

National Council of Women of Victoria



“Caring Women Make a Difference”

Report by Jennie Russell, President of NCWV on The United Nations Conference on Status of Women CSW 57, “Violence Against Women and Children”

4th to 15th March 2013

The main thrust I got from this conference was *“to do everything in my power to do something to change behaviours and the make the world a better place for all.”*

This year's United Nations Conference on Status of Women 57 (UN CSW 57) topic has been on women's lips for many centuries, a very long time indeed yet all forms of “Violence against Women and Children” still exists, in fact if anything, it has accelerated globally due to the greed and selfishness of people such as traffickers.

Eight thousand people from Non Government Organisations (NGOs) all over the world were invited to New York under the UN banner. Some events were for UN CSW 57 delegates only while others were parallel events open to all. We listened to outstanding well qualified worldwide speakers and could be involved in up to 75 discussion groups per day (6 sessions) in the first week. There were fewer sessions in the second week.

I was thrilled to see the number of sessions run by Australian NGOs, some of whom are NCWV members. I was able to make contact and share our brochure details with several Victorian groups who were greatly impressed with our work. I will be in contact with the representative of the Victorian Indian Community within the next week or so.

It was also gratifying to know NGO's do not have to work in isolation; instead they can collaborate with many.

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Main subjects under discussion related to all forms of gender based violence (GBV) across the life span, human trafficking, creative and winning strategies, tools to use and education to stop GBV, developing justice in and out of the court systems, community mobilization to achieve a goal, empowerment and leadership, the media and sexualisation. In the second week far more men participated and took on a greater leadership role during discussions. I found this far more satisfying. Without the involvement of men such problems will never be solved.

The same theme was examined repeatedly throughout the two weeks in all sessions. No matter what aspect was undertaken the underlying problem, not always verbalised, was summed up as:

- accountability, respect and dignity or the lack of,
- taking ownership and responsibility for ones behaviour and privileges,
- education to know one rights and how to use them,
- ensure there is a law to protect.

Several sessions really stood out as exceptional. In one, an ex-prisoner told us to stop talking about issues and to start really listening to our children so trouble doesn't start. A role model footballer told us about the work achieved in NY by “Connect” and “Breakthrough”. In another run by “Lawyers without Borders” an interaction “What would you do if you were in my shoes?” proved to be most creative and innovative involving the entire audience from the start. It captured everyone's imagination and did away with the need for dozens of questions as you solved the issues as you went along.

On Friday March 8th the National Council of Women USA held an evening reception to celebrate both the International Council of Women - Conseil Internationale Des Femmes's (ICW-CIF) 125 years as well as its own 125 year existence. It was very exciting to realise ICW-CIF and its constituent council in the USA had survived so well.

Incidentally I am writing this report on 19th March 2013; on this date in 1902 Janet Lady Clarke held the inaugural meeting to establish National Council of Women of Victoria (NCWV).

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