

## Newsletter

March 2021

**Quote:** : “The new **Gender Equality Act, Victoria** is nation-leading legislation designed to give it a big push in public sector workplaces. It’s going to be like a giant social experiment to see what legislation like this will have throughout Australia particularly in Victoria.” Dr Niki Vincent, Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector.

**Celebrating International Women’s Day, our March meeting will focus on gender stereotypes in children’s literature and school books:**

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March, 5.15pm start** via ZOOM. We are delighted that Inbal Steinberg, IT specialist and education consultant, who has analysed school readers will speak on sexism in Children’s Literature.

**Please spread the word particularly amongst contacts involved in primary education and parents groups. All are welcome to join us.**

Members and others who wish to attend need to notify NCWV via the email: [info@ncwvic.org.au](mailto:info@ncwvic.org.au) .

**RSVP 5pm Tuesday 2 March.**

## February 2021 Council Meeting

**Guest Speaker: Dr Niki Vincent**, appointed Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector for Victoria in September 2020 spoke about her new role and passion for equal opportunities for all women in Australia and overseas. She shared a little of her own story, telling us that she left home at 15, was married at 18 and had four children by 28 , but had not let obstacles stand in her way, fighting for better conditions for women, especially those who are working and caring alone for their families, while men advance without the dual role of homemaker and primary carer. Some employers do not make allowances for women’s unique situation or for the constraints imposed more significantly on them by COVID-19 . There is also no measure of unpaid care.

The new [Victorian] **Gender Equality Act** that comes into law from 31 March 2021 excites Dr Vincent as it covers the work practices and gender equity realities of 300 Public Service entities with more than 50 employees imposing mandatory Gender Equality Action Plans with indicators including gender composition, recruitment and promotion policies and practices, leave, and gender pay equity. Dr Vincent told us that there is at least 10% less pay for women in similar jobs in the Public Service at present. The effectiveness of the implementation of each entity’s Gender Equality Action Plans will be audited by her Department

every four years and entities are required to self-report their progress every two years. Dr Vincent informed us that she and her team are working closely with unions and the Victorian Human Rights Commissioner. The introduction of the Act will be accompanied by a travelling “roadshow” led by her, including training for leaders who will train others. She is optimistic that awareness of inequality for women in Victoria will increase and be addressed, but has grave concerns for women in third-world countries.

Link to the Gender Equality Commission in Victoria:

[Gender impact assessments | Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector](#)

Gender impact assessments from 31 March 2021. <https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-impact-assessments>

[Guidance for defined entities](#) to comply with the Act 2020. <https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/guidance>

Tools and resources are located at [Gender Equity Victoria Advocacy Toolkit - Gen Vic](#); [www.genvic.org.au](http://www.genvic.org.au) for guidelines on gender advocacy in the community. Advocacy is part of a broader movement to: • advance gender equity within Victoria; • promote better health outcomes for women and girls in our ; • prevent violence against women and girls before it happens.

<https://www.genvic.org.au/pdf/GENVIC%20Advocacy%20Toolkit.pdf>

Dr Niki Vincent (below)



**From President, Ronni Milliken (above right)**

**Gender Equality NOT ‘covid normal’** Will gender equity be achieved by 2050? The media take on community sentiment is that we are hankering for ‘covid normal’. At NCWV we look to our Purpose and continue to aspire for and advocate for gender equality – to be achieved in the short term. In 2021 we will consider known/likely topics requiring action during this year and beyond, building on past efforts, considering our resources, becoming more informed, advocating action where appropriate; and holding our leaders to account.

### **Period Poverty—call for donations—in March at Woolworths**

The 2021 SA Young Australian of the Year Isobel Marshall has raised the profile of period poverty for girls in education and homeless girls and women. While the Victorian and South Australian governments have school programs to provide feminine hygiene products – the expense is still an issue for employed or homeless women and girls. We are sharing information about the annual drive for donations - [Share the Dignity: Dignity Drive 2021](#).

[Share the Dignity: Dignity Drive 2021](#) : Twice a year, in March and August, the public are asked to donate pads, tampons, period underwear, incontinence pads, menstrual cups etc. to 'Dignity Drives' across the country. Throughout March, collection points will be at all Woolworths stores across the country and a number of nominated businesses.

Since Share the Dignity was founded, 2.8 million period products have been donated to those in need changing the lives of so many across Australia. Thousands of packets of unopened period products are donated to partner charities to help those doing it tough. From people experiencing homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, and those living in crisis. All donations must be brand new, sealed, in the original packaging, and must comply with Australian quality standards. Share the Dignity believe everyone experiencing period poverty deserves the right to their dignity.

### **Free sanitary pads and tampons in all government schools - helping schools promote positive menstrual health**

Free pads and tampons are now available in every government school in Victoria –because being able to access sanitary products shouldn't be a barrier to students getting the most out of their education. In Victoria periods are no longer a taboo. Victoria is the first state or territory in Australia to ensure every government school student has universal access to free sanitary products.

The \$20.7 million initiative commenced in Term 3, 2019 and installed dispensing machines in every school by the end of Term 2, 2020. This initiative will continue to provide pads and tampons to students until June 2023.

The Government's commitment to provide free pads and tampons in government primary, secondary and specialist schools will:

- provide students with the confidence that there will always be sanitary items available at school;
- relieve female students of the stigma, anxiety and discomfort associated with menstrual hygiene management so they can focus on their studies;
- ease the cost of living for families.

Sanitary items are a necessity, not a luxury, and the free sanitary pads and tampons in public schools initiative will support tens of thousands of students across the state.

Lack of easy access to pads and tampons can negatively impact on students' participation in sport and everyday school activities.

Students may not be able to concentrate in class, feel comfortable or feel confident doing physical activity, or they may miss school altogether. By making sanitary pads and tampons freely available at school, we are one step closer to educational equality.

The use of sanitary items provided at school is entirely voluntary. Providing both sanitary pads and tampons allows students to make a choice based on their own needs, cultural beliefs, maturity and preferences. Schools play an important role in promoting a positive culture around menstrual health and building a supportive environment among the school community. The initiative aims to reduce the stigma of periods, making school a more inclusive place which will help students focus on their studies.

The Department is providing schools with communication materials to increase parental and community understanding of this initiative.

### **Celebrating women in medical research**

The **60<sup>th</sup> Annual Australia Day Pioneer Women's Ceremony**, was held on Monday January 18<sup>th</sup> 2021 at the Women's Peace Garden, Kensington, a beautiful garden created by women in the International Year of Peace in 1986. This annual event celebrates Victorian Pioneer Women, conducted by the National Council of Women of Victoria, to acknowledge past and present women pioneers and includes a colour party and flag raising by Girl Guides Victoria and the singing of the National Anthem.



This year, the focus was on **Victorian Pioneer Women in Medical Research**. Many women have been working in medical research over the past 100+ years including: **Fannie Eleanor Williams**, the first female medical research scientist at the Walter and Eliza Institute, the first bacteriologist and serologist. She was an expert in dysentery, was awarded the Associate Royal Red Cross for her work, and co-founded the Red Cross Blood Bank. **Dora Lush**, an accomplished bacteriologist, was a close collaborator with Sir Macfarlane Burnet 1934-39 researching diseases including influenza, herpes infections and myxomatosis.



**The Guest Speaker, Professor Susan Sawyer, Chair of Adolescent Health, Department of Paediatrics at the University of Melbourne, research fellow at the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, Director of the Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children’s Hospital, spoke on three themes:**

**Firstly**, the importance of investing in medical research, and the value of evidence informed public health policies exemplified by reminding us of some of the highlights of our 2020 pandemic year.

**Second** theme was the strong record of Victorian women in medical research, sharing achievements of two remarkable Victorian women pioneers of medical research, one, Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown, in research and public policy from 100 years ago. Vera began to systematize Victoria’s approach to infant welfare services, antenatal care and pre-school programs through her pioneering role as first director of infant welfare in Victoria, the first woman appointed to head a government department in the state. From 1926 until her death in 1946, she put into place the universal structure of maternal and child health services and pre-schools we have in Victoria today. In 1919, the next 6 years saw her with a series of appointments at the Queen Victoria Hospital for Women and Children, the Women’s and Children’s Hospitals, the Victorian Baby Health Centres Association and the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria. In 1926, she was appointed as the director to the newly established section of infant welfare in the Health Department. She introduced compulsory training for nursing sisters at infant welfare centre to then disseminate that knowledge to expectant mothers, central to lowering infant mortality. In 1994, her pioneering efforts to broaden infant welfare to pre-schoolers, resulted in the establishment of government child care centres and pre-schools being added to the Health Department.

The other was in virology. Nearly 50 years ago Dr Ruth Bishop, a microbiologist, led a research team that discovered Rotavirus, the most common cause of severe diarrhoea among infants and young children a deadly disease, claiming the lives of half a million children around the world each year and responsible for about 10,000 children being admitted to Australian hospitals annually. Given the prevalence of gastroenteritis in babies and young children, she began searching for a cause. She worked with Ian Holmes at the University of Melbourne who used a new electron-microscopy identifying a wheel-like virus ‘rotavirus’.

Ruth confirmed rotavirus to be the cause of the severe diarrhoea which began a revolution in public health. As a result she led the development of a vaccine against ‘gastro’, part of Australia’s National Immunisation Program for all infants since July 2007. Ruth was awarded the CSL Florey Medal for her achievements in biomedical science – the first woman to receive the honour.

**Thirdly**, Susan shared her background in groundbreaking adolescent health and medicine which she began after a group of teenage girls with Cystic Fibrosis approached her about their fertility status. After further training she worked to develop adolescent medicine services at the RCH with George Patton, becoming director of the Centre for the past 15 years, helping change global thinking about adolescence from being a brief period of risk, to new understandings of adolescence as a critical period in which the assets and capabilities of future health, employment, relationships and parenting are established and expand the age of definition from 10-19 years up to 24 years of age. Adolescent health is now part of the global policy which drives global maternal and child health efforts renamed as the Global Policy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health. This is now considered a field of research and clinical practice.



## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2021 Event

**WHEN:** Any time from 9th to 12th MARCH 2021

**WHERE:** ONLINE EVENT

**HOW:** At a time and place to suit, with colleagues.

**\$20 PER PERSON/\$100 GROUP OF 10 or MORE:**

Each person will receive a unique link to view the video presentation online. A video file will also be made available to download by Friday March 5<sup>th</sup>

The event brings together leaders in their field; experienced and informed in the current issues of leadership and gender, who are able to offer their insight into a "Bold New World" - a world post 2020. It is designed for clubs/groups holding a function to view the presentation as part of their event.

**REGISTER NOW** Website: <https://www.iwd.org.au/>

**Charities Supported: Give Every Child A Future;**

**Mcauley House; Justice Connect.** [More Information](#)

## SPEAKERS



Jacinda Ardern

Prime Minister, New Zealand



Sally Capp

Lord Mayor, City of Melbourne



Jennifer Jones

Rotary International President  
2022-23



Colin Carter AM

Business Leader



Dr Megan Clark AC

Chair, Australian Space Agency



Ian Hamm - Moderator

Community Broadcasting  
Foundation

The campaign theme for International Women's Day 2021 is 'Choose To Challenge'. A challenged world is an alert world. And from challenge comes change. So let's all #ChooseToChallenge.

Find out more information by [clicking here](#).

**Friday March 5, is World Day of Prayer:** [www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/](http://www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/) The theme for the World Day of Prayer 2021 is "Build on a Strong Foundation", host country is Vanuatu. Every year, there is worship service prepared that focuses on a different country and a specific theme. World Day of Prayer National/Regional Committees prepare the order of worship on the theme to be used on the next World Day of Prayer. Then on the first Friday of March, in services all over the world that country becomes the focus. Through the worship service, women worldwide learn of the concerns and needs of those women and to empathize and feel solidarity. To find a service to attend near you go to website [www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/locate-a-service](http://www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/locate-a-service)

## Royal Historical Society Victoria

### [March is Women's History Month!](#)

The concept of Women's History Month was revived by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria during 2019 with support from several interested organisations. Some of the activities are:

Friday, March 05, 2021 at 02:00 PM, [Online](#) in Melbourne, Australia, [Women's history beyond stereotypes](#)

Public Record Office Victoria and Her Place Women's Museum Australia present the online panel talk "Women's history beyond stereotypes" as part of International Women's Day 2021. #Chooseto ([show all](#))

Friday, March 12, 2021 at 05:00 PM, [Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Gallery Downstairs](#) in Melbourne.

[Launch of the RHSV Women's Biographical Dictionary](#)

There is a perception that from its beginnings in 1909, the Royal Historical Society has been the domain of men. Yet from the outset women have played an active role in the Society in many ([show all](#)).

Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 05:30 PM · \$10.00 AUD

[Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Gallery Downstairs](#) in Melbourne, [Vera Deakin in War and Peace](#)

The RHSV's major lecture during Women's History Month (March) will start at 6pm and we will be serving drinks prior to that from 5:30pm. The daughter of Prime Minister Alfred Deakin ([show all](#)).

For a list of activities go to: [https://www.historycouncilvic.org.au/womens\\_history\\_month](https://www.historycouncilvic.org.au/womens_history_month)



## Women's Information community: The campaign to save safe lending

WIRE is continuing to advocate against the federal government's plan to roll back responsible lending laws, which protect people from exploitative lending by banks and other lenders. These laws are now before parliament. Responsible lending laws mean lenders must make sure a loan is suitable and able to be paid back, and they must stay vigilant for signs of financial abuse. These laws protect victim-survivors. We've written to the crossbench senators urging them to oppose the changes. With enough pressure, we can save these laws.

You can [read our letter here](#)

**Our Purposes:** *to provide a non-party political, non-sectarian, not-for-profit, umbrella organisation with broadly humanitarian and educational objectives, empowering women and girls and raising awareness of gender equality; act as a voice on issues and concerns of women and girls at a State level; develop policies and responses on behalf of women and girls on a State-wide basis; maintain and strengthen the Association's relationship with all members; link with women in Australia and the International Council of Women through the National Council of Women of Australia and contribute to the implementation of their plans of action and policies.*

**Our motto:** *The Preamble to the original ICW Constitution said "We, women of all Nations, in the conviction that the good of humanity will be best advanced by greater unity of thought, sympathy and purpose, and that an organised movement will serve to promote the highest good of the family and of the Nation, do hereby band ourselves together in a federation of women of all races, nations and creeds, to further the application of the Golden Rule to society, custom and law: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."*

### **NCWV Dates for 2021 – venue or online to be confirmed**

- March:** **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>:** Council Meeting, **5:15-7:15pm. NOTE late time**  
**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>:** Committee Meeting, RHSV, A'Beckett St
- April:** **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup>:** Individual Members meeting;  
Council Meeting 12:15pm  
**Monday 12<sup>th</sup>:** Standing Committee Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm  
**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup>:** Committee Meeting, RHSV, A'Beckett St
- May** **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May Forum:** 10:00am, Room 4.1 Ross House;  
**Council Meeting,** 12:15pm  
**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>** Committee Meeting, RHSV, A'Beckett St
- June:** **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>:** Individual Members meeting;  
Council Meeting 12:15pm  
**Monday 14<sup>th</sup>:** Standing Committee Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm  
**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>:** Committee Meeting, RHSV, A'Beckett St
- July:** **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup>:** Council Meeting, **5:15-7:15pm. NOTE late time**  
**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>:** Committee Meeting, RHSV, A'Beckett St
- August:** **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup>:** Individual Members Annual meeting;  
Council Meeting 12:15pm  
**Monday 9<sup>th</sup>:** Standing Committee Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm  
**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>:** Committee Meeting, RHSV, A'Beckett St
- September** **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup>:** **Council Annual General Meeting,** 12:15am, Room 4.1 Ross House  
**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup>** Committee Meeting, RHSV, A'Beckett St
- October:** **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup>:** Individual Members meeting;  
Council Meeting 12:15pm  
**Monday 11<sup>th</sup>:** Standing Committee Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm  
**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup>:** Committee Meeting, RHSV, A'Beckett St
- November:** **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>:** Council Meeting, **5:15-7:15pm. NOTE late time**  
**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>:** Committee Meeting, RHSV, A'Beckett St  
**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>: Annual Festive Luncheon, William Angliss Restaurant.**  
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