

Australian Federation of University Women

A Voice for Graduate Women



Newsletter

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The 2008 AFUW AGM and Education Trust AGM

The last weekend of August was a busy one. Friday saw an Executive meeting and the Education Trust and AFUW AGMs, following which we retired to Dinner at the Hellenic Club, where conviviality was only constrained by the fact that most of us had to be ready for Council's all day meeting on Saturday 30th.

AGMs are largely a matter of formal reporting on the past year. The President's Report this time was lengthy, because calendar changes subsequent to the change of the AFUW financial year meant the reporting period stretched from the March 2007 AGM to August 2008. Much of that Report has, however, been covered in the last two Newsletters, so only more recent material will be dealt with below. One thing I would like to highlight was the enthusiastic vote of thanks passed to Jennifer Phillips for the amount of time and effort she has put into keeping the website up to date.

The Treasurer's Report was probably the most notable part of the AGM, if only because it showed that our strenuous attempts to economise have kept expenditure within income. Thanks to the helpfulness of the Auditors and the hard work of Deborah Haydon, we were able to approve not only the deferred accounts for the financial year ending in June 2007, but also those for the 2007-2008 year, so that the changeover period has been brought to a successful close.

The AGM also heard a report from the **Education Trust AGM**. The major financial item was confirmation of the transfer of the Fellowship Funds from the past Security Rollover to a Colonial First State managed fund. Although, in the event, this turned out to be not the best of years to make such a move, and the expected improvement in return has not eventuated yet, the Trustees believe that the interest on our capital will continue to maintain the Fellowships, even if there is fluctuation in the overall valuation of that capital. In 2009 the Georgina Sweet Fellowship and the Beryl Henderson Award will be offered, with the AFUW Fellowship offered in 2010. The Meeting thanked AFUW-Qld, who generously funded the AFUW Fellowship from 2006 to 2008. Until we can increase the capital of the AFUW Fellowship, AFUW Inc can offer it only in alternate years, hence the plan to seek to make it eligible for tax-deductible donations. This will require

modifications of the Trust Deed, and Council has approved some funding for obtaining legal advice on necessary changes.

Fellowships: 2008 has been an active and exciting Fellowship year, and members thanked Fellowships Convener Gaynor Reeves and her team of assessors for making it all happen. Hard on the heels of the success, reported in the last Newsletter, of two of the Australian applicants for IFUW Fellowships, have come the awards of the AFUW and E.M Hinder Fellowships. The winner of the AFUW Fellowship is Gretel Png, a PhD student in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at the University of Adelaide, whose research focuses on the area of medical terahertz (radiation) spectroscopy of biotissue, especially in relation to the brain. Gretel is well-known to AFUW-SA members as the 2007 recipient of their Daphne Elliott Bursary. The winner of the E. M. Hinder Fellowship is Carly Starr. A PhD student in the School of Animal Studies at the University of Queensland, Carly is conducting the first study of the pygmy loris in its wild habitat in Cambodia and combines this with volunteering on an AUSAID project as a Biodiversity Conservation Research Support Officer. There will be more about Gretel and Carly, as well as a selection of winners of STA awards, in the 2008 issue of *Graduate Women*, which will reach you later in the year.

Council Meeting

Streamlining of the handling of regular reports (from Executive, STAs, Committees, Registrar and Secretariats) has ensured space for more Council discussion of issues affecting AFUW's future. We certainly needed that space at this Meeting since Amendments to the By-laws, the Report of the Working Party on Membership and plans for the Triennial Conference were all on the Agenda.

By-Laws: The Executive has been looking closely at both the By-Laws and the Constitution to see whether they match not only our desired future, but also our actual current practice and are expressed in terms that any member could reasonably be expected to understand. We are also anxious to limit discussion of constitutional changes at Conference to major issues that can only be decided by Conference, such as a change of name or of membership eligibility. Under AFUW Rules, Council has the authority to amend existing By-Laws or create new ones, although these must then be approved by a two-thirds majority of STAs to come into effect. The Executive had circulated proposals and responses, some of which were incorporated into the proposals approved by Council. The simplest suggestion was to change that cumbersome phrase 'Member Association' wherever feasible to the more familiar STA (and yes, we want to get rid of that pesky slash, modelling this on the IFUW use of NFA). More important changes reflected conclusions already reached at earlier Council meetings. One was that the handover between Executives should take place straight after the relevant election, i.e. during the Council meeting that concludes the Triennial Conference; another was that the Standing Committees of Council should be three policy Committees (Education, Peace and Human Security and Status of Women) and one Administrative Committee (Resolutions). This leaves open for debate at Conference the question of whether the Committee members should be full voting members of Council (which at present is not the case). Removal of the Fellowships Committee recognizes that it has been inoperative since the Trustees of the Education Trust assumed most of its original responsibilities, however a new By-Law was approved codifying the duties of the current Fellowships Convener and changing the name of that role to Fellowships Officer.

Council's decisions have now gone to STA Presidents for STA ratification.

Report of the Working Party on Membership: Council set up this Working Party to consider the implications of the changes made at Manchester to IFUW membership eligibility. When Council met, members had already received the report from Working Party Convener, Kathryn Seymour, and expressed their gratitude for the detailed way in

which she elucidated the tangled maze of equivalent qualifications that have emerged from the blurring of the traditional divide between the 'higher education' sector (universities and some specialised degree-granting institutions) and the 'tertiary' sector (Vocational Education and Training institutions including TAFEs). The recommendation of the Report is effectively that holders of VET qualifications, except for Certificate 1 to 4 courses, should be eligible to join AFUW.

Council held an open discussion session in which members were asked to respond frankly. Most were supportive, seeing this as an opportunity to extend membership, but there were some reservations about the loss of identity as university graduates, and about identifying what services we could offer to VET graduates. It was noted however that we must be consistent with IFUW Rules and that some change seemed inevitable.

STA Presidents have been asked to take the matter back to the membership for discussion. Eventually amendments to the eligibility provisions of the Rules will have to be circulated for the more formal discussions that will lead to delegates to Conference being instructed on their STA's wishes. It's important for all members to share in this process, so please respond when the issue is scheduled for discussion in your STA.

Name change: One corollary of accepting qualifications from non-university institutions is that our existing name will no longer reflect the reality of our organization. You've already been told that proposals for a change of name will be brought to Conference, although the original impetus for change was not to do with membership eligibility but with objections that our name was too cumbersome, or that it was misleading, causing people to think we were only for women employed in universities, thus discouraging prospective members. Up to this point, Graduate Women Australia has been favoured over Australian Women Graduates or the lengthier Australian Federation of Graduate Women. Feedback from AFUW-Q, which was thinking about pre-empting a name change, has suggested that we need to think about how a new name can be combined with the State and Territory identification.

Legalities: We have been assured that IFUW will have no problem approving a name change that involves substituting 'Graduate' for 'University'. There remains the Office of Fair Trading, which oversees our incorporation. They require us to 'reserve' three possible names six months before any proposals are put to Conference. So members will be asked early next year to help choose three preferred options, bearing in mind that making a suggestion will not commit your STA to voting in favour of any of these when the time comes at Conference.

Triennial Conference: Membership Participatory Sessions: Discussion of the 2009 Triennial Conference at the recent Council Meeting highlighted the importance of member participation in the Conference program, over and above the formal 'business' of reporting and delegate voting and in addition to the speakers of the Public Days.

As a result, there will be time provided at Conference for STAs, Branches and groups to showcase particular projects and actions they have undertaken to support and develop AFUW principles and policies. This could be through ten to fifteen minute presentations, posters, photographic displays, role plays or any other original and lively means. Council and the LAC (Local Arrangements Committee) are therefore calling for expressions of interest from members who would like to share their AFUW activities and ideas with other members. Let us know, in not more than 250 words, what you'd like to do. If we get lots of proposals we probably won't be able to squeeze them all into the Conference schedule, but we will find other later ways of publicizing those that can't be fitted in.

Please send you proposals in the first instance to the President of your STA *as soon as possible but no later than 30 November*.

Resolutions: Now is the time for thinking about Policy Resolutions as well as Amendments to the Rules (also known as Constitutional Amendments). Sending proposals before the final

deadline will mean that we can have preliminary discussions to enable points of clarification to be sorted out and agreed wording to be reached before voting takes place, thus ensuring a speedier and smoother Conference session.

How many proposals: There is some feeling that we already have a policy overload and that those proposing Policy Resolutions should be particularly prepared to act on and advocate for them, so Council suggests that some thought be given to 'Is your Resolution really necessary? Is it covered by existing general principles? Does it replicate existing Resolutions (check these out in the Policies and Attitudes document on the AFUW website).

Who can make proposals: Please remember that both forms of resolution must come from the Executive, Council, Council Committees or an STA (not from individuals). STA proposals must be signed off by the STA President, so if their formulation is delegated to a sub-committee, please ensure time for the President to give full consideration to any proposals.

Deadline for submission: Amendments to the Rules must reach the Secretary on or before July 27 2009; Policy Resolutions must reach the Secretary on or before 27 September 2009. No proposals will be considered after those dates. Please copy your proposals to the Resolutions Convener, Rosemary Everett at reverett@netspace.net.au as Rosemary will be co-ordinating preliminary discussions of proposals.

PGWNet

Council noted that the President and CIR would be going to Tonga to attend the Council Meeting of the Pacific Graduate Women's Network and the Conference of the Tongan Association on 18-19 September and that arrangements would probably be made there for AFUW to assume carriage of PGWNet business for the next two years (Fiji and Samoa having had that role before Tonga). We expect to have a PGWNet Council meeting in association with the AFUW Triennial Conference in November 2009.

Advocacy

This has certainly been an Advocacy-overload year. Visit the website Advocacy Page to read what has been done since the June Newsletter: these include our Submission to the Bradley Review of Higher Education, with a Supplementary Submission specifically on Indigenous issues (thanks to Erica Jolly for its preparation); a joint Submission with the National Foundation for Australian Women on After-Hours and Vacation Childcare as an issue in women's workforce participation (thanks to Dalma Jacobs for her work on this); and the Submission on the Effectiveness of the Sex Discrimination Act prepared jointly by S4W and WomenSpeak, to which AFUW is a signatory.

Representations have been made to the Minister for Foreign Affairs urging (yet again) removal of AusAid restrictions on aid for family planning programs that include advice on abortion and also requesting Australian support for the Fijian Association of Women Graduates in their courageous opposition to the power of the military; to Senator Sherry as Minister for Superannuation on women's superannuation and taxation; and to every Federal Senator calling on them to oppose a private bill that would deny Medicare benefits for late-term abortions. A requested Message of Support was sent to the ASEAN Women's Caucus, which is attempting to ensure recognition of gender issues in a proposed regional Human Rights Body.

New Format: I hope that the larger font and black type makes this more readable for those who've had problems. Feedback is always welcome.

Jennifer Strauss, AFUW President