

# Honi Soit

SEMESTER 1 WEEK 9  
5 MAY 2010

## WOMEN'S EDITION

+ Abortion Rights

Abbott's Heaven. Your Hell.

The Problem with Sluts

Culture Wars

DANGER



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### DISCLAIMER

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**EDITORIAL**

The Women's issue of Honi Soit provides a fantastic opportunity for passionate female students to rant, raise and debate ideas and issues about gender politics in the media and popular culture, within the political sphere, and right here on our university campus. As Australia grapples with the idea of a paid maternity leave structure, outdated abortion laws at both the state and national level, equal pay and the lack of adequate representation across a whole range of spheres, it is imperative that both male and female students alike pay heed to, and engage with the issues affecting broader Australian society, especially as we edge closer to the upcoming Federal elections. As University students we enjoy a privileged position to engage with these broader issues and demand change.

This year we have chosen Lady Gaga as our front cover icon, to examine the rise of raunch culture and what kind of liberation this provides women, as well as other issues currently affecting the Feminist Movement: for example the abortion debate, as well as the frightening possibility of an Abbott-led Coalition government (as someone who has been unafraid to voice conservative views on women's issues in the past) and what this will mean for women generally.

We are proud to present a fun, informative and provocative Women's Issue. Enjoy.

*If you'd like to discuss any of the issues found in this edition of Honi Soit, come along to Women's Collective!*

## Women's Collective

# THURSDAY, 1PM

in the  
Women's Room,  
Downstairs in the Holme Building

womens.officers@src.usyd.edu.au

9660 5222

**YEMAYA****CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

Interested in writing? Got a flair for photography? Keen to see your artwork published? Consider making a submission to Yemaya!

Yemaya is Sydney University Law Society's (SULS') annual women's journal. Now in its sixth year, Yemaya encompasses a diverse range of works that communicate the talent, ideas, and experiences of women worldwide. Submissions can include essays, opinion pieces, feature articles, short stories, poetry, interviews, photography, book reviews and original artworks.

This year, Yemaya will feature a special themed section, 'Communities'. We encourage contributors to explore this topic creatively, touching upon the experiences of women locally and/or globally. Contributors are also invited to submit works to the non-themed section, on a topic of their choice. We welcome contributions from all disciplines, and from both within and outside the student community.

Yemaya will be launched at Mallesons Stephen Jaques by Catherine Branson QC, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission and a former judge of the Federal Court. Prizes will be awarded for the best submissions.

For written submissions: Please send an expression of interest to [women@suls.org.au](mailto:women@suls.org.au) by Monday 26 April. The submission should outline your idea, the form of your submission (essay, feature article, interview etc.) and an estimated word length (up to 2000 words). Final submissions will be due on Wednesday 19 May.

For non-written submissions (eg. photography, artwork): Please send your submissions to [towomen@suls.org.au](mailto:towomen@suls.org.au) as soon as possible. Photographs must be of a minimum resolution of 300 dpi.

# *the problem*

Hear the phrase 'she's a slut' and we've all got a pretty good idea of what you mean. Someone, always a woman, who's 'easy' or 'gets around', with a dress code, flaky morals and lack of self-respect to match. It's a longstanding slur in youth culture, thrown about in the media and in shock-and-awe articles on morally bankrupt teens, fuelling pop culture stereotypes and hurled sometimes playfully, often viciously, around all sorts of peer groups.

This 'slut' culture is cited again and again by shock jocks and opinion piece journos as a clear indicator of the downfall of sexual ethics and indeed, the modern world at large. But there are deep-seated problems with this view, our common conception of a 'slut', and indeed, the sheer use of the word. All damn female sexual expression.

“Women are taught that if they dress in a certain way, don't walk on the streets alone at night, hold their keys for self-defence and don't lead men on, they will avoid rape.”

Fundamentally, the term assumes there to be something wrong with a woman who has many sexual partners – although what constitutes 'many', and on who's grounds, is highly debatable. But even more problematic is the insult's implicit assertion that it's socially unacceptable, even morally wrong, for a woman to enjoy sex at all. The word 'slut' carries overwhelmingly negative connotations of dirtiness, disease, social dysfunction and immorality. It allies women who are actively sexual, physically sexualised or sexually confident to such negative traits – regardless of the number of sexual partners they have. Such damnation of a woman who enjoys sex strips her of agency by suggesting that there's something wrong with her, undermining the desires and sexual freedom of all women.

Female insults like 'slut' and its many equivalents – whore, skank, slag, tramp - contrast starkly with male-gendered insults like 'fag' and 'homo'. These criticise a man's ability to sexually ensnare women, once again reiterating the misogynistic dichotomy of woman as submissive, responsive and weak and man as dominant, active and empowered. Elizabeth Sandoval wrote that: 'women are non-self-respecting because they willingly sacrifice such an important part of their being for just a few moments of sexual pleasure'. She is one of the many who speaks misguidedly of women 'giving up' something to men in heterosexual sex, rather than viewing it as a reciprocal exchange of what should be two equal partners. There is an extreme double standard as to how the sexual behaviour of men and women is perceived and judged, a double standard that must be overturned in order to make any significant steps towards gender equality.

This dichotomy is reinforced in every aspect of our pop culture, political and social authority figures and the varying socialisation of male and female children. It's also reinforced through sex education classes, which superficially teach young women about drugs and how to put condoms on bananas, but not about recognising their own sexual power or needs.

Things are further complicated when such judgments are made on the basis of a woman's appearance, assuming that someone's physical presentation says anything about their sexual activity at all. Most scary is the correlation between such 'slut bashing' and society's views on rape. In an article titled 'Misogyny's Rise No Surprise when Self-respect Rejected', Miranda Devine wrote: 'there is no point in simply

**Jaya Keaney** explores the problems with the term 'slut culture', questioning why a woman with multiple sexual partners is deemed so immoral in today's society...

## WITH SLUTS

demanding that men change their attitudes. It is no coincidence that the rise in misogyny seems to coincide with some women's rejection of any self-respect or modesty. Why would a man respect a woman who doesn't respect herself...?' This is some of the most insidiously sexist mainstream journalism I've ever read. It is views such as this that fuel society's rape myths like 'she was asking for it' that somehow place women at fault for 'causing their own rape'. But as Emily Maguire states, 'If a woman drinks to excess, then falls over in the street, loses her wallet and vomits all over her shirt, she has only herself to blame. But rape is not a consequence of getting drunk. It's a consequence of a man deciding to rape someone'.

Women are taught that if they dress in a certain way, don't walk on the streets alone at night, hold their keys for self-defence and don't lead men on, they will avoid rape. Instead, how about targeting rape prevention strategies at men, and challenging the unfathomable idea that women who dress revealingly, get drunk or behave in a sexualised manner are sluts, and therefore somehow deserve to be raped?

Feminism has a long way to go to combat the violent damnation from both males and females alike, of women who are confident in their sexuality and sexual expression. At the heart of this, we must tackle society's entrenched prejudice, fear and hatred of female sexual pleasure.





# Culture Wars

**Elly Howse** talks about seeing beyond the sandstone walls of Sydney Uni...

Last year, chat rooms, Facebook sites and the media all exploded with a scandal involving ex-St Paul's college students. I'm sure you've heard about the 'Pro-rape' Facebook page - the media was pretty quick to comment on what had happened and people's opinion of the matter. In the process, a college, a university and a community were left extremely embarrassed by the fallout. There has been so much discussion and dialogue on the issue that people are even referring to it in their PhDs and Honours theses. So why was this incident such a huge issue?

I don't actually agree with the opinion that there's necessarily a problem with colleges, or all-male ones, or co-ed colleges. If anything, this incident suggested that perhaps pointing the finger and blaming one area of the university or society is covering up the bigger issues in our culture, particularly in relation to women, men and their sexual relationships. Put it like this: looking deeper at a 'college culture' or interpreting what this may mean might magnify issues that are already prevalent in our society. Whatever problems St Paul's college may have are probably miniscule when you put it next to the sexism and misogynistic attitudes which are embedded in Australian society. Why aren't these attitudes and ideas ever questioned? Why does it take a 'Pro-rape' Facebook site for a discussion about women's sexuality, consent and misogyny to start in the broader culture of Australia?

Let's start by looking at Australian history. Who are the 'heroes' of Australia's foundation and colonisation? I think you'll find looking through our Year 9 and 10 history books that (white) men are overwhelmingly focused on. A pattern of ignoring women seems to continue throughout our history. The beginning of the 'Anzac legend' saw a militaristic depiction of manhood appear as part of the core identity of 'Australia'. Then came the emphasis on the surfer, who was nearly always male and had 'some hot chick' beside him. Of course, she could never actually surf - she just had to sit on the beach and look pretty. Come the 1970s and beyond, we either continued to ignore women of other races (such as refugee, migrant and Indigenous women) or we would view them with tokenism. And now, post-1990s, "oh

my god! Some women don't want to get married and they just want a career! Or shit, young women think it's okay to have sex with whoever they want!"

It seems our ideas about women, especially young women and their identities, is in a bit of conflict. That conflict was already there but it surfaced more when the St Paul's issue hit the media last year. The calls of a 'horrific college culture' levelled at St Paul's and other colleges were a bit bizarre. Isn't it clear that whatever problems that institutions like colleges (and universities) have are merely reflections on broader society? You can say all you like that St Paul's is 'misogynistic', but that's only a tiny aspect of the problem. The real problem is our society still functions fundamentally on the achievements and power of men, whilst at the same time silencing and reducing women to 'less-than-subjects' in a lot of circumstances. Women are still disenfranchised on a daily basis in all kinds of areas - pay is not equal, we're denied safe, free access to abortions, and women are still under-represented in many areas of society such as in politics, not to mention academia. Haven't you ever wondered why women students make up the majority of the undergraduate population at Sydney Uni yet management is overwhelmingly male?

This year, the SRC was invited to do a leadership program at St John's College, first with the student leaders and residential advisors, and then with all the first years. The Dean of Students at St John's, Dr Liza Rybak, is a pretty outspoken and terrific feminist and she thought it would be good for the SRC to start a program like that. What we went through were scenarios and questions - getting the newer students to think about particular circumstances relating to alcohol, drugs, sexual assault, consent, plagiarism, bullying...you name it, we brought it up. It was also put in to context with the changes to the University's Harassment and Discrimination Procedure, so students could really understand the University-related ramifications of their behaviour.

It also led to a pretty interesting discussion on such a variety of topics that anyone who was there that day would understand that 'colleges' aren't a problem. Indeed, having lived at a college in my first year of uni, I think they are a great way to involve students who have moved interstate, from overseas, or from outside of Sydney. Some of the issues that have been raised at colleges - around appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, especially towards female students - continue to be found throughout workplaces, families, institutions, and even our own university. It was great to see other young people debate, ask questions and give their own answers as to what they'd do in a particular situation. I think we need to give young people more opportunities to ask questions, particularly around consent and sexual relationships. For example, everyone teaches you in high school about condoms, but no one actually teaches you how to have meaningful sexual relationships with other people. But all that finger-pointing at St Paul's ended up distracting everyone from the real problem - that women's rights are still, in the 21st century, being constantly ignored, denied and abused in society. Which is why problems such as domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse aren't 'women's issues'. They're actually issues that all of society has to deal with in some shape or form, whether you're female, trans\*, male, genderqueer, intersex, or not gender-specified. By saying it's a 'woman's issue' suggests only women should be dealing with the problem, when it's all of society that needs to step up.

I'm not denying there aren't problems in colleges at Sydney Uni. But there are problems in the rest of our uni, and in nearly every other place I can think of in our society. St Paul's college was the place everyone could turn to and crucify to feel some sort of moral high ground or justice (yes, I'm looking at you, journalists), and feel like they were getting answers. But in the meantime, we lost sight of the bigger picture and the tremendous amount of work we still have to do as young people and feminists to ensure we have meaningful, respectful sex with each other, and ensure that women aren't silenced or ignored around societal and cultural issues relating to their bodies, sex and identities.



“ Why does it take a 'Pro-rape' Facebook site for a discussion about women's sexuality, consent and misogyny to start in the broader culture of Australia? ”



# abortion: *access denied*

**Alice Dixon** looks at why the abortion debate is far from won in Australia...

Abortion. It is one of those words you rarely hear anymore. It is hard to just bring up in conversation. It elicits emotionally charged responses and tempers arguments. Mostly we take for granted that, if pregnant, it is a legal and available choice.

The debate concerning abortion and a woman's right to control her fertility is seen as long won. In our education system, everyday conversations and even popular culture, abortion is presented predominantly as a safe and accessible choice. Unsurprisingly two of the most recent films concerning abortion, Vera Drake and El Crimen del Padre Amaro, depict the horrifying reality of backyard abortions not in contemporary Australia but rather in 1950s England and Mexico respectively. If we take Juno as a more accurate depiction of our reality, accessing an abortion involves getting past a lone, ineffectual protester before exercising an inalienable right to choose. Unfortunately this is not the situation. The debate is far from won and the right to choice remains vulnerable.

For the past six months the news has been littered with attacks launched in America restricting people's right to choose. Recently Utah has criminalised 'wilfully inducing a miscarriage'. It goes much further than just maintaining the safety of the mother and foetus. The bill has created a dangerous grey area in which negligence or voicing pro-choice attitudes can be prosecuted as homicidal tendencies. In Iowa, a state with similar laws in place, a pregnant woman who fell down the stairs at home confided to emergency workers that she was initially considering an abortion. She did not immediately miscarry, however was still arrested under a law that makes it a criminal act to harm a foetus. She was released only after two days in gaol. Nebraska's anti-choice campaigners have restricted access to abortion over 20 weeks on the grounds of a spurious medical claim of foetal pain. One of the few practitioners of late term abortions in America, George Tiller, was assassinated by an anti-choice campaigner last year.

The situation is hardly better in Australia. Currently a woman and her partner are facing 7 and 3 years respectively for knowingly inducing a miscarriage last year. Known as the Cairns

case, it has been highly publicised and reported on. The couple lacked information about where to access a legal abortion. Instead the partner's sister imported Misoprostol (a drug similar to RU486 which was passed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration or TGA in 2006) to induce a miscarriage. Later when police were raiding the house on an unrelated matter, they came across drug packaging in their garbage bin. The couple was charged for the importation of drugs and termination of the pregnancy. This has been the first time in at least 50 years a woman has been charged with organising her own abortion.

“the time has come to explicitly and publicly have the debate”

The Cairns case adds to a list of reasons to doubt our politicians. Tony Abbott's personal disapproval of abortion is well known. This extends to policy making. In 2006, after losing the battle to legalise RU486 due to a conscience vote, he asked the Board of the TGA to restrict its access. RU486 is only legal in Queensland and even then is restricted to a small number of practitioners. Rudd has as well not clearly articulated his position. However until 2009 he continued a policy that prevented AusAid from providing information and access to abortion and pregnancy support to women in third world countries. He has however removed Abbott's religious pregnancy hotline service, thankfully providing more objective advice for undecided women.

At the F Conference, the first feminist summit to be held in Sydney in over a decade, abortion was specifically on the agenda. In light of the case in Cairns, the repressive legislation in the US and an international anti-choice summit to be held in Sydney on the 29th of May, the time has come to explicitly and publicly have the debate. One young woman perceptively stated that we are the generation possessing relatively easy access to abortion so no wonder we take it for granted. This might not always be the case. We need to stay in the debate so that young people can see that the Cairns case might not be an isolated example and see what a world without abortion would look like.



## the law in nsw

The Crimes Act 1900 states that:  
Section 82. Whosoever, being a woman with child, unlawfully administers to herself any drug or noxious thing; or unlawfully uses any instrument to procure her miscarriage, shall be liable to penal servitude for ten years.

Section 83. Whosoever unlawfully administers to, or causes to be taken by, any woman, whether with child or not, any drug or noxious thing; or unlawfully uses any instrument or other means, with intent in such cases to procure her miscarriage, shall be liable to penal servitude for ten years.

Section 84. Whosoever unlawfully supplies or procures any drug or noxious thing, or any instrument or thing whatsoever, knowing that the same is intended to be unlawfully used with intent to procure the miscarriage of any woman whether with child or not, shall be liable to penal servitude for life.

So what does this mean? Abortion is only a crime if it is performed unlawfully. The law does not explicitly state the distinction between lawful and unlawful. Rather, Justice Levine in 1971 established a legal precedent in his ruling on the definition of lawful. He allowed that an abortion should be considered to be lawful if the doctor honestly believes on reasonable grounds that 'the operation was necessary to preserve the woman involved from serious danger to her life or physical or mental health which the continuance of the pregnancy would entail' and that in regard to mental health the doctor may take into account 'the effects of economic or social stress that may be pertaining to the time'. Levine also specified that two doctors' opinions are not necessary and that the abortion does not have to be performed in a public hospital.

While there has not been a prosecution for unlawful abortion since 1973, ambiguity in the law leaves patients and doctors liable to be charged. To protect the bodily autonomy of women abortion must be removed from the NSW crimes act.

Information sourced from:  
[www.childrenbychoice.org.au](http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au)

## facts

- Abortion is one of the most common surgical procedures in Australia
- Abortion is one of the safest medical procedures in Australia. It is 10 times safer than childbirth and around 200 times safer than an appendectomy
- Around one in three Australian women will undergo an abortion at some time in their lives
- Studies show that between half and two thirds of all women presenting for abortion were using contraception at the time
- A safely performed abortion with no complications doesn't reduce a woman's future fertility
- The legal and voluntary termination of pregnancy rarely causes immediate or lasting negative psychological consequences in healthy women
- The 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, conducted by the Australian National University's Centre for Social Research, found that more than 80% of respondents supported a woman's right to choose.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that worldwide 68,000 women die every year as a consequence of illegal, unsafe abortions.

Taken from [www.prochoiceactionqld.org](http://www.prochoiceactionqld.org)



# VS pro-life pro-choice

**Rebecca Brown** investigates US healthcare reform and what it means for reproductive rights

On the 23rd March this year, US President Barack Obama signed into law his controversial healthcare reform, something that had evaded seven US presidents before him. This means that millions of Americans who did not have adequate access to affordable healthcare have now been extended coverage. His epic victory however was a slim one, decided by 219 to 212 Congress votes. Understandable jubilation and joy aside, the only way that Obama could persuade some of his own party members to vote for the bill was to ensure that the 1976 Hyde Amendment would stand – that no taxpayers' monies would be used to fund an abortion, other than in the cases of rape, incest or where the pregnant woman's life was endangered by physical disorder or injury.

On the final day of the debate, a shout of 'baby killer' was heard during a congressman's speech to the House of Representatives. Later, Texan Republican Congressman Randy Neugebauer admitted to being responsible for this outburst. Although he apologized, the anti-choice sentiment was felt throughout the chamber, and was the weapon those opposed to the reform in the Republican ranks used most.

As it now stands, women must still rely on private health insurance (that is, if it even covers abortion), or their own private savings. This means that those who can't afford it have the least access to abortion and choice – women who are more likely to be young, from working-class backgrounds, and on low incomes. Regrettably, this perpetuates myths of 'certain types' of women and mothers ending up poor, pregnant and in need of welfare.

Why is using government funds for abortions such a problem for some? The exclusion of taxpayers' monies for abortion in the U.S. raises issues of fault, blame and responsibility. It implies that the woman is responsible and therefore to blame for

getting pregnant and she cannot expect to have an abortion provided on demand. If this alone is the case against government-funded abortion, why not extend this argument to smokers who get lung cancer or to a speeding driver who injures themselves in a car crash? If government healthcare were only based on the logic of just desserts, Republicans could have taken the argument much further than only abortion. The point is however that they didn't.

The Republican Party's anti-choice rhetoric, which reared its ugly head time and time again during the healthcare debate, is fundamentally about controlling women via their sexuality and fertility. It is about policing women's bodies, taking away their freedom and choice. Using 'pro-life' religious arguments about the baby's right to live means that the unborn foetus is given a higher status in society than the mother herself or her own well-being. This point of view doesn't consider the baby's predicament once it is born, for example if the mother is not in a financial position to raise a baby. Forcing motherhood on women by making (legal) abortion as difficult as possible to obtain means that women are kept out of the public sphere for as long as possible, rendering women's primary role in society to one of baby carriers and mothers.

Ironically, these same 'pro-life' supporters in government will fund military activities which inflict harm and death on many innocent soldiers and civilians. A 'pro-life' activist in the US was found guilty of murdering Dr George Tiller, a long-standing and dedicated abortion provider.

The regressive moves to take choice away from women are not restricted to America. The UK opposition leader, David Cameron, is pledging to lower the limit of abortion from 24 to 20 weeks as part of his election campaign, at the same



time as blocking government moves to make sex education compulsory in secondary schools. Here in Australia, a young woman in Queensland is currently facing seven years in prison for using the legal abortion drug RU486. Her house was firebombed shortly after the authorities pressed charges. On the 29th May this year, the NSW Right to Life Association will host an international anti-choice conference, here in Sydney. Despite many years of activism fighting for women's right to choose, women's bodies are still under attack and are being used as political pawns.

Liberal Party leader, Tony Abbott, believes that 'every abortion is a tragedy, and up to 100,000 abortions a year is this generation's legacy of unutterable shame' – women's shame, is it? Associating guilt and shame with abortion make it a 'dirty little secret', of which women should be embarrassed and ashamed. This in turn punishes and condemns sexually active women, and links women's sexuality to shame, dirt and sin. To Mr Abbott, 'good' women are those who don't get pregnant (ie. don't have sex) and need abortions. Women who get pregnant and choose to have abortions (and the governments that aid and support them) are not 'baby killers'. In an often very difficult decision-making process, they are exerting choice and control over their own bodies, rather than allowing someone else to. It is this aspect of abortion which strikes fear into the heart of the anti-choice movement, not the killing of unborn babies.

## the right to choose

**Cindy Chong**

The right to choose an abortion, much like the right to wear a hijab seems to have become another private issue that many feel is open to public debate. The tradition among many Muslim women of wearing a hijab, basically a two-piece head scarf that connotes their Islamic belief, is one that many Muslim women choose to wear. There is no requirement for women to wear the hijab, and there is probably an equal number who choose not to wear it. Similarly, many Christians identify as wearing crosses around their necks, or displaying the cross in their homes. If they don't, it doesn't mean they don't believe in Christianity.

Like her uterus, a woman's head seems to be another domain over which others would like to exercise control. A similar element that has caused much controversy and interest, is deciding whether women should be allowed to have abortions, and if this practice can be prevented.

The woman's right to choose whether she wears the hijab or has an abortion is questioned in both cases. However, so many women may face condemnation depending on the judgement of a third party or third parties, even if it does not affect the latter. In terms of deepening the concept of choice, the central role that choices play in everyone's life can be explored. Choice is our method of declaring independence of maintaining our autonomy. Our ability to make fundamental choices in our lives is a human right in general.

Consider the rights and abilities of the pregnant person. Taking away the option of having an abortion or not is detrimental to the freedom of the individual. It could affect their health, education, extended relationships, or their future. Pregnancy requires time, energy, money, and good physical and mental health that not

everyone has, or has access to. Not every person who is carrying a foetus, regardless of how they became pregnant, wants to carry the pregnancy or is able to do so. People should not be forced to do things with and to their bodies that they do not want to do.

Pro-choice simply means that no one has to face giving birth against their will. It means that thousands of deaths, traumatic injuries, and infections that have been suffered by people who have had to seek out illegal abortions can be avoided. Pro-Choice means when any member of the community, regardless of income or age, faces a pregnancy, they have genuine access to, and information about all options, including parenting, adoption, and abortion, without having to acquire it through illegal means or paying ridiculous expenses.

# art to be taken



Dating back to Renaissance times, women have traditionally been viewed as mother, victim, and sex object. Their main role? To marry and provide children for their male counterparts.

Painted in a traditional Renaissance context, Titian's 'Venus of Urbino' (1538) was viewed as an instruction for women on marriage and procreation. The female character, naked and seductively reclining, as if a man might want to fall in love with her. The background emphasises two maids putting objects away into a marriage chest – this was the role of women...to marry and succumb to their husband's "power".

Surely women, in the twenty-first century, cannot be stereotyped to fit this label. After all, Virginia Woolf's book 'A Room of One's Own' had reiterated the domination of women by men, socially and physically. Artists, much like literature, have the ability to defy social constructs, and allow the wider audience to grasp their perspectives on issues, such as femininity. Yet, some women still see their main goal in life is to marry and fit into pre-eighteenth century portrayals of women.



As a self-portrait photographer, Cindy Sherman's work spoke to a generation of baby boomer women who had grown up absorbing the glamorous sensual images at home on their televisions, taking such portrayals as cues for their future. With each subsequent series of photographs, Sherman has imitated and confronted assorted representational tropes, exploring the myriad of ways in which women and the body are depicted by effective contemporary image-makers, including the mass media and historical sources such as fairy tales, portraiture, and surrealist photography.

Drawing from her childhood experiences and the development of the feminist movement in the seventies, this created the platform for her art, making her photography a success. The seventies was a period when women wanted to be seen as more than objects of sexual desire, or purely motherly figures. They wanted to reinstate themselves in the modern society, and direct the male vision away from previous stereotypes. Much of this feeling was expressed through performance art. Sherman uses this medium as she is the artist and protagonist of all her photographs yet, in each, she adopts a different guise. It is her aim to show the different personas that women have opted for, or even adopted, over the recent years.

In Untitled Film Still # 53, Sherman engages with another theme of postmodern practice and theory of the 1980s: the camera is not a neutral device but an ideological apparatus that frames and constructs a particular viewpoint. In this case, Sherman seems to have consciously manipulated the image to emphasise the controlling (implicitly male) gaze of the viewer from which the young blonde anxiously averts her own gaze. As a number of writers have pointed out, the young women in the Untitled Film Stills series re-enacts cinematic codes of femininity of the 1950s. Outfitted in a demure '50s nylon blouse and carefully done hairdo and makeup, the witty, provocative figure thus reconstructs the codes of passivity, vulnerability, and anxiety. A '50s lamp and diffused lighting suggest an evening encounter in a domestic interior. Sherman, as the young woman has little room to manoeuvre in the

limited space left to her between the viewer and the wall. The elements are manifestly fictional, as the lamp is artfully poised to light the scene. At the emotional centre of the picture is Sherman's round, wide face, made up with exaggerated conventionality under her permed hair. Sherman portrayed as a lively catalogue of female roles inspired by 1950s cinema, touches a vital nerve in our culture, as well as baby-boomer mothers during the feminist movement.

Sherman, always the main focus of her pieces, continues to analyse the subject of gender, in particular femininity. Her photography intends to show images of the stereotypical woman, then goes on to mock the vision of the female body from the past and continues to reject pre-conceived notions of beauty and youth. These photographs crossed boundaries between postmodern playfulness and the exploration of self, especially women, through portraiture.

In fact, second-wave feminists saw women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked. Barbara Kruger encourages women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicised and reflecting sexist power structures – most commonly in mass media.

Kruger's work is as bold and jarring, as one would expect from a leading artist in the feminist and social movements of the 1980s. Her work is typically on a large scale, and uses images from the media juxtaposed with text to explore the power of imagery. Her trademark look is black and white images encased in a red frame, though she has certainly not limited herself to this, and has circulated her artwork on such varied media as posters, billboards, t-shirts, and matchbooks.

Famously emblazend across t-shirts and magazines, the phrase "I Shop, Therefore I am" begs us to ask whether buying a certain product defines a lifestyle.

Kruger's work addresses the cultural representations of power, identity and sexuality, and challenges the spectacles of stereotypes and clichés. Since 1980, her work with pictures and words has developed into a highly recognizable, consistent visual language. In her iconic photo-text montages, Kruger juxtaposes striking images with equally striking phrases. Her art pieces incorporate appropriated media images with strong, pithy phrases that often relate to objectification of women and other cultural issues that women face. The focus is on the construction of gender and identity through social representation. Her attention is directed to the inversion of stereotypes by contrasting images appropriated from the media with text that often directly subverts it.

In '(Your Comfort is My Silence)', 1981, Kruger combined a black and white image of a man's head with his index finger over his mouth and two lines of text reading, "Your comfort is my silence." The first two words cover the man's eyes, further eliminating his specific identity and reducing him to a generic symbol of masculine dominance and control. The text is presented in a combination of black text over white rectangles and white text in red rectangles in a cut-and-paste fashion. By employing collage to combine pre-existing imagery with authoritative statements,





Kruger practices the appropriation that Barthes described. Roland Barthes, in his 1967 essay "The Death of the Author" declared, "A text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning, but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash." According to Barthes, Kruger's use of words assigns an interpretive role to both the viewer and culture at large. By keeping her statements somewhat cryptic or ambiguous, Kruger forces viewers to construct meaning from their own previous experiences, inviting audiences to act on their beliefs and past.

By appropriating advertising's overlay of text on image, Kruger disrupted the "rhetoric of the image" of the photographs she lifted from pre-existing sources, such as fashion magazines and medical manuals. Viewers can identify the wit and playfulness Kruger convey through the parody on advertising present in this image. Kruger has combined the look and feel from advertisements with an all-powerful image through the juxtaposition of text that shakes and centres the viewer, using the pronoun 'your' makes her image personal.

Kruger's image undermines the advertising world through her portrayal of the dark male figure in the background with text across his face. In this image, Kruger challenges the role of art. In startling contrast to the commercial advertising to which they bore resemblance, Kruger's captioned images demand we rethink our xenophobic, sexist and racist proclivities. Rather than sell products, Kruger's designs sold ideological critique. The breakdown of the hyper-consumerism of the late 20th century, the commoditisation of signs, and viewers in the universal flow of power are made visible. She reappropriates the power of cultural iconography and commercial images, robbing the slick conveyances of societal assimilation of their strength and giving it to her audience in the form of knowledge. Her art is knowledge, and through this knowledge she challenges contemporary society's social and cultural views.

We're living in the twenty-first century; it's time to realise your social and cultural views in the context of this era.

**Cindy Chong**



## vagina is not a dirty word. period.

When women get their periods they just want to frolic. On the beach. Wearing white. They also like to breeze around their hardwood floor apartments, listening to trendy music while looking fresh faced and confident. Sometimes a menstruating woman will like to poke fun at her naïve (but good looking) boyfriend and his complete lack of awareness of all things feminine.

Other women just want to go dancing in spandex outfits with their modelling girl friends. After all, with today's 'streamline technology' and 'comfort engineering' there is just so much to celebrate. And, of course, only women aged between 18 and 26 menstruate. These are the insights I've gained having watched over two decades of advertisements on the subject.

Of course television promotions for tampons and sanitary pads are ridiculous. In acknowledgement of this stupidity, the brand Kotex has just released an advertisement that parodies the conventional ads. The Kotex ad starts off with a woman on a couch saying "How do I feel about my period? Ah, we are like this." (She then crosses her fingers indicating tight friendship).

She continues; "I love it. It makes me feel really pure. I like to twirl, maybe in slow motion. And usually by the third day, I just want to dance. The ads on TV are really helpful, because they use that blue liquid, and I'm like 'oh! That's what is supposed to happen!'"

This satirical ad forms one part of a biting humorous campaign titled 'break the cycle'. The point is to challenge the ways in which traditional advertisements and discourses reinforce the stigma around 'women's issues' by refusing to acknowledge or talk about real women's bodies.

It's a timely ad given that only recently, a tampon advertisement was censored for using that 'vulgar' word; vagina.

When they reshot the ad using the second grade euphemism, "down there", they were once again considered to be too inappropriate by two networks.

Apparently it's fine to mention things like "erectile dysfunction" but any allusion to female genitalia is just too much for the censors to cope with.

I am reminded of a time in my final year of school in 2001. Our acting principal ordered the tampon dispensing machines to be removed from the girls' bathrooms. Her reason? They were 'unladylike' and they gave a poor impression to visitors of the school. I kid you not. The announcement was made before the entire high school assembly. My friends and I were furious. After all, almost all young women have at some point been caught out without a tampon. By providing a more discrete option, these machines allow us to side step the sometimes awkward task of asking another woman for a 'spare'.

As Year 12 students, we had already passed through those uncomfortable first years of puberty where physical development is considered a taboo and embarrassing topic, not least because it happens at different times for different individuals, and there is always the concern that one is not developing 'normally'.

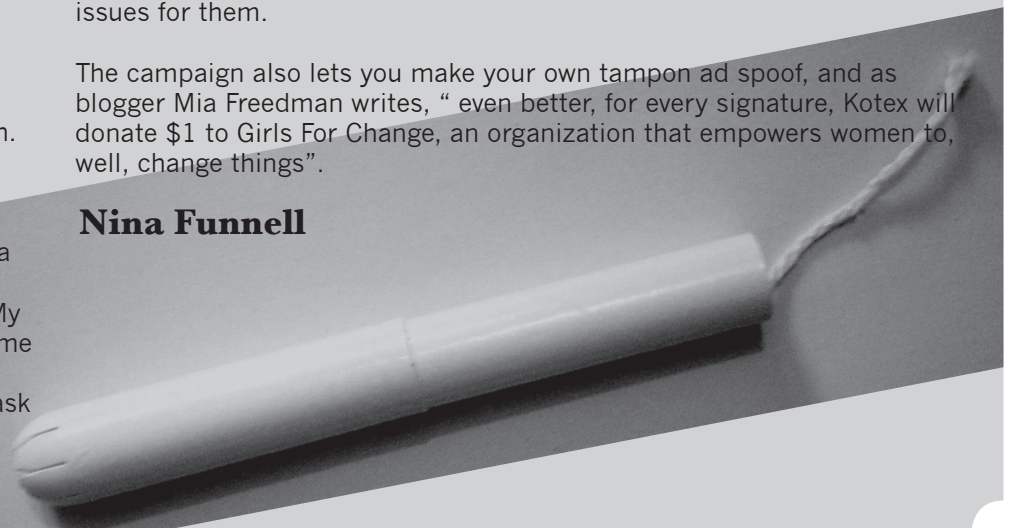
“Apparently it's fine to mention things like “erectile dysfunction” but any allusion to female genitalia is just too much for the censors to cope with.”

But we knew the younger girls hadn't passed through this stage, and we were aware of the message that this action sent to the girls; that their bodily processes were inherently dirty and shameful. At the time, I was a member of the School Representative Council. The issue was put to the SRC and we very quickly voted against the decision. When our Principal Proper returned, I had a very frank discussion with him. I have never seen a man so eager to sign off on something in order to end a conversation and, the end result was that we got to keep our machines.

It's been almost ten years since then and yet menstruation is clearly still a taboo subject. To help break the stigma, the U by Kotex website asks girls and women to sign a "Declaration of Real Talk" that states that "vagina is not a dirty word". The pledge also states that those who sign it will not succumb to the cultural pressure that prefers women to pretend as though period cramps, mood swings and weight fluctuations are non issues for them.

The campaign also lets you make your own tampon ad spoof, and as blogger Mia Freedman writes, "even better, for every signature, Kotex will donate \$1 to Girls For Change, an organization that empowers women to, well, change things".

**Nina Funnell**



# SCREAM QUEENS

**Nicole Cini** plunges into the blood and gore of Hollywood horror

Blood splattered on a wall, a rusty blood-soaked axe scraping along the ground, heavy breathing and a chilling scream. That scream is from a woman facing a gruesome death that only the most dedicated horror fans can stomach. Women often suffer the most painful and gruesome deaths in Hollywood horror films and most of us answer this with feminist rhetoric. In modern horror films this is more often than not true, however, the horror films our parents know and love provide a different answer: violence against women makes us question social issues. Most disagree with this proposal because no feminist could ever argue for the justification of violence against women. There is no justification for violence against women, but there are however, different views on why women are guaranteed to suffer the most in horror films and the following argument is one of them.

There are many different roles that women play in the genre of horror film. These vary between the scream queen (often the leading lady) and more minor roles. However each role has something in common: women always suffer the most. The sequences are drawn out longer, women witness more confronting acts of violence than any other character and women always give the most agonising screams as they experience a pain that no other character has felt. This article does not aim to justify this, but to contextualise why this is so.

Essentially, if these atrocities were to be carried out upon male characters they would not elicit the same response. The viewer would not feel as confronted, as uncomfortable or as guilty. When watching a horror film the spectator is always accomplice to the actions carried out by all parties. This is because they are in a unique position of knowing both the killer's intentions and the victim's actions. You know what lies behind that door, up those stairs and you cringe as they make wrong decisions because you succumb to the dramatic irony of knowing more than the characters do. But you know the film would not be the same if the characters did not follow the rules of the film and the genre. The spectator is not satisfied until their thirst for blood is satisfied. This is the reality of horror film; it manipulates our basic instincts. Our desire to live versus our desire for suspense... and blood.

Violence against women is not acceptable in society and is always seen as confronting to most viewers because of preconceived notions of femininity and the role of women in society. The woman running through the woods, to what will surely be her death, could be a mother, a daughter or a sister, someone we are most inclined to protect because after all, women cannot survive on their own. Enter the 'scream queen' - a woman that challenges these ideas and strives to fight and ultimately triumph over evil. *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, *Slither*, *The Texas*

*Chainsaw Massacre*, *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Carrie*: these films depict women that rise above what they were destined for in earlier films. These women struggle, falter, and suffer more than any other character, but they become stronger and, in the end, triumph over their obstacles to send us a very important message, that times are changing.

Video games have always been clued in to this and continually present strong characters that are accessible to all gamers. As a gamer you not only watch a character move through a game but you become that character. Enter Jill from *Resident Evil*, a strong woman from the get go, ready to overcome all that is in her way. Women's suffering is a fundamental part of the horror film genre, which will never change because it manipulates our emotions on an escalated level. Women and children affect that part of us that knows that these actions are wrong and make us feel guilty, and we succumb to the message presented in these films. Most people don't see horror films as having any form of underlying message, however, this is untrue.

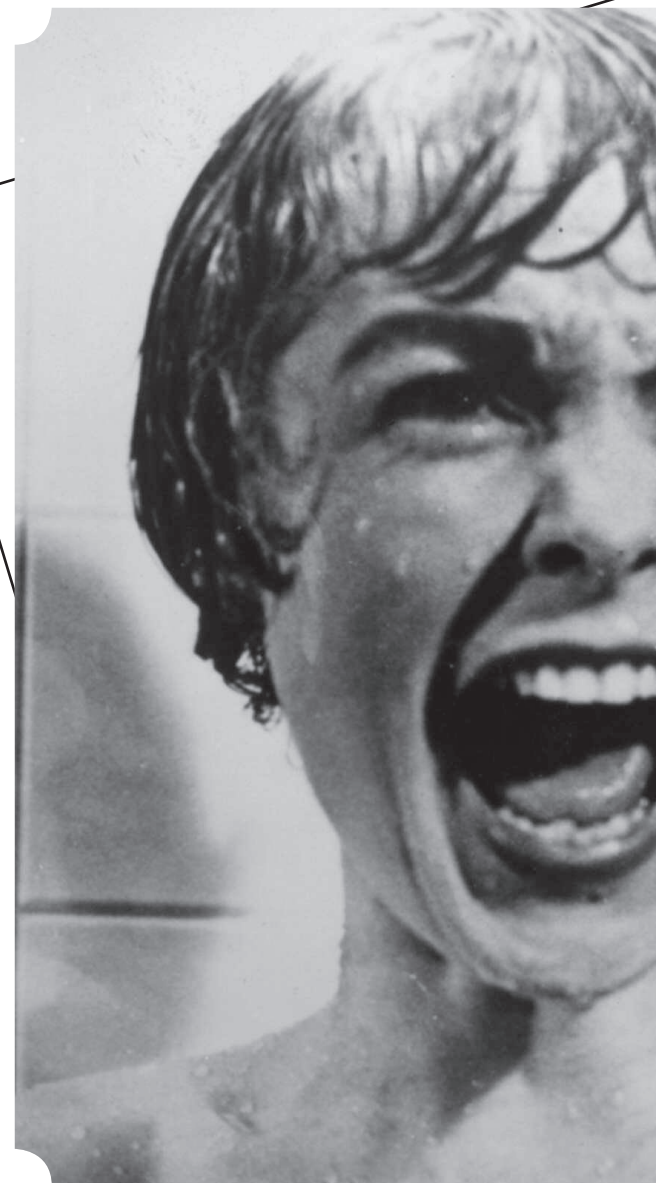
Take *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* for example. It depicts the strongest kind of fear, the fear of the unknown, as well as the deranged, the cannibalistic and the unforgiving. It also reflects broader societal fears and anxieties facing American society at the time, especially concerning Vietnam. In this film the female lead, Sally, witnesses a slaughter house family, whose business is in ruins, torture, murder and eat human beings unfortunate enough to pass their way. Sally witnesses her brother being murdered like a cow in a slaughter house. His face is skinned and then worn as a mask to hunt and torture her. These incidences comment on war, as well as work to challenge American ideals of industry as it was taken over by machine, the nuclear family, the rise of vegetarianism, the American national identity, cults uncovered by the media, old country hospitality and the traditional status of women. This film will still unsettle most viewers, and may well challenge their views on the American national identity, especially the changing South. Undoubtedly, this film would not have made such an impact, had the lead actor been male. While modern audiences well-versed in the genre of horror and gore films may not be as shocked by its "gore" content, Sally's experience still proves to be an uncomfortable one to sit through.

This was not the only horror film to feature a female lead. Wes Craven's first feature film, *Last House on the Left*, depicts both female villains and victims. The film follows four young people as they rape, torture and ultimately murder two young women. Aside from this obviously sickening plot an interesting point is that one of the murderers is a woman. She witnesses the rape,

torture and murder and then plays along with the performance to the parents of their victims. This is a lot more confronting than her heartless male counterparts and this can only be attributed to her gender. The film also comments on American family values as two of the murderers are a father and son who work together to kill an entire family for a reason never explained to the audience. The parents of the victims eventually take vengeance on the four killers and these violent acts work to challenge the viewer's notions of both the traditional nuclear family and the broken family.

This genre manipulates conceptions of gender to produce some of the most gruesome and shocking films of a generation that still resonate with viewers today. In these films the woman always suffers the most, she always dies the slowest and most painful death and if she does live, she is sure to have serious emotional scarring for the rest of her life. But that's the genre of horror film, and I doubt that will change.

Just remember, 'it's only a movie... it's only a movie... it's only a movie...'





# Hi, I'm Honi Soit, you must be

## *Tanya Plibersek*



Soon after her election to federal government in 1998, Tanya Plibersek delivered her inaugural speech to parliament. Quoting Bruce Springsteen, Plibersek announced herself to be a unique politician. While she may not be a household name, the Minister for the Status of Women and Housing has worked tirelessly for the last twelve years, seeking reform on a wide range of women's issues. As one of the youngest women ever elected to Australian parliament, Plibersek has an energy and passion for women's rights that is infectious. Speaking three languages, reading 18th century novels, and counting Hatshepsut, the only woman pharaoh, to be amongst her many female role models, reveals a depth to Tanya that is all too often lacking in our members for parliament.

My interview with Plibersek is in her Broadway electorate office. I am early and have waited twenty minutes before she hurries through the door, breathless after rushing back from a long list of morning engagements. From what I'm told, there will be a similarly busy afternoon schedule. Managing dual portfolios, Plibersek freely admits she doesn't get much spare time and describes politics as an, 'unforgiving business'. I get the distinct impression, however, that she enjoys her busy agenda. As the mother of two children, Plibersek rejects the idea that women should have to choose between family and career, and, as one of the Australian government's seven female ministers, Tanya is extremely proud of her role.

Plibersek's ministerial positions give her a powerful platform from which to enable change; such as the recent unveiling of the Paid Parental leave scheme. Though Julia Gillard, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, had primary carriage, Plibersek was closely involved with the scheme's conception. While it is far from perfect, the scheme means that Australia will catch up internationally. Australia is one of only two western countries without a universal paid maternity leave scheme, a commitment to which is required by all signatories to the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Chosen to speak as part of Australia's delegation to the 53rd United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in April 2009, Plibersek spoke about gender equality. She said the Australian Government's campaign for gender equality is based on the three priorities of 'improving economic outcomes for women, ensuring women's equal place in society and reducing violence against women.' Plibersek believes commitment to gender equality is critical in the midst of the

global financial crisis, as 'we will have the best chance of recovery from the crisis by supporting all people, women and men, to contribute equally to their societies and economies.'

Following the commission, Australia signed the optional CEDAW protocol which allows a woman to pursue a case of discrimination as far as the United Nations if all domestic avenues have been followed. In an interview with Radio National last year, Plibersek spoke about the protocol. She argued 'the reason that we do this is what we're aspiring to as a nation. We aspire towards equality between men and women and we are prepared to be judged by international standards when we're seeking to achieve that.' While the protocol may be of little relevance to most women, it has generated much public debate about the meaning and importance of gender equality, which Plibersek hopes will generate changes in behaviour and attitude.

Another issue Plibersek passionately campaigns against is domestic violence. She acknowledges that the 'biggest risk factor for becoming a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault is being a woman'. With shocking statistics that reveal one in three Australian women will report being a victim of physical violence, and almost one in five will report being a victim of sexual violence in their lifetime, Plibersek has initiated various policies to increase awareness and funding to support domestic violence victims and survivors. In an overlap of her portfolios, Plibersek suggests public housing is a key issue, as one of the largest population groups in need are women and children escaping domestic violence.

With fierce lobbying for women's rights, Plibersek is proud to call herself a feminist, though she dismisses the term as a be all and end all. Helping the most disadvantaged, regardless of gender, is her priority. She has learnt 'not to ask anyone's permission to be politically active on the issues I am passionate about - not even the sisterhood'. Before I leave her office, I ask Plibersek what she hopes to see changing for Australian women over the next fifteen years. She admits there is much work to be done, for instance, there is currently no specific policy in place that directly addresses pay parity. She believes significant change for women's rights can only be achieved through more women's voices being heard.

**Monica Connors**



# ABBOTT HOLDS THE KEY... to sexist views

Donherra Walmsley takes a look at the Opposition Leader's understanding of women and autonomy



In 2002, the Prime Minister John Howard claimed that 'we are in the post-feminist stage of the debate' and added that he found 'for the under-30s woman the feminist battle has been won'. The irony of a man telling us that the feminist battle has been won aside, there are many who agree that we now live in a post-feminist era, where sexism has been wiped out and we live in a utopian world where all genders are equal.

As someone who has, for as long as I can remember, identified as a feminist – that is, someone who believes that people should be treated equally and have equal opportunities regardless of gender – I've encountered a lot of anti-feminist sentiments. They've ranged from the (sometimes) innocent question 'why do we need feminism anyway?' to the disdainful 'does that mean you don't wear a bra?' First of all, I'd argue that as long as women are being judged based on whether or not they wear a bra, and whether or not they are conforming to societal expectations of femininity, the feminist battle has not been won. Have a look at the way in which female politicians, for example, are criticised for their haircuts and outfits – how often do male politicians suffer the same scrutiny over something so irrelevant? Not very often at all (except maybe for Tony Abbott – and that'd stop if he'd just please put some pants on). The fact remains that women's bodies and the way in which they present themselves are considered

an appropriate subject for public discourse in a way that men's bodies are not, but hey, we're all equal, no need for feminism nowadays.

In some ways, it's possible that the rise of Tony 'Budgie Smugglers' Abbott to the position of opposition leader is a blessing in disguise – it's certainly emphasised the fact that the feminist battle, unlike his predecessor claimed, is far from over. In the world according to Abbott, 'the housewives of Australia need to understand as they do the ironing that...their own power bills when they switch the iron on are going to go up'. Good to see we've made it past the 1950s notion of women staying at home to cook, clean, and iron...oh wait, apparently we haven't. Abbott proceeded to publicly iron a shirt for the first time later that week. It's fortunate for him that he's had a supportive wife to do these mundane tasks for him, leaving him free to pursue his political career.

“ The fact remains that women's bodies and the way in which they present themselves are considered an appropriate subject for public discourse in a way that men's bodies aren't. ”

One of the reasons men have dominated politics for so long is the fact that few women have a similar supportive figure at home – they are expected to do the majority of the housework and childcaring at the same time as managing a very

demanding career. And what happens to women politicians who choose to pursue a career without the balancing act, without the husband and children? Their choices are called into question time and time again, as we've seen with Julia Gillard, who, before the last federal election had her leadership credentials called into question by Senator Bill Heffernan because 'if you're a leader, you've got to understand your community' and 'one of the great understandings in a community is family, and the relationship between mum, dads and a bucket of nappies.' Apparently according to Bill, there aren't any women out there who've chosen a career over being a wife and mother. Once again, a man is telling us what we should be doing with our bodies: having babies. But hey, we're all equal, no need for feminism anymore.

Perhaps one of the most disturbing things about Tony Abbott's sexist views is that they're not just those of a religious right wing minority. The anti-feminist backlash pervades wider society: just the other day, I was driving somewhere, only to be confronted by a giant billboard promoting Woolworths – apparently the choice of fresh food mums all over Australia. According to Woolworths, women are the only ones who do any cooking in Australian households. Again, great to see we've moved past the 1950s. I'm not saying that women shouldn't cook, or that being a housewife is not a valuable and valid choice – I believe that feminism is all about choice, about women having the choice to pursue a career, to have a safe and legal abortion, to choose with whom and under what circumstances they'll have sex – but that decision should be up to them, not society.







The problem with everyone, from our leaders to multinational companies, spouting the rhetoric of the stay at home mum is that we run the risk of losing all the ground we've gained thanks to the feminist movements of times past. After all, in order to win feminist fights, we've got to have men on board, and with this rhetoric we are just creating another generation of sexist men who expect women to cook and clean for them, rather than a generation of men who respect women, believe we're equal, and will be our allies in the struggle for equality. I will continue to proudly call myself a feminist until the day we are truly equal – the day when double standards don't apply to how many partners you've had, the day when we are equally paid, the day when women are no longer expected to do the majority of the unpaid work in the home, and the day when every woman can access a safe, legal abortion. Feminism still has a lot of battles left to win, and progress is like a wheelbarrow: if you don't keep pushing, it stops.

“The housewives of Australia need to understand as they do the ironing that...their own power bills when they switch the iron on are going to go up.”



## Abbott's Heaven.

## Your Hell.

**Keelia Fitzpatrick**

NUS National Women's Officer for 2010.



As a student representative on the Sydney University SRC, Tony Abbott proclaimed “I think it would be folly to expect that women will ever dominate or even approach equal representation in a large number of areas simply because their aptitudes, abilities and interests are different for physiological reasons”. Of course it would be harsh to hold the statements of a 21 year old against them, decades later. We learn from our mistakes, we grow up; we experience things that change our understandings, and perspectives. Surely Abbott, now the Opposition Leader, would be quick to denounce such archaic and downright offensive sentiments. Denounce them adamantly. “Well, I just don't want to go over old ground too much Liz. Ah, I don't want to repudiate what was said, but I don't want people to think that what I thought as a 21 year old is necessarily what I think as a 52 year old”. This certainly was not the explicit renunciation you would expect of most (by most I mean sane) politicians. But for Abbott, nicknamed ‘Mad Monk’ in the Howard years, this response shows a softening of his past extremities. A dilution of his nickname may be necessary, perhaps the ‘potty prayer’ or ‘batty bishop’?

This necessary PR makeover has come since Abbott's promotion to Leader of the Coalition in December 2009. Since this time, we have also seen his attitudes toward women receive much attention and analysis. This is the result of several blunders, his comments about female virginity and the housewife gaff, but also his infamous Ministerial record. As Health Minister and staunch Catholic, Abbott led the group attempting to ban the abortion drug RU486 in 2005. Thankfully, pro-choice MPs were ultimately successful, and the restrictions were lifted. With this in mind, Abbott's 2010 mantra of éreligion should not drive politicsí rings particularly hypocritical.

Given it is an election year and Abbott's noted unpopularity amongst female voters, it is surprising that we have seen little substantial focus on the issues and policies that effect women's lives. Instead, we are subject to the insulting presumption that Abbott (and Rudd's) attractiveness, or fitness, or hair, is what is really on our minds. The only refreshing thing about this obsession is that for once, it is not a female politician whose appearance is being scrutinised.

What he must be quizzed on is what an Abbott Government (I just gasped a little when writing those words alongside each other) will do about the 17% pay gap between women and men, the child care crisis, Workchoices II, reproductive rights and the raft of other issues that affect women. Hopefully by the time many of you are reading this, there have been some substantial answers delivered on these matters. These must come from the media and its power to set the agenda, as well as from the Coalition itself. It is worth quickly noting Abbott's International Women's Day announcement of a Coalition paid parental leave scheme, the only significant policy to have emerged from the Liberals of late. Though it highlighted the inadequacy of Labor's 18-week scheme (below the World Health Organisation's standards), it was undermined by its lack of consultation and costing. Plus the fact is that as a senior Minister in the Howard government, Abbott was always opposed to a paid parental leave scheme.

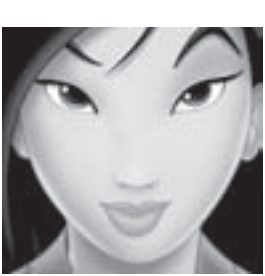
Until meaningful debate and policy appears in 2010, we go on Abbott's record. His patronising, sexist and conservative record. The thought of how many steps backward women would take with Abbott as Prime Minister has sparked the NUS Women's Department's campaign ‘Abbott's Heaven. Your Hellí. It draws attention to his disregard for women's choices over their bodies, his inability to separate his religious views from politics and his backward notions of gender roles.



Ruby Prosser looks at the top five empires that did a little something for women, before feminism became trendy:



How a wife's false modesty can  
*'freeze'*  
her husband's affection



## In Soviet Russia, women shoot you!

Only Spartan women give birth to real men.

## The Mongols gave us more than just Mulan.

## Queen Victory of Brittonic Iceni.

**New Zealand: quietly doing their bit for “sixual” equality.**

# By Sibella Matthews

Hair-removal is the battle that feminism lost. Feminism has had many a victory - the right to vote, the right to equal pay, but what ever happened to the right to ditch depilation?

Rumour has it that the trend for neck-down alopecia only began after the May 1915 issue of Harper's Bazaar magazine featured a model sporting a sleeveless gown which exposed, for the first time, bare armpits. As hemlines rose above the ankle, young male marketing executives of razor blade manufacturers realised that profits need not be limited to men's beards and began cashing in on women's insecurities.

Can it be true to say that no-one equates 'natural' with 'beautiful' anymore? If women are in the constant cycle of waxing, shaving and tweezing in order to be attractive, what image of beauty are we striving for? Science might tell us that the more evolved we appear the more attractive we are to the opposite sex as it suggests superior procreation. According to this belief, a double standard has arisen where women must appear to be further down the evolutionary track from apes, yet a guy who can't grow a beard is emasculated with nicknames like baldilocks.

The trend for hairless bodies is pushing the feminine ideal of beauty towards a prepubescent physique. The Australian Classification Board recently banned depictions of small-breasted women in porn, with Senator Barnaby Joyce of the National Party claiming that publications featuring small-breasted women were encouraging paedophilia. This change in status quo slipped through without too much controversy. Why then was a ban on the brazilianwax in pornography not up for discussion?

Probably the most concerning thought of all is that the most up-to-date methods of hair removal are the most painful. Oprah (what a woman) says that

'unless the salon gets a morphine drip and three shots of tequila' she's not touching the brazilian wax. And then there's the epilator that rips out hair, follicle by follicle, which I'm assured feels similar to poking yourself in the eye with a tooth pick.

All these torturous activities are justified by women through the desire to be attractive, which appears to be equated with exaggerating the differences between men and women as much as possible. But why was this not the case for our beastly and unkempt sisters of the 19th century? How can we explain the fact that our predecessors with their lack of political rights and freedoms had more authority over their own bodies than we do today? Despite the fact that depilation is a process most women are familiar with, the taboo subject all too often raises a not-so-hairy eyebrow. It seems that although women hate the cycle of tweeze, wax, bleach, shave, tweeze, wax, bleach, shave, the everyday women can let their hair down is a long way off. That is, until someone plucks up the courage.





# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Report of the SRC President, Elly Howse // [president@src.usyd.edu.au](mailto:president@src.usyd.edu.au)



This year it is the 82nd Students' Representative Council. Having begun in 1928, 19 out of 82 presidents have been women which is roughly 23%. This year, less than a third of the Council is made up of women students.

Seeing a trend? It seems a lot of other people have, especially considering that women in 2010 make up around 55% of the undergraduate student population at the University of Sydney. But let's stop thinking about the under-representation of women at our University and start thinking about the over-representation of men. This was an idea suggested by Professor Karen Beckwith from Case Western Reserve University, Ohio USA, during the talk 'Why Feminism Matters' hosted by the Arts Faculty at the Seymour Centre in late March 2010. If we look at how much men are represented in politics (including student politics!), academia, large businesses and corporations, the performing arts...well, it does begin to make you wonder.

This is very much historically-based. Women were, until the latter half of the twentieth century, quite limited in their participation in work, the political, education and the arts. As a progressive organisation, the SRC is committed to equality and women's liberation from oppressive structures and institutions. Which is why we have an SRC Women's

Officer who is paid a half-time stipend – she is responsible for liaising with all women students at the University (which is a heck of a lot of students!). It's really important to have that position as it means there is a representative voice out there for all women in the University, particularly those who are experiencing issues such as harassment, discrimination, domestic violence, inability to access contraception and medical treatments, or whether those issues are specifically related to education and women's participation in academic life and organisations.

“‘Autonomous’ does not mean ‘exclusive’.”

This is also why the SRC runs autonomous collectives. ‘Autonomous’ does not mean ‘exclusive’. Rather it's saying that those who have a lived experience as a member of an oppressed or stigmatised group in society can organise and control campaigns they can directly relate to. So a campaign run autonomously by women does not mean men can't be involved – it's actually the opposite. Men should be involved in assisting women achieve full equality, but autonomous organising and collectives recognise that it is important for groups such as



campaign or meeting is run and chaired (for example) – as often women don't have these same opportunities outside of progressive organisations.

Essentially we're making up for 'lost time'. So the next time you want to have a whinge about why a woman got a job over you, or why a woman is preferenced to do a particular academic activity, stop and think about why that may be the case before you start complaining about the 'over-representation of women'.

# GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Report of the General Secretary, Donherra Walmsley // [gen.sec@src.usyd.edu.au](mailto:gen.sec@src.usyd.edu.au)

Every year, the week after Women's Honi is published, there's inevitably a flood of letters complaining about the fact that there's not a 'Men's Honi', and arguing that the feminist battle has been won.

I hope that the articles in this edition have convinced you otherwise, and have illustrated the more (sometimes) subtle discrimination that still affects women today. If, however, you're still in the "we've already achieved equality" camp, I'd ask you this question: is a society wherein it is deemed that regardless of her claims to the contrary, a woman in skinny jeans can not possibly be raped really one that doesn't have some serious issues around consent and women's bodies?

I'm talking about a case that was discussed in Saturday's Sydney Morning Herald. A woman alleged that a man had raped her, however it was deemed by the court that because she was wearing skinny jeans (which are quite tricky to get on and off) it was impossible that the sex had been non-consensual.

The jury judged that it would've been impossible for him to get her jeans off without her consent. Nevermind that she was 42kgs and claimed to be easily able to get the jeans on and off. Nevermind that at 42kgs it would probably be quite easy for a man to overpower her; clearly she was a willing participant. This is just an extension of the extremely disturbing "she was asking for it" mentality which pervades our society when it comes to sexual assault.

The fact that it is still often viewed as a woman's responsibility to avoid rape speaks volumes about our views on women's bodies and sexuality, and as long as that mindset persists, there's a need for feminism, for autonomous organising, and for women's officers in progressive organisations like the SRC.

I am by no means saying that men are all horrible awful beings whose only purpose is to oppress women - which is what any feminist argument is often cast as. I am saying that we live in a society in which there are

some serious problems with the way women are treated and portrayed. I'm not pointing a finger of blame at anyone in particular - in fact women can often be as misogynistic as men, oxymoronic though that sounds. I'm pointing a finger of blame at society.

We need to change the world view of Australian society. We've already come so far - only one hundred years ago (or thereabouts), the world view of the average Australian was that women didn't have the intellectual capacity required to vote. Through long, hard battles, that world view was challenged and ultimately vanquished - it's pretty rare to find anyone these days who'd argue women are incapable of the degree of thought required to vote, or obtain a university degree, or being a valuable part of the workforce.

We've come a long way, but there is still so far to go. The difference is, the oppression of women in the new millenium is not quite as overt: on paper, we do have - in Australia at least - the same rights as men.



This assurance of equality on paper hasn't addressed the fact that women are still paid less than men, that the onus is on women rather than men to make sure they're not sexually assaulted. This is why there's still a place for feminism in today's world.



# WOMEN'S REPORT

Report of Women's Collective member **Hannah Goldstein** // [womens.officers@src.usyd.edu.au](mailto:womens.officers@src.usyd.edu.au)

A survey carried out in the UK earlier this year found that more than half (56%) of respondents thought that rape victims / survivors should, in some cases, bear responsibility for their attack. 70% of that group were men. 75% of them were women. The online survey, Wake Up To Rape, in which 1061 women and men in London participated, was carried out for Haven - an organisation that runs sexual assault referral centres.

The survey found that, of the 56% of people who think that in some circumstances, a person is responsible for being raped, the circumstances include:

- Performing another sexual act on them (73%)
- Getting into bed with a person (66%)
- Drinking to excess / blackout (64%)
- Going back to theirs for a drink (29%)
- Dressing provocatively (28%)
- Dancing in a sexy way with a man at a night club or bar (22%)
- Acting flirtatiously (21%)
- Kissing them (14%)
- Accepting a drink and engaging in a conversation at a bar (13%)

In particular scenarios, women were more likely to place the blame with the victim:

- Performing another sexual act on them (75% women vs. 70% men)
- Getting into bed with a person (71% women vs. 57% men)
- Going back to theirs for a drink (35% women vs. 19% men)
- Dressing provocatively (31% women vs. 23% men)
- Dancing in a sexy way with a man at a night club or bar (23% women vs. 19% men)
- Accepting a drink and engaging in a conversation at a bar (15% women vs. 11% men)

Considering that rape is largely a gendered crime that worldwide affects women in far greater numbers than men, these results are somewhat perplexing. Why are women buying the 'blame-the-victim' argument? These results indicate that a significant number of women believe that some behaviours are simply unacceptable if you want to avoid being raped. Apparently, women should never go home with men. We should not dress 'provocatively' (although it is unclear as to who sets the standards here – how short is too short? How tight is too tight?). In fact, we should not dance with men, accept drinks from them or even talk to them. It is not difficult to see that this line of argument not only curtails women's freedoms, but ignores the systematic and widespread nature of sexual violence, and goes some way in legitimising the actions of those men who think that it is ok to have sex with a woman against her will.

So let's get back to the question: Why are women blaming victims / survivors of rape for the crimes that were committed against them? I'll be honest and say that I



Artwork: A Bad Case of the Mean Reds by **Elizabeth Martens**

don't have a definitive answer to this question, but speaking to women I know, I have come up with a theory. It seems to me that many women want to cast sexual violence as something that happens to other women - as something that happens to women who wear their skirts too short, or dance too sexily, or who are too promiscuous. If you believe this then it is perhaps easy to believe that by not doing those things and by not being that woman, you will be safe. However, the fact is that sexual violence is experienced by women from all ethnic, cultural, language, class and economic backgrounds. It occurs all over the world, in public spaces and in private homes. Women experience it at the hands of husbands, relatives, strangers, friends, soldiers and men they have just met. I don't write this to scare women or cast us all as victims, but to make the point that sexual violence occurs not because women 'ask for it' by behaving in certain ways but because, in patriarchal societies, women are regarded as the sexual objects of men.

Perhaps before we jump in and blame victims / survivors of rape we should stop and think – who is benefiting from this? What issues are we ignoring? And how would we feel if we were blamed for having a violent crime committed against us? The only way we are ever going to address sexual violence is by recognising that it is a widespread crime that stems from gender power dynamics that operate within our society. In the meantime we need to support in, every way possible, women and people who experience the trauma of rape and sexual assault.

## SRC Help...

### ASK PIPPA

Q & A with students who need help and a dog who has all the answers...

Send your questions to: [help@src.usyd.edu.au](mailto:help@src.usyd.edu.au)

Dear Pippa,

I am in my second year at Uni. I have moved out of college and into a share house so that I can concentrate more on study than partying. However, it turns out that I'm partying more not less. I spend all of my food money on beer and have to get guys to buy me more drinks so I have a good time. It's now getting close to mid semester exams and assessments and I'm quite a bit behind. What do you think I should do?

BD

Dear BD,

I'm doing Abe's column this week, as it is being written autonomously by women. There are a number of things I would like to address in your letter. Firstly if you're living somewhere that will damage your ability to pass at uni you should consider studying elsewhere, like in the library, or moving house. This situation won't improve unless you make it improve. There will be no point to getting kicked out of uni. If you think it is too late to catch up on the subjects you're doing this semester, see an SRC caseworker about withdrawing rather than failing. You may be able to get a refund on the fees/HECs spent.

Spending all of your food money on beer is not a good idea. It suggests that you are drinking too much for your body to process and will lead you to bad health issues. It also suggests that you are not eating, which will have physical and psychological problems for you in the future. This is especially the case if you are trying to study. Getting people to buy you drinks solves the issue of spending your money, but at some point you need to realise the value of your own self-respect. Being objectified is not flattering. It treats you as a 2-dimensional object, when you obviously have character and personality to enjoy. Set your goals higher and you'll be surprised what you can achieve.

Pippa



## SRC Help...

The Students' Representative Council provides Sydney University undergraduate students with confidential independent advocacy and advice on a range of issues including: **Academic Appeals, Show Cause, Centrelink, Tenancy, Discrimination & Legal Advice.**

We are located at Level 1 (Basement) Wentworth Bldg - City Road Entry

**To make an appointment to see a caseworker: p: 9660 5222 or e: [help@src.usyd.edu.au](mailto:help@src.usyd.edu.au) w: [www.src.usyd.edu.au](http://www.src.usyd.edu.au)**



# Environment Collective



## South East Forests

By Aimee Bull-McMahon

During the Easter Break, student activists from New South Wales and Victoria converged on the Bega Valley (my home region) on the far south coast of New South Wales. We went to learn about the logging that has just started in the area's State Forests and to brainstorm ways to take action. Student Activists dressed up as koalas and went to Tilba Tilba and Bermagui (towns close to the logging sites) to do a bit of awareness-raising street theatre. This made the local papers.

The logging is taking place in the last known Koala Habitat in the South East, with all felled trees going to the Eden chip mill. The plot thickens as Japanese company, Nippon Paper, who usually buys the majority of Eden's chips, experienced the pointy end of the GFC, and no longer wants to buy. To stop the chip mill from going bust, the NSW government has proposed a Biomass plant, which involves burning woodchips for energy. Now money can be made by burning native forests for energy instead of turning them into paper. The NSW government considers biomass to be 'renewable' (cos trees grow back, right?) but fails to account for the environmental disaster caused by the logging of native old growth forests, which sequester carbon and provide habitat for koalas and other native animals.

## People's Blockade of the World's Largest Coal Port

By Rosa Nolan

On the 28th of March some SEAC members went to the People's Blockade of the World's Largest Coal Port in Newcastle, organised by grass roots action group Rising Tide. Newcastle exports about 90 million tonnes of coal every year and this figure is expected to double as the NSW government expands the state's coal industry. This exported coal counts for about two thirds of Australia's carbon emissions.

Around 400 activists gathered on Nobby's beach and occupied the Newcastle harbour entrance and shipping lane to halt large coal ships for a day. The result: no coal ship even attempted to leave the port! We also heard from a range of speakers including members of a coal mining community and Greens MP Lee Rhiannon.

But it wasn't all hard work. Free kayaks were provided (with life jackets!) and some SEAC members did make their own carbon neutral bike powered raft. Others made do with floaty rings and surf boards. Tofu burgers were abundant and Newcastle hip hop artist, Zane Alcorn, turned a large catamaran and surrounding kayaks into a dance party.

## Green Campus Now!

The Student Enviro Action Collective (SEAC) has been working hard on our Green Campus Now! Campaign, the demands of which include that the university commit to 100% renewable energy by 2020, and a 50% emissions reduction by 2020. Our University currently consumes 75,000,000 kWh of electricity, which is equivalent to 10,274 households. Ninety percent of this energy is generated by coal. Our University has a social responsibility, as an institution responsible for learning and research, to set a precedent for a transition away from coal, and towards large scale renewable energy. The University of Sydney has the knowledge and capacity to demonstrate to the wider community that these ambitious targets can be met.

You can get involved in this campaign by signing the petition, getting your club, soc or group to sign on as an official supporter, or by coming along to SEAC meetings 1pm Mondays, Botany Lawns. Or, contact Aimee at aimee.lbm@gmail.com or on 0407204973.

## Upcoming Events

By Zoe Britton-Harper

SEAN (Student environment activist network) training day - Saturday April 24th, 9.30am till 5pm. Workshops all day to help develop your University's renewable energy campaign.

Renewable Energy on campus lunch- 13th of May, 12-1pm (week 10)

Come along to hear about the Green Campus Now! campaign and why our University needs to, and can, take the environmentally and socially responsible step of moving to 100% renewables by 2020.

Students of Sustainability Conference (SOS) - 5th to 9th of July

This is a conference held annually where students from all around Australia come together to learn and talk about ideas relating to sustainability and more! There are many ways to participate including forums and workshops, excursions and protests. The huge variety of workshops and forums means there is always something interesting on, from climate change, forests, indigenous solidarity and nuclear, to food systems, co-ops and permaculture. This year's conference will be held in Adelaide in the mid semester break.

## The Environment and Feminism

By Miriam Jones

A few weekends ago, Sydney's biggest feminist conference in 15 years took place at the Teacher's Federation building in Surry Hills. The intersections between feminism and the environment movement were discussed a few times over the weekend, most prominently with Cate Faerhmann (the former head of the National Conservation Council) on the Sunday panel about the future of feminism. Amongst other things Cate talked about the current dominance of male voices on climate issues (Tim Flannery, Clive Hamilton etc), and on often finding herself only invited to talk about 'community' related issues at climate change forums, while things like the economics of climate change and policy were generally seen as being in the realm of male expertise.

This got me thinking about our own collective and more broadly about the Australian Student Environment Network (ASEN), the network that connects us to other collectives around Australia. While sexism within our collective and this network still rears its ugly head at times, the organising models which we use (consensus decision-making, decentralisation of tasks etc) actively attempt to overcome the dominance of certain voices which we hear all day every day and listen to others who typically remain unheard.

While our organising is far from perfect, and does not always represent a diverse mix of voices (ASEN remains pretty white), compared to the rest of the environment movement we seem to be doing pretty well. Most importantly, a desire to constantly re-evaluate what we are doing right and wrong and challenge sexist, racist, homophobic and other oppressive behaviours means that we can (hopefully) only improve. Perhaps if such organising methods were employed across the wider spectrum of environment groups the gender imbalances in these groups would begin to decrease as well.





## Why We Still Need to Fight

Female postgraduates will not be surprised to learn that there are many issues for women which have not yet been addressed, yet here we are well and truly on our way into the 21st century. At the recent activist and feminist conference - F Conference - Australian feminist commentator, Anne Summers stated that she considers equal pay and the right to control our fertility as the key issues for which women still have to fight.

### Equal Pay

Consider, for example, the issue of equal pay. In Australia, women's full-time average weekly earnings are only 83% of men's. This 17% gender gap is a national average that opens up to 30% in some industry sectors. Significantly, one of the positions in which women earn a lot less than men is in CEO and finance positions, where some women earn only half of what their male counterparts are being paid. For key management positions, women can expect to earn 28% less than men in the same positions, which is 11% higher than the national average.

Women don't just face discrimination in terms of being paid less for the same work, but also still face huge challenges in being appointed to top positions. When faced with claims that the glass ceiling no longer exists, it is worth bearing in mind that more than half of all ASX200 companies have no female directors at all.

Whilst some of the worst discrepancies in pay and job opportunities are occurring at the top-end of the employment spectrum, female graduates just entering the workforce will be paid, on average, \$2000/year less than their male counterparts.

### Women's Officer

Elections have been called for the role of Women's Officer for 2010-2011. Elected by female subscribers to represent all female postgraduates on SUPRA Council.

The election is at 1pm, May 5 in Holme Courtyard. Nominations may be received anytime prior to the election to [women@supra.usyd.edu.au](mailto:women@supra.usyd.edu.au) or at the time of the election. For more info, contact [secretary@supra.usyd.edu.au](mailto:secretary@supra.usyd.edu.au)

There is nothing natural or normal about women's work being devalued. Equal pay is something we need to keep fighting for.

**Get involved in the ongoing equal pay campaign by attending the "Take Action for Equal Pay" rally being held on Sat June 10th at 11 am at Sydney Town Hall. You can get more information regarding the campaign at [www.payup.org.au](http://www.payup.org.au)**

### Fertility Rights

Fertility rights both in Australia and internationally are under attack. The below information provided to SUPRA by the activist group, Women's Abortion Action Campaign, indicates that it is also time to get active on the fertility rights issue!

It's been more than 10 years since we've had a rally for abortion rights in NSW, but now is the time as abortion rights are under attack both in Australia and overseas.

### Why now? Drop the QLD charges

As many of you will know a young QLD couple have been charged under archaic abortion laws and have been committed to stand trial in relation to the use of RU486, an abortion drug, which they obtained from relatives overseas. RU486 is legal in Australia and safe, however distribution remains tightly controlled by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

The QLD government has indicated that the case relates to the importation of the drug and safety concerns about the use of RU486 at home. Why then have the couple been charged under the abortion laws?

Abortion remains a crime in NSW and QLD, however common law rulings have established lawful grounds for abortion when a woman's physical or mental health is at risk. We are calling for all abortion laws to be repealed. This is very relevant for people in NSW as the Criminal Code 1899 QLD (ss 224-226) and the Crimes Act 1900 NSW (ss 82-84) are in almost identical terms.

### Why now? Right to Life conference

The rally has also been called in response to an International Federation of Right to Life Associations conference which is scheduled for that weekend. Recent polls show that there is majority support for a woman's right to choose and it is important to remind the public and the media of this at a time when anti-abortionists will be active and vocal.

### Why now? US Anti-abortion legislation

Recently US states such as Nebraska and Oklahoma have passed anti-abortion bills, for example, Oklahoma has passed legislation which prohibits a woman from getting an abortion unless she first has an ultrasound, is shown the ultrasound image and listens to a detailed description of the foetus. Other amendments also prevent women from suing doctors who knowingly withhold information about the foetus, including whether there's a foetal abnormality.

Nebraska has signed a law that bans most abortions 20 weeks after conception or later on the theory that a foetus, by that stage in the pregnancy, has the capacity to feel pain.

These legislative changes are clear attacks on the rights of women to be in control of their bodies and their reproductive choices.

**Rally for Abortion Rights  
- 11am Saturday 29 May  
2010 at Martin Place**

**Margaret Kirkby**  
Student Advice and Advocacy  
Officer (SAAO)



## We want you - for SUPRA Council!

Ever wanted to be involved with SUPRA student council? Now's your chance!

**Nominations are now open for the election of 21 General Councillors to serve on SUPRA's council from 1st July 2010 to 30th June 2011.**

**Nominations close at 5pm, 6th May. Nomination forms are available from the SUPRA office.**



# POSTGRAD PAGES

## SUPRA for Womyn

Now that the semester is well past half-over, it's back to the grindstone, and postgraduate students will have some big dates looming. If you're a research student like me, you'll be facing up to that dreaded six, twelve, or maybe eighteen month mark that always seems to come with the unfortunate expectation from your supervisor that you've produced some work by now ... Or, if you're lucky, you'll be preparing to attend one of the many conferences that all take place over the winter break. Coursework students, having just shuffled out of their mid-semester exams, will be looking forward to more study for the finals. The University is also undergoing massive changes, and you'll have seen all the work put into the Green Paper that SUPRA has done.

Whatever you're studying, hopefully you'll be feeling well prepared, up-to-date and on top of it all, but if you're not (and who is?) you're certainly not alone. You'll most likely also be working outside of university in some capacity or another to pay the bills, and you might have any range of family responsibilities. If you have children you'll be facing the ongoing struggle to balance family life and study. If that's the case then hopefully you will have access to affordable and convenient child-care options, but if not – again, you won't be alone! SUPRA has included, in their submission responding to the University's 2010 Green Paper, a request to consider the child-care needs of postgraduate students (and students in general, for that matter), which as we all know are not insignificant, and can sometimes be urgent. SUPRA is maintaining pressure on the university to provide adequate child-care facilities for all postgraduates

across the University, on all of the campuses.

SUPRA aims to provide as much support and as many resources as possible to help postgraduate students get access to services – you should certainly drop into the SUPRA office (on Raglan St, behind the Services Building) to pick up a



copy of the Child Care Handbook, Thesis Guide, or the Postgraduate Survival Guide (and many others sources of information). We also have a handy resource room for work if you don't have appropriate facilities, and we're always keen for your feedback if there's anything else we might be able to offer.

If you're having problems with any part of your Masters or PhD, SUPRA has a range of support services on offer. You can also arrange to speak to one of our Student Advice and Advocacy Officers (SAAOs), who can help with any more specific problems you might be having negotiating the different demands and challenges of postgraduate study. We also have a legal advice service available Tuesday-Thursday. Check our website for drop-in times or make an

appointment with our Admin Staff.

As Acting Women's Officer at SUPRA, I'm in the process of putting together what I hope will be a helpful forum for postgraduate women students, to share their concerns, anecdotes and queries about the experience of studying at a postgraduate level. I hope it will also operate as a place for women students to access resources and information about the services that the university and SUPRA provide, and that it can help expand the Women's network, introducing you to new people from around the University and in different disciplines. So keep your ears open and eyes peeled for more information about that. If you have anything you might want to add to this forum, you can always contact me at [women@supra.usyd.edu.au](mailto:women@supra.usyd.edu.au)

It's always important to feel like you're part of a community when you're

studying, and sometimes for postgraduate students that can become difficult, what with multiple off-campus commitments, or just the general struggle to find time for anything outside study. SUPRA aims to provide not only a series of equity networks (Women's, Queer, International, Indigenous, and Disabilities) to help you feel connected, but also to provide a point of contact and support. So become a subscriber, and if you're a female postgraduate student, be sure to join the women's network for information about resources, events and services. You can subscribe to our mailing list for women by going to <http://mailman.ucc.usyd.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/supra-women> and entering your details.

Sophia Barnes, Acting Women's Officer, SUPRA  
[www.sydney.edu.au/supra](http://www.sydney.edu.au/supra)

## YOUR Postgraduate Representative Association

Becoming a member of your postgraduate representative association gives you the following benefits:

- Access to our confidential student advice and advocacy service and legal service
- Participate in SUPRA events and activities
- Receive regular email updates and electronic publications (eGrad)
- Use the SUPRA Resource and Meeting Rooms
- Vote or run in the SUPRA Council elections
- Actively participate in your representative student association.

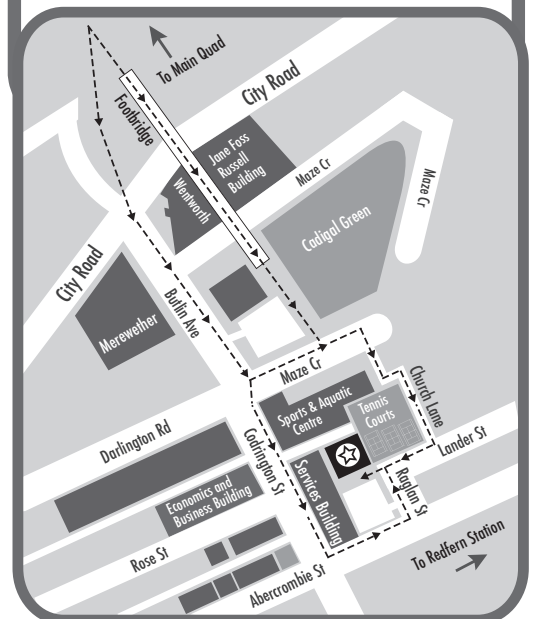
Complete your subscription online at [www.supra.usyd.edu.au/subscribe](http://www.supra.usyd.edu.au/subscribe) then follow the links if you would like to become a SUPRA Supporter. Alternatively you can complete a form at our stalls or drop into the SUPRA office.

## WHERE IS SUPRA?

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Toll-free: 1800 249 950  
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E: [admin@supra.usyd.edu.au](mailto:admin@supra.usyd.edu.au)  
Web: [www.supra.usyd.edu.au](http://www.supra.usyd.edu.au)



## Immigration Forum

Registered Migration Agent Aris Paipetis will be speaking about condition 8202 of international student visas and what it means to "satisfy academic progression requirements". Question and Answer session at the end.

**WHEN:** 1pm, Friday 7th May  
**WHERE:** SUPRA's Resource Room, G10, Raglan St Building

## NOWSA Conference

SUPRA may be able to provide support for female postgrad students wishing to attend the Network of Women Students Australia (NOWSA) conference in Newcastle from July 14-18th.

To apply, email [secretary@supra.usyd.edu.au](mailto:secretary@supra.usyd.edu.au) for more information. Applications for support are due by 15th May.

## Postgrad Sports

Are you looking to keep fit, have a social afternoon, and get involved with the activities that keep your heart racing? Then come along to SUPRA sports.!

**SUPRA is committed to providing safe sporting experiences for women, so female students are especially encouraged to come along!**

For more details contact:  
[SUPRACHOI@gmail.com](mailto:SUPRACHOI@gmail.com)



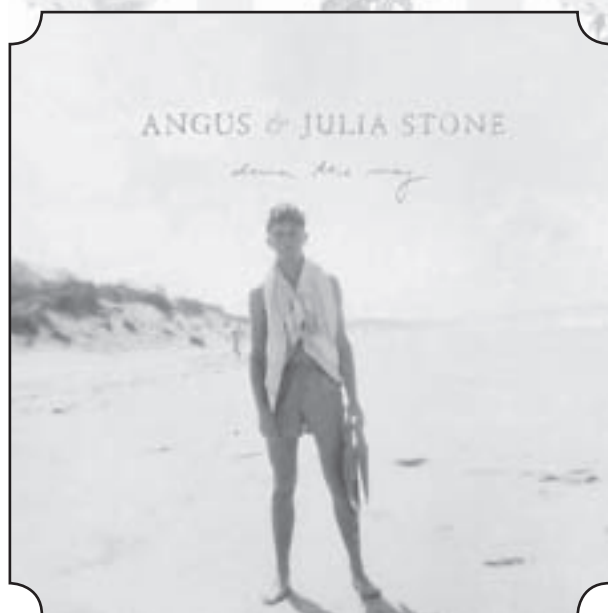


## REVIEWS

By Cindy Chong

**Down the Way, Angus & Julia Stone**

Angus & Julia Stone's music has always struck me as simplistic yet appealing. Their first album consisted mainly of acoustic folk songs based on the subject of love. But *Down The Way* has proved to contain more lyrical power with Julia's Joanna Newsom-esque vocals and somber melodies. While their first album sounded a little empty, the Stone siblings have added fuller and more complicated musical arrangements. The velvety textures and lush, orchestral sounds are especially ones to make note on. As the album artwork suggests, the entire compilation will leave you yearning for lost innocence, much like the delicate sound of Julia's voice. Angus' guitar work has showed a lot more vibrancy and texture than *Chocolate* and *Cigarettes*. Their second album is definitely one to listen to for those quiet Sunday afternoons.

**I Speak Because I Can, Laura Marling**

A culmination of several components makes Marling an irresistible listen. Her standout folk strumming provides the perfect backdrop for her passionate vocals. She has the great ability to convey her message on either rock songs like 'Rambling Man' or when she brings it down to a whisper on 'Hope In The Air'. Following the break-up with Noah and the Whale frontman Charlie Fink, *I Speak Because I Can* is more 'serious' than *Alas, I Cannot Swim*. Marling's music is backed up by lyrics that tackle the realities of love, despair, and even death. The change in melodic direction and sudden strumming of strings in songs that begin the album shows an expression of confidence, as Marling leaves her teenage years behind. Mumford & Sons also kick in the track 'Hope in the Air' with group harmonies. Breaking out of her shell, Marling's album shows musical versatility and character diversity.

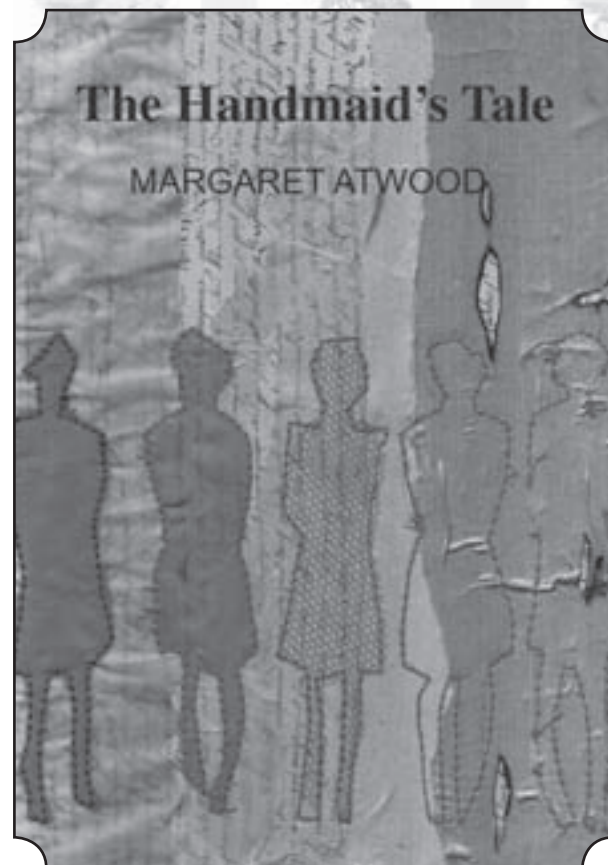
**Every Jack Has a Jill (Jusqu'à toi), dir. Jennifer Devoldère**

The title automatically alludes to the nature of this film: a romantic comedy. The genre predicts a happy outcome, one to please all audience members. Much like *500 Days of Summer*, this film would appeal to the majority of tweens to nineteen year old girls who have experienced 'heartbreak' and just want to witness another happy love story. However, I found the plotline disappointing and relied too heavily on the typical quirks and charms of two people bound to meet each other in the most awkward situations and fall in love. The only aspect of the film I enjoyed was another glimpse into the talents of rising French actress Melanie Laurent, who made such an impression in Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* last year. Chloe, played by Laurent, is an oddball loner who finds social interaction difficult. She watches hundreds of romantic movies, but relies on others to do her actual interacting for her. Upon returning to Paris from Brussels, her bag is lost at the airport. The one they deliver to her is not her own. Instead it belongs to Jack (played by Justin Bartha). Jack's suitcase contains the book *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which his friend gives him at the airport before he departs the US for Paris. In going through Jack's things, Chloe thinks she has found the man of her dreams. She dresses in his clothes, takes pictures with his camera and fantasises about who he might be. When the time comes to return his bag, she leaves notes and clues, hoping he will find her. Despite coming across as slightly deranged, we empathise with Chloe and hope that her romantic dream might come true. The bumbling object of her affection, Justin Bartha is just the right mixture of dumb American and loveable fool, just how the French perceive the Americans.

**The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood**

In Atwood's new world, everyone is under surveillance, very much like Orwell's 1984. And also a warning to common humanity of what may happen if our current trends continue, much like *A Clockwork Orange*. Atwood's dystopian novel is told from a woman's point of view, and details the transition from the United States to the Republic of Gilead. Readers come to understand that the government has been replaced with a totalitarian one that is completely male chauvinist, racist, and religiously fundamentalist, which takes shape after population declines caused by the 'Big One' earthquake in California and widespread AIDS. The main narrative takes place while Offred—whose real name we never learn—is a Handmaid to a Commander (Fred) and his Wife (Serena Joy). She is there solely for reproductive purposes, because

Serena Joy cannot have children of her own. If Offred doesn't come through, she will be declared an Unwoman and sent to the Colonies, where unwanted people who are considered expendable are sent to deal with dead bodies and clean potentially dangerous sites. She relates her day-to-day life in their home in a stream-of-consciousness style, interspersed with details of either the days before Gilead, or while she was in Handmaid training at the Red Center. This is a haunting tale that cautions particularly those in power about the future at stake.

**The Dead Weather- Enmore Theatre, 26 March, 2010**

By Brigitte Garozzo

The sexed up blues rock beast that is The Dead Weather exudes attitude and is a definite indication that the broody garage rock culture is not dead. The Dead Weather ooze onto the stage painted in darkness and the murky silhouette of Jack White (The White Stripes/The Raconteurs) is almost too much for me to process. I'm not sure who I was expecting, but being in the same room as a living, breathing Jack White is exceptionally and stupidly exciting. Soon enough, the slinky, prowling and decadently gorgeous front woman, Alison Mosshart (The Kills) steals my attention. Mosshart paces the stage frantically belting out '60 Feet Tall' with her pale and sunken frame hidden under a sea of raven hair. As the tension builds and the heart pounding bass drum begins, her corpse-like charm turns into a she-devil fury. It's not long before she jumps up onto the foldout speakers, arches her back and lets out a potent and husky scream. The superbly tough 'Hang You From The Heavens' follows in an explosion of strobe lights. In between songs, White paces away from his kit, towels his face and looks as sultry as ever. Sporadically, he strides toward Mosshart, taking a mic for the slow-burning and freaky 'So Far From Your Weapon'. Hormones ablaze, you can feel the audience being played by the sexual pinball between Mosshart and White. By now Mosshart is jumping from speaker to speaker, staring down the front row, while Dean Fertita (Queens of the Stone Age) flaunts a deep and raspy display, switching between guitar and distorted organ. Jack Lawrence (The Raconteurs) peers out from his straight black hair and coke-bottle lenses, and despite his reserved appearance works off Fertita, on bass, emphasising the song's immense backbone. Their



matching white Gretsch guitars that grace the stage have myself and everyone around me drooling. 'New Pony' quickly becomes a crowd favourite that sends many hands in the air. 'Hustle and Cuss', a new addition, has the pounding bass and bang similar to that of 'Cut Like A Buffalo'. Then, to the pleasure of the crowd, White saunters out from behind the drums again and picks up his guitar: a Gretsch Jupiter Thunderbird, for 'Will There Be Enough Water?'. The electricity between White and Mosshart oozes as she shares his mic, lip-to-lip, eye-to-eye, moving around him, never shifting her gaze. Maybe this is put on, maybe not, but the sexual effect is definitely not suitable for kids. White then takes his sexual tension and erupts into a blistering solo, climaxing all the way through to 'Cut Like A Buffalo' and the popular single 'Treat Me Like Your Mother'. As the last bit of guitar feedback fades, the band takes a bow at the front of the stage in unison. Bedlam ensued after the concert, while the crowd (myself included) begged security guards to hand over drumsticks, picks, towels and anything else the pair may have touched. The Dead Weather's demanding and indomitable vibe, created mostly by Mosshart, and partly by White, makes for an amazing musical experience. 10/10



**About Harry Townes - SUDS, now showing at the Cellar**

By Catherine Holbeche

About Harry Townes is the latest offering by the Sydney University Dramatic Society (SUDS), and man, it's a damn fine piece of work. The screen play adaptation of Bruce Jay Friedman's 1974 novel has been modified for the Cellar by co-director Julian Larnach, and the script is, overall, a good one, successfully capturing the heady atmosphere of 1970s American society. The clever witticisms give the characters fun dialogue to play with ("I'm the cane!"), and certainly help offset the play's more serious undertones. The story itself focuses on screenwriter Harry Townes (Jon Dunk, Andrew Fraser and Harry Milas), a playboy bachelor-type who lives a life of debauchery, enjoying women, booze and the odd hit of cocaine. Estranged from his wife (Brigid Dixon), and son (Ian Ferrington), whom he rarely sees, Harry appears to have no real relationships, and his complicated family history is something which this performance captures well. While some may lament the production of yet another American play in the Cellar, which rarely embraces the work of Australian playwrights,

accents were consistent across board, and this certainly helped to convince me of the merits of the play. First-time SUDS Directors Luke Martin and Julian Larnach have divided the character of Harry Townes into three, in order to capture Harry's multiple personalities, but also, one suspects, for the practical reason of spreading parts around. While none of the Harrys were weak, it was difficult to discern any major difference between them (despite the obvious detachment of Dunk juxtaposed with the seemingly more sensitive Milas). However, the idea was a good one, and, if nothing else, meant that we never became bored with the same face for too long. Special mention should be made of Ian Ferrington ("a ten year-old trapped in a sixteen-year old's body"), who, as the excited, enthusiastic schoolboy, not only looked adorable, but was the most physical member of the cast (a problem for SUDS actors generally), and Hattie Archibald, whose performance of a British tourist provided some relief from the sea of American accents. The use of the stage was good, especially Harry's positioning during his monologues and, thanks to the fantastic choice of music between scenes, if scene changes were long, I certainly didn't notice. Overall, About Harry Townes is a strong show, and both Martin and Larnach deserve commendation for what they have produced. 4/5

## Living Dolls by Natasha Walter

By Sophia Barnes

I recently started reading British feminist Natasha Walter's new book, Living Dolls, on the recommendation of a friend. Walter's previous book, The New Feminism, was written more than a decade ago, in 1998, and the author herself admits just how much her opinion has changed in the intervening twelve years. Her earlier book all but declared the cultural and social fight for feminism dead, emphasising the need to focus on economic and political equality rather than worrying about pop cultural representations of, or 'politically correct' attitudes towards, gender. As Walter observes, "I once believed that we only had to put into place the conditions for equality for the remnants of old-fashioned sexism in our culture to wither away. I am ready to admit that I was wrong". Her new book takes a harsh look at what she regards as a backward step for women, epitomised by the ubiquity of sexualised imagery throughout the media. She argues that ideas of what it means to be 'female' are once again becoming more, not less, restrictive.

Reading Living Dolls, as someone who is committed to the importance of gender equality across all aspects of social, cultural, political and economic life, is a little like reading The God Delusion as an atheist. Both books are really only outlining and reiterating what I already feel to be true; nonetheless, it's encouraging and reassuring to see those opinions being put into print and disseminated. As Walter makes clear, sometimes the majority view can seem so overwhelming and saturating, it's important to remember that there are many others out there with the same qualms as I have. Living Dolls does not claim to be a comprehensive study of feminism as it stands (and as we all know, even the word 'feminism' is so fraught these days, one might more appropriately talk about 'gender equality'). Walter is particularly interested in examining the way in which the fight for sexual freedom, which was part and parcel of second-wave feminism, has been so successfully co-opted and repackaged by consumer culture. Rather than encouraging the celebration of female (and for that matter, male) sexuality in all its forms and guises, we have somehow ended up in a situation where the popular representations

of women as sexual beings have grown ever more narrow, restrictive and disheartening.

While Walter, like myself, would never suggest that women should not have the right to choose whichever manifestation of their sexual identity suits them, she questions the idea that by buying into a culture of sex-as-commodity, and by conforming to particularly narrow and objectifying ideas of what it means to be sexy, women are really making a free and unfettered 'choice'. The language of empowerment and freedom has been adopted and manipulated very successfully, to commercialise and popularise depressingly one-sided notions of what sex is and what sexiness can mean. If a woman wants to shave or wax her pubic hair, buy some sexy underwear and swing around on a pole to please her partner (or herself), then by all means fair play to her, but the development of a culture in which women who choose not to do this are singled out as different, as somehow less 'feminine', or less sexy, cannot be good for either women or men. We need to be able to have intelligent, nuanced conversations about the complicated background and cultural impact of activities such as stripping, the creation and distribution of pornography and, at the most extreme end, prostitution, without being labelled as 'crazy feminists' and wowers. Perhaps most importantly, these conversations need to involve men as well as women.

Which brings me to what I'd like to think is a positive point – the friend on whose recommendation I began reading Living Dolls was male. It's very important to me to identify the fight for gender equality in all its forms, as one that both genders need to be involved in, and I like to encourage all my male friends to not be afraid of acknowledging their own interest in this struggle. After all, if popular representations of what it means to be 'female' are restrictive, and difficult to attain, then one can almost always pick up a concomitant (and often equally restrictive) set of ideas about what it means to be 'male'. An enriching relationship between two people, of whatever gender combination, will always benefit from each individual feeling as if they are appreciated sexually for what is particular to them, rather than because they conform to a popular stereotype of sexual attractiveness. So, while there are many issues which it does not address, I would nonetheless recommend Walter's book to both male and female friends. Sometimes it's important to remember that we – by which I mean men and women – don't need to accept the images and messages about sexuality and gender that we are bombarded with on a daily basis. We can decide for ourselves.





# post-feminism

Vivienne Moxham-Hall

The new empowered female wears scant clothing, pursues casual sex and 'hooks up' with other women to attract male attention. The less clothes worn by a female has become a symbol of how confident she is with her body, rather than how insecure she is through this constant pursuit of male attention. Casual sex has become a way in which women can pursue a form of male voyeurism and being bisexually friendly has become a method of achieving the approval of male onlookers. Is this new era of sexuality really all that empowering? Is the new age of post-feminism adding up to a greater feeling of female liberation? Or is the joke on women?

Feminism has come a long way; from obtaining the vote in 1902 and fighting for some degree of independence from men through the pursuit of land ownership rights to achieving equal opportunities to climb the corporate ladder. The sexual revolution of the 1960s represented an acceptance of individual sexuality and a break with the frigid rules of attraction dictated by Victorian customs. The 30 year downstream effect of that revolution has produced a culture where seeing female breasts, cleavage, thigh or crotch is constantly thrust upon us in our day-to-day interaction with popular culture. Female sexuality has become a comment on how uptight or desirable a women can be. As Ariel Levy

comments in her book 'Female Chauvinist Pigs', the extent to which a female pursues attention is a barometer of how 'hot' she appears to men. Every night this mentality is made evident in the clubbing culture as clutches of shivering girls dressed in short dresses and high heels wait outside clubs or bars in the cold. Their near-naked appearance embodies sexual promise and elevates within them a feeling of power over men. The rules of club entrance include a dress code, and limits the number of male entrants unless they are attached to an attractive female. This is said to empower females to take their pick of the limited numbers of men. Is this the case? Or is this a modernized, more acceptable form of Hugh Hefner's Playboy House where females must vie for the attention of limited males to such an extent that their concept of attractive becomes more closely aligned to sexual objectification rather than any sort of liberation.

Cosmopolitan magazine released a 52 page 'Love and Sex' special edition last year. Four of these pages are taken up by Cosmo's 'greatest sex hits' where it openly advises its readership (ages 14+) How to "do outdoor" and tips on navigating car sex (steering clear of the handbrake). It isn't enough to have casual sex, suddenly the new form of sexual liberation is public. Young girls are being encouraged not only to

“Is this new era of sexuality really all that empowering? Or is the joke on women?”

join in the sexual revolution but to take it a step further as a measure of confidence and security with their bodies and actions. 'Women can have sex like men' Samantha in 'Sex and the City' tells the millions of captivated watchers over the world. It is liberating for women to have casual sex with people whose names they don't remember in the morning. This behaviour not a sign of deep-seated insecurities but rather, as raunch culture enthusiasts proclaim, an indication of how far society's acceptance of female sexuality has progressed.

Even within Universities in Australia, there is a college culture that tracks the co-college relationships, serenading two participants the morning of their union by spooning the table tops. There are whole 'webs' of inter-club or college relationships that are meant to demonstrate the liberation and sexual freedom this generation has inherited. Not only of 'women having sex like men' but also with each other, being bisexually-friendly in order to extend their sexual resume (in some cases) in order to appeal to male fantasy. Alternatively, this phenomenon can and will continue to be presented as a new era of sexual freedom and flexibility.

Feminism has been taken out of our hands and appropriated to a raunch culture of pop-advertising. This is not feminism, but post-feminism. Or sexual liberation gone mad.

Concern and tears-  
I walk with concern everyday  
I sleep with tears every night  
I feel like there is no hope  
I feel like giving up  
I lost all of my strength  
I did everything that could be done  
To have my baby girl back in my arms  
But still it isn't enough  
Afraid not knowing where to go  
What else should I do?  
Afraid not knowing who I am  
Crying till not one teardrop is left  
Why does it have to be like this?  
Have faith, since faith is my only hope  
God is almighty, always watching over me  
My baby girl

I don't know why everything in our lives has gone so wrong  
I can't imagine how an angel like you would have to cope with this conflict  
I can't imagine how someone can hate us as much as this  
The only thing I can think of is "power and misery".  
I wish I knew the intention of all kindness in the first place, if I did? I would approach  
and respond in very different way, to avoid the pain for you and me  
What else is there for me to say?  
When everything is too late  
All I can hope and wish for is: "For you my darling baby girl to be strong and be wise  
sweet heart"  
As the day goes by

The pain that he caused  
Further gets into my veins  
I am trying to be strong and at the same time wish for a miracle  
On a day like this  
When I can't see you  
I feel so down  
As though someone has torn my heart into a thousand pieces  
Taking away all my senses, and leaving me in a numb condition  
I refer to no one  
As I know, nobody else will ever understand  
How painful this misery and torture is  
I knew you well  
I know who you are  
Others might find it hard to believe  
Others might see it differently  
I knew you well  
More than anyone  
Just like you used to say  
You are different, you are unique  
I guess you were correct.  
You combined your smartest with your trick to get into me,  
Then slowly you tore apart,  
When I refused your abuse  
Man power does work  
In the land I now call home  
Right becomes wrong and wrong becomes right  
The law I obey  
Still doesn't work.

Jua Magno Cooksey



# WHY I LOVE MEN

## — ANONYMOUS MAN-LOVER

a.k.a. Catherine Holbeche, or, "I wear heels bigger than your dick"



When I was pondering what to write about for this week's special edition of Women's Honi, I certainly didn't think I would be writing about a backlash against feminism. What I WANTED to write about were the issues of Female Genital Mutilation and the position of women in some communities in parts of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and within some religious communities in North America and Europe. Middle Eastern politics (as well as gender politics) is my particular area of interest (buy me a book on Israel!) and I wanted to share some of my KNOWLEDGE with youse all.

However, whilst researching for what would have been my INFORMATIVE, INTERESTING, and INSIGHTFUL article, I came across a website that really made me want to SPEAK MY MIND. OH gosh. Not you too, you sweet, young thing!

The website, which prompted me to CHANGE MY DIRECTION and write an opinion piece, when I was so desperate to stay seated on my white fence, swinging my legs in this DELICIOUS autumn air (seriously, you readers are scary, opinionated people – I read your replies in Honi every week), is called "What Men Are Saying About Women" and can be accessed via <http://whatmenthinkofwomen.blogspot.com/2010/03/more-from-delusional-feminists.html>. There you go! Go

check it out! The website's manifesto claims that "Feminism is a Hate Movement. Even they agree it to be the case. They promote sexism and male hate under the game of equality. It is just about revenge...Over 2340 posts..." Quoting from the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, Anonymous male accounting blogger asserts: "There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn't true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true." FACT. Feminism is a Hate Movement.

Obviously, we can begin to critique this website from the very beginning. Who, specifically are "they"? All women? Men - hating women? Men - hating women who admit they hate men? Female Dogs? His daughter/wife/MIL? I'm not even going to deal with the next sentence. You can deal with that. Interactive Media – Let's Go! But the issues here are important. I realise these are issues that you may be sick of hearing debated, but if there is any real hope in the revival of the Feminist Movement, then they need to be clarified. LET ME CLARIFY THEM. Certainly they need to be raised within these pages, as there were a number of heated debates in Honi last year that really rocked-a-lot-of-people's-boats. I myself read these debates and then yelled my opinions at my cat.

Feminists do NOT hate men. Believe me. I love men. I was actually attracted to a boy who looked about 11 years old this afternoon on the bus and was shocked at myself. Must. Not. Tell. People. Shit. Wrote. It. In. Honi (to save face, I was imagining him a couple of years older). Most people have let go (or so I thought) of the old stereotype of a hairy, loud, opinionated, straight-or-lesbian woman who eats men for breakfast. Perhaps they have not. Of course, those who hold very conservative opinions

on the position of women and have a complicated relationship with feminism may not air them, perhaps because they are too afraid to speak them (unlike our dear PM-in-training - who has suddenly become a moderate, has anyone else been puzzled by that? Don't reply to this point with a letter – I get it. Election politics. Ahh...) or are "quiet conservatives". It is important to address this issue so that the issues of feminism are not only discussed within one section of the community i.e. amongst the women. Feminism, and more broadly, the issues of gender equality, can/should be/currently are/constitute an important dialogue between both sexes. Men + Feminism = Not Mutually Exclusive.

Before I close, I would like to add that there are, however, significant ways that feminists can damage the image of feminism and its relationship with the broader community. An aggressive posture towards males does nothing to help the cause. Neither does holding the view that women are in danger of attack at anytime, anywhere, from any MALE. I certainly do not mean to dismiss the issue of violence against women here, my point is merely to emphasise that a more moderate approach to general issues of gender equality, and embracing dialogue (rather than confrontation) is sometimes (ooh, look how carefully I'm treading...) a more effective approach to achieving real and lasting change. This does NOT APPLY TO ALL ISSUES. A more aggressive posture is certainly needed to fight for a proper paid maternity leave structure, equal pay within the workforce (c'mon, Australia!), and adequate representation across a whole range of spheres. Oh, shit, I forgot – and to decriminalise abortion!

Apologies to my blonde best friend who may be shocked that I wrote this. Beers soon? x

## Cat Fight

**Sandra Kaltoum**

Feminism is often viewed in a negative light. Change is often feared. People can become complacent, and comfortable with certain situations. Those who oppose change and refuse to comply with conditions of social normality, because this oppresses certain social groups, face opposition from men and women alike. It is the latter group that I am particularly critical of.

Women who do not think that there is a place for feminists in our society and women who have accepted unjust principles, such as female subservience, lower pay and a general social culture of male dominance, fail to see the benefits that can be achieved through solidarity. I am the first to acknowledge that every woman differs in her personal values and political views from the next, and that we do not all agree on issues of significance within the feminist movement, but there is no doubt that a more collective approach to-

wards the need for certain rights will lead to an improved outcome for women across Australia. Many women attack feminists, for placing too much attention on relatively minor inequalities. I vehemently disagree. The strategic way to attack large scale problems is through attacking relatively small issues. Education should be a central focus for the empowerment of girls and women. Although many people (perhaps those reading this article who are most likely to be studying at university) may not be able to appreciate this type of situation, many young women in schools across Australia are brought up in homes that stress the fundamental differences between the working roles of men and women. Men are breadwinners, women are child rearers, they say. Coming from a Middle-Eastern background, although I myself have never directly experienced this type of attitude, I am very aware of situations where females are discouraged from pursuing a higher education because of cultural influences or general social perceptions.

This is not only a cultural issue. There are many different factors that have influenced the current position of women. The economist will point to statistics and show how off-putting they can be for women pursuing a career. The philosopher will point to religious influences that contribute to the current status of women. The psychologist may point to evidence of a more nurturing, caring nature, inherent to femininity, which generally makes us more loyal and reliable. The historian will analyse the evolution of the status of women and

the role that the feminist movement has played in achieving the progression of our status.

I urge you to address inequalities on a small-scale in your everyday life. You don't have to actively seek out gender inequality, but the next time you hear a woman doubt the direction of her future, assure her that if women support each other, with, of course, the understanding of many men, our opportunities are limitless, and our efforts will lead to a future that we can all be EQUALLY proud of.



# Women's Honi Launch



**Speakers:**

**Nina Funnell**

Journalist

**Gabe Kavanagh**

PAY UP! Campaign for pay equity

**Hermann's Bar  
Monday  
May 10th  
6pm-8pm**



- light refreshments provided •
- performances and speeches from 6:30pm •
- all welcome •

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