

## International Women's Day 2010

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In recognition of this significant yearly event it is interesting to acknowledge some interesting facts about women in Western Australia:

- ◆ In 2001, there were 728,091 women aged 15 years and over in WA.
- ◆ 28% of women aged 15 to 69 years have no superannuation
- ◆ 59% of women had an income of less than \$400 a week, compared to 38% of men.
- ◆ In 2003, 73.2% of primary care was performed by women and 13.7% of all women in WA were carers.
- ◆ 85% of sole parent families have a female as the sole parent.
- ◆ Women earn 76% of men's average weekly earnings
- ◆ A higher proportion of women than men are engaged in some form of higher education in WA however, only 20% of women are represented in senior management roles in the local government workforce, and only 5% of chief executives or general managers are women.

(Statistics from Department for Communities; WA Profile of Women 2005 & Local Government Managers Australia [www.lgma.org.au/default/2010\\_year\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_local\\_government](http://www.lgma.org.au/default/2010_year_of_women_in_local_government))

Western Australia can lay claim to being a prosperous society however, women do not equally share in the abundance or opportunities which exist. For women to achieve their full potential there are significant barriers and obstacles which continue to make these aspirations difficult. For 2010, the theme for IWD is 'Empowering Women to End Poverty by 2015'. WHW is supportive of encouraging all women to reach their potential and to overcome the challenges that can often be so overwhelming.

It is heartening to note that the international tax and accounting company Ernst and Young has recently acknowledged the importance and untapped capacity of women in being

able to assist in overcoming the current global financial crisis: *The undeniable body of evidence in favour of women's empowerment presents a powerful case for building more inclusive societies and more diverse leadership. At a time when our global economy is facing the greatest challenge in decades, corporations and governments must capitalize on the contributions women can make.*

(Ernst and Young, 'Using the Strength of women to rebuild the world economy' <http://www.ey.com/GL/en/Issues/Driving-growth/Groundbreakers---Executive-Summary>)

Despite such glowing acknowledgements regarding the unharnessed potential that more women in leadership can bring, the Australian Government's findings on the state of women's health reports that although Australian women are living longer than ever before, the burden of disease which accompanies growing older is significant. Women disproportionately suffer the burden of poverty and throughout the world there is solid evidence of gender inequity.

### Empowering women to end poverty by 2015

On a more positive note, one thing is certain - women never give up! Both individually and collectively, women are a force to be reckoned with. We will continue to strive towards equity and will continue to overcome the challenges and barriers which threaten our own, our families and our sisters' economic, social, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

This year, WHW is going to celebrate IWD with music and song. In recognition of the strengths, stories and histories of women, the obstacles faced and the achievements made thus far, an event will be held which will bring together women across the northern suburbs - to unite together, empower each other and sing songs which will recognise and celebrate the achievements of women - in a women's choir! Please refer to the calendar of events (inside!) for further details, and we look forward to seeing you on Monday 8 March to share in the celebrations!



## From the Executive Director's Desk

### Change is Inevitable

Welcome to WOMEN'S Healthworks first edition of Women's Health News for 2010.

I hope you have enjoyed the Christmas period and that your New Year's resolution ... whatever that may be ... **(hopefully something that makes you happy and healthy)** has started on a positive note ...

With a new year it is always good to reflect and consider what changes we would like to make in both our private lives and at work.

I must say I feel incredibly privileged working for WHW. It is such a wonderful organisation, with fabulous Board, staff, volunteers and supporters. I firmly believe in the unique services our staff offer, and the underlying philosophy and approach to service delivery. I have heard wonderful testimonials of women accessing our services and the incredible changes some women have made in their lives. This has been through counseling, self help groups, women joining our walking groups and through our education, health promotion and social services.

I know there will be challenges ahead this year with funding and keeping women's health on the agenda! There have been a number of consultations and reports at a National and State level making recommendations for reform in the health and non government sector.

We look forward to the release of the New National Women's Health Policy and hope that this policy enables women's health centres to further deliver services that respond to the needs of women in our local communities. We will endeavour to keep our readers informed.

Change is inevitable in life and how we manage it depends on a number of factors. Of course it really depends on what we are hoping to change work practices, communication within relationships, lifestyle - eating habits, exercise regimes, time out to do things you really enjoy, experiencing new things ...

Have you ever thought that you would love to try singing in a community choir? I personally love to sing and very much enjoy a range of music. I have also enjoyed watching both the Choir of Hard Knocks and the recent Jailbirds choir on ABC TV. The power of singing can be incredibly therapeutic!

For International Women's Day this year, we will be giving you the opportunity to join us singing. There are some great songs we are considering ... remember "I Am Woman" by Helen Reddy. We hope to choose some empowering songs that have lyrics that make us feel proud to be a woman! No experience is necessary and it is FREE thanks to a small grant from the City of Joondalup.

Please see inside for further details.....

We look forward to hearing you!!

Mandy Stringer

## It's a Girl! Congratulations



Jo (Stepping It Out Program Co-ordinator) and partner Derek are the proud parents of a beautiful girl - Lainie Violet (pictured right).

Lainie didn't want to wait any longer and was born several weeks premature on 22 October, weighing just 1.375kg.

After a few weeks in intensive care, brave little Lainie was able to go home for Christmas.

We wish Jo lots of love in her new role of being a mum and the new challenges and adventures it will bring.

## Pregnancy and Depression

A nationwide survey conducted by *beyond blue: the national depression initiative* has revealed high levels of confusion about the link between depression and motherhood.

One in seven new mothers develops post natal depression (PND) after birth and one in 10 pregnant women experiences antenatal depression. (*Antenatal and postnatal depression* are known collectively as *perinatal depression*). Despite this, many Australians still consider depression to be a normal part of pregnancy and motherhood.

*Beyondblue* Deputy CEO and psychologist, Dr Nicole Highet, said it is concerning to learn many people think depression is a typical part of having children.

"If people think that depression is a normal consequences of pregnancy, they're less likely to seek help to seek help. This has important implications for the detection and treatment of depression, given that one in 10 women will experience this illness while pregnant. This is particularly worrying, because our aim is to help women who are depressed to get treatment before the baby is born.

There is a lot of work to be done to raise awareness and increase understanding about this illness so that women get the help they need. Based on this survey and input from women who have experienced peri-natal depression, *beyondblue* is developing a national campaign to target women and their families, as well as health professionals.

Despite the assumption that PND is typical, most people also recognise the serious nature of postnatal depression and the importance of seeking professional help, with 90 per cent agreeing that PND is a serious condition and 96 per cent agreeing that women with PND need special treatment.

For further information go to [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au).

The information in the article has been source from a *beyondblue* media release 13.11.09



## Open Cancer Support Group

Thursdays from 10.00am to 12noon  
at The Homestead  
48 Peregrine Drive, Kingsley

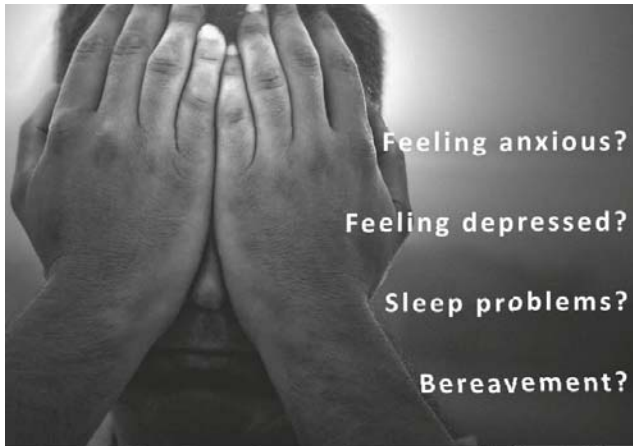
This is an open support group for anyone affected by cancer in their lives, including partners and family members.

Connect with others who understand: to share or just to listen, in a safe and confidential place.

All are welcome, come along any week, no need to book

*Facilitated by Gill Falconer*  
(M.Soc.Sci (Counselling), BA Hons, Dip.C.G MPACAWA)

Ring Gill on 9447 1071  
if you would like more information.



**Can't afford to see a private psychologist?**

**Help is available for low income earners.**

Speak to your GP about whether you are eligible for low cost (maximum \$20 per session) counselling services with the **Access to Allied Psychological Services Program**.

Further information is available from your GP or contact the Osborne GP Network on

9201 0044.



## Sugar and Spice Patisserie Sponsorship

WOMEN'S Healthworks is delighted that Sugar and Spice Patisserie in Lakeside Drive, Joondalup (where everything is made fresh on a daily basis) has offered sponsorship towards our quarterly newsletter 'Women's Health News' for 2010.



## A New Decade: Will it Mean More of the Same



With the closing of the first decade of the 21st century, I am amazed by how quickly time has flown. It seems like only yesterday that we were toasting the year 2000! How will we meet all the demands of the next decade?

Certainly meeting both many of the old and new challenges of women's health and well-being will be high on WHW agenda. We are keen to see what the 'New National Women's Health Policy' looks like and if it contains any of the worthwhile ideas put forward by women in WA. There will be a Federal election sometime this year so again we will be lobbying our Federal politicians to make sure that the matter of women's health is not forgotten by them.

Sadly, the past two decades have not seen much change in the issues concerning women's health and well-being so we are putting great store in the 'New Women's Health Policy' in the hope that it will deliver real outcomes for women.

As we have said so often before, there are no new services being funded for women's community health services and this means that families will hit crisis before they are able to get help - and that will put pressure on the existing services.

**WHW lobby politicians on women's health matters**

One of the programs WHW has run very successfully over the past eighteen months, helps women with children who are experiencing drug and alcohol problems. Ongoing funding for this program has not been secured, and there is no alternative program being offered to women in the northern corridor. It is so short-sighted of our politicians not to recognise the need to continue funding successful programs in areas of high need, both in terms of service delivery and geographic location.

Recent reports indicate that homelessness has increased considerable over the past two years. This is directly related to the high cost of housing rent and affordability. There is a real need for an increase in social housing. Just recently we met with women Councillors from the Cities of Wanneroo and Joondalup, and made the point that social housing is one area that Local, State and Federal Governments can work together to address.

Additionally, with the alarming growth of sexually transmitted infections among teens it is imperative that WHW be able to provide a safe non-threatening and non-identifiable service to young people; although WHW is a women's service we are able to provide services to men in the evenings. WHW has had discussions with the relevant bodies about providing such services from our centre. It would appear that the process is being hampered by lack of funding and 'red tape'. WHW is hoping to advance this in 2010.

Despite the challenges that lie ahead, I look forward to working with the Board, Executive Director, Mandy Stringer and all the dedicated staff at WHW to improve women's health in the northern corridor in 2010. I have not doubt that together we can continue to make a difference.

*Robin Terry*  
Chairperson

## When sex is a huge pain - literally

A surprisingly large number of women experience pain during sex. Apart from the physical impact on their bodies, this also can affect their mental and emotional health, and their relationships.

Dyspareunia (pain during sexual intercourse) is a condition that affects over 14 per cent of premenopausal women, with significant variations across the lifespan.

The highest rate is found in women aged 16-39 with one in six women in this age group reporting experiencing pelvic pain during, or in the 24 hours after intercourse.

<sup>1</sup> Postmenopausal women may also experience painful sex due to changes to their vaginal walls and increased vaginal dryness.

There are three main types of dyspareunia

**Superficial Dyspareunia:** pain on attempted penetration and may be associated with anatomic conditions or vaginismus (involuntary tightness of vaginal muscles).

**Vaginal Dyspareunia:** pain related to friction (due to lubrication problems), including arousal disorders.

**Deep Dyspareunia:** pain related to thrusting, often associated with pelvic disease.

Diagnosing the cause of the dyspareunia will dictate the forms of treatment necessary.

There is a range of treatment options available but almost all will include some form of individual or couples counselling.

A medical examination by a GP or gynaecologist is important to correctly identify any medical causes of dyspareunia. Some women may benefit from physical therapy, which includes musculoskeletal, vulvar and pelvic floor assessments via physical examinations and subsequent hands-on techniques such as trigger point massage in the pelvic area and transvaginally.

If you are in a relationship, encourage your partner to be involved in your treatment, particularly the counselling sessions. Both women and their partners often experience feelings of rejection, confusion, helplessness and frustration. For single women, dyspareunia can prevent them from approaching partners or entering new relationships because they feel ashamed, embarrassed or scared.

The important thing to remember is that dyspareunia can be treated, but it will require commitment from women (and their partners if they have one), as well as the support of qualified health professionals.

*Published with the permission of The Jean Hailes Foundation for Women's Health. For women seeking further health information visit [www.jeanhailes.org.au](http://www.jeanhailes.org.au) and tollfree number 1800 151 441 for women seeking further health information.*

<sup>1</sup> Prevalence and correlates of three types of pelvic pain in a nationally representative study of Australian women. Pitts MK, Ferris JA, Smith AM, Shelley JM, Richters J. Med J Aust. 2008 Aug 4;189(3):138-43.

### Website

Remember to check our website for more information on our services, up to the minute details on what's new and happening NOW.

[www.womenshealthworks.org.au](http://www.womenshealthworks.org.au)

### Dates to Remember

February	Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
14 Feb	National Condom Day
8 March	International Women's Day
21 March	Harmony Day
2-5 April	Easter



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### Yes, I want to help women in my community!



Please accept my donation of:

\$25  \$10  \$50  \$100  My choice \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheque/money order payable to **WOMEN'S Healthworks**

or debit my  Visa  Mastercard

Card Number

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Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your support is appreciated - THANK YOU!**

Donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible

I would like to receive my newsletter via email