staff and interns Ingrid, Ava and Devini  
IMAGE BY RACHAEL IMAM

## Thank you and farewell

In April of this year, we farewelled two amazing staff members of the Victorian Women's Trust, **Tarik Bayrakli** and **Gillian Barnes**.



Top: Gillian Barnes. Bottom: Tarik Bayrakli  
IMAGES BY BREEANA DUNBAR

**Tarik** led VWT's Club Respect project, bringing both his enthusiasm for sport and his passion for equality into board rooms and club rooms, right across Australia.

**Gillian** worked alongside Wilfredo in the finance department, keeping the organisation moving with a quiet determination.

We wish you the very best for whatever you do next. You will both be greatly missed.

As you may already be aware, **Mary Crooks AO** finished her role as Executive Director of the Trust at the end of July, marking the end of 28 years of service to the organisation.

Many thousands of people have been involved and positively affected by Mary's work. The changes have been history making. Mary's driving vision has been of a Victorian Women's Trust which remains strong, sustainable and there for generations to come.

We owe enormous thanks to Mary for building the Trust into such a key organisation with its prized independence and feminist advocacy. She has led with distinction, intellect, energy and selflessness. Every major initiative by Mary over her 28 years at the Trust has been pathbreaking, of the highest quality, and extremely impactful.

**Mary, on behalf of all of the staff, volunteers, interns, partners and supporters of the Trust over the past 28 years, we thank you.**



Mary Crooks AO. IMAGE BY JASON ROBINS

# LEAVE A LEGACY, CHANGE LIVES:

How to remember the Victorian Women's Trust in your will

**Opt for part of  
your estate**



**Select a  
percentage  
amount**



**Specify  
a gift**



**Or make a  
residuary gift,**

which means that the  
remaining portion is  
gifted after all other  
specific gifts and debts  
have been honoured.



If you are considering  
including a gift for the  
Victorian Women's Trust in  
your will, please contact:

Kirsten Abernethy  
*Executive Director*  
Victorian Women's Trust

kirsten@vwt.org.au  
(03) 9642 0422

## Celebrating our interns and volunteers

Our volunteer and internship programs continue to go from strength to strength, with five excellent new individuals working with us throughout 2025. An enormous thank you to each and every one of you for your work.

### **Sofia Weerts**

*Volunteer*

Sofia is writing a review of how CaLD queer communities navigate their identities, and a review of deepfakes as image-based abuse.

### **Haiyi Zhu**

Master of Development Studies  
*University of Melbourne*

Haiyi produced a research report on the experiences and advocacy of women with disabilities.

### **Emily Lewis**

Master of Social Policy  
*University of Melbourne*

Emily produced a practical resource on the manosphere for parents and carers of boys.

### **Emerald Young**

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology  
*University of Melbourne*

Emerald produced a research report on sexism and misogyny in Victorian Primary Schools.

### **Ingrid Walter**

*Volunteer*

Ingrid is supporting the expansion of our Madam Speaker database by identifying and adding even more speeches.





YOU'RE INVITED TO

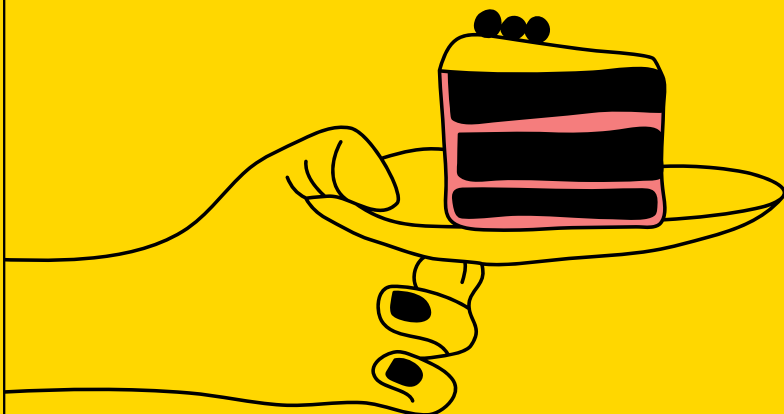
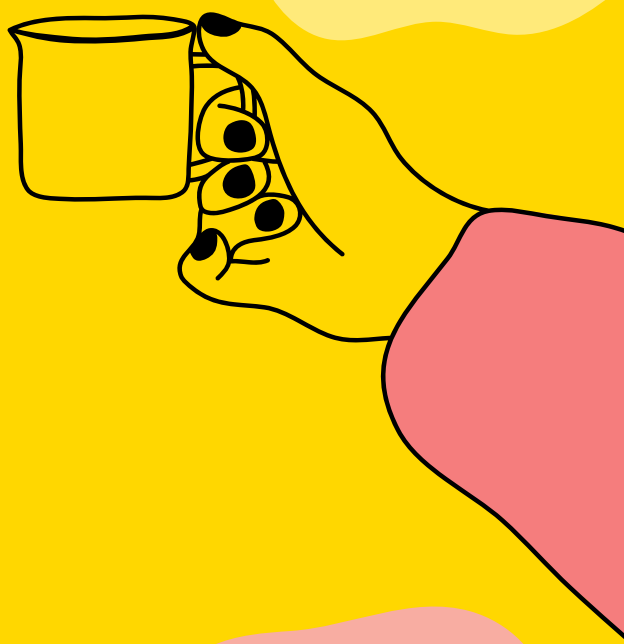
# CELEBRATE 40 YEARS OF VWT

**3PM SUNDAY 12 OCTOBER  
THORNBURY BOWLS CLUB**

**27 Ballantyne Street  
Thornbury VIC 3071**

*Cake!*  
*Music!*  
*by Georgia Fields*

*Prizes!*



**Please join us as we celebrate 40 years  
of feminist action and welcome our new  
Executive Director, Dr Kirsten Abernethy.**



**\$30**  
**PER PERSON**

**PLACES ARE LIMITED. BOOK NOW.**

**Scan the QR code or call (03) 9642 0422**

- Ticket includes one free drink, nibbles and cake
- Free entry for children under 18 years

