

Winter 2008



Auckland
**Women's
Centre**

Auckland Women's Centre

Gossip

Contact us

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Centre hours

Monday to Friday
9am - 4pm

Additional Library hours

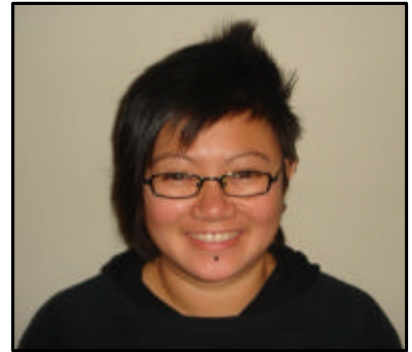
Saturday 11am - 1.30pm

Thanks

To the South Auckland
Charitable Trust for funding
Gossip and
our community education
brochure.

Auckland Women's Centre News

We are thrilled to welcome **Ellie Lim** to our staff in the new position of Women's Services Coordinator. Ellie has a long standing relationship with the Centre first as a course participant, then as the Women's Coordinator for Rainbow Youth and recently Ellie facilitated the Centre's Board Games Group in a volunteer capacity. Ellie's role at the Centre involves managing our Information, Referral and Advice Service and our volunteers. We look forward to Ellie's infectious enthusiasm, passion for women's empowerment and keen intellect that she will bring to the Centre.



Ellie's arrival means **Amelia Rothwell** is moving from the frontline service into working with our Teen Parent Project. Amelia will continue to coordinate our community education work at the same time as delivering a number of small projects with teen mothers. Our Teen Parent Project has also just been further enriched by the addition to our staff of **Gaby Ugalde**. Gabe is organising our first ante-natal classes for teenaged mothers, designed to increase teenagers' participation in these programmes. We are also currently lucky to have the able and hard working **Helen Vicary** on our staff, helping with our many and never-ending funding applications.

Congratulations to our Skip Project Coordinator, **Shelley Fraser**, who won a Ministry of Youth Development award recently to support her presentation at the Youth Involve Conference held in Wellington in July. Many youth workers applied for this award and Shelley and two other applicants were successful. Shelley's seminar, to approximately a hundred youth workers, drew on her research for her Master of Social Work degree which looked at the support needs of teen mothers. Shelley shared effective relationship-based practice ideas with other professionals, based on our SKIP positive parenting work.

AWC Coordinates a Teen Parent Agency Network (TPAN) open to all professionals in Auckland who work with teen parents. These gatherings are always buzzing with new ideas and committed professionals. A recent meeting decided to support a **collaborative research project which scopes the needs of Auckland's teen parents**. The project will examine evidence-based models which contribute to positive outcomes for teen parents and their children. The research will be owned by the community and will actively involve teen parents. A key value on which the research will be based is acknowledging the importance and diversity of culture.

Courses and Groups

Get creative this term with Margot Pakenham's 6 week **art therapy** course. **'Get Knitting'** and learn to make some winter woollies to keep the cold at bay!

Craft the night away at **Craft Grannies** once a month (in partial hibernation for the winter, Craft Grannies will only be on the 2nd Wed of every month this term).

Also available this term: Joan Prairie's **Separation** workshop, **Book Club**, Simone Bonny's 6 week introduction to **Hatha Yoga**, **Irate: Women and Anger**, Marilyn Gravette's weekly **yoga/pilates/stretch** class, **Art of Joyfulness**, and our **Young Mother's Support Programme**.

For details check out our community education brochure or our website.

Staff: **Centre Manager:** Leonie Morris, akcentre@womens.org.nz **Teen Parent Service Coordinator:** Margaret Stewart, teenparent@womens.org.nz **Young Women's Coordinator:** Amelia Rothwell, programmes@womens.org.nz **SKIP Project Coordinator:** Shelley Fraser, skip@womens.org.nz **Team Leader, Teen Parent Project:** Annalise Myers, youngparent@womens.org.nz **Administrator:** Elizabeth Morey, admin@womens.org.nz **Women's Services Coordinator:** Ellie Lim, info@womens.org.nz

What do women's agencies want from Government?

Auckland Women's Centre hosted a forum recently where some key agencies in the women's sector reflected on what the current Government is achieving for women and what they would want from the next Government.

The forum participants enjoyed the information sharing, networking and experience of being in a room with other active feminists. Another forum will be held in September with a stronger focus on the elections.

Preventing Violence in the Home (PVH)

Holly Carrington, Partnerships and Training Manager for PVH, welcomes the \$450 million new funds the Government has allocated to addressing family violence over the next 4 years. There is also optimism regarding a number of proposed revisions to the Domestic Violence Act. One of these involves the police being able to issue Safety Orders where there is not enough evidence for arrest, but the police are concerned for the women's safety. Other changes include increasing the penalties for breaching protection orders and requiring the Family Court to assess for itself whether there is a risk of future violence before deciding to discharge an order. PVH is pleased with the Government's "It is Not Okay" campaign which research shows is successfully changing attitudes to domestic violence.

Holly explained that PVH would welcome the Government's return to the kind of consultative approach characterised by *Te Rito*, the violence prevention strategy implemented in 2002. While the Taskforce on Family Violence is doing good work, it does not carry out the thorough consultation with the community that was inherent in the *Te Rito* strategy.

Auckland University Student Association (AUSA)

Sophia Blair, Educational Vice President of AUSA, explained that the current user pays loan scheme is discriminatory - female students earn less and therefore take longer to pay off their loans. Women students are also more likely to study part-time, in which case they don't qualify for a student allowance. The time women may need to take off work to raise children also isn't taken into consideration by the current loan payback system.

While making up 41% of academic staff, women hold only 19% of senior academic positions in New Zealand's eight universities. In recent years, the university sector has become increasingly commercialised and a disproportionate number of women staff are now engaged in casual and precarious employment. The new Performance Based Research fund ("PBRF") uses grading criteria that discriminates against women. This is because child-rearing leads to broken service, less time for research and therefore less opportunity to score highly in completed research, presentation of papers, and publishing. Furthermore,

research most likely to be published in professional journals does not favour occupations where women are found in greater numbers such as in education, nursing, and teaching.

Auckland Sexual Abuse Help (ASAH)

Paulette Benton-Greig, Agency Development Manager, ASAH, is very pleased that there's been some positive action in the last eighteen months regarding sexual violence, as it is an area which historically tends to be ignored by policy makers. Paulette identified two key issues facing the sector.

Firstly, that the Government's Taskforce on Sexual Violence produces real and timely improvements for women in terms of justice for rape survivors. Secondly the Government needs to recognise that survivors require community-based sexual abuse services that are well funded. Current funding of rape crisis services throughout the country is woefully inadequate.

It is important to HELP that any Government is committed to considering women's issues, through the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and to gender analysis; that it has women in Cabinet and has female equity on their MP list. It also needs to see social development and leadership as an important part of being a Government.

ASAH is looking for a long term strategic plan on sexual violence that has been agreed by the Government and community sector and is adequately resourced.

Auckland Women's Centre (AWC)

Leonie Morris, Centre Manager at AWC, addressed the topic of motherhood. Leonie feels that in the media and some parts of the state sector an attempt to be non-sexist and use the term "parenting" rather than "mothering" has had the perverse effect of minimising the huge child caring workload mothers carry. For instance, some parts of the Government tend to refer on the one hand to "parents" and on the other to the "special needs of fathers". This can mean that the specific needs of mothers are not examined or attended to.

New Zealand's Child Support system is a complete disaster. The Act is designed, not to support children, but to off-set the costs to the state of the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB). A huge number of fathers are avoiding their financial responsibilities - either through getting their income paid to them as a contractor or a self-employed person, or through lack of enforcement by the Child Support Agency. Child Support debt at the end of June 07 stood at \$13.6 million dollars.

The undervaluing of mothering is reflected most clearly in the wholly inadequate payment for the DPB. One in five children in New Zealand is under the poverty line, with about 150,000 children in severe and significant hardship. Most of these children have mothers who are on the DPB or another benefit and many of these mothers are either Maori or Pasifika.

While Working For Families helps partnered mothers exercise some degree of choice around choosing full or part-time employment, solo mothers are often forced to

choose between the inadequate income of the DPB, or, if they can find a job with over 20 hours, receiving a Working for Families Payment. Those receiving Working for Families payments can not increase their family income (unless they can command very high wages) as the more they earn, the less Working For Families they receive.

Leonie believes the DPB should provide a decent standard of living for those solo parents for whom employment is not practical. For parents who wish to combine parenting and employment a wage and benefit system is needed that enables parents (male or female, single or partnered) to have a decent standard of living so that they can work part-time and have time to be with their children.

Women's Health Action Trust (WHA)

Christy Parker, Policy Analyst for WHA, touched briefly on a number of key areas of concern. Firstly the use of the HPV vaccine which is touted as being capable of reducing the incidence of human papilloma virus and thus the number of women who develop cervical cancer. WHA is concerned that there are unanswered questions about the real benefits, safety, and efficacy of the vaccine and the targeting of this vaccine to young girls, particularly with respect to the issue of informed consent. Women need to understand that regular cervical screening and practising "safe sex" is still the best way to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. Another controversial issue concerns public funding of Herceptin for HER2-positive early breast cancer.

PHARMAC extensively reviewed the available evidence in 2006 and decided that the evidence did not indicate the efficacy of Herceptin to the extent that women had been led to believe. Given the high cost and the cardiotoxicity of the drug, PHARMAC would not fund a 12 month treatment regime. PHARMAC has agreed to give financial support to a new trial to consider whether a 9 week treatment would be as toxic and/or effective as longer treatments. WHA is concerned that the public profile of Herceptin may mislead women into viewing it as a "wonder drug" or miracle cure for breast cancer.

Eating Disorders Education Network (EDEN)

Maree Burns, EDEN Coordinator, spoke of the need for a comprehensive system of services for those with eating disorders. This includes early identification and early intervention for sub clinical disordered eating as well as intensive treatment for those who are very unwell. Although the Government has recently published 'Future Directions for Eating Disorder Services in New Zealand' the regional DHBs will have the final say on how this vision will operate and be funded throughout New Zealand. Maree is concerned that only services that require inpatient and intensive outpatient support will be funded. EDEN argues that this is very short-sighted. EDEN's concern is that existing services should be increased and that there should be funding for initiatives for prevention of disordered eating and the promotion of health and wellbeing for girls and young women.

At the Auckland Women's Centre...

Library: recent additions

We have recently added many books to the library including *Novel about my Wife* by Emily Perkins, *Take it Easy* by Pat Rosier, *Street without a Name* by Kapka Kassabova, and *Why Do I Think I am Nothing Without a Man* by Penelope Russianoff.

The library has recently been spruced up by removing books that are not read frequently and replacing them with those in demand, including new science fiction. It costs \$5 for beneficiaries and between \$10 and \$20 for non-beneficiaries to join the library per year. Books are issued for a month, and there is a library returns box in the alcove on the porch if you return books after hours. **As well as being open during the week the library is also open every Saturday from 11am to 1.30pm.**

Therapeutic massage

Available for beneficiaries and other women on low incomes on Mondays between 9.15am and 2.30pm, for an

hour-long session. Cost is \$25 for beneficiaries and \$40 for non-beneficiaries.

Health services

With WONS: Nursing, Education and Health Promotion Services, our smear tests and breast examinations service includes full consultations on women's health issues, such as menopause and PMS. The next clinics are on Friday, 1 August, 26 September and 24 October. Appointments are essential. Cost is \$45, or free if you meet certain criteria. Ring 376 3227 to book or for details.

Counselling

Low cost one-to-one counselling is available at the Centre. All counsellors are professionally trained and supervised. They use a sliding scale of \$30 to \$80 for fees and cater for a diverse range of issues. Please ring the Centre for an appointment.

A Tribute to those who Survived Malcolm Rewa, aka the Ponsonby rapist

by Auckland Sexual Abuse HELP Foundation, Friday 29th August 5.30pm, St Columba Centre, Vermont St, Ponsonby

Speaker: Dr Jan Jordan "Serial Survivors – women's narratives of surviving rape"

Tickets from Auckland Sexual Abuse HELP 6231700, Women's Bookshop and Auckland Women's Centre

Prominent Feminist critiques National's Policies

AWC is interested in encouraging voters to discuss the up-coming elections and what policies and parties would represent women's interests best. Below is an article by feminist and author Anne Else with her views on the National Party.

Since John Key took over as National's leader, he has been very careful not to frighten women voters. Though the gap between National and Labour is still much larger among men than among women, the polls indicate this technique is working.

For example, he has bent over backwards to avoid any impression that National will cut social spending, especially on health and education. But of course, National's number one policy is cutting taxes. So **how are services to be maintained, let alone improved** – as National keeps saying they must be?

In one of the few definite bits of policy released so far, National intends to **double state funding for private schools**. But there will be no extra funding for state schools on top of "the cost of living". This amounts to a "sinking lid" policy, meaning that schools and teachers (the majority of whom are women) will have to do more with less. Already, secondary schools are facing severe recruitment and retention problems, with a survey finding 75 percent of advertised jobs are getting either one or no applicant, and use of untrained teacher-substitutes is rising rapidly.

Increased funding for private schools will come only from slashing staff at the Ministry of Education. Overall, says Key, cutting "wasteful bureaucracy" and capping the core public service at 36,000 people will save "\$500 million over 3 years". But as various commentators have pointed out, that's only \$166 million a year, or 0.25% of government spending – which won't go far.

National is also insisting on the merits of forming **PPPs – public-private partnerships – for example, to build schools, prisons and hospitals, which would then be privately owned and maintained**. As Gordon Campbell notes, under National, "public private partnerships (PPPs) are set to become a major vehicle of state provision in almost every sector imaginable – in education, health, roading, prisons, and possibly even in social welfare delivery. If National can't sell existing state assets to its business allies (privatisation of everything except ACC is off the agenda, at least during National's first term of office) it intends to build new ones for them instead." <http://election08.scoop.co.nz/>

National has definite plans to **change ACC, claiming that opening it up to private competition** will bring benefits for employees as well as employers. But in Australia, which has competition now, workers pay on average \$2 in every \$100 towards their worker compensation scheme, compared with 78 cents in New Zealand under ACC; yet here they get better cover, higher benefits and quicker access, lower claim

management and administration rates, and a faster return to work. Even the NZ Law Society and Business New Zealand do not support National's policy. Business New Zealand's Paul Mackay told the *Dominion Post* that there was no demand for a move back to a competitive ACC market among employers "and we certainly have not argued for it".

National has also introduced a Bill allowing small businesses with less than 20 staff to hire new employees for a **90 day "probationary period", during which they would have no right of appeal against unfair dismissal** (for example, a woman could be dismissed because she resisted sexual harassment, and would have no redress). It's claimed this will increase job opportunities. But the Employment Relations Act already allows for a trial period if employer and employee expressly agree to this and write it into the employment agreement.

Perhaps the biggest worry about National under Key is that overall, apart from a few specific areas, it's still very hard to know exactly what it would do if it wins office. **There seems to be a deliberate policy of saying as little as possible about policy**. Instead National seems intent on (a) attacking Helen Clark and the government – currently on things no government can control, like soaring petrol and food prices; and (b) selling John Key instead of National, mainly by keeping him as bland as possible.

Finlay Macdonald calls him "the Ken doll of Kiwi politics", trying to please all the people all of the time. <http://www.publicaddress.net/default,4905>, On religion, for example, he told a student paper, "I'm not deeply religious, and I don't believe in life after death." He told *Investigate* magazine, "I have lived my life by Christian principles". And he told the *Jewish Chronicle*, "I will be the third Jewish prime minister in New Zealand".

In other words, no one really knows who John Key is, let alone where he would take the National Party. But given that his experience is mainly in the offshore financial sector **his natural alignment is with big business**.

He said as much in a revealing slip of the tongue when talking to Scoop's Kevin List about tax cuts, the central plank of National's policy so far: <http://www.scoop.co.nz/> [For business], "tax is a cost of capital. It reduces their investment returns and it makes more projects less likely to take flight. Most businesses want to grow as much as they can. So do I think they spend their whole life focused on an agenda, a hard-core agenda of trying to push tax cuts? No. I think they leave that to us." Exactly. Key himself has said his differences with the extremely right-wing Don Brash are not fundamental, more a "matter of tone". Is that really the kind of party, and leader, that New Zealand needs?

For more of Anne's views check out <http://elsewoman.blogspot.com/>