

UNAA Victoria Status of Women Committee

Annual Report 2016/2017

The program for the Status of Women Committee for 2016-7 had significant contributions from three interns: Tenille Gilbert (University of Melbourne) reported regularly to the committee on her project examining the debate round the Respect curriculum and the Safe Schools program. Ruchira Kakkad (Monash University) prepared a series of brief reports relating to her participation in the Harvard Model UN program in Kula Lumpur. Charlotte Ferguson, a graduate law student, joined the Committee as an intern in late April to work on a paper examining submissions to the Modern Slavery Act Inquiry for presentation at the 2017 UNAA Status of Women National Roundtable in Canberra.

The year's work began in [July 2016](#) with discussion of the part to be played by civil society in Australia's preparatory work for the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2017. The Committee discussed the planning for the UNAA National Forum on the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls (the theme for CSW 61) by Dr Wendy O'Brien, Convenor, UNAA Human Rights program.

In [August](#), we focused on the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy as consultations began across the state, led by then Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, the late Fiona Richardson MP. Members of the Committee took part in consultations with stakeholders from business, government, community and industry as well as additional events with particular communities and sectors. Committee members also attended the annual Castan Centre Human Rights Conference.

On 5 and 6 [September](#), we were involved with the UNAA National Forum on the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls held at the Novotel on Collins.

[October's](#) focus was on UN day of the Girl Child. Interns Ruchira Kakkad and Tenille Gilbert presented on their research to the monthly meeting of National Council of Women Victoria.

[November's](#) meeting included another briefing about the less well-known aspects of the UN's work. Nina Richwol presented a paper on the role of UN Information Centres. Later in the month, we were well represented at the Victorian Women's Trust Breakthrough Conference. Over two days, 100 speakers discussed the theme "Together, we'll celebrate diversity, build momentum and shape the future of equality in Australia".

For the [February 2017](#) meeting, the theme was the workings of the UN Rapporteur system in the light of the visit to Australia of UN Rapporteur Dubravka Šimonović. This topic recurred in [April](#) when we reviewed the statement by UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people Victoria Tauli-Corpuz. Members also attended the screening of *Hunting Ground* and the outcome of the Australian Human Rights Commission and Australian Universities research into campus violence.

In [March](#), the meeting included reports on International Women's Day activities, and outcomes from the UN Commission on Status of Women CSW 61, including the process by which the draft agreed conclusions document is created.

At the [April](#) meeting, we reviewed materials produced as part of the third stage of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children* (posters, pens, DAISY app, business cards). These were provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the National Sexual Assault Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service. It was noted that the first trial of the 1800 number failed to address the needs of women of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and we discussed if there is evaluation available about its current use.

In [May](#), in the lead up to the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) face to face in Melbourne in late May, we considered the call for input to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights review of Australia's progress under the *International Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights*, following Australia's report to the Committee in 2016. The NGO Shadow Report which will accompany Australia's progress report will address assessment of the measures taken to ensure a whole-of-Government approach to mainstreaming gender policy and of the remaining obstacles to achieving substantive equality between men and women. We also noted the continuing high numbers of children in out of home care. Co-chair Dr Jennifer Strauss and Convenor Sheila Byard travelled to the Country Women's Association of Victoria AGM at Shepparton.

In [June](#), the focus was on planning for the UNAA National Status of Women RoundTable and the Interim Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on modern slavery and global supply chains.

We acknowledge the team at the AMES Multicultural Hub for their assistance with our monthly meetings and thank UNAA Executive Officer Sophie Arnold and Dr Wendy O'Brien for their support and guidance and liaison between the Committee and the UNAA Victoria Board.

Shirley Reynolds and Dr Jennifer Strauss

UNAA Victoria Status of Women Committee Co-chairs