

Australian Federation of Graduate Women

A Voice for Graduate Women



Newsletter

November 2012

AFGW NEWSLETTER - CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL REPORT

GWQ put on a splendid conference, the St Lucia campus was at its springtime best and the Women's College proved a delightful setting, with those of us who stayed there being extremely well looked after. We welcomed colleagues from New Zealand, Fiji, Vanuatu and not least the IFUW President, Marianne Haslegrave, from England.

Never-the-less what this newsletter is about is to provide information from the Conference and the pre and post Conference Council meetings, and most importantly to announce the new executive. **Madeleine Laming** (WA) is the new President, **Lynda Roberts Hall** (WA) Co-ordinator of International Relations (CIR), **Jenny Jones** (WA) Secretary and **Merle Thompson** (NSW) Honorary Business Manager. From this you will realise that the proposal for the revised management structure was not passed, albeit by the narrow margin of one vote. A two-thirds majority is always hard to achieve and I am sure there will be more fall out from the Archbishop of Canterbury's failure to get the appointment of women Bishops accepted by the Church of England by a similar close vote in the same week! The astute among you will recognise that Merle's title means the minor change to a combination of the Treasurer and Registrar positions was passed. However, since the Registrar has never had funding to attend Council meetings this is in fact no economy measure, just harder work for Merle. To balance this a little her responsibilities for the Education Trust are removed though not the expense of the audit.

The other significant constitutional change, which did pass, was the **transfer of the authority of the Triennial Conference to an Annual General Meeting**. Preliminary plans are for this to be in Perth next December (2013) to celebrate the end of the 90th birthday year of GW WA. There will continue to be two face-to-face meetings of full Council a year with the venue to be decided, though Councillors at least will remember that surprisingly Adelaide is the cheapest place to hold a national meeting. For the last triennium a temporary decision was made for Conveners to have one fare paid to Council each year and executive members to have two so were this policy to be continued with three of the four executive to be in Perth it may be cheaper to get the rest of us there. All convenerships will continue including one specifying Human Rights as had been introduced during the last triennium. This means we shall have conveners for Education, Status of Women, Peace, Human Security and Human Rights (Lily Tsen reappointed), and Resolutions. There is obviously an urgent need for a replacement for Education Convener as Madeleine is now President and she has invited STAs to seek out interested people and contact her without delay.

Michelle Imison (NSW) was ratified as Public Officer and Dalma Jacobs endorsed as one of the two eS4W representatives and Jane Baker as one of the two ERA representatives.

Many will be absolutely delighted that the proposed Mission, Vision and Objectives were accepted after 6 years of trying so we now have these more accurately stating who we are and what we are about (and have even lost that quaint word 'objects'). We are all grateful to Kathryn Seymour and Kathy Mumford who, with minor modifications from other contributors, achieved this.

Administrative and Policy Resolutions. These were all accepted but with considerable modification to some during debate and the withdrawal of others before conference. If the final form is not available before this newsletter is sent out it will be published on the website as soon as possible. A significant number of members do not have access to the website so it is hoped STA Presidents will ensure they get paper copies.

Council 35/10

This was the last meeting of the 35th Triennium and took place on the Thursday afternoon. Minutes from this meeting will be sent to all Council members old and new, and to Branch Presidents where their details are known, in the next few days and will be available from your State President. It was a delight to welcome Jennifer Strauss back as newly elected President of GWV and Jocelyn Eskdale now back as President rather than acting President AFGW ACT. Elaine Butler who has been providing regular updates on educational issues via her CCH Political alerts was acting President and proxy for GWSA and it was a great chance to meet her face to face.

Undoubtedly the most important business discussed was the fate of the Education Trust and it was good that so many observers were able to be present and contribute during the discussions. By a fairly wide margin it was agreed that the funds be entrusted to AFGW NSW Education Trust which gave instant Donor Tax Deductible status for donations and was a less final solution at a time in which we might be involved in major change. Papers were available about Colonial First State investments which hopefully were included in the load of conference papers your representatives took home if you want to see them. It was confirmed that both the Georgina Sweet and AFGW Fellowships will be available only to Australian citizens and permanent residents but that applicants will no longer be obliged to be members. The AFGW Education Trust will be disbanded with AFGW NSW Education Trust to manage the funds. The existing Trustees are to complete the formalities including incorporating the minor change into the Trust Deed to recognise the Australian Community Foundation as a suitable recipient of the funds. On winding up the Trust we will be thanking Joan Smith for her time as NSW Trustee in addition to the executive. Jenny Strauss, under her IFUW Board hat, addressed Council about the proposed changes to IFUW committee structure to be discussed in Istanbul next year

Education Trust AGM

This followed on immediately and confirmed these decisions about the Education Trust. It was then the pleasant privilege of those attending to welcome Jana McCaskill, the latest AFGW Fellow to the meeting. As you will have read in the reports for conference and on the website Jana's primary focus of her antiviral research is human Hendra virus, a highly pathogenic virus of Queensland and New South Wales that currently has no vaccine or post exposure therapy available. This research has resulted in a potential therapeutic agent that uses an innovative approach to treat viruses, by combining direct suppression of viral replication with immune

system recruitment to the site of infection. All this sounds potential Nobel Prize stuff but perhaps I am getting too excited!

AFGW AGM

At this the reports of the President and Treasurer for the year were presented, the Auditor's report and proposed Triennial Budget. Minutes will be distributed very soon. As has been stressed throughout the last year, the AGM is very much a reporting business meeting and the fact that it has been in NSW for the last five years has not really disenfranchised any other STAs. Next year it will have a very different purpose and function.

This was followed in the evening by a council meeting of the **Pacific Graduate Women's Network (PGWNet)**. This was a great chance for AFGW members to find out more about the successes and problems of our sister organisations. We welcomed news that Vanuatu is close to re-establishing a National Federation (NFA), though deplored the fact they could be asked to pay all the back dues for a completely different group. A Resolution was passed to express this view to the IFUW Board. Papua New Guinea (PNG) is also close to making application to IFUW for affiliation. Lily Vesikula the President of the Fijian Association of Women Graduates (FAWG) took over the Presidency of PGWNet. Marianne Haslegrave, IFUW President, then addressed the meeting reminding us that small NFAs are vitally important in IFUW. She explained that, as graduate women in these countries, they are much closer to the people in power in government, in business and in status in the population, are more likely to meet them socially and therefore much more likely to have influence through this type of 'local advocacy' than she is ever likely to have in Britain.

Then the Conference!

Auntie Joan Hendriks welcomed us to Country in a most moving way, having travelled from Stradbroke Island at break of day to join us. She is Queensland State Finalist for Senior Australian of the Year 2013 so those of us from other states may well hear more about this remarkable lady next January. More information is at:

<http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/honour-roll/?view=fullView&recipientID=964>

Professor Cindy Shannon, Auntie Joan's daughter, and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Education) was one of the many speaking highlights of the Public Day.

Professor Iyla Davies, the Principal, then welcomed us to The Women's College and we made a start on business. We were lucky enough that **Professor Debbie Terry** found time in her very busy schedule to open the Council formally just before lunch. We were able not only to thank her for enabling the generous sponsorship by the University of Queensland but also to benefit from her experience at all levels in universities and her insights as a psychologist into dealing with the challenges.

After lunch the "Futures" session was handed over to **Marianne Haslegrave** to give the IFUW perspective. Full details will be in the post conference papers but in summary Marianne felt the Conference theme reflected the four pillars of IFUW,

Education for employment and leadership

Education for freedom from violence

Education for financial independence, employment and entrepreneurship

Education for sustainable futures

but what matters is what happens locally. Australia Canada and France develop more resolutions than other National Federations (NFAs) but more important is what happens afterwards. There is a problem of diminishing membership which means diminishing funds

but three large European NFAs have made it very clear that they will disaffiliate from IFUW should there be a rise in capitation fees. A fuller report will be in the Conference papers on the website.

Each State President has taken a copy of the Conference Book home. In there are all the triennial reports, a summary of what has been achieved and essayed over the last three years. Certainly I would regard the Presidential Report as what has happened but, since it is a bit lengthy, I would ask you to read it there. The other vital bit for you to read is the budget for the next three years. Though no rise in capitation fee is recommended and a recommendation for limited use of reserves is included, we are operating on the same management plan as before and economies will be hard to implement. Transferring the office from East to West is not without cost. For this reason it is essential to maintain or increase membership and the new executive cannot achieve that without the support and hard work of everyone in AFGW.

A welcome break from business was the **Public Day**. The LAC assembled an outstanding group of speakers all, apart from Marie Coleman, a showcase of Women of Achievement from Queensland – and Marie is an icon of Australian feminism so belongs to us all. It was especially encouraging to have three of our own members, Jeannie Mok, Ann Stewart and Iyla Davies (in order of appearance) among this line up. Everyone who was there was fascinated from start to finish, questions and contributions from the floor were limited only by time constraints or we could all be sitting there still! There is certainly enough amongst all the material presented to keep us occupied until our centenary in 2022.

At dinner in the evening the guest speaker **Leneen Ford, Chancellor of Griffith University and past Governor of Queensland** continued the theme of Women, Work, Education in her address. She illustrated from her own life story how a young widow with five small children managed, through further education, to embark on the illustrious career she has followed.

It is traditional to combine minutes of all these meetings, a summary of the public day presentations and report of the resolutions passed in Post Conference Papers. The past Secretary and Conference scribe are working on them to get them to all delegates and STAs as quickly as possible. Again, copies can be obtained from STA Presidents and the website.

Last but not least the **Art Show** generously sponsored by GWQ FFI Branch in Honour of Barbara Williams, a member of 61 years standing and a notable contributor throughout that time. Perhaps each state has artistic talent like that among its members but it has certainly never been demonstrated so convincingly.

Finally in what will be my last Newsletter to you all may I extend our congratulations to the new executive and Council and wish them all well in what I know will be a difficult year ahead. The proposed constitutional changes may have been too much too quickly but I think there is a definite mood of rejuvenation. We all look forward to hearing all about progress and consolidation in December 2013 .

Jane Baker
Immediate Past President