

Is it 'just' the Baby Blues?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	
Village Program	2
From the Executive Officer's Desk	2/3
Body Esteem Program	3
Chairperson's Editorial	3
A Matter of Time	4
In Memory of Laurel	4
AGM Reminder	4
Dates to Remember	4
Donations to WHW	4

Support and information for mums who are finding pregnancy and/or motherhood not quite what they expected.

A little while ago, we advised that WOMEN'S Healthworks were pursuing funding to offer services to women who were experiencing difficulties adjusting to pregnancy and parenthood. We are delighted to announce that thanks to the WA Perinatal Mental Health Unit (Department of Health) we will be able to offer some exciting services for mothers over the coming months.

We will be offering two x 10 week support/information groups based on the 'Mother Nurture' Program. This program was developed by Community Midwifery - Western Australia Inc, and aims to support women by reducing isolation and providing practical strategies for

mums, partners and families so that the navigation of the turbulent and unpredictable journey of early parenthood can be eased.

Additionally, we will be establishing a facilitated fortnightly coffee morning for women who are in the perinatal period (which means from pre-conception, through pregnancy and up to 36 months post partum). The coffee mornings will be commencing in August.

*Exciting services
for new mums
coming soon*

If you are planning a pregnancy, are pregnant or have given birth recently (or know someone who has) then these programs could be very helpful.

More details about dates, times etc will be included in the next newsletter, however if you have any queries prior to this, please contact Tracey at WOMEN'S Healthworks on 9300 1566.

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WOMEN'S Healthworks Celebrating 21 Years



WOMEN'S Healthworks will be commemorating our 21st birthday on Friday 17 September 2010 and you're invited to the celebrations. We hope you can join us.

WOMEN'S Healthworks will hold an 'open day' with tours of the centre and showcasing of our services with a variety of activities from 9.00am to 12.00pm and formal presentations from 10.00am.

Proceedings will commence with a walk led by Hazel (volunteer walk leader), followed by singing from our new WOMEN'S Healthworks choir led by Margaret. The formal presentations will be followed by the 'cutting of the cake', kindly made and donated by Sugar and Spice Patisserie which will be included as part of morning tea. A Tai Chi demonstration will follow next, with the events concluding at 12.00pm.

For further information please contact WOMEN'S Healthworks on 9300 1566.

The Village Program

Supporting women with drug and alcohol issues who have children under 18 years.



The Village Program has been working with young women for just over two years now. These are women who have fallen victim to the seductive and exploitive nature of mind altering substances. They have children and desperately seek to offer their children a different life style to that which they became involved in.

As their motivation and courage strengthens, the women will often say how they want to give back. It's a 'giving back' that now makes them fully available to meet the variety of needs of their children. For some women there are opportunities to 'give back' to their wider community.

The Village Program counsellor recently had the opportunity to speak with a group of 15 year old girls who were not fitting into the 'normal' school system and who were in the early stages of experimentation with drugs and/or alcohol. A number of the Village Program clients were approached to accompany the counsellor and speak with the teenagers about the negative impact that drug and/or alcohol use can have.

The end result was amazing. The two women who spoke, talked with honesty and from the heart. The girls took note as they related to the 'how and why' of substance use.

Did these women make a difference to the lives of a group of 15 year olds? Very definitely YES. Their feedback is testimony to that.

Comments such as:

- *'Confident that I can be successful in life after hearing what others have overcome'.*
- *'Inspired'.*
- *'Put me off about taking drugs'.*

These comments have not only inspired the staff at WOMEN'S Healthworks but have provided the clients themselves with further evidence that their life journey can have a positive impact on the lives of others.

Congratulations to the two women of the Village Program for what they contributed to the lives of a group of 15 year old girls. And congratulations to all of the women who were also willing to offer their life journeys so that others may benefit. Circumstances meant not everyone who was approached could directly contribute to the talks but the openness and willingness to share experiences with others is something that WHW is keen to harness and explore further in the future.

A sincere and heartfelt thank you is extended to all who were involved.

From the Executive Director's Desk



Australian Women's Health Network Conference

As a State representative for the Australian Women's Health Network (AWHN) I was extremely proud to be part of a group (consisting of volunteers) that coordinated and brought together nearly 600 delegates to attend the 6th Australian Women's Health Conference - The New National Agenda 18-21 May 2010 in Hobart, Tasmania.

It was wonderful that a strong delegation from Western Australia attended and presented. This conference only occurs every five years and is an opportunity for individuals, organisations and services involved and concerned with women's health to share ideas, knowledge and practice.

The work of AWHN like women's health centres is underpinned by social determinants of health. This recognises that all

Socio-economic disadvantage is strongly associated with poor health outcomes

aspects of a woman's life, including age, cultural background, sexuality, disability and factors such as income, social status, education, working conditions, access to appropriate health services and the physical environment impact upon a woman's wellbeing.

As research on the social determinants of health shows, socio-economic disadvantage is strongly associated with poor health outcomes, it is not surprising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are considered the most socially and economically disadvantaged and have the poorest health status.

AWHN were very pleased to launch the **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Health Strategy** at the Conference. This was written after extensive consultation with Aboriginal women from every state and territory and can be accessed via <http://www.awhn.org.au/> We ask that you please work with us to distribute the strategy to your networks and take every opportunity to advocate for the implementation of the recommendations within it.

It is always interesting to see and discuss what is happening in other states. WOMEN'S Healthworks showcased the Body Esteem Program, and other WA delegates included service providers, researchers, and women's health centre staff also presented.

One of the sessions I chaired was on "media and violence". Three insightful presentations covered 'How the Media Represents Domestic Violence (DV) Deaths', 'The Impact of Sexualised Media Images on the Mental Health of Ageing Women, and 'Being Savvy in Cyber-space'. All of these presentations were based on current research and like domestic violence in any form presents an alarming picture.

"How the news media represents domestic violence related deaths shapes our view and understandings of gender relations".

The paper presented by South Australia highlighted the negative ways that the media both informs and reflects commonly held beliefs, values and attitudes about victims and perpetrators. This media analysis is part of a larger study of DV related deaths in SA, providing evidence that will inform the establishment of a Death Review process in this state.

I suspect we are all aware that research indicates that cyber-bullying is an emerging issue coinciding with the increasing level of access to the internet. Mobile phones were also highlighted as a medium for bullying amongst teenagers.

There has not been much research done on the impact of sexualised images on the mental health of older women. Although this research was not extensive, findings indicated that sexualised images in the media do have an impact on older women's self image and mental health.

Research which demonstrates that, the viewing of sexualised images has a powerful detrimental impact on the social and emotional developments of adolescents who consume such content and can contribute to the development of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, eating disorders and sexual dysfunction.

There were many other fantastic presentations and the AWHN website as mentioned above can be accessed for presentations should you wish to read more.

The conference confirmed the fundamental importance to women's health of the social model of health and re-affirmed its appropriateness for achieving the best health outcomes for women in their diversity, from all population groups.

Mandy Stringer

Body Esteem Program (BEP)

The **Body Esteem Self-Help Programs** for Binge/Overeating and Anorexia/Bulimia are mid-way through their 20-week programs. The groups are well attended and the women are gaining a lot of positive peer facilitated led support for their eating disorders recovery.

The **Step-Down Program** is continuing its success and the group meets every month. The ongoing support for the group is of great value for the women who had previously attended the 20-week support groups.

There were three sessions for the **Parent Education Groups (PESG)** run during June/July. These support and education programs are for parents and siblings whose loved one is experiencing an eating disorder.

Eating disorders present a huge problem for women across Australia, and it's an issue that is often kept a closely-guarded secret by sufferers. **National Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week** 30 August to 4 September 2010 aims to raise awareness of the health-threatening conditions with various events taking place throughout the metro area.

For further details contact Cath Ashton, BEP Coordinator on 9300 1566 or cath@womenshealthworks.org.au.



Abortion: The Politician's Incessant Issue



From time-to-time politicians have tried to intimidate women with regards to their decisions to have an abortion. The issue of whether a woman has an abortion if she feels she needs one is a matter only she can make the decision about.

It is so important that women know the beliefs and values of politicians before they vote for them ie: wanting to legislate a woman to have a 3D ultrasound before they have an abortion was recently suggested by state Parliament. Once a person is voted into Parliament they have unfettered opportunity to put any legislation before Parliament, either as part of the political party they represent or as a private members Bill.

During the debate about the abortion drug RU 486, Tony Abbott wanted to restrict women's access to it. Now he aspires to be our next Prime Minister. John Howard, when in Government, introduced restrictions to overseas development aid when countries did not support his Government's view on abortion. With the Federal election looming it is imperative that all women make sure that the politician they vote for, will respect their right to make decisions about their own health and well-being free from any value judgement they may have.

Women should have the right to make their own decisions!

I think it is important to put a number of facts before the community so that they are informed about abortion and its implications.

- There is no evidence to support that abortion results in depression. *Reference: La Trobe University study.*
- There is no conclusive evidence that abortion increases risk of breast cancer. *Reference: Cancer Council*
- The vast majority of studies have found no link between abortion and infertility. *Reference Department of Health*
- A woman can only undergo an abortion once she has given her informed consent. *Reference: current abortion legislation.*

However, if abortion were illegal, or if inappropriate restrictions were put upon women in obtaining an abortion:

- Many women would die as the result of unsafe abortions. History has proven this to be the case.
- Women would feel isolated and unsupported before, during and after having an abortion. Is this what we want for women during this difficult time?
- As the result of not having access to supportive legislation during the difficult period of having to have an abortion, more women would be in need of psychological support after an abortion. Putting yet another demand on our already over extended mental health services.

So, politicians of all persuasions, leave the issue of how a woman can make the decision to have an abortion up to her, and her alone.

WOMEN'S Healthworks supports women in all aspects of their lives and does so without any value judgement about the decisions they make about their lives.

Robin Terry
Chairperson

A Matter of Time

How to Make the Most of Your Doctor's Visit at WOMEN'S Healthworks.

Making the most of your visit to the doctor requires preparation, patience and participation.

Here's how you can approach your medical appointment - whether it's a regular two yearly check up, referral to a specialist, diagnostic examination or a call for help with a second opinion.

- Make a list of what you want to ask the doctor
- Be specific when you make your appointment
- WOMEN'S Healthworks offers extended time, so ask for extra time if you need when scheduling an appointment
- Try to arrive early for your appointment to fill out any necessary forms, however waiting times can be unpredictable, but our doctors aim to give the most comprehensive care whilst minimizing the wait time
- Be honest (and unembarrassed) with the doctor
- Be an active participant in any decision making regarding your health and medical treatments - take charge of your life and your health
- Follow up with return visits or additional medical tests as recommended
- We value your opinion, both positive and negative. Please let us know if we can improve our services to you!
- WOMEN'S Healthworks offers crèche facilities on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for your convenience

Website

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

www.womenshealthworks.org.au

In memory of Laurel Pike

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Laurel on 09.05.10.



Laurel was a dedicated and tireless volunteer who made a significant contribution to our craft group and held in the highest esteem by WOMEN'S Healthworks staff and her fellow volunteers. She will be sadly missed.

WOMEN'S Healthworks

Annual General Meeting

will be held at our premises

on Monday 25 October 2010

commencing at 6.00pm



with light refreshments after the meeting

Dates to Remember

- 11-17 July Diabetes Awareness Week
- 1 - 7 Aug Healthy Bones Week
- 29 Aug Daffodil Day
- 30/8-4/9 Boy Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week
- 2 June Foundation Day
- 1 Sept Be Active WA Day
- 12-18 Sept Stay on Your Feet Week



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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Signature _____ Exp Date ____/____/____

Name: _____

Address: _____

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

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