



New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women (Inc.)

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NEWSLETTER JULY 2011

MEETING REPORT

About 20 members attended a very successful mid winter lunch at Rosebank Estate Winery recently and enjoyed listening to Wellington Branch member, Joy Dunsheath's lively and enthusiastic talk and Power Point presentation on the Hegg Hoffet Fund, for Displaced Women Graduates. This fund assists graduate women (in special cases tertiary women students) who have been displaced as a result of war, political upheaval or other serious emergencies. Some are fleeing gender-related atrocities in their home countries, such as rape, honour crimes, forced marriage and female mutilation. Others fear for their lives because of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Arriving in a new country, most face complex challenges to integration, among them language difficulties, unemployment, rejection of foreign qualifications and the need for retraining.

The Fund provides short term grants for refresher courses for re-entry into the candidates' professional field (or if that is not possible, training courses leading to some other employment), and for language training and other courses to assist with integration into their new countries. In addition to financial assistance, IFUW's national and local groups also provide the graduate refugees with moral support to help them to adjust to life in a different country.

Joy is a member of the Hegg Hoffet Fund Special Committee.

Members brought along small items to sell and the sale of these plus donations raised \$213 as a contribution to this fund.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES AND DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

As some of you will know, the regalia hire team has been forced to move from the Arts Centre basement as a result of the February earthquake and after a temporary move to Solway Ave has now found a home at 9 Creyke Rd. The university are in the process of renovating the house and when the move is complete it is intended to hold an Open Day there along with a light lunch. There will be more information and a date in the next newsletter but we hope members will take the opportunity to me along.

The AGM will be held on **20 October** and the Christmas meeting on **17 November**.

On **13 September** we will be joining the National Council of Women and attending their Suffrage function at the Linfield Cultural Recreational Sports Club, 56 Kearney's Road (off Pages Road). The speaker is Mary Devine, Managing Director, Ballantynes. There will also be supper and entertainment. Tickets \$15.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN (*Val Bailey*)

Early Childhood Education

Professor Judith Duncan from the School of Education was the guest speaker at the meeting on early childhood education and the Taskforce Report recommendations. Consultation on this closes on 8 August and she urged the group to make a submission.

The Public Affairs Committee of FGW heard Judith Duncan speak at a meeting last year on the same topic. A remit was prepared by this group for the Mid Term Council and passed.

It is intended to apply to CERA for funding for an Oral History project on women's experiences post-earthquake. This is planned to be a resource for research, with the results being made available for future disaster planning.

The Hon Hekia Parata is to speak in Christchurch on 5 August. Her earlier visit was cancelled after the February earthquake.

Other matters occupying the Branch's attention have been:

- (a) the proposal of the District Licensing Authority to grant an off-licence for a bottle store on the corner of Yaldhurst and Avonhead Rds.
- (b) The Family Court Review Project

I have material available for those interested.

WEA COURSE

Suburbs of Christchurch - Past, Present and Future

at the Canterbury WEA, 59 Gloucester Street

Starts 3 August, 1-2.30pm, 4 Wednesdays, \$21

The suburbs of Christchurch have a rich history but what of the future? The recent earthquakes have brought devastating change to some parts of Christchurch while at the same time providing opportunities for new developments. Each week a local historian will speak about the suburb they are familiar with while the second speaker discusses the present reality and future hopes for their part of town.

3 Aug **Lyttelton** - Baden Norris and Margaret Jefferies
10 Aug **Addington** - John Wilson and Diane McEvedy
17 Aug **Aranui/Wainoni** - Tim Baker and Rachael Fonotia
24 Aug **Papanui** - Murray Williams

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NATIONAL EXECUTIVE'S THOUGHTS CONTINUE TO BE WITH CANTERBURY

Following the most recent earthquake, NE President Dot Page wrote on behalf of NZFGW to the Branch President Shirley C' Ailceta:

Dear Shirley

How wretched to be writing to you, yet again, to express to our Canterbury members the sympathy of NZFGW at the latest earthquake and our hopes that none of you have suffered more property damage. The strain on the faces of those people interviewed on the TV news who are beginning major clean-ups for the third time is hard to watch, and the additional damage to the Christchurch city centre, which will put back the rebuilding programme, is a serious blow. Those of you who live in Christchurch must be in a state of continual anxiety.

The thoughts of all of us are with you at this time.

Dot Page

Shirley's reply:

Dear Dot,

Thanks for your message and kind thoughts as we undertake yet another massive clean-up after this latest spate of earthquakes and aftershocks throughout our poor city. Yes, the TV news coverage is hard to watch these days. The distress of people in the Eastern suburbs is very real and the additional damage sustained by Christchurch Cathedral and other buildings in the centre of the city, is very sad.

Although people feel frustrated at delays and daily uncertainty, they are continuing to help one another out other as best they can.

Canterbury Branch committee is in the process of planning for our mid-winter lunch. Members are looking forward to meeting up together again after several months of uncertainty.

Christchurch will bounce back in time but no one is in any doubt that right now we face a very big task indeed.

Kind Regards, Shirley C'Ailceta

Message from IFUW Sent by Leigh Bradford Ratteree, General Secretary of IFUW:

Just to say we are thinking of you with the latest quakes. While it is good that these have not resulted in any deaths, the continuing destruction of buildings and disruptions in daily life must be very difficult for all concerned. I've seen reports that nearly 1,000 buildings will need to be demolished. We hope that our Christchurch members are all well and that none have been affected too drastically.

Kind regards, Leigh

SIXTH TRIENNIAL ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCES CONFERENCE 28-29 July, SkyCity Auckland

If you're a woman working in the science field, then you need to be there.

The Developing Women – Advancing Science conference is designed to provide a forum for women working in research, business and education or studying science to learn from other women working in the New Zealand science industry. The conference programme will include keynotes and panel discussions with women who are leaders in their fields, workshops for career and personal development, as well as sessions to discuss some of the key scientific issues facing us in the 21st century and opportunities to network with other women working in the New Zealand science industry. More information can be found at <http://awis.org.nz> or <http://pacificchannel.com>.

Susan Byrne award enables move into neonatal research - Rebecca Bear, Recipient

I feel exceptionally grateful today to be writing about the opportunities and progress in my new chosen career since winning the Susan Byrne award last year.

The news of substantial funding assistance through the NZFGW in October last year enabled me to begin my second year of postgraduate study at Massey University in 2011 after gaining an A+ grade at the end of 2010. I made a decision to change from my career as a veterinarian to neonatal researcher and educator after two of my three babies were born extremely premature in critically-ill condition in 2002 and 2003. It is my belief that I have much to offer in the area of neonatology with my background in science and healing in the veterinary field and the empathy I have developed through our extremely traumatic and life-changing experiences. The biggest difficulty I have faced since making the decision to begin postgraduate study with the goal of changing my career has been a financial one. I have been unwilling to take on another large student loan debt (I have only just paid of the first one!) and have had insufficient income to date to fund my postgraduate studies. Apart from course fees, I was lacking much-needed equipment and most urgently, a computer, as well as resources to fund travelling from Raumati South to Palmerston North for tutorials.

With the help of the Susan Byrne award, I have purchased a computer that has not only enabled me to research and complete my assignments, but also Skype my supervisors and have online tutorials as opposed to a 3-hour return travel time to Massey. This year, I was able to pay my fees outright and have chosen to embark on a Neurophysiology and Neuroendocrinology paper from which I can study more in-depth the physiological basis of the myriad of deficits that babies who are born extremely early continue to suffer. It is apparent that an increasing number of children are being born early and a significant number of these are experiencing a range of physical, intellectual, emotional and social hardships that have a neurological basis which we may be able to study more fully in the neonatal units that they are born into. The stays in the neonatal unit often last for months for these babies and their families and are a major environmental influence

that shape our children at such a critical time around their birth. The most recent assignment that I am working on is titled “The Neurophysiological basis of neonatal maternal attachment and separation in the perinatal period and the implications for appropriate subsequent development” and is at the crux of an extremely important area of huge public significance, an area that I am passionate about contributing to in any way that I can.

Tackling the Tyranny of Distance – Dot Page, National President

The geography of New Zealand has never made it easy to move from one urban centre to another. Certainly our 19th century forbears found it a real trial. The long distance from North to South was only part of the problem. The rugged terrain made building roads and railways challenging and expensive - and of course there was always Cook Strait, implacable and stormy, dividing the country in half.

With the main trunk railway down the North Island more than a decade in the future, women coming long distances to attend our first major conferences, the annual meetings of the National Council of Women from 1896, usually travelled by the uncomfortable coastal steamers. The conferences usually lasted slightly more than a week, with one in Dunedin in 1900 stretching to ten days. By the time travel was added on, the more distant delegates could expect to be away from home for a fortnight. Moreover the expense of both travel and accommodation put attendance beyond the reach of all but the well to do, with supportive husbands and families. The difficulty of organising conferences in these circumstances was one of the reasons the Council faded into recess in 1905.

It was easier by the time the New Zealand Federation of University Women came into being in 1921, but travel was still slow and expensive in relation to women’s salaries. To get from Auckland to Dunedin, as Auckland delegates to the first conference did in 1923, meant enduring a fourteen hour train trip to Wellington, catching the overnight steamer to Lyttelton and spending much of the next day on another train. It made sense, therefore, to set up a ‘Dominion Executive’ that rotated round the branches in the four University centres every three years. We are told that it worked well from the start, with the original branches in turn enjoying the contact involved with IFUW and other Federations.

So here we are today. The basic scheme was maintained as branches proliferated well beyond university centres, to a maximum of seventeen in the early 1990s, although the original reasons for it had largely disappeared with a reliable postal service, easy telephone communication and the development of air travel. In recent years the country has been divided into three broad regions – Northern, Central, and Southern – within which branches are expected to collaborate in finding an Executive for the triennium.

That the scheme no longer works so smoothly is widely acknowledged within NZFGW. It is not easy to fill positions on National Executive; its demands, for women who are also employed in challenging occupations are considerable, especially if most of the Executive are new to the job and finding their way. The number of our branches is now down to eight, plus one associate branch. Within some of these, as delegates reported to our recent Mid Term Council, there are concerns that an aging membership is leaving only a small group of potential leaders, too few to staff a branch committee and also contribute to a regionally based national executive.

We must consider doing things differently. At Mid Term Council we initiated discussion about this, heard some helpful ideas and were given a mandate to consult with our membership and set in place by Conference next year an alternative style of Executive which is truly national rather than regional and which perhaps will not be replaced en bloc every three years. I trust that all the branches will take time to discuss and report to us their views on this important topic: we are sending out a brief questionnaire to focus the discussion, but would welcome your views also on relevant issues that fall outside the specific questions.

It is an exciting prospect, because although we are constrained by finance – setting up an office in Wellington as some NGOs have done is not an option at present – we are no longer at the mercy of New Zealand’s uncompromising geography. Instant communication need no longer be face to face and physical meetings can largely be replaced by the use of teleconferences, skype, email and the internet – and doubtless other forms of communication as yet undeveloped. Most importantly, it will enable us to draw our Executive from our whole membership, while fostering through branch activities and conferences the intellectual stimulus, companionship and collegiality that are at the heart of Graduate Women.