

# Australian Federation of Graduate Women

## *A Voice for Graduate Women*



# Newsletter

## February 2012

### President's Post Council Newsletter      February 2012

Last Saturday the AFGW Council held its final face to face meeting before the Triennial Conference in Brisbane. Our task in drafting an onward course for the organization was made much easier by the invaluable documents **Members Rebuilding AFGW Initiative 2011-2012 - Final Report to Council February 2012**, and **Discussion Paper on Reimagining our Purpose** produced by Kathryn Seymour and Kathy Mumford for which I am extremely grateful, and by the feedback we had from all of you as individuals, branches and State organisations. These documents are all available for those who want to read them – please contact your State President. Thank you to all who contributed.

There is obviously a feeling that the organisation and its connection to IFUW is not clearly understood so I shall endeavour to explain it. I always think of it in terms of the Australian system of government as learnt as a migrant in Government 101 at Queensland University!

AFGW Inc is the equivalent of the Federal Government – with President and Minister for Foreign Affairs (the Coordinator for International Relations - CIR). I write this on 23 February thankful that Dalma is no Kevin Rudd! 'Cabinet' consists of State Presidents (who are all vice-presidents of AFGW) and National Conveners, so is more akin to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). This Federation is made up of State and Territory Associations (STAs) each STA with its own executive and a constitution which has been approved by AFGW Council. Thus State Presidents are the equivalent of State Premiers with responsibility for local governance and for being the conduit of information to all of its members to and from AFGW, and the State CIRs are responsible for the distribution of information to and from IFUW via the National CIR.

In NSW and Queensland there are then Branches, the equivalent of City Councils with a President (Mayor). Often Branches may in fact be larger than a smaller STA. Our connection with IFUW, perhaps the UN or the Commonwealth Heads of Government, is through the CIR, our representative on the IFUW Council which meets face to face at each IFUW Triennial Conference. IFUW has a President, at present Marianne Haselgrave from England, and a ruling Board on which AFGW's Jennifer Strauss serves as a Vice President. It has standing committees, Finance where AFGW's 'Tricia Blombery serves, Fellowships where AFGW's Marion Jones serves and Projects of which AFGW's Michelle Imison is Convener.

This brings me to the present way we organise things and the importance of the Triennial Conference.

The AFGW Triennial Conference of Member Association's determines AFGW policies for the coming triennium, decides on any changes to the Constitution, and elects the incoming Office Bearers (the Executive). Conference is the chief decision making forum in which all states and territories participate, meet national council members and the International President. As well as conducting the business of AFGW during the various business sessions, the conference brings together members from around Australia and overseas, for intellectual stimulation, friendship and networking. The Public Day, which is open to non - members, for the 2012 Conference in Brisbane in November features excellent speakers on the chosen theme *Women Work and Education*.

If we are to make significant changes to our management structure it is very important that as many members as possible attend the conference business sessions in November and participate fully so we achieve an outcome acceptable to all. The overwhelming response to my appeal was that AFGW should continue with a large majority wanting to remain a part of the international body. For this to happen, whatever changes may be made, we do need office bearers at Federal level. I am sure there are suitable candidates in the membership and I hope when the call for nominations is made there will be a good response and even a need for elections. If no-one is willing to serve AFGW will have to close despite all this recent hard work and consultation throughout all of 2011. You all know that the CIR (Dalma Jacobs), Treasurer (Deborah Haydon) and Secretary ('Tricia Blombery) have served maximum terms and I hope I have made it clear I think three years as President and one as Past President is definitely enough, and that a vibrant organisation needs a younger president. I would be very disappointed to have my term marked only by the end of AFGW.

Now to what AFGW Council members proposed at the Council Meeting in Sydney on 18 February. Nearly all the following proposals were passed unanimously while the rest by a large majority with the abstention to reflect State/Territory membership views rather than the Councillor's personal view.

**1. The proposed Vision, Mission and Objects** produced by Kathryn & Kathy were very warmly endorsed by everyone and STA presidents undertook immediately to distribute them widely so that I hope at Conference the vote will be similarly unanimous - a two thirds majority being needed under the Constitution.

### **MISSION**

"AFGW is the national voice of graduate women working through initiatives in Education for the advancement and wellbeing of women and girls.

### **VISION**

AFGW members view Education as essential for:

- Empowering Women
- Reducing Poverty
- Improving Health
- Understanding Human Rights
- Maintaining Human Security
- Building Peace.

## **OBJECTIVES**

AFGW will unite graduate women in Australia to work in friendship, cooperation and understanding with each other and the IFUW network of sister graduates worldwide to:

- Improve the status and well being of women and girls.
- Promote equitable educational opportunities and lifelong learning.
- Encourage women and girls to be active leaders and decision-makers in all spheres of public and private life.
- Inspire and support women graduates to put their education and professional training to the service of the local, national and international community.
- Promote the Vision of AFGW amongst all people, irrespective of their gender, age, race, nationality, religion, political opinion, gender, sexual orientation or other status.”

### **2. AFGW Continuation**

- That AFGW Inc continue as a national incorporated body to which STAs are affiliated.
- That AFGW continue as an NFA of IFUW.

### **3. Governing Structure of AFGW**

- That we change the management structure of AFGW.
- That the current Council be replaced by a management committee of elected President, CIR, combined Secretary/Treasurer/Registrar, Communications officer
- That these officers be elected for three years
- That this committee co-opt annually two VPs. In the first year of office these VPs will be the Immediate Past President and one STA President or her appointee. In the following two years both VPs will be STA Presidents. These co-optees will rotate around all STAs so that each STA in turn will be involved at this level during the Triennium
- That one of the VPs will be delegated the Convener of Education
- That the management group meet electronically each two months and the minutes of this meeting be circulated to all STA presidents and, in STAs where branches occur, also to branch presidents.
- That these presidents be asked to comment on the minutes and submit items for the next agenda.
- That the practice of asking national Executive and STA Presidents to vote electronically on decisions be continued.
- That the management group ask members to form groups of “experts” who can be drawn upon to provide support for advocacy matters.
- That the management group have the power to appoint ad hoc committees to deal with particular issues that arise.

If this structure were to be rejected at Conference, it was suggested:

- That the role of Registrar be combined with that of Treasurer.
- That the Policy Standing Committees be either just one – Education or two - Education (Schools) and Education (HE)
- That the Convener be chosen from among the STA Education Conveners

- That the Resolutions Convener remain.

#### **4. Meetings**

- That after the conclusion of the 2012 Triennial Conference in Brisbane, Conference be replaced as the primary decision making body of AFGW.
- That the powers of Conference pass to the Annual General Meeting.
- That the location for the AGM rotate between the Eastern states to enable participation of local members.  
*(this is because GWWA suggested meetings in Perth would be expensive and harder to restrict to two half days)*
- That the STA where the meeting is held be responsible for an accompanying social event for members.
- That a face-to-face meeting of the management group and STA and branch presidents be held the next morning.
- That the election of national office bearers be for a three year term.
- That the system of quota voting based on STA membership numbers be maintained for deciding constitutional amendments, policy resolutions, election of office bearers and setting of membership dues.
- That the present quotas be revised to better reflect current membership numbers.

If the proposed changes are not accepted by conference, it was decided:

- That one full Council face-to-face meeting be held each year to coincide with the AGM.
- That 2 Council meetings be held by teleconference or other electronic media.

#### **5. Membership**

The possibility of independent members or members at large was raised but it was decided that this would need to be administered and serviced by STAs or the subscriptions to fund them would need to be unacceptably high.

#### **6. Audit**

The Secretary, speaking as Public Officer, informed the Council that an audit of AFGW finances is neither required by the NSW Office of Fair Trading nor the AFGW Education Trust Deeds. It was agreed that clauses that suggest a mandatory audit should be removed from the Constitution and replaced with one that makes audit optional yet protects the Treasurer and the association.

#### **7. Representation Fund**

Some responses expressed concern at the amount of international and national travel that was funded for Council members. It was agreed that support for President's travel and delegates' travel to international meetings should continue to be budgeted triennially and remain the decision of the governing body.

*It was stressed that this funding support represents only a small part of actual costs for delegates and alterative delegates to IFUW conferences and only nominal amounts for other attendees. In the case of funding to "high level regional conferences" (e.g. the NZFGW*

*Triennium Conference or a PGWNet Conference) funding again represents only a small part of the actual cost of attendance. In any case, total Representation Funding is restricted to the amount raised during the Triennium from the designated part of the capitation dues. The funds are also required to contribute to the AFGW President's travel to STA events to which she is invited. IFUW Board and Council members receive no travel support from AFGW Inc.*

The Resolutions Convener and the Executive will draft Constitutional amendments which reflect these agreed proposals and circulate them for consideration by STAs and their members.

**All revised Constitutional amendments must be formulated by 1 May 2012 and sent to Jocelyn Eskdale, Resolutions Convener and this is a reminder to all STAs.** The Resolutions Convener will then amalgamate them and present them at the July Teleconference for endorsement.

*STA presidents are reminded of the need for a 2/3 majority for these resolutions to pass and are asked to canvas opinions as widely as possible to obtain informed feedback for the quota voting. Support for these suggestions did receive strong support from all Council and it was felt failure to achieve the necessary vote at Conference would be a great disappointment.*

## **8. AFGW Communications**

Many submissions expressed concern at the lack of adequate communication between AFGW Council and the members and at the lack of knowledge about AFGW and IFUW. It was restated that:

- The responsibility for passing on AFGW and IFUW information is the duty of the State President and CIR.
- That Council papers should be treated as STA inwards correspondence. They are not confidential documents but should be shared with members
- That all STAs develop a members' email database as a matter of urgency and keep it current.
- That STA send all changes of address and email of members to the Registrar as soon as they are received.

## **9. AFGW Website**

It was unanimously agreed that a new design was needed for the website and that funds from reserves could be used to have this done professionally. Marion Jones has agreed to manage the website for six years. Felicity Farrelly reported that GW WA has just spent some time developing a brief for their website. Felicity will send this brief to Marion who will further modify it and send to Council members and the Membership team for further comment. Council members were also asked to send Marion contact details of web designers they could recommend. Marion will then send the brief with a request for Expressions of Interest to the current web mistress and those other designers suggested. Her aim is to have a new website ready for implementation by 31 May.

## **10. Graduate Women**

Any decisions on the continuation of Graduate Women as an annual glossy publication mailed to all members should properly be passed to the incoming governing members.

**For the 2012 edition I request all STAs to send to me suitable material for publication.**

Reports of research completed by recent scholarship holders are especially welcome. This year the same printer will be used but there has been discussion with a graphic designer and editor and a mock-up and quote will be circulated for the next Council meeting.

## **11. AFGW Education Trust**

The Treasurer reported that the Trustees had met by teleconference to discuss the future of the Trust. She explained that some things could be achieved by the Trustees and other decisions needed to be taken by Conference.

It was agreed that Council endorse the Trustees redefinition of the eligibility criteria for the Georgina Sweet Award to allow it to qualify for Donor Gift Recipient status and that Council endorse the Trustees intention of working towards the amalgamation of the Trust Funds into one investment allowing tax deductibility of donations.

It was agreed that the current funds should be amalgamated to generate income funding for two awards of similar value. One will be from the current Georgina Sweet funds and the other will be a combination of the current AFGW and the Beryl Henderson - monies augmented with money from reserves to make them equal. Awards of equal value would then be offered in alternate years.

The Treasurer reported that there has been some discussion that the current AFGW Education Trust be disbanded and management of the Education Trust funds should be handled by another body. AFGW Vic has already made a proposal. The Treasurer asked that other STAs wishing to make a proposal should make an Expression of Interest, guidelines for which were provided. STAs were requested to forward their Expressions of Interest to the Treasurer at [dhaydon@tpg.com.au](mailto:dhaydon@tpg.com.au) by Friday 1 June 2012 for evaluation by the Education Trust trustees.

You will see from all this that there will be a lot of business to be discussed at Conference in November. Queensland University have generously offered some sponsorship that has enabled us to fix an early bird registration fee of \$150.00, which we hope will be affordable by most members, and is significantly less than the last two Triennial Conferences. This has been made possible by funding accommodation and catering for the two Council Meetings and the AGMs from AFGW reserves. The Registration Brochures are nearly ready for posting and you should receive them very soon – even sooner for those of you who have agreed to have communications by email **AND** have ensured the Registrar has your up to date email address.

I am hoping for a very large turn out by enthusiastic members at both the business sessions and the public day of the AFGW Conference in Brisbane from 22 to 25 November 2012.

Jane Baker

President

**CURRENT STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES**

FEDERAL COUNCIL

**VOTING MEMBERS**

Executive  
    President  
    Coordinator for International Relations  
    Secretary  
    Treasurer

Vice-Presidents  
    Presidents of each State and Territory Association (STA)

Conveners of Standing Committees  
    Education [or Education (Schools) and Education Higher Education)  
    Peace and Human Security  
    Human Rights  
    Resolutions

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**  
    National Registrar  
    Fellowships Office  
    Proxies for Vice-Presidents when the relative VP is in attendance

**MEETINGS**  
    Three per annum  
        Formerly all face to face,  
        More recently two face to face and one by teleconference  
        Email votes on urgent matters between meetings  
    The executive meets regularly by email or teleconference and prior to each council meeting

DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

All constitutional amendments and policy resolutions must be approved by the National Conference

Conferences are held every three years

Voting is by quota by STAs dependent on number of financial full members.

**PROPOSED STRUCTURE**

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**MEMBERS**  
President  
Coordinator for International Relations  
Combined Secretary/Treasurer/Registrar,  
Communications officer  
Each of the above elected for a 3-year term  
Two Vice-Presidents  
one of whom is the nominated Education Convener  
Year 1: Immediate Past President + one STA President or her nominee (a recent STA President)  
Year 2: Two other STA Presidents or their nominees  
Year 3: Presidents or their nominees from remaining 2 states

*The proposal gives Education the highest profile.*  
*This method would ensure each state had close involvement with the Management Group.*  
*This extension to ‘nominees’ is to cope with the differing terms of office of STA Presidents and the lack of synchronicity of these terms. Recent past Presidents of STAs are likely to have the relevant experience and expertise.*

**MEETINGS**  
Electronically every two months

DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The authority to make constitutional amendments and policy resolutions would pass from the National Conference to the AGM.

To be held annually hosted by an eastern state in rotation.