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## **FEATURE STORY**

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### **Cyclone Larry – Outreach for a community in need**

**Weeks after Cyclone Larry stormed across Northern Queensland; Lifeline continues to offer support and comfort to distressed communities left in its wake. The story of Brenda-Anne Parfitt, General Manager of Lifeline Northern Queensland, is just one example of how Lifeline quickly met the challenges nature set.**

For twenty-two days straight Brenda-Anne Parfitt, General Manager of Lifeline Northern Queensland, was on the ground dealing with the human devastation wreaked by Cyclone Larry. She is tired and emotional but above all, very proud of Lifeline.

Within 72 hours of Cyclone Larry ripping through communities north of Townsville, Brenda-Anne was in her car heading north through torrential rain and gusting winds. Her office was a suitcase – no computer; just brochures, notepads, forms, pens – everything she could carry.

At Cardwell she met-up with SES volunteers, who were glad to have her there. While they could deal with the physical damage the people they were encountering were

going to need more than a tarpaulin or clean up. Even some SES were traumatized by the scope of the devastation.

Alone and almost overwhelmed by the task, Brenda-Anne continually stopped and talked to people on the streets, handing out information and offering support where she could. After a few hours she knew that the real challenge lay further north where the full force of the cyclone had hit. With the roads blocked to all but emergency traffic Brenda-Anne abandoned her car and hitched a ride north with the SES.

In each community she found more devastation. She acted by door knocking, dropping information at local shops and meeting with community leaders to see how Lifeline could help. By Friday, with the help of a generous donation from the Pilot Light Foundation Brenda-Anne had five teams on the ground. Feelings of grief and were surfacing and people needed someone to talk to. The Lifeline teams set about providing face-to-face counselling and linking people to support services.

The level of effort by Lifeline counsellors cannot be underestimated. They continue to deal with hundreds of referrals from services such as the Salvation Army, St Vincent DePaul, SES, and police, as well as calls from a special 1800 number. In the weeks after Cyclone Larry, Lifeline teams are finding more deep-seated trauma in the community. Staff are 'red flagging' people for follow up by the outreach teams.

Brenda-Anne believes that the professionalism and dedication of the teams working on the ground will help people come to grips with the emotional strain of the disaster. She is aware that those who have worked so tirelessly need to rest and take stock. There is much more that needs to be done in Northern Queensland.

Source: Lifeline Australia

## **world**

### **UNIFEM appoints a new Regional Programme Director for the Pacific Region**

The United Nations Development Fund for Women Pacific Regional Office is pleased to announce the appointment of Ms. Elizabeth Cox as its Regional Programme Director for the Pacific Region commencing on Monday the 22nd May 2006. Ms. Cox brings with her 20 years of experience in research and development, mostly in the Pacific Region.

Prior to taking up her appointment as the head of UNIFEMs Pacific Regional Office, Ms. Cox was the founder come Programme Manager of HELP Resource, a provincial NGO based in East Sepik in Papua New Guinea[1].

Prior to this, Ms. Cox held various positions in Papua New Guinea, she was National Adviser for an AusAID sponsored National HIV and AIDS project on Counseling and Community and Home Based Care, the Manager of East Sepik Women and Children's Health Project with Save the Children in PNG, and the Programme Manager for

OXFAM Australia's Pacific NGO Capacity Building Programs and Partnership, as well as various positions in the University of Papua New Guinea.

Ms. Cox has also undertaken extensive research in women and agriculture, Gender Violence and Poverty in PNG and has developed a series of training manuals and materials.

A naturalized Papua New Guinea Masters in Development Studies Development from the Institute of Netherlands, and a Bachelors of Psychology from the University of Melbourne.



citizen, Ms. Cox holds a specializing in Gender and Social Studies, The Hague, Arts, majoring in Social

As the Regional Programme Director, Ms. Cox will provide guidance and oversight to all of UNIFEMs programme and is the representative of UNIFEM to the Pacific.

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities on four strategic areas: (1) reducing feminized poverty, (2) ending violence against women, (3) reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls, and (4) achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war.

Source: Unifem Pacific

### **Annan inaugurates UN's strengthened Human Rights Council with appeal for 'new era'**

Human Rights Council inaugural session

*19 June 2006* – The new United Nations Human Rights Council held its inaugural session today, with Secretary-General Kofi Annan calling for “a clean break from the past” and a “new era” as the enhanced body seeks to give teeth to the protection of rights for all, an issue that often seemed to elude its much-criticized predecessor.

“What must be apparent, above all, is a change in culture,” Mr. Annan told representatives from over 100 countries at the first meeting of the 47-member body in Geneva, appealing for an end to the confrontation and distrust that pervaded the now-replaced Human Rights Commission.

“Never allow this Council to become caught up in political point-scoring or petty manoeuvre,” he entreated those present. “Think always of those whose rights are denied - whether those rights are civil and political, or economic, social and cultural; whether those people are perishing from brutal treatment by arbitrary rulers, or from ignorance, hunger and disease.

“The truth is that those denials go together. All too often, it is those who seek to improve the welfare of their communities who become the victims of oppression; and it is the lack of freedom and of legal safeguards that inhibits economic and social development,” he declared.

The creation of the new Council was a major plank in Mr. Annan’s UN reform package “In Larger Freedom,” which he issued in March last year and which was later endorsed by the World Summit at UN Headquarters in New York in September.

Although its final form does not contain all the elements Mr. Annan sought, it is regarded as a significant improvement on the Commission, with several features to make it stronger and more effective. These include its higher status as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, its increased number of meetings throughout the year and an examination of the human rights records of its own members.

“It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the eyes of the world - especially the eyes of those whose human rights are denied, threatened or infringed - are turned towards this chamber and this Council,” Mr. Annan said today.

He noted that in his report he had stressed that human rights form the third of the three pillars, with economic and social development and peace and security, on which all UN work must be based.

“I argued that these three are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, and are the prerequisites for our collective well-being. No society can develop without peace and security,” he said. “No State can be secure if its people are condemned to poverty without hope. And no nation can be secure or prosperous for long, if the basic rights of its citizens are not protected.

“In short, lack of respect for human rights and human dignity is the fundamental reason why the peace of the world today is so precarious, and why prosperity is so unequally shared,” he added.

Mr. Annan held out the prospect of even greater enhancement of the Council, noting that at the moment it is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, pending a review within five years.

“I venture to hope - and I suggest it should be your ambition - that within five years your work will have so clearly established the Human Rights Council’s authority that there will be a general will to amend the Charter, and to elevate it to the status of a Principal Organ of the United Nations,” he declared.

He stressed that although human rights are an inherently sensitive topic, that does not mean they are inherently intrusive, or antithetical to State interests. “Nor should we accept the widely parroted notion that there is a built-in tension, or a necessary trade-off, between freedom and security, he said.

“This Council represents a great new chance for the United Nations, and for humanity, to renew the struggle for human rights,” he concluded. “I implore you, do not let the opportunity be squandered.”

In an opening address, General Assembly President Jan Eliasson urged Member States to continue working in a spirit of compromise and responsibility. “Now you have to show determination and courage to translate intentions and words to the changing of realities and taking action,” he said. “This requires from all of us statesmanship and preparedness not only to examine each other but also to examine ourselves.”

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour called on members to look beyond national interests. “Through its deliberations, the Council should search for, articulate and implement a broad concept of universality of rights and freedoms, designed to reflect first and foremost individual human dignity, rather than cater to the narrow pursuit of national self-interest and regional factionalism.”

Luis Alfonso de Alba of Mexico was elected as Council President. “We are at a crossroads of an historic nature,” he told the session. “We can and should contribute to improve the respect of human rights all around the world, and at the same time, we can and should contribute to the reform and strengthening of the multilateral system.”

The Council also elected four Vice-Presidents: Tomas Husak (Czech Republic) (Eastern European group), Mohammed Loulichki (Morocco) (African group), Blaise Godet (Switzerland) (Western Europe and Others Group) and Musa Burayzat (Jordan) (Asian group), who will assume the role of rapporteur.

### **Uniting Against Terrorism**

In New York, on 26 May 2006, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan launched his report, *Uniting Against Terrorism: Recommendations for a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*. In his speech he said,

"Today, I have the privilege of presenting to you my vision on that matter, contained in the document *Uniting against terrorism: Recommendations for a global counter-terrorism strategy*.

These recommendations stem from a fundamental conviction which we all share: that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes, is unacceptable and can never be justified.

Uniting around that conviction is the basis for what I hope will be a collective global effort to fight terrorism -- an effort bringing together Governments, the United Nations and other international organizations, civil society and the private sector -- each using their comparative advantage to supplement the others' efforts.

In formulating my recommendations, I have built further on the “five Ds”-- the fundamental components which I first outlined in Madrid last year. They are:

- dissuading people from resorting to terrorism or supporting it;
- denying terrorists the means to carry out an attack;
- deterring States from supporting terrorism;
- developing State capacity to defeat terrorism, and;
- defending human rights.

I believe all five are interlinked conditions crucial to the success of any strategy against terrorism. To succeed, we still need to make progress on all these fronts.

Implementing a global strategy requires us to dissuade people from resorting to terrorism or supporting it, by driving a wedge between terrorists and their potential constituencies. We need to launch a global campaign of Governments, the UN, civil society and the private sector, with the message that terrorism is unacceptable in any form, and that there are far better and more effective ways for those with genuine grievances to seek redress. One of the clearest and most powerful ways we can do that is by refocusing our attention on the victims. It is high time we took serious and concerted steps to build international solidarity with them, respecting their dignity as well as expressing our compassion.

Denying terrorists the means to carry out an attack means denying them access both to conventional weapons and to weapons of mass destruction. That will require innovative thinking from all of us about today’s threats -- including those which States cannot address by themselves, such as bioterrorism. Similarly, it will mean working together to counter terrorists’ growing use of the Internet. We must find ways to make sure that this powerful tool becomes a weapon in our hands, not in theirs.

Our work in deterring States from supporting terrorism must be rooted firmly in the international rule of law -- creating a solid legal basis for common actions, and holding States accountable for their performance in meeting their obligations. This work is intimately linked with the need to develop State capacity to defeat terrorism.

In response to a request I received last December from the President of this Assembly, the document I am presenting today elaborates on steps to build state capacity, and to strengthen the Organization’s work in this field."

See the [Full Report](#) *Uniting Against Terrorism*

### **World’s poorest countries see some growth but poverty rates persist – UN report**

An increase in development aid since 2002 has raised health and education standards and hastened gender equality among the world’s poorest nations but overall poverty rates are not improving, according to a new United Nations report released today.

The 2006 annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) adds that domestic reforms and a revival of commodity prices have underpinned strong economic growth in many of those States. A number of them also benefited from a steep rise in oil prices.

But despite signs of progress, extreme poverty has deepened, and overall social indicators remain cause for concern, the report warns.

Chronic poverty continues to be aggravated by diseases such as HIV/AIDS and by environmental degradation, says the report, which the Secretary-General submitted to the Economic and Social Council.

In addition, the positive impact of growth in many cases is mitigated by high birth rates and an unequal distribution of resources. Climate change is already taking a toll on many low-lying or island LDCs, and is likely to pose a growing challenge to development in upcoming years, the report notes.

“The message we are getting from the least developed countries is that they are working hard to take advantage of economic opportunities and to use effectively the assistance from international partners,” said Anwarul Chowdhury, the UN’s High Representative for the LDCs, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

“It is important that the international community stays the course on promised aid, debt relief and tariff-free access for LDC exports, as populations in these countries continue to struggle to escape extreme poverty.”

Of the 50 LDCs, of which 34 are in sub-Saharan Africa, 15 in Asia and the Pacific and one – Haiti – in the Western hemisphere, more than half recorded average annual growth rates of 4 per cent or better during 2000-2004. Foreign direct investment has generally been on the rise in these countries in general.

Trend lines for primary school education and gender quality in education, adult literacy, under-five and access to sanitation and clean water are largely positive, the report states. In contrast, seven of these nations experienced declining life expectancy, often in countries affected by AIDS.

**(Source: UN June 2006)                      national**

### **Commissioner Goward concerned that gender is still an issue in senior level appointments**

Reflecting on this year's UNIFEM theme for International Women's Day 'Women in Decision-Making', Sex Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward said she is concerned that gender equality in the workplace is still an issue despite sex discrimination legislation being in place in Australia for over 21 years.



"Each year we pause on International Women's Day (8 March) to reflect on the achievements of women, consider their needs and contemplate ways to tackle the continued discrimination and bias that women and children continue to suffer," said Commissioner Goward.

"While some women and organisations can hold their head up high, it dumbfounds me that in this day and age we are still calling for greater numbers of women to be appointed to senior leadership roles, whether in business or politics - despite the clear social and economic benefits and despite women being eminently qualified."

A January 2006 Income and Wealth report by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) showed that educated young women are getting more job opportunities than ever before, while other women are heading back to work in larger numbers. But this hasn't translated into women being appointed to powerful, decision-making roles.

Ex-federal Cabinet Minister Kay Patterson's recent call for more women to be appointed to the ministry highlights the lack of women in senior political roles (only 35.5% of senators are women[1] and a mere 24.7% of MPs in the House of Representatives are women[2]).

The story is the same in the corporate sector. Despite their significant presence in the workforce, women hold only 10.2% of executive management positions (compared with 15.7% in the USA and 14% in Canada) and women hold only 8.6% of board directorships (compared with 13.6% in the USA and 11.2% in Canada).[3]

"I would have thought it was a no-brainer - if you're the best qualified person for the job you should be promoted to the position, regardless of your sex," Ms Goward said. "But these statistics indicate that gender is still an issue in senior level appointments."

It is no different in the judiciary. In the Federal Court, state or territory supreme courts and court of appeals there are only 33 women out of a total of 202 judges[4]. Only five of the 42 current Federal Court judges are women.[5]

"Young women start out their working lives with high expectations. They are well educated for anticipated careers and initially gain valuable skills in the workplace. But this is not translating into leadership and management roles based on merit or performance. Australia is simply wasting its investment in women's education and skill development by not rewarding women for their contribution," Ms Goward said.

"Gender equality is crucial for two reasons - it is a fundamental human right; and an essential requirement for successful economic and social development. We cannot continue to ignore these basic truisms if our nation is to achieve its full potential."  
(Source: HREOC)

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 34th session in New York**

At its recent 34th session in New York, the CEDAW Committee examined the Australian Government's fourth and fifth periodic reports, as well as the Australian NGO Shadow Report on the Implementation of CEDAW. It had been 10 years since Australia had last appeared before the Committee.

While praising Australia's wide-ranging gender equality programmes, members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women today urged the Government to make sure its initiatives better addressed the unique situation of disabled, indigenous and aboriginal women, boosted its efforts to curb domestic violence and identify and prosecute perpetrators, and provided better protections for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Taking up the combined fourth and fifth reports dealing with Australia's implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Committee expressed concern about protection for trafficked women, rural women and women in same-sex relationships. It was also troubled by Australia's reservations to the Convention and refusal to sign the Optional Protocol under which the Committee could receive complaints from individuals or groups regarding violations of rights protected under the Convention, and initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights.

Introducing the combined reports, Kerry Flanagan, Head of Australia's Office for Women, Department of Family and Community Services, told the Committee that her Office, the Government's focal point for advice on the impact of policies and programmes on women, now had a four-year budget of over \$A 98 million -- more than it had ever had before -- and had some 50 staff members.

All Australian governments -- including at the federal level, across six States and two self-governing territories -- were strongly committed to building women's leadership and participation in all walks of life, she said. The number of women in parliaments was the highest it had ever been, ranging between 27 and 43 per cent, including six indigenous women. Four of its state and territory governments had been led by women and three had had women opposition leaders.

Regarding the Committee's specific concerns about indigenous women, Ms. Flanagan said that there was a huge level of commitment on behalf of the national and local governments to tackle the situation of the country's indigenous people and assist marginalized groups of the population. Indeed, many relevant programmes included an indigenous component, including programmes dealing with domestic violence. She admitted that, while there were no indigenous people at her Office, she, nonetheless, worked closely with the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination.

Indigenous women wanted to have their own voice, but recognized the power of using the mainstream vehicles, such as the Women's Office, to represent them, she added. A high proportion of the indigenous population lived in highly remote, tough-to-reach areas, so the Government sought to implement its programmes in conjunction and consultation with the communities themselves. On the Committee's

concern about overrepresentation of indigenous women in prisons, she agreed that the numbers were high. But, they correspond with a high recidivism rate among those women, she added, agreeing the issue needed to be tackled on several levels.

When the discussion turned to the anti-Muslim violence that swept Sydney last month, Matt Minogue, Assistant Secretary, Human Rights Branch Attorney-General's Department, said that while those events were distressing, the general citizenry had responded in a commendable manner. Vincent Biuca, of Australia's Embassy to the United States, said the leaders of the two communities involved had discussed how the situation had arisen and how to prevent similar occurrences in the future. He added that overall policies aimed at boosting community harmony and emphasized that minorities had the same rights as the rest of the population.

On sexual assault and domestic violence, Ms. Flanagan said follow up to a 1996 countrywide survey was now under way to evaluate the results of a decade's worth of programmes aimed at curbing such violence. She also recognized the problem of the low prosecution rate and said that evidence and research testified to the need to educate and train people working in the justice system. Also needed were programmes to raise awareness and work with family members. As for the experts' concerns that some women might lose their homes when they moved into shelters after being abused, she said the Government was actively looking at models under which women stayed at home and men were removed.

Ms. Flanagan said Australia retained its reservations to the Convention regarding paid maternity leave and women in direct combat roles. Still, it had a unique and comparatively generous system in place, under which employees with at least 12 months continuous service with an employer were entitled to a minimum of 52 weeks of shared unpaid leave following their birth of a child. On the Optional Protocol, Mr. Minogue said the Government was concerned over provisions it felt could constitute "a standing invitation" for treaty bodies to visit the country without the consent of national authorities. At the moment, there was no intention to ratify that instrument, he added.

On non-governmental organizations, Gabrielle Burrell, Section Manager, Office for Women, Department of Family and Community Services, informed the experts that when preparing its compliance documents, the Government had sought to assist civic actors in compiling their own "shadow" reports. Although the Government had taken note of the organizations' comments, it did not include any of that information in its own report.

On refugees and asylum-seekers, Mr. Biuca said that temporary protection visa arrangements had been authorized in 1999 to discourage people who had effective protection elsewhere from making a dangerous voyage to Australia and applying for asylum in Australia. That did not diminish the country's obligations under the refugee Convention, which did not require States parties to provide permanent asylum to refugees -- it only required them to provide interim protection.

Under the temporary protection visa arrangements, unauthorized arrivals to Australia were given a temporary visa of up to three years. Afterwards, permanent or temporary visas could be sought. The country's Prime Minister had recently made a commitment to finalize all existing applications for such visas. Virtually all of some 3,500 applicants had been approved for permanent visas. Australia was not considering removing temporary protection visas at this time.

On International Women's Day 2006, the Australian Democrats called on the Government to back up its purported commitment to women by signing the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW.

Source: UN

### **The Voices of Homeless Young Australians**

A short publication by Mission Australia based on research with 100 homeless young people that highlights some of the experiences and difficulties they face on a day-to-day basis.

Almost half of Australia's 100,000 homeless people are aged under 25 years of age, with a significant percentage aged 12 to 18.

Young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are often dealing with a complex range of issues that extend beyond their need for secure housing, and can include poverty, family breakdown, violence and mental illness.

This publication highlights some of the experiences and difficulties facing homeless young Australians, drawing on responses from Mission Australia's 2004 National Youth Survey and interviews conducted in 2005.

The research identifies a number of key policy priorities for homeless young people:

- Adequate and accessible income support.
- Holistic supports which lead to positive educational and employment outcomes.
- Information and support strategies addressing alcohol and other drug issues.
- Provision of comprehensive quality support by community agencies.
- Strategies that strengthen the advice and support role of relatives and family friends.
- Increased and improved information via the internet.
- Improved access to and affordability of mental health services.
- Availability and appropriateness of social housing.

Follow this link to [Mission Australia's The Voices of Homeless Young Australians](#)

Source: Community Builders NSW

### **Statistics in Australia's Health 2006**

The health of people living in poverty and on low incomes is not keeping pace with others, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) said today in response to the release of a new report *Australia's Health 2006*\* which includes the following statistics:

- 70% of Indigenous people die before the age of 65 years compared with 20% of non-Indigenous Australians.
- Indigenous children aged 1-14 have a mortality rate which is 2.5 times higher than non-indigenous children.
- Mortality is 50% higher for the unemployed than those who are employed (unemployment is associated with other risk factors such as mental illness and cardiovascular disease).
- Nearly 40% of the population did not see a dentist last year. 1/3rd of lower and middle income adults are unable to access proper dental care.

\* *Australia's Health* is released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare every 2 years.

### **Federal Budget 2006**

#### **– ACOSS response**

ACOSS President Lin Hatfield Dodds said: "Given the largesse of this Budget, the Government had a golden opportunity to spend more to make sure Australians who are really struggling have a fair go."

"Low income Australians in paid work have gained through adjustments to income tax and family payments changes. What ACOSS was hoping for was greater investment in solutions to provide better quality, more accessible and affordable services."

"An Australia where everyone has a fair go is not something that can be built overnight. The Government needs to link its spending in a strategic plan to ensure people left behind by economic growth can have a better chance for housing, work, good health and essential services."

ACOSS Director Andrew Johnson said: "ACOSS welcomes the increased investment in mental health, child care subsidies for parents studying, carer payments and aged and disability care."

"ACOSS would like to see greater investment in services like housing, indigenous health, dental care, child care, supports and services for jobless Australians to change the lives of people on low incomes."

#### **Some specific investments ACOSS welcomed in this year's Budget include:**

##### **Mental health**

- \$1.4 billion over four years for COAG mental health initiatives, including:
- \$380m for better access to GPs, psychologists and psychiatrists through Medicare
- \$132.1m over four years for more respite places to help families and carers
- \$36.6m over four years for community based programs to help families with mental illness.

##### **Child Care**

- \$9.4m in 2006-7 to extend JET child care to meet gap payments for parents moving into work or study.

## **Carers**

·One off Carer Bonus - \$1,000 for Carer Payment, \$600 for Carer Allowance.

## **Ageing and Disability**

·\$90.2m over four years to assist younger people with disability living in residential aged care to find more appropriate accommodation.

·\$24.2m over five years to simplify access to aged care services through more timely, consistent and quality assessments by Aged Care Assessment teams.

·\$152.7m over five years to improve care for older patients in public hospitals by enhancing in-patient services and the transitions to appropriate long-term care, avoiding re-admission to hospital and improving care services when people stay long term in smaller rural hospitals.

(Source: ACOSS)

## **Human rights must come first**

Amnesty International Australia presented every Federal Parliamentarian with a written request and the names of more than 10,000 people opposed to the policy. This policy is not yet law but may be within a matter of weeks. World Refugee Day is a timely occasion to call for an Australian policy that does not turn its back on refugees and asylum seekers

Amnesty International Australia welcomes the findings of a Senate Committee Inquiry into the proposed Migration Amendments (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill 2006 (the Bill). The Committee clearly stated that this legislation should not proceed.

The report maintains that this law should be abolished. With this background, the Committee made ten recommendations for amendments necessary if the Bill were to be passed. In summary these are:

- Asylum seekers should only be detained for a "reasonable and specified time";
- If settlement for refugees cannot be found in other countries, refugees processed in places such as Nauru should be resettled in Australia;
- Children should only be detained as a last resort;
- Offshore asylum seekers should have access to welfare support, community support and legal representation;
- All asylum seekers should have access to independent review of their decisions;
- Independent monitoring of offshore detention; and
- An 18 month sunset period after which there should be a public and independent review of the Bill and its operations.

Amnesty International Australia agrees that these amendments are essential if the Bill is to be passed. The Committee specifically noted that the Bill is at odds with the positive changes made in 2005.

Amnesty International Australia welcomes all parliamentary opposition to this legislation. The Bill would deny humane treatment to asylum seekers and refugees and would see Australia breach its international obligations.

(Source: Amnesty International)

### **Budget 2006/07 Women Forge Ahead in NSW**

The Lemna Governments budget invests in the Office for Womens policies of promoting gender equity and social justice in the planning, development and delivery of programs throughout NSW says NSW Minister for Women, Sandra Nori.

The Office for Women will continue to fund innovative community projects and will provide support and advice to the government through the Premiers Council for Women, Ms Nori said.

Following its successes over the last two years, the grants program to assist local councils to celebrate International Womens Day will be further extended again this year, to \$100,000, she said.

In 2005, the program assisted almost 80 councils.

This budget will also enable the Office for Women to build on the success of innovative new programs by funding their further expansion, said Ms Nori.

The most successful of those programs include Sistaspeak, the Lucy Mentoring Program and Girl Savvy and are all designed to mentor young women in their educational and career choices throughout both urban and regional NSW.

SistaSpeak was successful piloted in Dubbo in 2005 and will be expanded in other regions this year. The program is designed to encourage young Aboriginal women to learn leadership skills and continue their education.

The Lucy Mentoring Program provides female university students with mentors who motivate and educate them about the opportunity to gain top positions in the public and private sector. In 2006/07, the program is being extended to a regional university and there is planned expansion to other faculties beyond business and law.

The highly successful Girl Savvy program goes into its fifth year, with a further 24 Girl Savvy workshops across NSW to be added under this budget.

GirlSavvy is a fantastic initiative that encourages young women to aim high and think about the importance of becoming economically independent, Ms Nori said.

This year will also see the implementation of two important new projects to educate low income and disadvantaged women about their rights under the Federal Governments harsh new industrial relations environment.



I'm excited that through innovative policy and collaboration, the Office will continue to push for greater equity for NSW women across a range of areas and age groups, said Ms Nori.

### **Australia's IR Laws are Among The World's Worst: ILO Complaint**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has listed Australia's IR laws for an immediate hearing alongside cases from Libya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Guatemala and other countries that are known as the world's worst violators of labour rights.

Speaking from the ILO's main annual conference in Geneva, Switzerland, ACTU President Sharan Burrow said:

"Australia's IR laws breach fundamental human rights by infringing on the right of working people to join a union and to bargain collectively.

ILO members are very concerned that as an advanced nation, Australia is increasingly out of step with its international obligations and has placed the Howard Government's laws on a list of labour rights violations cases for immediate examination on Tuesday or Wednesday next week.

Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews lobbied hard last year for the Australian Government to gain a seat on the governing body of the ILO and is currently travelling to Geneva to attend the meeting. The Minister is now faced with the humiliating prospect of being carpeted by the ILO for a breach of international labour standards in next week's hearing.

Mr Peter Anderson of the business lobby group ACCI is also a member of the ILO governing body.

Australian Government representatives at the ILO are expected to be questioned about the legal and practical aspects of the Government's adherence to international labour rights conventions in particular, The Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, number 98.

The ILO has previously stated that the Federal Government's Workplace Relations Act does not provide workers with adequate protection against discrimination if they choose to have their employment conditions governed by collective agreements.

International concern with the Australian situation has been heightened by the Howard Government's new IR laws which now make illegal many legitimate union activities.

Under the new laws, union officials and employees can be fined up to \$33,000 simply for asking an employer to include in a collective agreement:



- Provision for employees to attend union-provided training, including health and safety training
- Protection from unfair dismissal
- Union involvement in dispute resolution
- Protections against employees being replaced by labour hire or contractors

And Australia's building and construction industry laws are so draconian that workers face six months jail if they refuse to attend a secret interrogation, if they refuse to answer questions even though it may incriminate them, or if they refuse to hand over documents.

The Committee for the Application of Standards is one of several senior review panels established by the ILO to monitor adherence to international conventions on fundamental labour rights.

The Committee noted that Australia's 'Workplace Relations Act' has now been substantially amended with the passage of the Workplace Relations (Work Choices) Act in late 2005.

In strong terms for the tripartite body, the Committee observed 'with regret' that the Australian Government had failed to comply with a previous request to transmit copies of all draft laws to the ILO and noted there had been a lack of prior consultation on the new Australian laws.

The Committee also found there were serious concerns regarding the impact that the new IR laws would have on the application of the provision of key international conventions (Nos 87 and 98), and in particular the effect the laws would have on the right to collective bargaining.

The Committee requested the Australian Government provide a detailed report to the ILO Committee of Experts for examination this year on the impact of the new Work Choices Act in terms of the obligation to ensure respect for freedom from association and, in particular, the promotion of the right to collective bargaining in Australia."

Source: ACTU

### **Corporate Responsibility Index**

The Corporate Responsibility Index is a strategic management tool to enhance the capacity of businesses to develop, measure and communicate best practice in the field of corporate social responsibility.

The Corporate Responsibility Index benchmarks the corporate social responsibility strategy and implementation process.

The results of the third Australian Corporate Responsibility Index demonstrate that for participant companies, running business better has extended beyond the triple bottom line.

Top five participating companies in this year's Australian CRI were Westpac, Toyota Australia, ANZ, BHP Billiton and BOC Group.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defines corporate social responsibility as the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families and the local community and society at large

The Index has been created by more than 80 leading businesses in the UK and Business in the Community, a unique movement of 700 member companies committed to continually improving their positive impact on society.

Every year, *BRW* top 250 companies and Business Council of Australia members are invited to participate in the Corporate Responsibility Index (CRI).

Business in the Community has generously donated the Index under a licensing agreement for use in Australia. St James Ethics Centre, working in partnership with *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* and proudly supported by Ernst & Young, launched the Corporate Responsibility Index in Australia in February 2004.

Follow this link to the [Corporate Social responsibility Index website for more information and 2005 results](http://www.corporate-responsibility.com.au/) (<http://www.corporate-responsibility.com.au/>)

**Source: Community Builders NSW Research & Reports**

### **Aboriginal Education: Remote Schools and the Real Economy**

This [Paper](#), commissioned by the Menzies Research Centre, examines whether Aboriginal education in remote communities is preparing Aboriginal children for a world beyond those communities. This Paper provides evidence of poor literacy and numeracy results achieved by Aboriginal students in remote communities. It acknowledges that, in recent years, there has been some woolly thinking about school curricula. Importantly the paper places indigenous education in the broader context of the problems of remote communities including, welfare dependency, the absence of a real economy and poor school attendance. It is claimed that the correct policy response to failure at school will be determined not simply by additional programs at school, but by how various issues of transition to the real economy - work, individual obligation, mobility - are managed; and concludes that western education cannot and should not preserve Aboriginal culture. The launch of this paper is particularly timely due to the increased interest in policy affecting remote Aboriginal communities in recent weeks.

**2006 Education Profile for Australia Now Available**

The Country Education Profile (CEP) for Australia includes the latest information on all sectors of the Australian education system and includes details about qualifications, quality assurance, government funding and administration and international activities. The CEP is used to provide assessment guidelines for the comparability of overseas qualifications to Australian qualifications. The education systems of more than 100 different countries are described.

### **Innovation Report Reveals Strengths in Science and Innovation**

Recently released, the Australian Government's Innovation Report 2005-06, provides a comprehensive overview of the Australian Government's policies and programmes in science and innovation, focussing on the three key themes of Backing Australia's

Ability: strengthening Australia's ability to undertake research, accelerating the commercial application of ideas and developing and retaining Australian skills. The report identifies Australian businesses as the largest performers of R&D, noting that business expenditure on R&D is at the highest recorded level. A record number of small and medium sized firms obtained support through the R&D Tax Offset which helps small companies undertake innovative research and development.

Electronic copies of the Report are available at:

<http://backingaus.innovation.gov.au/2001/statement/index.htm>

Source:DEST

### **From National Curriculum Collaboration to National Consistency in Curriculum Outcomes**

<http://tinyurl.com/gmzum> This article from Curriculum Leadership 4:16, examines the influence of both outcomes-based and standards-based education on curriculum reforms in Australia. It compares developments in Australia with those in the USA and assesses whether the move towards greater national consistency in curriculum outcomes in Australia confirms the dominance of outcomes-based education or reflects a shift to standards-based education. Source:Curriculum Leadership

### **National Industry Skills Report**

The National Industry Skills Report provides an overview of three major industry focused research projects which tell us more about the skills needed to ensure social and economic prosperity. The report proposes strategies to address issues raised in Industry Skills Reports, considers findings from skills ecosystem projects, and outlines research into how the labour market is evolving.

### **Attitudes to Teaching as a Career**

This report from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) synthesises recent Australian and international research on attitudes to teaching as a career, including research on the motivations of current teachers to remain in or leave the profession. The research shows that, while people who have chosen teaching as a career are chiefly motivated by 'intrinsic' rewards such as wanting to 'make a difference', enjoyment of children, etc, extrinsic factors such as remuneration, workload, employment conditions and status are the most significant factors influencing people not to choose teaching, and to leave the profession.

## **News**

### **Call for Nominations**

For more than 15 years, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission has hosted the Human Rights Medal and Awards to celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations that have made an exceptional contribution to the advancement of Human Rights in Australia.

Previous Human Rights Medal winners include the former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, welfare rights advocate Michael Raper, Refugee and asylum seeker advocate Marion Lê, and women's rights advocate Deborah Kilroy. Last year's Human Rights Medal was awarded to Kevin Cocks, for his long-standing commitment to disability rights and social justice issues.

The Commission is calling for nominations from individuals and organisations for the 2006 Human Rights Medal and Awards in the following categories:

- Human Rights Medal
- Law (sponsored by the Law Council of Australia)
- Community – Individual
- Community- Organisation
- Arts Non-Fiction
- Radio
- Television
- Print Media

The 2006 Human Rights Medal and Awards will be presented on Thursday 7 December 2006, at a luncheon ceremony at the Sheraton on the Park hotel, Sydney from 12 noon to 3pm.

Entries must be submitted on an official entry form, available via the Commission's website at [www.humanrights.gov.au/hr\\_awards](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/hr_awards) or by telephoning 02 9284 9618 or by emailing [paffairs@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:paffairs@humanrights.gov.au)

An audio file about the Human Rights Medal and Awards 2006 can be downloaded at [www.humanrights.gov.au/hr\\_awards](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/hr_awards)

**ENTRIES CLOSE FRIDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2006**

## **Charter for the Teaching Profession Consultation**

Teaching Australia invites participation in the development of a Charter for the Teaching Profession. All members of the teaching profession are invited to take part in discussions about the development of a charter.

Feedback can be provided through professional associations, unions and other peak education bodies or direct to Teaching Australia.

## **UQ Project Helps Kids and Teens Overcome Anxiety**

<http://www.uq.edu.au/news/index.html?article=9713>

A pioneering University of Queensland (UQ) research project will help children and teenagers overcome anxiety. The internet-based BRAVE Program and the BRAVE Program for Teenagers have been specially designed to teach young people the skills they need to reduce anxiety and to cope with stressful situations. Source:UQ News

## **A clearer picture of women's pay and conditions in the workforce**

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), the National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW) and the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL Australia) have teamed up to commission research on the current position of Australian women in the workforce.

The aim of the research project is to ensure that comprehensive, accurate data about women's pay and conditions are publicly available to assist researchers and policy makers to track progress for women in paid work.

HREOC, NFAW and WEL Australia recognise that there are gaps in the understanding of women's pay and conditions, and the ways in which women may trade off pay for family friendly conditions. However, it is difficult to understand something which hasn't been measured.

This research will assist in developing sound public policy responses and recommend further work that may be needed to promote gender equality at work, including pay equity and family friendly work arrangements.

As well as providing a national snapshot of pay and conditions for women in the first half of 2006, the research will include interviews with women from many regions across Australia to gain a better understanding of factors affecting their work conditions and opportunities.

The research will be conducted by an interdisciplinary team of researchers from around Australia, led by the Women in Social and Economic Research (WiSER) Unit at Curtin University of Technology.

The research is due to be completed by October 2006.

## **National Inquiry into Discrimination against People in Same-Sex Relationships: Financial and Work-Related Entitlements and Benefits**

Submissions for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) National Inquiry into discrimination against same-sex couples in accessing financial and work-related entitlements and benefits has topped 200.

Some of the submissions can be found on HREOC's website:

[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/samesex/submissions\\_index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/samesex/submissions_index.html)

The Inquiry will convene public forums around Australia in the second half of the year, to seek clarification of any issues arising from the submissions, and to gain further information. At the end of the consultation process, the Inquiry will report its findings and make recommendations on changes needed to eliminate discrimination to the Federal Attorney-General who will table the report in Parliament.

## **Rural and Regional Women's Representation**

Federal Senator Judith Troeth will chair an Inquiry into Rural and Regional Women's Representation. The inquiry will report on:

- the position of women in decision making in rural and regional Australia
- factors assisting and impeding the broad participation of women in bodies of influence in rural and regional Australia
- strategies for industry and governments aimed at increasing women's representation for the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of rural and regional Australia.

The report is due in **June 2006**. Phone +61 2 6274 7915, email [diversityonboards@dotars.gov.au](mailto:diversityonboards@dotars.gov.au) or visit [www.dotars.gov.au](http://www.dotars.gov.au).

## **Senate Inquiry to regulate Pregnancy Counselling**

The Senate inquiry examining Senator Stott Despoja's Private Member's Bill to regulate pregnancy counselling, the *Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill 2005*, will hold its first public hearing in Canberra on 22 June 2006. Senator Despoja will be presenting thirteen thousand petitions in support of the Bill.

The inquiry will hear evidence from: - Department of Health and Ageing; Australian Reproductive Health Alliance; National Foundation for Australian Women; Catholic Social Services Australia; Australian Medical Association; Pregnancy Help Australia (Australian Federation of Pregnancy Support Services).

## **Women's Worlds Congress July 3-9 2008 in Spain**

10th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women Mundos de Mujeres / Women's Worlds 2008 UCM, Madrid, Spain

Women's Worlds is the most important congress on academic research on gender and women and feminist social movements. It is a major international event with a main goal: to continue the fight against social injustice and gender inequalities. Feminist researchers, specialists, activists and internationally known public figures will use this opportunity to reflect on important contemporary issues that affect women in specific ways. The University Complutense of Madrid (UCM) was elected in Seoul (WW05) to be the home for the 2008 congress edition.

THEME: New Frontiers: Dares and Advancements

Mundos de Mujeres / Women's Worlds 2008 is open to proposals in ALL fields and themes related to women and gender in contemporary societies as well as historically. However, we have established some thematic guidelines to facilitate classification of proposals for the congress final program. We are placing a special emphasis on two central themes: violence and migrations but these themes are by no means the only ones to be addressed.

The experience of dislocation whether physical or conceptual / symbolic affects women in specific ways. We have chosen three concepts to encompass the general theme of the congress: frontiers, dares and advancements, in order to address a wide range of themes, issues and disciplines that ought to be taken into account for a better understanding of the present World.

MMWW08 will be the ground for a deep and constructive analysis and an optimistic outlook at all the issues that affect women and feminist enterprises today.

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