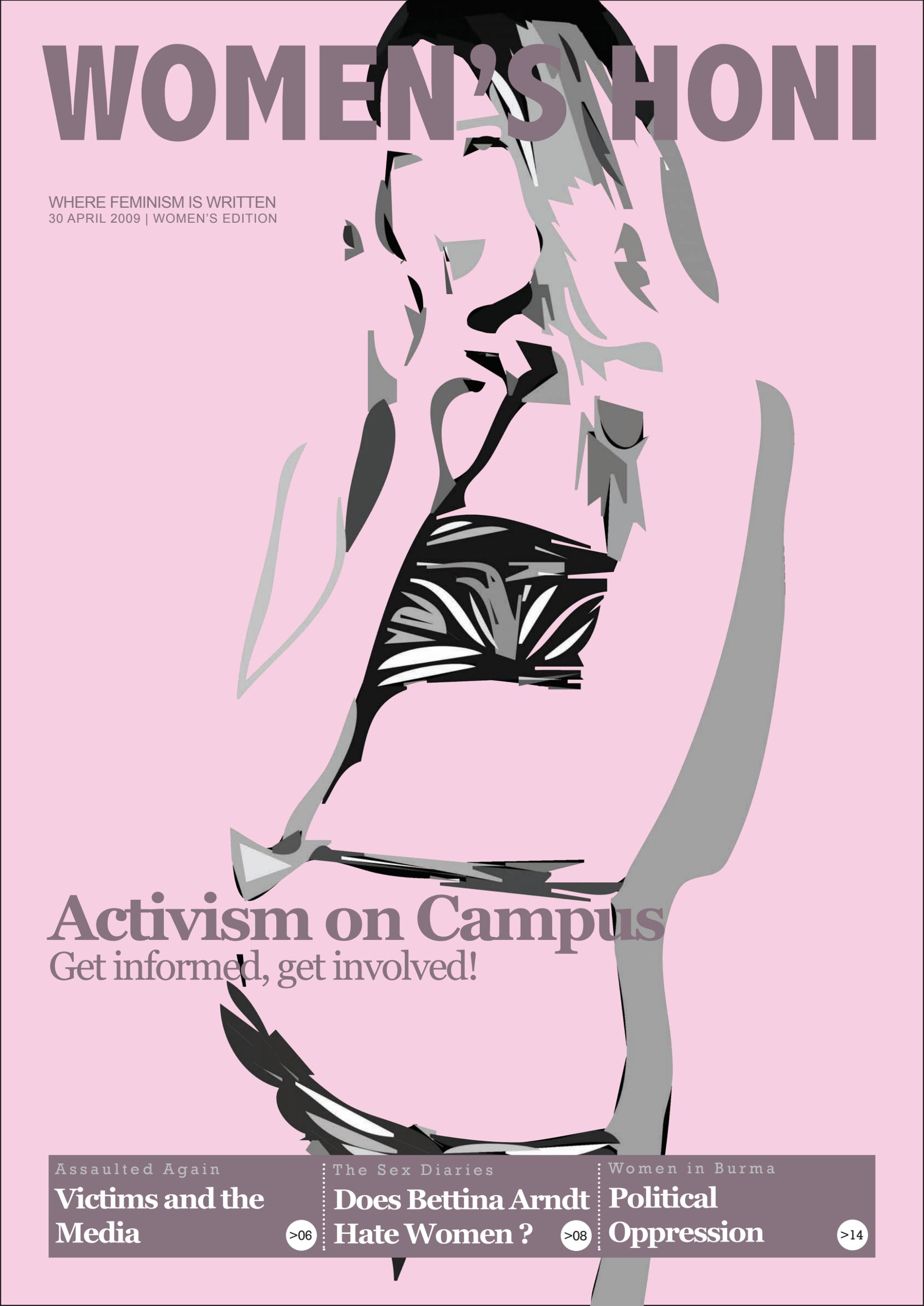


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**Victims and the
Media**

>06

The Sex Diaries

**Does Bettina Arndt
Hate Women?**

>08

Women in Burma

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Oppression**

>14

thursdays in BLACK

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DEVOTED EDITORS Tamsin Dingley, Rebecca Cleaver, Hannah Goldstein, Elly Howse, Giselle Kenny, Rosie Ryan

WONDERFUL CONTRIBUTORS Elly Howse, Nina Funell, Mel DeSilva, Kay Dook, Nadia Redelman, Morgan Snow, Donherra Walmsley, Rosie Ryan, Amelia Stojanovik, Hannah Goldstein, Charlotte Long, Kate Laing

FRONT AND BACK COVERS Tamsin Dingley

IMAGES Tamsin Dingley, Rebecca Cleaver, Hannah Goldstein, Elly Howse

PHOTOS Tamsin Dingley, Hannah Goldstein, Elly Howse, Rosie Ryan, Morgan Snow, Donherra Walmsley

ADVERTISING Publications.manager@src.usyd.edu.au/PO Box 794, Broadway NSW

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AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: THE MEANS TO AN END

By Elly Howse

What is affirmative action?

Princeton University in the USA defines **affirmative action** (or AA) as 'a policy designed to redress past discrimination against women and minority groups through measures to improve their economic and educational opportunities'. For example, an all-white company may enforce an affirmative action rule so that the company has to hire more people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, because this company has recognised discrimination against non-whites as affecting

those people's professional opportunities.

Affirmative actions recognises that because of the existence of a culture which is focused on emphasising the social, economic and cultural position of the white male, women and non-white people have often been excluded and discriminated against in the professional world.

AA seeks to change this culture through what is sometimes

termed 'positive discrimination', where women and people from ethnically and culturally-diverse backgrounds are given preference for professional and educational positions over white men.

In Australia, affirmative action is commonly used to promote women in leadership roles and positions. The University of Sydney Union has, since 2006, followed a policy of affirmative action for most positions. This was introduced to encourage and make sure women took part in the USU at every level of the organisation, particularly in leadership roles. For example, there is an affirmative action quota for positions such as Board Directors, and O-Week and Verge directors.

In other countries such as the USA, affirmative action often includes not only women but other groups in society as well, such as African-Americans.

Why do we have affirmative action?

Affirmative action in Australia was begun because people realised that even though the status of women in society had improved, women were still less likely to take on (or gain) leadership positions, despite being just as educated and skilled as their male counterparts. This led to affirmative action becoming a common policy within the corporate and political worlds.

Forexample,therewasacern that without affirmative action women were going to remain a minority in organisations such as the USU and the SRC and

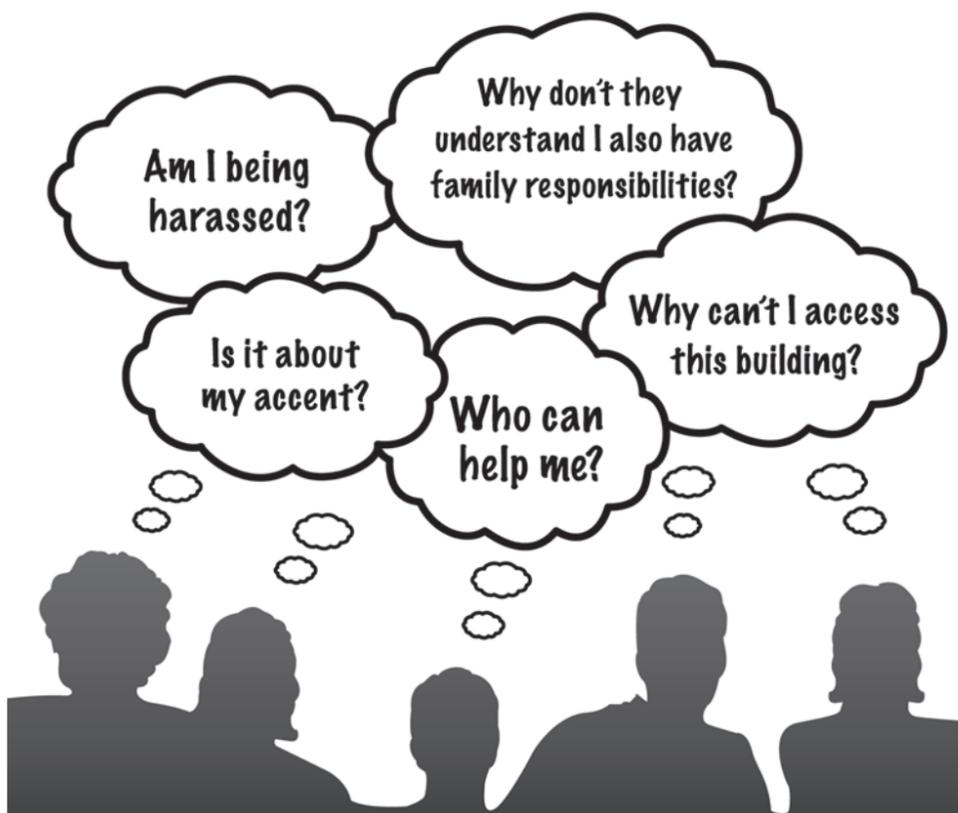
they could be deemed sexist in their availability of positions for women. Affirmative action is used in many progressive organisations because these organisations recognise that discrimination still exists in many forms towards women, and often this discrimination based on gender stops women from achieving many political and work-related positions they deserve.

A policy of affirmative action recognises that women are an integral part of political life and society, and that women should therefore have equal representation to men in all positions in the organisation. For example, for any position in which there is more than one position available, at least one of those positions must be filled by a woman (this of course excludes autonomous women's positions). The aim of having affirmative action in organisations such as the USU, Sydney University SRC and SUPRA is to encourage more female students to get involved, so that we can reach a stage where the culture has changed so much that affirmative action practices are no longer necessary. But we are a very long way from that!

The positives of affirmative action

Affirmative action is a positive step in the right direction. In Australia, it ensures that women actually go for and achieve leadership positions in many areas of society, whereas previously they may not have had that opportunity, mainly due to perceptions about their gender. Affirmative action policies also mean that women and men are equally

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represented in positions, instead of men completely dominating all positions.

In somewhere like the SRC, we realise that to truly transform the dominant patriarchal culture, the change has to come somewhere. Affirmative action ensures that women are trained in various leadership positions, so that those women can then pass on these skills to other young women.

Putting a woman in a leadership position can overcome the misconception that a woman can't fulfil the position competently.

covering up massive ideological problems in their structures. Is there a reason women don't become involved with these organisations at the same rate men do?

But that's for you to decide.

The negatives of affirmative action

One of the main problems with affirmative action is that it is discrimination. Even though it is 'positive' discrimination, affirmative action is still reliant on choosing people for positions based on their gender, ethnicity or race. This is a problem, for example, when not enough women apply for positions and

election debates and going out there to win the student vote, often against quite aggressive and dominant male voices.

Is there a future without affirmative action?

The solution to problems like the ones I mentioned above? Recruit and involve more women. Affirmative action is a policy, not an ideology. Affirmative action does not ensure long-term involvement in organisations by women or other oppressed groups in society. The only thing that ensures long-term involvement is by encouraging these groups to become involved. Too often an organisation like the USU or the SRC can be lazy in encouraging women students to become active.

We've become reliant on affirmative action, rather than engaging so many women that affirmative action is no longer needed. For example, many clubs and societies have hardly any women on their executives, which I think is a largely unaddressed problem in the USU. There has been some discussion of introducing affirmative action quotas for the USU C&S programme, but as far as I know, it's just an idea. Perhaps the place to start is with autonomous training days for women C&S executive members.

But it's great news that this year, five women are running for the six spots on the Union Board. I think having a nearly all-female USU Board would be an amazing step away from the past domination of men in such positions. So I'd urge everyone to support and help as much as

possible our wonderful women candidates: Jess, Lizzy, Amani, Mel and Giorgia.

I also think organisations like the ones I mentioned before are too solely focused on gender. It would be fantastic if affirmative action could include several other oppressed groups in Australia society – for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I personally would feel uncomfortable gaining a position over an indigenous male, because I recognise that he would probably face much more discrimination (both overt and subvert) than myself on a daily basis in many areas of the university. If women are less represented than white men in our political organisations, indigenous women and men are even more under-represented which is why affirmative action could be extended to include indigenous people.

I would like to see these organisations get to the stage where we have elections in which men and women are both equally represented, and where women are elected solely based on their merit and skills, not solely their gender. But a culture still exists, even within many progressive organisations, in which women can be seen as less able candidates for many positions.

To change the culture, we have to start somewhere. Which is why affirmative action is a means to an end, not the end itself. Otherwise, what are we working towards?

A policy of affirmative action recognises that women are an integral part of political life and society, and that women should therefore have equal representation to men in all positions in the organisation.

The competence of men is rarely questioned, but the competence of women is regularly questioned – such is the culture of our society. But surely having a woman in a leadership role is better than none? Sometimes giving positions to women over men is seen as tokenistic or symbolic rather than actually being realistic. I would perhaps agree to an extent, but symbols are a way of moving forward and redressing past actions.

Without affirmative action, the SRC, USU and SUPRA may not actually have as many women in leadership roles, which would lead me to ask whether affirmative action is

then women automatically get a position because no other women applied. How do you encourage men to respect and encourage women to apply for positions if the skills of the women are not even considered?

One such case occurred in the USU election several years ago, in which only three women applied for Union Board, and as affirmative action is a policy of the USU, these women automatically received the positions without running a campaign and without the student population voting for them. If this continuously happens, it will mean that women students will never get the chance to participate in running and organising their own campaign, participating in

THE MEDIA'S ASSAULT ON WOMEN

by Nina Funnell



I was recently asked to give advice to a teenage girl who had been sexually abused over a four-year period by her stepfather who happened to also be a B-grade celebrity. With the court case underway, she was considering going to the media to name and shame him and she wanted my professional advice.

Having studied the ways in which sexual assault victims are treated and represented in the media, and having already 'outed' myself in the press as a sexual assault survivor, I had a fair idea about what she was in for if she went public.

I have always argued that in order to erode the stigma around sexual assault more survivors need to speak out. And yet I am still always reluctant to encourage other survivors to 'go public' as I know the backlash that can result.

Three months after I went public I discovered a website discussing my assault. One young man had posted the following; "what a conceited bitch for thinking she's worthy of being raped. The guy just probably wanted to give her a good bashing in which case job well done". Another individual commented, "there is a chance she made the whole thing up just to get her name in the paper" (despite there being male DNA taken from my person) and yet another individual had added "she's so ugly I wouldn't bother raping her even from behind with a box cutter".

No matter how many people come out in support of victims, immature, unsavoury types will continue to use the anonymity of the Internet to mock, deride and undermine already traumatised sexual assault victims

One of the other things I have learnt from going public is that once you do, your life experience no longer belongs to you; it becomes public property and you cannot control how it is talked about or what discussions flow out of it.

In her book **The Making of Me**, gang-rape survivor Tegan Wagner discusses the frustration she felt as she watched various commentators hijack her life experience and use it to reinforce their own racist agendas. Wagner, who was attacked by three Pakistani brothers (though the media often mistakenly reported



them as being Lebanese), has always been careful to avoid making racist generalisations herself.

My attacker was also 'of middle eastern appearance' and, like Wagner, I became

particularly perturbed by tabloid journalists and Sydney shock-jocks who took my very personal experience and turned it into predictable, racially bigoted gossip-fodder.

I have always maintained that sexual assault is a gendered crime born out of patriarchal arrangements in society and that it is not productive for the media to constantly reframe rape through a racial lens as being an immigration problem.

Of course that's not to discount the very real links that exist between the misogynistic attitudes of certain ethnic groups and the prevalence of rape within those cultures, but it's important to remember that sexual perpetrators come from all classes, cultures and communities and that inter-racial sexual assaults (like what happened to Wagner and myself) are actually atypical.

The fact is, Anglo women in Australia are far more likely to be raped by Anglo men than they are by men from any other ethnic background. This makes sense given that roughly 70% of victims are attacked by family members or friends (who tend to be of the same ethnic background as the victim).

Additionally, if we are ever going to look seriously at the links between immigration and rape, we should start by acknowledging that statistically, the group

of immigrants who have committed the most rapes in this country are, without question, Anglo men who have assaulted indigenous women.

Racial politics aside, what is really up for debate here is the issue of speaker authority; who has the right to speak on certain subjects and what types of voices matter in these discussions?

Historically, the voices of victims have been largely absent or sidelined from public debates around sexual assault. These debates have typically been dominated by the legal fraternity, feminists, sexual assault workers, and media commentators.

Now though, victims like Wagner are challenging the authority of these traditional stakeholders and demanding a right to be included and heard in public debates around sexual assault. How these voices will be received and what value will be attributed to them is still unclear, but in the coming years I suspect that more and more survivors will want to contribute to these debates and to participate in the telling of their own lives.

And when they do, I sure hope people listen.

RECLAIM THE NIGHT

by Melissa de Silva

Reclaim the Night marches and rallies have traditionally been organised by collectives of women who have worked together in their communities to organise peaceful protests against sexual violence towards women and children, and to promote women's strength and survival. Reclaim the Night represents a claim for women's basic human right to live in freedom from discrimination and fear of violence.

The first rally took place in Rome in 1976, as a reaction to reported rapes reaching 'Astronomical' figures (16000 per annum). Around 10,000 women and children marched through the centre of the city.

Marches followed in 1977 in West Germany. Women there demanded, "the right to move freely in their communities at day and night without harassment and sexual assault".

Reclaim the Night marches were initiated in England on 23 November 1977 by women in Leeds in response to the 'Ripper Murders'. They had read of the demonstrations by feminists in Germany. Angry at advice to stay indoors since the last "Ripper" killing, they marched

with torches through the town and challenged men in the street, asking them where they were at the time the "Ripper" killed Jacqueline Hill? On this occasion hundreds of women sang protest songs in the city square. Marches occurred simultaneously in 11 towns, from Manchester to Soho.

'Take Back the Night' marches in the USA were first held in 1978. In San Francisco over 5000 women from 30 states marched through the pornography district. These organised protests developed into campaigns such as Women Against Violence Against Women.

"Take Back the Night is a symbolic statement of our commitment to stopping the tide of violence against women in all arenas and our demand that perpetrators of such violence be held responsible for their actions and be made to change."

Women from Ireland, India, Canada, Germany and Holland have also marched through their cities to Reclaim the Night.

In Australia, Reclaim the Night marches were first held in 1978.

"The campaigns here have become large and explicitly political campaigns, focussing on the need for social and legal reform, on the need for more Government resources to assist victims, and on the effects of assault and loss of freedom on women's lives...."

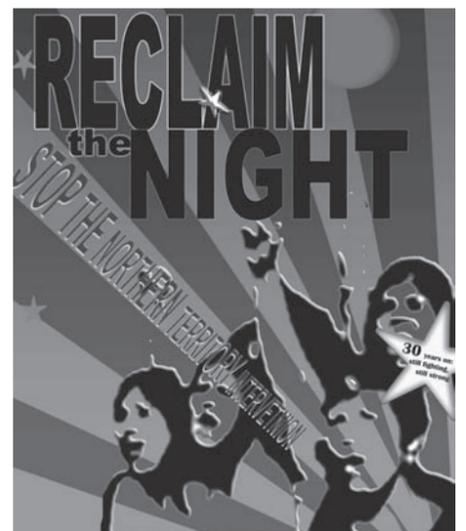
On another level, Reclaim the Night represents a challenge to the curfew mentality that is imposed on 51% of the population. It symbolises a rejection of existing beliefs that "women shouldn't walk alone at night" and "that women should be careful of what they wear and who they speak to". Such warnings deflect the onus and responsibility of male violence from men onto women, and endorse a kind of gender apartheid on the streets. It also incorrectly assumes that women predominantly experience violence from strangers. This fact is by no way true.

The Women's Collective of the SRC has played a major part in organising the march and rally in the last few years. Women are encouraged to participate in whatever way they feel able. If you feel that you want to help organise the march and rally, but only have limited time, then volunteer whatever time

and skills you have free. You'll meet a great bunch of amazing women, and share your skills. If you don't want to organise the event you can just attend. It's on the last Friday of October, starting at 6:30pm.

By taking part in this protest we are able to unite in a joyful celebration of our collective strength and solidarity, demanding not only safety on the streets but at home and in the workplace. We march to reclaim our public space and demand that which has been denied us, paradoxically, the right to walk alone."

Reclaim the Night organising meetings for the 2009 event will be starting soon. Stay tuned for details!



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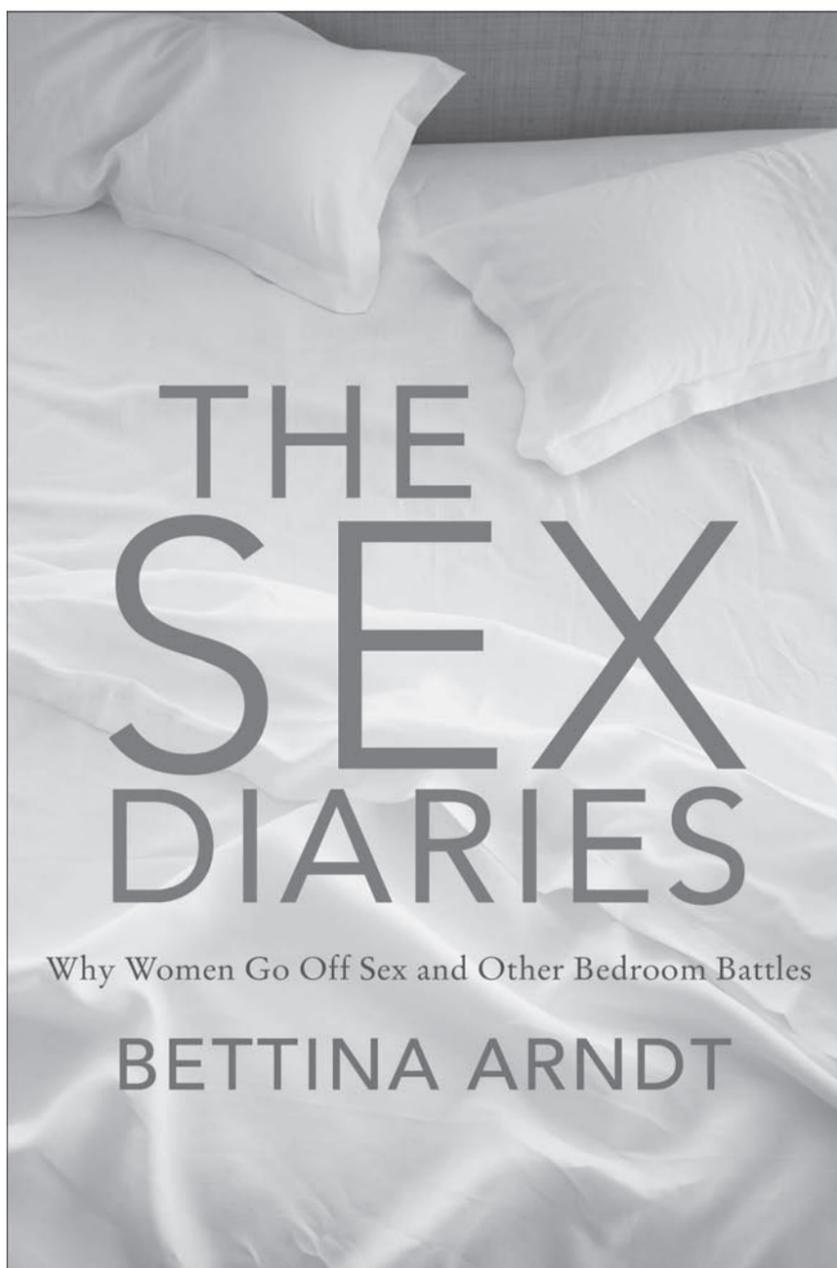
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'The Sex Diaries': a victim

by Kay Dook



Women today are confronted with an ideological backlash against the gains of feminism.

According to proponents of this backlash, women aren't oppressed any more - in fact, feminism gave us "too many" choices. The mythology of the "biological clock" is pervasive. We are told that women need to have babies in order to be fulfilled as human beings; that we have to hurry up and get married so we don't "miss out".

Bettina Arndt - a clinical psychologist and sex therapist, and author of *The Sex Diaries* (Melbourne University Press, 2009) - personifies this trend.

The Sex Diaries is based on Arndt's study of 98 couples' diaries of their sex lives. It purports to explain why women "go off sex". What it actually does is to reinforce and encourage sexism. Arndt is as committed to heterosexual gender roles as any religious fundamentalist.

Not surprisingly she seems to have recruited the most boorish, ignorant and repulsive men in the country for her study. Here's a gem:

"I have a really crap sex life," complains Luke, aged fifty. "Wifey

doesn't climax for me... I can grind away there for forty minutes or so and when I can't last any longer and climax, she gets cranky."

I'm stumped, aren't you? I can't understand how Luke's sex life could be "really crap" - the prospect of all that "grinding" must be such a turn-on.

Luke's wife Shirley writes of sex with her husband: "I have given up on telling him what I want as he goes back into the just do it his way or no way."

What's wrong with you, Shirley?! Who could resist that?

But in fact the whole book could be summarised by that sentiment: "What's wrong with women?"

Apparently, part of the problem is our innate sexual weakness in comparison to men. Arndt devotes pages to the supposed inferiority of the female libido. She describes women's sex drives as "feeble", "fragile" and "weedy". She suggests (rather disturbingly) that women are biologically programmed to have their need for sensuality satiated by caring for babies.

The conclusion she draws from all of this is that most women's sex drives will inevitably fade away, and because men will always want more sex than women, women should "Just Do It": "The right to say 'no' needs to give way to saying 'yes' more often."

This is a flat out apology for rape, and like most rape apologists Arndt blames women for their situation.

One diarist, Amy, "spent the first ten years of her marriage fighting about sex. 'Every night he'd have a go... Even if I refused him I'd be so upset that I'd lie awake at night thinking, 'Why did I say no?' I might as well let him have it because the next day he'd be so grumpy.'" Luckily, Amy saw that it was all her fault! She "finally realised it was the idea in her head that was the real problem - that if she could get over that stumbling block of thinking she had to want it first, she'd enjoy sex and all would be fine".

Here is Arndt's discussion of Justice Bollen's comments in 1992:

"[Bollen] suggested that 'there is nothing wrong with a husband, faced with his wife's initial refusal to engage in intercourse, in attempting...to persuade her to change her mind, and that may involve a measure of rougher than usual handling.'... [T]he sky fell in over these unfortunate words but one suspects that even without them, Bollen would have come in for a caning for daring to suggest that men should ever try to persuade women to come across."

Arndt writes wistfully of the 1950s, when women saw it as their wifely duty to put out: "Perhaps...past generations of women considered that sex was part of their wifely duties." She suggests that sex should be a task that women take on as part of a marriage, like cooking when you don't feel like it. "It's not as if you are doing something dreadfully painful... There are plenty of women who see it as just

The oppressive social structures that emerged during this process are hardly conducive to loving, passionate relationships between men and women.

part of the give-and-take that makes relationships work."

This reduces sex to a commodity, to be negotiated and doled out; or into a chore, something that you just have to do. These ideas are so anti-humanist that Bettina Arndt as a sex therapist is like giving Philip Ruddock a job as a trauma counsellor for refugees.

Rather than assuming that women naturally want less sex than men do, that there is something wrong with us that needs to be medicated or

counselled or willed away, we need to ask what is wrong with society. What kind of society produces these horrific stories of women who lie awake dreading that their husbands will want sex? Stories like Amy's: "He'd be snoring loudly and I'd still lie there worrying that the hand was going to come creeping over."

This kind of crushing sexual oppression is not default human behaviour. This is proven by studies of sexual customs in pre-class societies. Anyone who wants to understand how oppression crushes human sexuality and poisons relationships between men and women should read Eleanor Burke Leacock's *Myths of Male Dominance* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1981).

Leacock describes the pre-colonial Montagnais-Naskapi of Canada, among whom women and men alike were free to choose who they lived with and who they had sex with, inside or outside of a marriage partnership.

The collective nature of this egalitarian society meant that the family unit was much looser and relationships more fluid. Childcare was the responsibility of the whole community - men and women participated.

In these circumstances it would have been impossible for a man to think of a woman as his property, or to treat her as though she "owed" him sex.

Sexual freedoms among the Montagnais-Naskapi were curtailed as Jesuit missionaries, backed by the power of French colonialism, consolidated the ideologies and structures of Christianity and capitalism.

The oppressive social structures that emerged during this process are hardly conducive to loving, passionate relationships between men and women.

This tells us there is nothing wrong with

women, biologically or otherwise.

Capitalism represses human sexuality, boxing people into stereotypical, expected gender roles of heterosexuality, monogamy and parenthood. Men don't get anything out of the situation, either: sex is transformed from something that should be mutual into something that has to be coerced or bought or begged for.

The generalised oppression of workers under capitalism compounds the

scious assault on women

stifling relationships of the nuclear family. For many of Arndt's diarists, factors affecting their sex lives were constant tiredness, stress, money and work.

The family unit is unequal in part because of the economic differences between men and women. In 2005, 82 per cent of men were in paid work, with the vast majority of this work being full-time. In contrast only 67 per cent of women were employed, with a greater proportion of this work composed of part-time and casual work. This basic inequality and the greater concentration of women's jobs in services, teaching, nursing and low-paid unskilled work means that relationships between men and women are unequal to start with.

These basic inequalities feed into our personal relationships. Men and women begin every sexual encounter not in a vacuum, but against the backdrop of an unequal society and the social conditioning of a lifetime.

So it's sexism that produces the horror

stories in The Sex Diaries - it's nothing to do with biology.

The diaries themselves support this analysis. One diarist, Natalie, struggles to exert control over her sex life. The only way she can do this is to initiate sex with her husband before he harasses her for it: "When he is doing all the come on I have the walls up before we even begin. There is no

Capitalism represses human sexuality, boxing people into stereotypical, expected gender roles of heterosexuality, monogamy and parenthood.

chance of me enjoying myself in the slightest."

Another diarist, Antonia, writes of her husband Angus: "[Our sex life] changed when I realized my husband is determined to have sex no matter how I feel... If I don't feel like sex he ridicules me... If I say no to sex he often gets mean and nasty."

Clearly Antonia's libido is not dropping off because of her inferior female biology. Angus sounds about as appealing as a peak hour trip on CityRail in 46 degree heat.

All this is not to say that we are doomed to behave how capitalism tells us to - but it is hard to see how a man who is not interested in confronting sexism could do other than accept the prevailing ideas about women and behave towards them accordingly.

Reading from an anti-sexist perspective, what takes shape most clearly in The Sex Diaries is how the structure of the nuclear family and all its ideological baggage warp our most intimate relationships.

That's why Arndt's book is so destructive. She ignores the real inequalities in the world and simply

tells women to shut up and put out - it's their "wifely duty", after all.

To deal with sexual oppression we need to challenge the alienating conditions that produce it, not reinforce them with propaganda that encourages men to behave boorish to women.

We need to campaign for adequately funded and quality childcare, and for benefits for single parents so that women who leave a destructive relationship can survive.

We need to call for shorter working hours and oppose unpaid overtime so that busy workers and parents can reduce their stress levels.

And we still need to fight for gender equality in the workplace. It's only by understanding and confronting the causes of sexism and sexual oppression that we can hope to have half-way decent relationships.

Life is a Cabaret!

In a schizophrenic like manner, Alley Cabaret's Artistic Director and third year Biomedical engineering student, Nadia Redelman interviews herself!



Interviewer: Willkommen! Bienvenue! Welcome Nadia, thanks for being here. I'm glad we could find time in your busy schedule for this before submission date!

Answer: No problem, I've always wanted to be in two places at once, so I guess this is just a variation.

I: Whatever you think... so down to business. What is a cabaret?

A: Cabaret is a form of dinner theatre with its origins in the mid-1800's. It has been immortalised with clubs such as the "Moulin Rouge", "Le Chat Noir", and in musicals like "Chicago." Cabarets tend to be set in plush surroundings,

with extravagant costumes and a great variety of acts, including: singing; dancing; comedy; and circus performances.

I: What does Alley Cabaret do?

A: Alley Cabaret is a group that aims to host spectacular themed cabarets, whilst providing gifted emerging artists opportunities to get stage experience off campus.

I: What is with the cat?

A: She's an alley cat named Frisky. She also functions as our symbol.

I: When will you be performing?

A: Alley Cabaret's first show is on the 13th of May in the Roxbury and is themed 1920s Chicago, audience is encouraged to dress up. Then, provided the first show is a success, the Alley Cabaret will continue every fortnight for 3 months starting the 6th of June.

I: That's a lot of performances in a very short time! How will you keep the show fresh and different every week?

A: Each show has a different theme, each show will be unique. Some shows lined up include: Red versus Blue; I love a man in uniform; and Arabian nights. These themes will inspire us, the artists and give the audience an excuse to dress

up and even have a girly night (yes boys, you too!). Also, as we are a network of performers and crew it's not always the same people on display.

I: So as an artistic director, what do you do?

A: Come up with crazy ideas like trying to fit a trapeze inside or having 2kgs of white feathers dropped on the audience to emulate snow or have everything coloured pink or... and then getting told NO by the producer and director. It's fun.

I: So how does this all fit into your university degree?

A: Artistically, it doesn't but as an engineer we are taught to manage projects, draw up budgets, communicate and do group work. I've also found that my work with Clubs and Societies has greatly helped me deal with the type of tasks I'm given.

I: What has been the greatest challenge so far?

A: Finding carpet, so challenging we haven't succeeded - I think it's going to be BYO picnic rug and sleeping bag.

I: What has been the most rewarding thing so far?

A: Having an idea become reality. And after not getting home till well after midnight, seeing the amazing photographs from a shoot at 9am the next morning!

I: Thank you very much for your time, I'll definitely be at Alley Cabaret - I love a cabaret!

A: I'll see you there, if not before!

See 'Alley Cabaret' on the 13th of May at the Roxbury Hotel (182 St John's St Glebe). \$8 Access member, \$10 Concession, \$15 General (group bookings available). Please dress up: 1920s Chicago!

For more information, to join the mailing list or register as a performer please email alleycabaret@gmail.com



Queer Women On Campus!

by Donherra Walmsley and Morgan Snow,
SRC Queer Officers

It's been a pretty big and exciting year for Sydney University's Queer Action Collective (affectionately known as QuAC), with a lot of events, both political and social. QuAC is not a gender-specific collective, so most of our events involve women, men, and those who consider themselves outside the gender binary.

and the week was packed full of lots of different events. On Monday night we ran "Coming Out By Candlelight" - a Pride Week tradition - and then queered the graffiti tunnel. Throughout the week, several events were focussed on visibility - such as the graffiti tunnel run on Monday night, the chalking night on Thursday and the Queer T-shirt making workshop



until such times as we can obtain practical, social and legal equality for women. The night was lots of fun, and culminated in a night out in Newtown.

usyd.edu.au/lft-download.cgi?id=3009715e5330f9113ee3c3c6, and I'd highly recommend everyone give it a listen. You can't hear all the questions from the audience, but some of the answers are just as interesting on their own.

In the debate we ran on Thursday, the topic of which was "Is Same-Sex Marriage Relevant to the Queer Community"; the issue of institutionalised sexism and disempowerment of women came up quite often. It was a fascinating, at times heated debate, and it was argued that marriage as an institution, and the social norms surrounding it, perpetuate the patriarchy and inequality between the sexes. It was great to get

The Whole week concluded with a bang at hermann's bar on the Friday night. About 200 queer and queer-friendly people attended the "MasQUEERade" party. The night was full of dancing, chatting, the occasional game of pool, and a wonderful fire performance by SURCAS.

If you're interested in getting involved with the Queer Action Collective, send an email to queer.officers@src.usyd.edu.au, join the Facebook group "QuAC" and come along to our weekly meeting at 3pm on Tuesdays in the Queer Space (basement of the Holme Building).

so many different perspectives on the issue of queer marriage, and particularly exciting to hear the feminist reading of the issue. The audio recording is available for download at <http://lft.ucc>.



The year began with Mardi Gras, which started as a protest march in 1978. Today, its function is the basis of much debate amongst the collective- does it still function as a protest, is it a celebration of our identities, or is it just a zoo where queers are gawked at without effecting any change in the views of the community? Perhaps it's a combination of the ideas - sometimes a protest can be as simple as saying "I'm here, I'm proud of who I am, and I'm going to celebrate it". Around 200 students from campuses all across New South Wales participated, and it was a huge success, and lots of fun for all.

on the Wednesday. We tried to find some fun, anonymous, easy ways to involve all sorts of queer students on campus in the visibility campaign. It is so important to raise awareness of both the presence of queers on campus as well as the (often unintentional) discrimination that queer students have to face if we ever want to move forward. All three events were really successful.

On Wednesday night, we ran a female-identifying autonomous movie night, because sadly even in the queer community women can still feel quite dominated by men. We believe it's important to continue giving women a space in which they feel secure and powerful,

Week 7 was Pride Week - an annual celebration of queer culture on campus. This year's theme was celebrating diversity,



USyd WOMEN AND activism

by Elly Howse, co-Education Officer



As you can tell from this great issue of Honi Soit, USyd women students and staff are incredibly active on a huge range of issues affecting us and the wider world. Here's a short update of everything that's been happening in this semester, both on and off campus.

We had a wonderful march and festival on International Women's Day, Saturday 7th March, and many women students and staff from Sydney Uni and other universities came to the Town Hall to carry banners, signs and petitions, such as 'Why aren't we there yet?'. The SRC Women's collective has started a campaign raising awareness about the disturbing levels of domestic, physical, emotional and sexual violence perpetrated against women by men. The 'Stop Violence Against Women' campaign is directly targeting male students on campus, and encouraging women students to speak up if they are a victim of harassment, intimidation and violence on and off campus.



For the first time since 2004, there have been women Education Officers in the SRC. This is fantastic not only for getting more women students on campus involved with their SRC and the Education

Action Group, but also for bridging the gap between some activist movements. Did you know you're less likely to pay off your HECS debt than the guy sitting next to you at the City Rd bus stop? There have been various studies showing that women have a much wider variance in their economic circumstances throughout their life, including part-time and casual work, unpaid maternity leave and so on. Also, for every \$1 that a man earns in Australia,



a woman earns only 92c of that. As you can see, there are still serious problems with pay parity in Australia, however much some of us think we 'don't need feminism' anymore.

The National Day of Action on Wednesday 25th March was a fantastic day for women students of all backgrounds to come out and demand a better future for tertiary students in Australia. Then, just last Thursday night, we had a National Sleep-out in Martin Place to highlight the huge lack of student income support and to encourage the Rudd Government to start listening to students' needs. Full Youth Allowance payment rates (including Rent Assistance) are 56% of the Henderson Poverty Line and you get \$100 more per fortnight if you're on the dole than on some sort of study allowance. It was a long night but over 45 people were there at one point, with about 25 staying for the whole night which is a fantastic

result for the students involved, especially the many women office-bearers who organised the event.

This year the SRC Anti-Racism collective has been run by women students passionate about stopping the Northern Territory Intervention. The Intervention is particularly affecting indigenous women, who are the first to feel the brunt of paternalistic

government policies which systematically discriminate on the grounds of race. It's also seriously affecting indigenous students from the NT, who have their Abstudy payments quarantined each fortnight. Last year, the annual Reclaim the Night march was focused around the issues affecting indigenous women in the NT, and many of those issues affect indigenous women all around Australia. Earlier in the semester, we held a forum on the Intervention with two wonderful indigenous women, Irene Fisher from Sunrise Health in Katherine and Valerie Martin from the Yundemu community, who both spoke passionately about their experiences with the Intervention.

Many women on campus also have been involved with the Palestine Solidarity campaign. We were all appalled to see the horrific violence perpetrated by Israel during the January assault on Gaza, with nearly 1,500 Palestinian civilians the victims of this brutal and horrifying campaign. Those civilians were overwhelmingly women and

children. Women at Sydney Uni, of every background, race, religion and ethnicity, feel strongly that war is a terrible problem in the world, with women and children being the most severely affected due to violence (physical, sexual and emotional), disease, malnutrition and starvation.



Climate change is one of the most serious problems we're facing for the rest of our lives. The destruction of our precious earth is coming at a huge price for humanity, and it's women in developing countries who are going to be the most seriously affected by it. Food shortages, extreme weather conditions and environmental devastation will mean that starvation, disease and poverty will be affecting even more people worldwide than it currently already is. We have to reduce our dependency on oil, which is why women students at USyd have been hosting forums, cake stalls and info sessions on how we can get more involved with saving our environment. It's also apparent that nuclear power is not, nor will ever be, the solution to climate change.

See all the issues affecting us, as students, as women and as human beings? Women have to be strong and keep fighting for what we're passionate about. So get involved with a collective, a club or society, and get out there!



Simone de Beauvoir

a reflection by Amelia Stojanovik

I arrived in Paris early on a frosty morning. The sky was grey and the wind icy and I couldn't be more excited. This wasn't just my first time in Paris; it was the first chance given to me to explore the home of Simone de Beauvoir. She became one of my favourite writers with the first novel I read of hers, the first volume of her autobiography *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*. Since then I've grown to love her even more. Simone put so much of her life, experiences and friendships in Paris into her novels that I felt I wanted to walk in her shoes for my first week in one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

After visiting the Louvre, overcrowded with tourists and their cameras even in winter, I felt relieved to be able to walk down Boulevard Saint-Germain— it was cold but the sun was finally out shedding sunlight on the Boulevard. The sun and the excitement of walking towards a part of Paris that Simone talks so much about in her memoirs almost distracted me from the designer baby stores and other overpriced stores that now fill Saint-Germain-des-Pres. This quartier was where Simone de Beauvoir sometimes took refuge during World War Two to write, when the Germans occupied Paris and Sartre spent time in a prisoner of war camp. Unexpectedly, I came across Cafe de Flore, home to intellectual conversation between French philosophers during the post war years, a meeting place for surrealists and where Simone de Beauvoir first saw Picasso. The building is beautiful and above the seating area, the windows are covered with flowers.

Afterward, I came across “Les Deux Magots”, another

meeting place for Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre, next to it a post with a sign, Place des Jean-Paul Sartre et Simone de Beauvoir and opposite the church of Saint-Germain-des-Pres, one of the oldest churches in Paris, dating back to the sixth century. This cafe was also a meeting place for intellectuals,



Simone de Beauvoir by Jennifer Mondfrans

writers and surrealists artists. It is still beautifully furnished and decorated but it is now frequented by tourists and although the food is satisfying, it is overpriced. However, it is a vital place to visit if interested in Parisian intellectual life of the early and mid twentieth century. Although Saint Germain des Pres has now become a somewhat wealthy and “bourgeois” area, it still retains its charm.

Following lunch, I walked to the Latin Quarter. The shops were incredibly different to Saint Germain des Pres and the atmosphere more alive with an abundance of students. The Latin Quarter is home to the Sorbonne, the university where Simone de Beauvoir graduated. From the age of fifteen, Simone knew she wanted to be a writer, and wanted people to love her through her books, which they did – in her memoirs she describes the flattery she felt

when she would secretly hear people comment on her novels and when she would receive letters from women who, after reading her prolific study of women, *The Second Sex*, felt their lives changed. She came second in her final philosophy examination to Sartre whom she formed a lifelong relationship with. The Sorbonne, officially called the University of Paris, is a long, stone building that stretches along the Rue des Ecoles and I walked along side it, admiring the large number of new and second hand book stores and small cafes and bars in the area.

A few days before I left Paris, I caught the metro to Montparnasse Cemetery, the second largest cemetery in Paris, where Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre are buried together. It was a typically wintery Paris day and the cemetery had only a few visitors. It was solemn and beautifully peaceful. I visited Simone de Beauvoir's grave first, only a few steps to the right from the entrance. The grave has a few flowers and notes, thanking Simone for the way she changed lives. Man Ray and Samuel Beckett are among others also buried here. In the third volume of her memoirs, *Force of Circumstance*, Simone de Beauvoir writes about the apartment she bought in Montparnasse with a view of the cemetery, with the money she received after winning the Prix Goncourt, France's highest literary prize, for *The Mandarins*.

After visiting her grave, I walked to Le Dome Cafe, situated on Boulevard Montparnasse, another meeting place for intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century and a restaurant famous for its seafood. The decor is amazing,

with green booths and black and white photographs of famous painters, writers, sculptors and thinkers, and beautiful art deco lampshades and stained windows, but the waiters are not very friendly to tourists.

Montparnasse Tower was next. The lift climbs fifty six floors in thirty seconds and the tour has one of the best views of Paris, including a great view of Montparnasse Cemetery, as the tallest skyscraper in Paris. I thought about Simone de Beauvoir's Paris and how much it had changed, as cities often do, with areas once celebrated for its artistic frequenters and forward thinking and now home to overpriced designer stores.

But as I looked out over the buildings that still stand from that time, I realised their charm and their memories still remained, and that is why tourists come from all over the world for a piece of it. If you just walk around Paris, you will still have the chance to see it as Simone de Beauvoir did, as a city that shaped her to be the proud writer, feminist, intellectual and woman that she was.

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WAR IN GAZA

by Hannah Goldstein



On International Women's Day this year, a group of Gazan women marched to the UN Headquarters in Gaza to protest Israel's 23 day military offensive that began on the 27 December 2009 (Operation Cast Lead), and to demand that the UN Security Council take action to end the siege on Gaza.

During Operation Cast Lead, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Palestinian Ministry of Health, an estimated 1326 Palestinians were killed, including 450 children and 110 women. Another 5450 Palestinians were injured, including 1855 children and 795 women. 13 Israeli soldiers and 3 Israeli civilians were killed. According to John Holmes, Under-Secretary General for the Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, 6 UN aid workers were also killed during the conflict.

The offensive, which included heavy bombardment, also had a devastating impact upon the land and infrastructure of Gaza, which in turn, has had a devastating impact upon the population. For example, on the 6th January a UN school in Jabaliya was bombed, killing at least 40 civilians who were seeking refuge there, then on 15th January the al-Quads hospital (the second largest in Gaza) was damaged in bombing – an act condemned by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Furthermore, according to the OCHA 14800 homes in Gaza were damaged or destroyed through bombing and bulldozing (although the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics puts this at 21000), leaving many homeless.

The destruction of land was also significant. According to the World Food Program and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

33-65% of Gaza's agriculture industry was destroyed during the offensive. Christine van Nieuwenhuysse, the World Food Program's country director for the Palestinian Territories stated that 'We are hearing that 60% of the land in the north – where farming was most intensive – may not be exploitable again. It looks to me like a disaster.' As a result many Gazans who relied on this industry for work have lost their livelihoods, and many more are becoming increasingly dependent on aid for food.

I spoke to Rachel Johnson, a young woman who spent time in Israel during January and February, and entered Gaza a few days after the unilateral ceasefire was declared. She stayed in Gaza for a month working with the International



Solidarity Movement (an international organisation that promotes Palestinian rights) collecting testimonies from Gazans and doing accompaniment work. Rachel's accompaniment work largely involved accompanying farmers to enter lands (once used for farming) that since the offensive have been declared by Israeli authorities as 'closed military zones', and accompanying families whose homes had been destroyed back to those homes so that they might recover some of their possessions. Rachel told me that 'for Palestinians to enter those areas with internationals greatly reduces their chances of getting killed or hurt'.

In describing the level of damage caused to Gaza's land and infrastructure, Rachel told me that she was once with a group of locals who became disorientated in their own neighbourhood because all the

landmarks had been destroyed.

I also asked Rachel what impact Israel's closure of the border crossings into Gaza had during the offensive. While various crossings were opened intermittently by Israel and Egypt during the offensive and afterwards, many Palestinian and international activists, as well as UN bodies such as the OCHA have been calling for the permanent opening of all crossings. Rachel stated that 'one of the most devastating impacts of the siege on Gaza was that, once Israeli forces launched their attacks, there was no where for people to flee to ... Many residents would ask: "Where could we go? We would think to go to the schools, but they were bombing the schools. We would think to go to the mosques, but they were bombing the mosques"'.

Rachel also stated that another consequence of the closure of the crossings was that foreign journalists were refused entry into Gaza until after the ceasefire was declared. As such, the only international news agency broadcasting from inside Gaza during the conflict was Al Jazeera - all others had to work from Israel and rely to a large degree on its official statements. On the 8th January, the International Committee of the Red Cross also criticised Israel's restrictive policies regarding the crossings. Representatives of the Red Cross stated that by failing to assist and evacuate the wounded, Israel had breached international law.

Israel's policies regarding the border crossings into Gaza are continuing to impact upon the Palestinian people that live there. In early March the OCHA

released a report outlining some of these issues. It stated that water and sanitation continue to be huge issues because much of the essential infrastructure was destroyed during the conflict and materials such as pipes continue to be blocked from entering Gaza. It estimated that 40 000 people in Gaza have no access to water and 100 000 have only intermittent supply. It was also critical of the Israeli government for blocking building materials, which are vital for reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of the conflict. Ultimately the report recommended the opening of all crossings.

In the beginning of this article, I mentioned that many Gazan women and women's groups are campaigning for an end to violence and the opening of the border crossings into Gaza. It is important to note that many Israeli women have joined them in this fight. During the offensive, a coalition of Israeli women's organisations came together to condemn the violence.

They issued the following statement, which I have quoted in full, because I think that it is important. 'We women's organizations from a broad spectrum of political views demand an end to the bombing and other tools of death, and call for the immediate start of deliberations to talk peace and not make war. The dance of death and destruction must come to an end. We demand that war no longer be an option, nor violence a strategy, nor killing an alternative. The society we want is one in which every individual can lead a life of security – personal, economic, and social. It is clear that the highest price is paid by women and others from the periphery – geographic, economic, ethnic, social, and cultural – who now, as always, are excluded from the public eye and dominant discourse. The time for women is now. We demand that words and actions be conducted in another language.' Other women from around the world have also stood in sisterhood with Palestinian women.



2010 ELECTIONS: ANOTHER ASSAULT ON

by Charlotte Long, Burma Campaign Sydney



Planned elections in 2010 offer nothing for the women of Burma. The outcome of the elections have been predetermined by a constitution written by the military. 25% of all seats are reserved for the military and many democratic leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, are prohibited from standing for office. With this constitution, the best run elections in the world can only offer Burma a 'legitimised' and emboldened military that brutally oppresses the rights of women and is firmly against democracy.

The world must not accept the 2010 elections, but instead insist on a constitutional review and the release of over 2,000 political prisoners.

The legal status of women will not be improved by the constitution. The constitution enshrines male dominance in the workforce and society, typecasting women as mothers and a gender that needs to be protected. Laws restrict women's rights in property ownership, marriage and divorce.

For many years women in Burma have suffered at the hands of the military. Human rights violations include rape, torture, arbitrarily imprisonment, forced labour and murder. There is a climate of impunity for military rape and other discriminatory and violent acts.

The situation is particularly alarming for women of minority ethnic groups where systematic rape is evident, as documented

in reports such as License to Rape and Shattering Silences. A high number of military personnel, particularly in conflict and

The constitution enshrines male dominance in the workforce and society, typecasting women as mothers and a gender that needs to be protected. Laws restrict women's rights in property ownership, marriage and divorce.

displacement areas, results in increased insecurity for women. Sexual violence, forced marriage (to remove 'ethnic' blood) and forced entertainment (young women and girls are forced to parade in "fashion shows" for military officers) are all common.

The legal status of women, coupled with an emboldened military if the world accepts the 2010 elections, will have devastating consequences for women in Burma. Human rights violations against women at the hands of the military will likely worsen.

The world cannot stand by and let this happen. Aung San Suu Kyi urges the world: 'Please use your liberty to promote ours.' Now is a critical time for women and men around the world to join together and try to match the strength and courage of the people in Burma, so that they may have liberty.

Women have been at the forefront of the pro-democracy and human rights movements in Burma since they began in 1988. Many of these women, and many more before them, have dedicated their lives to attaining democracy in Burma. Hundreds, if not thousands of women, have been imprisoned for their political beliefs. Many were arrested for their participation or support during the Saffron

denied family visits.

Australians have nothing to lose by insisting on democracy in Burma, and the people in Burma, particularly women, have so much to gain. The planned 2010 elections cannot be a further assault on the people of Burma. If the world allows this to happen, the violent and murderous dictatorship will consider itself legitimised and will be emboldened. The women of Burma will be the ones who have to deal with the most heinous of the consequences that will follow.

Let the strength of the women of Burma, and their brothers, motivate us to do what we must. Australians can write to their local MP and the Australian government outlining why we cannot accept the disastrous military-written constitution or the elections planned for next year.

The world must demand a constitutional review and the immediate release of all political prisoners.



WOMEN AND DEMOCRACY IN BURMA

Aung San Suu Kyi leads the National League for Democracy in Burma – the democratic party that won an overwhelming victory in the 1990 general election in Burma but was prohibited from forming government by the military dictatorship. Aung San Suu Kyi has been awarded many prizes for her commitment to peace and democracy, including the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been under strict conditions of detention since the Depayin Massacre on May 30, 2003 - considered to be an unsuccessful attempt by the junta to murder her. The Massacre resulted in scores of people in her party being killed, detained or 'disappeared'. Aung San Suu Kyi was due to be released from house arrest last May, but the military dictatorship is scared of the democratic support she will organise and inspire, and extended her detention for a further 12 months.

This message was a foreword to a collection of Women's Voices for Freedom, published in 2005 by Altsean-Burma. It is a collection of stories from women in Burma and women who have had to move to other countries.

"Want and fear are two of the greatest enemies that we have to contend with from day to day. In a country like Burma where we have been crushed under the military regime for many, many years, want and fear stalk us all the time.

People wake up in the morning wondering which of their friends have been taken into detention by the authorities, or where their next meal is going to come from. They wake up in the morning wondering what the future will be for their children and worrying about it.

Want and fear go together where there are no human rights and

"People wake up in the morning wondering which of their friends have been taken into detention by the authorities..."

no justice. A society that lacks human rights is a society that breeds misery.

What we want in Burma is both security and freedom; freedom from want and freedom from fear; freedom to be allowed to pursue our own interests. Of course, real freedom cannot exist without security. An insecure person is never really free.

...The struggle for democracy is about the simplest and most fundamental things in life like love, security and happiness; and it is about how we want to live our lives.

Democracy for us concerns matters people in freer countries often take for granted. It is about our jobs and our children's education; it's about the house we live in and the food we want; it's about whether or not we need to get permission from somebody else before we are allowed to visit our relatives in the next village; it's about whether or not we can reap our own harvest and sell it to the person we want to sell it to...

For the women of Burma, this means maintaining and strengthening the bonds of solidarity with the cause because when human rights are violated in any society, it is often the women and children who suffer most. Particularly to the women of the ethnic nationalities who are suffering so much, I would like to say: don't be discouraged, we are with you, we are together, and we will make it together.

It is important that we are aware of what is actually happening in Burma. Unless we know what is happening we won't know what to do.

Women should not underestimate what they can achieve individually or as a collective force, and indeed, they have a duty to demonstrate this strength to bring

about the necessary changes.

Burma is a nation of many different peoples and in this diversity lies immense potential for strength if we can make mutual trust and understanding the foundation of our union. I do believe that armed with knowledge and determination, I am sure that potential can be realised."

- Aung San Suu Kyi

For a copy of the most recent collection of Women's Voices (2008/2009) contact Burma Campaign Australia at zetty@aucampaignforburma.org

YOUR SUPPORT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN BURMA

-Sign a global online petition demanding the UN Secretary General prioritise the release of over 2,000 political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. www.aucampaignforburma.org

-Send Aung San Suu Kyi a birthday card for 19 June. Burma Campaign Australia will present all cards to the Australian government, urging them to prioritise democracy and freedom and Burma. Your card will then be sent to Aung San Suu Kyi.

Burma Campaign Australia
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-Subscribe to be a Burma Campaign Australia supporter at www.aucampaignforburma.org

-Become active in your local branch, Burma Campaign Sydney Contact zetty@aucampaignforburma.org



STUDENT SENATOR'S REPORT

Report of Kate Laing, Student Fellow of Senate//kateleonielaing@gmail.com

I was asked to write a report for women's Honi as a representative of students, so I thought what better and most relevant topic to discuss than female representation within the university structure! With the change over of a lot of the higher administration staff, we have seen that gender equity has been at the forefront of selection panels minds, yet the status quo remains the same. With the exception of the new DVC Research appointment, Jill Trehwella, recent appointments have all been men.

Overall, more women than men are employed by the University of Sydney. Women make up 44% of academic staff (higher than the Australian average) and 62% of general staff.

Among general staff there is a pay equity gap of 4.4% - ie the average salary for women in this group is 95.6% of the average salary for men

However, this strong overall representation throws into sharp relief women's under-representation at senior levels of employment in the University. Some examples:

- The Vice-Chancellor is male
- Two of 6 Deputy Vice-Chancellors are women (17%)
- One of 3 Pro-Vice-Chancellors is a woman (33%)
- Three of eighteen Deans are

women (16%)

- Among the senior executive staff (the groups above plus the most senior general staff members) 9 of 39 are women (23%).
- The pay equity gap between women and men in the senior executive staff is 15.4% - ie the average salary for women in this group is only 84.6% of the average salary for men. (Base salary only; when loadings are taken into account the gap widens).

3 in 18 Deans are female. I can't help but think that Sydney Uni should be striving for more, and that our university is not where it should be in terms of equity or diversity for all groups that are underrepresented within our society.

It is also surprising to hear that when an average female student graduates, the starting salary will be significantly less than our male counterparts. The articulation of female graduates to professional careers proportional to men is a very real issue of equity in society, and while women are entering a huge variety of professions, there is still an unacceptable difference in pay.

Well here is a short and brief report of what's been happening in the senate. I've spoken in Honi before about issues of Indigenous signage, the Bradley review response, student appeals panel make up, campus infrastructure, and the

budget processes and information. This year the senate is undergoing a large change over with many elections of fellows occurring at once, so changes in the future are expected.

I also sit on a number of committees that have all met recently, including the Student association/ Senate liaison committee where we pushed for the creation of a VSU working party to decide the next steps with the legislation reform, and the student association/ Management meeting with the DVC Education portfolio which has undergone structural change and continuing knowledge from last year has proved to be useful for the committee. I also sit on the senate/ sports liaison committee, which is never very interesting.

The university has been quite good with making sure there are student representatives in most decision making areas, but we have to be constantly aware and make sure they do better, because students should be having a say in all decisions that affect us. Most of the issues at meetings are discussed beforehand with student representatives from the SRC and SUPRA to make sure that there is a unified position, and if anyone has any questions or suggestions for issues that need to be raised in any of these forums, please don't hesitate to contact me on: 0424 752 095 or by email.

KATE'S SHED

This week we're getting out of the Kitchen, throwing away the aprons and fumbling round the shed to learn more useful things about living in a share house. Leave the cooking to the boys, and fix that dripping tap wasting 2 litres of water every hour.

1. Cut off the water supply to the tap by turning off the isolating valve under the sink.
2. Plug the basin to avoid losing tap parts down the drain. Remove the tap's cover with a screwdriver to expose the screw. The screw is usually under the hot or cold sign.
3. Undo the screw and remove the handle.
4. If the tap is enclosed with a metal cover, unscrew by hand or use a wrench.
5. Use a spanner or wrench to unscrew the tap bonnet. Completely take out the spindle to see the large body washer, O-ring and the jumper valve (this one should just fall out. If not, pull it out with pliers).
6. Replace the body washer, O-ring and jumper valve then refit bonnet and spindle - make sure not to over tighten the nuts.
7. Reassemble the tap in reverse order, close it and then open the water mains.
8. Check that the leaking has stopped.

WOMEN'S OFFICER'S REPORT

Report of Tamsin Dingley, SRC Women's Officer//womens.officers@src.usyd.edu.au

On Saturday morning as I stumbled out of the SRC at 3am it occurred to me that I must really be a devoted feminist and love my SRC. What a wonderful affirmation. It is the spirit of this apparent enthusiasm and joyfulness that I bring you the Women's Honi Women's Report.

Last Thursday Women's Collective launched our 'Fight Back: Stop

Violence against Women' campaign. In the latter half of Collective (and the following few hours) we set up a stall outside Manning. We distributed attack-whistles and pamphlets regarding safe walking routes on campus, sexual assault including information about the NSW Rape Crisis Centre and other crisis contacts. The first phase of our violence campaign is 'Thursdays in Black' which was

also launched on Thursday as we handed out badges and pamphlets and spoke to some budding super-keen new feminists. See page 3 of this publication for more detail. Women's Collective will be running a stall every week from now on, and will be expanded to include information on abortion and sexual health, women's refuges, Black Dog institute (depression support) and other health/support services. You can also email me for information on any of these services.

I was also lucky enough to be a part of pride week last week. The Women's Department ran a joint movie night with Queer Collective. We had a great turnout and much fun (and food) was had by all. More information about Pride Week on page 10.

Pride Week and our campaign launch are all a distant memory for those from Collective who worked on Honi this week. We've spent days underground creating this beautiful publication. The launch party will be on Friday 8th May at Hermanns at 6pm. Women and men are welcome to attend. We will be partying hard

with live bands and yummy snacks to celebrate Women's Honi '09 and also Women's Activism.

On that note I'd like to say a HUGE thank-you to Ellie, Giselle, Rebecca, Rosie, Hanna and Tina who worked very hard to make Honi happen. Wonderful feminists like these are working hard all over the world and on our campus to achieve real equality and to make the world a better, violence-free place for all women. They make a real difference every day and so can you.

Come to Women's Collective on Thursdays at 1pm in Manning Women's Room and help put an end to rape, domestic violence and the patriarchy!



ASK SALLY

SRC HELP: Level 1 (Basement) Wentworth Building, City Road Entry

//02 9660 5222 or help@src.usyd.edu.au



Dear Sally,

I am in my second year in a USyd faculty and trying very hard to do well. I've been asking lots of questions during and after class in order to get a good idea on what to write in assignments. My tutor encourages me in class and as far as everyone else can see I am doing quite well. However, my tutor has taken things too far. He invited me to his office and touched my leg while he talked to me. I am very shy and am scared about what people will say about me if I tell them. I certainly did not mean to confuse him about what I wanted. Now I feel that I cannot go back to his class. I have to do that subject at some point because it is compulsory. I really don't know what to do.

HG

Dear HG,

I'm really sorry to hear that you are feeling confused and scared. I think that this is a common goal for people who are trying to harass someone – use their power to make the other person feel threatened and unsure and feeling like their concerns are not legitimate. However, that's just not right. You have every right to feel uncomfortable in the situation that your tutor has created and he has a responsibility to make sure that you are not intimidated by him.

The University has very strict policies on sexual harassment, which includes a safety net to ensure that your marks will not be affected if you make a complaint. My personal opinion is, though, that you do need to consider all of the possible consequences, like being marked down, when choosing your actions. Additionally, though, you should consider that no reasonable person would blame you for what he has done. No woman could possibly do anything that deserves a man touching her without consent.

Talk to someone regardless of whether you want to make a complaint or not. You do not deserve to feel bad about what this person has done to you. The SRC has caseworkers you can talk to about the processes of making a sexual harassment complaint. They will explain how the university will go about investigating your allegation and what the possible outcomes are. There are also university staff members who can explain these processes. The SRC caseworkers can also suggest other courses of action that can consider. This might include things like changing tutorial classes, changing your home phone number and using informal resolution processes. Remember, though, that it is ultimately your decision to take whatever action you choose. So don't just wait for things to get worse, talk to someone about it now. The SRC are always happy to help.

Sally.

Dear Sally,

One of my best friends was involved in a very violent relationship. I was so glad when they finally broke up, even though it ended up physically and mentally hurting her. However, after a few weeks of apologising, her ex-boyfriend has managed to convince her that he loves her and they should be together. I understand that she really loves him, but I'm really scared that he has the potential to hurt her very badly. Is there anything I can do to stop them being together.

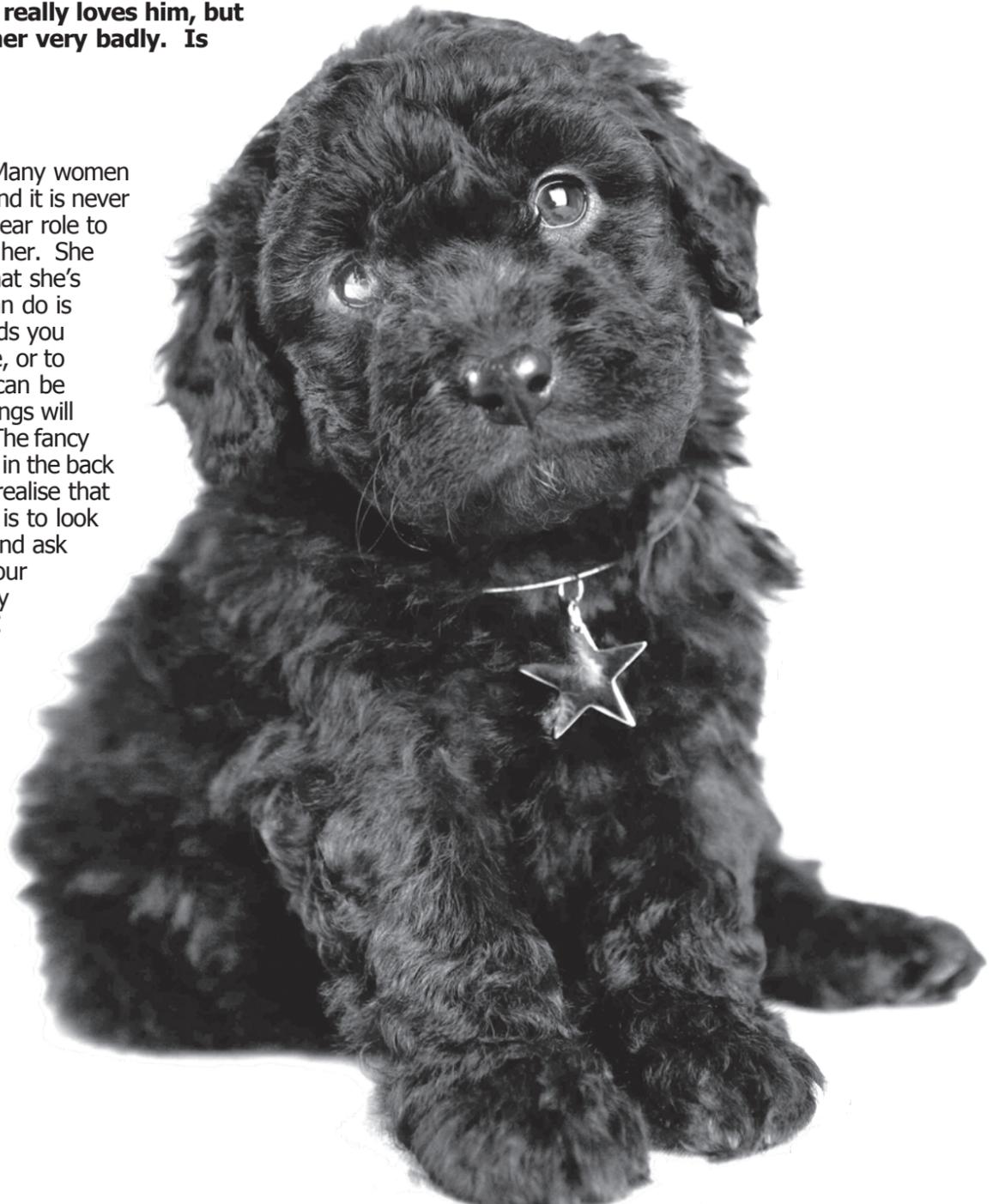
MP

Dear MP,

I'm so sorry to hear about your friend's difficult situation. Many women experience domestic violence of all descriptions at all ages and it is never acceptable. However, as her best friend you have a very clear role to play. You need to support her and not alienate or humiliate her. She knows what she's risking, so she doesn't need to be told that she's being silly or doing the wrong thing. The best thing you can do is constantly assure her that you are there whenever she needs you to be, whether it be to talk to, or to go with her to the police, or to pick her up and take her somewhere safe. Sometimes it can be helpful to acknowledge to her that while you're sure that things will go fine this time around, what would she do if things didn't. The fancy term for this is "exit strategy". This way she can have a plan in the back of her head just in case she needs it. Finally you need to realise that the most important thing you can do for all of your friends is to look after yourself. Talk to a counsellor about what's going on and ask them if there's anything else you can do for yourself or your friend. If you need help finding a counsellor or emergency accommodation or anything like that just contact an SRC caseworker. We have a number of referrals for you.

Sally.

This column offers students the opportunity to ask questions on anything that may affect their "welfare". This can be as personal as a question on a Centrelink payment or as general as a question on the state of the world. This week's women's edition column is presented by guest dog Sally, who is the lovely pet of our Women's Officer, Tamsin. Abe returns next week so if you would like to ask him a question, send an email to help@src.usyd.edu.au. Abe gathers his answers from experts in a number of areas. Coupled with his own expertise on dealing with people, living on a low income and being a dog, Abe's answers can provide you excellent insight.





What is the federal government doing about women's rights and welfare?

Paid Parental Leave

As we get ready for the federal budget presentation next month, women's groups and unions are keenly awaiting an announcement by the government about paid parental leave.

The results of a new poll released earlier this month, commissioned by the National Foundation for Australian Women, Unions NSW, the Commission for Children and Young People, Catalyst Australia and YWCA Australia, and conducted by Auspoll, show that two thirds of respondents were in favour of a federally-funded paid parental leave scheme. Over 80% of respondents favoured funding for a paid parental leave scheme over offering tax cuts to those earning over \$180,000 per year.

The Australian Productivity Commission released its report into paid parental leave in February this year, stating that a nationwide paid parental leave scheme is both affordable and practical.

This would allow approximately half of the women in the workforce, who do not currently have access to parental leave, to take up to 18 weeks' paid leave.

Australia is one of two OECD countries which does not have a nationwide, government-mandated paid parental leave scheme. This puts the country out of step with the majority of other similar economies, which offer parental leave as a part of comprehensive support for women in the workforce.

Childcare

Along with paid parental leave, the government must commit to a comprehensive childcare system for early childhood care to support working women. With the collapse of ABC Learning, some 20 centres are facing closure and another 8 are facing major uncertainty about their futures.

The last federal budget increased the government's childcare subsidy from 30% to 50%. However, there was little commitment by the government to a more comprehensive funding program for childcare across the country to support the creation of new infrastructure and capacity to meet the demand for childcare, and Minister Gillard

has recently rejected proposals for a public child care system.

The collapse of ABC Learning demonstrates the need for a more across-the-board approach to childcare funding in Australia. Although the federal government stepped in with \$22 million to bail out the corporation, the government's short-term and market-based approach to childcare leaves much to be desired.

The Senate inquiry into childcare, set up as a response to the collapse of ABC Learning, will hand down its report in June. You can find more details of SUPRA's submission to the inquiry on the opposite page.

Violence Against Women

Although last year the Rudd government announced, with much fanfare and self-congratulation, the creation of a National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children which was entrusted with the task of producing a National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women, the Council has stalled in its deliberations and has had an indefinite extension on its deadline to produce it.

With a lack of transparency and accountability about the process for producing it, the National Plan of Action is not likely to be well received unless it delivers a number of significant increases in resourcing of essential services for survivors of violence.

It is clear that the government could be doing much better in a number of areas, and it's up to us to keep them accountable for the promises they make to women.

Rashmi Kumar,
SUPRA Women's Officer and President
president@supra.usyd.edu.au

SAAO Corner

Dear SAAOs,

I am concerned about a childcare worker in the childcare centre my children attend and wanted to know what I can do about this? The worker has given my child a nickname which I feel is derogatory – what can I do about this?

From the SAAOs...

Generally you can speak to a senior childcare worker in the centre. If the senior childcare worker dismisses your concerns or does not take you seriously you are best then to make an appointment to see a management level person in the centre, usually the centre's Director.

Management may be unaware of that childcare worker's behaviour or may already have concerns about the worker and be thankful to hear the feedback from you. If you are not happy with the way management handles your concerns you can then go to the governing committee of the childcare centre. At the same time as doing this check the website of the centre for their policy and/or guidelines for handling of complaints against staff.

Make an appointment to see a Student Advice and Advocacy Officer at SUPRA if you want further information and/or assistance.

Postgrad Pages

Children on University Premises

University policy recognises that it may be necessary for you to bring your children onto campus. The policy deals with the situation with respect to classrooms, libraries and non-teaching spaces. One of the key things about this policy is that it commits the University to the long-term aim of providing access to childcare facilities for all students and staff who need them. It also recognises that dependant children of students may need to attend venues on University premises, and sets out some principles that govern arranging permission for dependant children to be with students in classes.

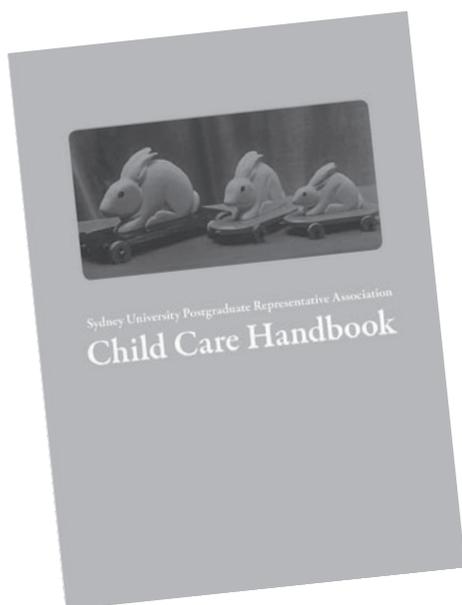
The policy makes it clear that requests for permission to bring children into the classroom should be considered favourably, though it also notes that there are legal obligations to not put at risk the health and safety of children and students. So, for example, dependant children are not permitted in laboratories, workshops or clinics. For a full copy of the policy please see the following page: www.usyd.edu.au/ohs/policies/ohs/children

SUPRA...Your Student Association Advocating for Better & More Affordable Child Care...

Many students were affected by the collapse of ABC Learning Centres. In the wake of the collapse the Federal Senate set up an Inquiry into the Provision of Childcare. SUPRA made a joint submission with the undergraduate Student Representative Council (SRC) to the inquiry.

We called for distinct attention to be given to student parents and guardians as a group, the adoption of a system similar to TAFE NSW where greater priority for places is able to be offered to students, and for adjustments to funding models to encourage providers to offer occasional child care.

We also called for more support for on campus child care providers, and a review of the current Child Care Benefit Scheme with a view to rectifying anomalies that discriminate against certain households who elect to move from paid work into study. The submission in full is available on SUPRA's web site.



Child Care Handbook

SUPRA is pleased to announce our latest publication the 'Child Care Handbook', is now available from our office. This handbook contains lots of useful information for those students with child care responsibilities. There are details about on and off-campus child care, University policies, details of child care facilities around campus, information for International students and much more. Drop in to the SUPRA office today, to pick up a copy.

What's coming up at SUPRA (see www.supra.usyd.edu.au for more information)

Wed 29 April 12pm	International Student Meeting @ SUPRA
Coming Soon	SUPRA Elections for the 2009-2010 Council - Nominations open soon. For details see www.supra.usyd.edu.au
Coming Soon	SUPRA Annual General Meeting

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- Vote or run in the SUPRA Council elections
- Actively participate in your representative student association.

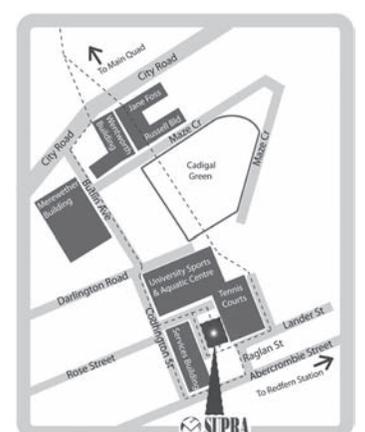
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- Show that you appreciate the value of an independent student run organisation.

Complete your subscription online at www.supra.usyd.edu.au/ subscribe then follow the links if you would like to become a SUPRA Supporter. Alternatively you can complete a form at our stalls or drop into the SUPRA office.



**Raglan Street Building (G10)
Darlington Campus
University of Sydney NSW 2006
Phone: (02) 9351 3715
Fax: (02) 9351 6400
Email: admin@supra.usyd.edu.au
Web: www.supra.usyd.edu.au**



Women's Honi Launch Party

Celebrating Women's Activism

Women and Men Welcome!

Hermanns Bar, 7pm

Friday 8th May

