

August 2014

www.vmws.org.au



President's Report

A/Professor Deborah Colville

The past few months have fortunately been a bit quieter for VMWS, though we've held one excellent event, our annual Lyceum luncheon. We invited Dr Heather Sheard, historian, back to us, and this time held a very interactive group discussion. Her work celebrates previously forgotten World War I women surgeons. I was particularly interested when Heather advised us about options for archiving our VMWS records, and about archiving records of our own experiences as pioneer women in professional settings still, 100 years later.

As at this month, VMWS is now incorporated in Victoria. At our last Annual General Meeting, we voted to adopt the "Model Rules" provided by Consumer Victoria. This is in line with the change of law last year whereby all voluntary organizations must now compulsorily comply with these. The model rules are more formal than our old VMWS Constitution, last updated 2008, but are entirely consistent with our VMWS philosophy. While we could do so in due course, with incorporation achieved there is now no need to formally alter our VMWS Constitution at this stage. Therefore I will not be bringing a VMWS constitution change to this year's AGM.

I have met in August with Australian Medical Student Association's Hui Ling Yeoh (incoming Co-Chair of the AMSA Global Health group) and Asiel Asan (LGBTI Officer) about joint interests between AMSA and VMWS. AMSA are interested in a gender equity policy next year. They also seek to develop their own publicity for their workshops more widely than their current networks. We also met up with Dr Rachel Goh, of AMA Doctors in Training (DIT) and most importantly our AFMW newsletter editor, to identify overlapping interests. As I have done in a previous VMWS newsletter, I commend to you the valuable medical workforce statistics in all the talks on the MABEL (Medicine Australia Balancing Employment and Life) website.

All committee roles become vacant each November. Recruiting our incoming committee is always difficult as everyone is time-poor, but all offers to assist the committee are most welcome. We welcome offers to assist with any roles. Recruitment and sponsorship are pressing issues for the Committee at present.

Ros Terry (our wonderful VMWS Vice President, and previous Constance Stone orator 2013 herself), has been successful in seeking approval from Dr Margaret Henderson, first female consultant at Royal Melbourne Hospital, to be this year's Constance Stone Orator. As she has her 99th birthday the week before our Annual General Meeting on Saturday November 15th, in case Margaret feels unable to talk much, she has pre-recorded some of her Constance Stone talk in advance. Our VMWS AGM that evening, again with our interstate AFMW Council members here for their weekend meetings, including strategic planning for AFMW. I'd like it if you would come along to hear this oration, and to attend our AGM and from 6pm onwards our Constance Stone Oration, and dinner.

Your incoming VMWS Committee plans to meet on 1st December at 7pm for 2015 strategic planning. We welcome input, and attendance, from any VMWS member.

I am sad to report the illness of two members Dr Marie Pirota and Dr Raie Goodwach this year. We wish them all the best for their recovery.

Deb Colville - VMWS President

In This Issue:

2015 Positions Available	page 3
Is there an LGBT friendly doctor in the house?	page 4
International World Regions of MWIA	page 4
Lyceum Luncheon 2014 Report	page 5
Student Elective Experience	page 6
Experiencing 'the gap', that sits at our doorstep, firsthand.	page 8
VMWS Booth at University of Melbourne MD Conference.	page 10
VMWS Membership Form	page 11

Upcoming Events:

Saturday 15th November
Annual General Meeting
Venue - Trinity College, Royal Parade, Parkville
RSVP by 31st October to VMWS secretariat

December 1st
Strategic Planning Meeting

Breaking news.....

Victorian Medical Women's Society is now incorporated. From now on you will notice that all correspondence will refer to Victorian Medical Women's Society Incorporated (Inc.)

VMWS Committee 2014

A/Professor Deborah Colville	President/AFMW Representative
Dr Rosalind Terry	Vice President
Dr Marissa Daniels	Treasurer
Dr Sarah Heynemann	Secretary
Dr Kate Duncan	Public Officer
Dr Desiree Yap	AFMW President
Dr Sarah Grigg	Newsletter Editor
Dr Skye Siskos	Newsletter Editor/ Social Media Liaison
Dr Marissa Daniels	IT Officer
Dr Sarah Lonie	Social Secretary
Dr Zoe Dorevitch	Social Secretary
Dr Lulusha Jayawardena	Social Secretary
Dr Magda Simonis	Immediate Past President
Dr Natalie Marijanovic	AMA Victoria Council Representative
Dr Jill Tomlinson	AFMW
Dr Raie Goodwach	AFMW (VIC)
Ms Hayley Roberts	Student Representative (Monash)
Ms Elysia Robb	Student Representative (Melbourne)
Ms Allison Hemenstall	Student Representative (Melbourne)
Ms Francesca Bridge	Student Representative (Deakin)
Ms Emma Downie	Student Representative (Deakin)

Newsletter Editors 2014

Dr Sarah Grigg
Dr Skye Siskos

Please contact us if you have any feedback, articles, photos or advertisements you would like to contribute to the newsletter.

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East Melbourne
Victoria, 3002

vic@afmw.org.au



Victorian Medical Women's Society Inc., on behalf of its members would like to extend sincerest condolences to those affected by the tragic circumstances of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17. In particular, to the delegates of the Melbourne-based HIV conference who lost their lives and to members of the medical community who lost family members and friends, our thoughts are with you at this solemn time.

Want to join the Victorian Medical Women's Society Inc?

Applications are open now for all 2015 committee positions. Positions available include:

- President
- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Newsletter Editor
- Social Secretary
- Sponsorship Officer
- University student representative/s

Applications of interest are to be directed to the Secretariat, Melissa Morey at vic@afmw.org.au by 3rd November 2014.

Current Position Available

Sponsorship/Publicity Officer

- Develop and maintain relationships with external parties, ie) sponsors, as well as key non-financial supporters of VMWS- to ensure adequate funding and support for VMWS events/ administration costs
- Encourage and support sponsors- by creating tailored sponsorship packages for interested parties; and ensure non-competitive sponsorship
- Liaise with other relevant committee members, in particular Publicity Officer and Newsletter Editors to ensure that sponsors are well looked after
- Ensure all committee members are aware of sponsor activities and rights, particularly at events; and ensure that sponsors are formally acknowledged during and post event
- Liaise with Treasurer on sponsorship invoices
- Issue invoices
- Follow up on sponsorship debtors
- Coordinate publicity for VMWS events- electronic and print media
- Liaise with other relevant committee members in confirming and publicizing events- including ensuring accuracy of event information

Is there an LGBT friendly doctor in the house?

This year's MD Student Conference at The University of Melbourne held a number of sessions regarding LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) health, a topic often overlooked and sorely missed in the medical curricula. I was honoured to be part of the organising team for workshop 'Is there an LGBT friendly doctor in the house?', a session focusing on inclusive and respectful communication with LGBT patients.

We had the pleasure of running this session twice over the conference, with a total of about 250 students attending. We had three wonderful speakers covering the main aspects on LGBT health and communication: Dr Ruth McNair covered aspects of LGB health, Sally Goldner covered a very practical approach to transgender and gender diverse patients and Dr Campbell Paul presented on gender questioning children and adolescents. The presentations were aided by a number of interactive

material. Two short videos were presented, one showing Dr McNair talking about mental health with a bisexual patient and the other showing Dr McNair taking a urological history and talking about the transition history with a patient. Furthermore, we had 4 role plays to give people opportunity using comfortable language and asking the questions they may have hitherto not considered.

Overall, the preliminary feedback -both anecdotal and submitted written responses- has been overwhelmingly positive. Medical students seem to engage with the topics well and responded to the practical approach the speakers took. Of note, some of the feedback suggested this material needs to be taught more widely. We hope to have further opportunities to include this in medical curricula more formally.

By Asiel Adan Sanchez
LGTB Officer
University of Melbourne

International: World Regions of MWIA



- The Medical Women's International Association is a federation of national associations of women doctors in 43 countries in all five continents.
- The Association is composed of 8 geographical regions. Each region is represented on the Executive Committee by its Vice-President.
- The MWIA Secretariat in Dortmund, Germany, coordinates the interests and activities of the Organisation.

Each region of Medical Women's International Association is represented on the Executive Committee by its Vice-President. Each Vice-President is encouraged to organize a regional meeting of the National Associations and Individual Members of her region between International Congresses. These scientific meetings consider issues of importance to the region. For a list of upcoming meetings and congresses head to <http://mwia.net/events/>.

Lyceum Luncheon 2014

by Elysia Robb, The University of Melbourne VMWS Student Representative

On Tuesday July 15th the annual VMWS Lyceum Luncheon was held. I attended along with about twenty other members. We had a lovely lunch and heard from Dr Heather Sheard about Australian medical women who served in World War I, a very similar presentation to that she gave at The Shrine a few months earlier (see the April Newsletter for details).

Although I had attended the presentation at The Shrine, it was enjoyable to hear the information and stories again and as before, there was much support from the audience to create a plaque to honour these highly impressive women, who have not been recognised elsewhere.

As a younger member of the VMWS, the luncheon was a great opportunity to meet and learn about some of our older members and their experiences in medicine and life otherwise. Dr Margaret Henderson, who will become a centenarian next year was present and was looking fit and well. I chatted to other attendees about their various medical experiences as well as fitting motherhood into their careers.

It was truly humbling to be surrounded by so many impressive women who have contributed so much to medicine. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and look forward to the next time.



From L to R: Ros Terry, Heather Sheard, Nancy Nicholas at Annual Lyceum Lunch

Taking newsletter submissions now.....

VMWS is keen to promote opportunities for members to contribute within our community. Volunteering helps you engage with other members, share stories, discover mentors, create collaborations and develop friendships. Learn a new skill, share your skills with a colleague, or just enjoy the company of other medical women. We invite volunteers with an interest in any of the following to submit a short paragraph to vic@afmw.org.au outlining how you would like to contribute:

- Writing: submit a short story, essay, blog article
- Advertising: assist with marketing, design and implement a campaign through digital media
- Event management: entertainers, caterers, ushers, musicians
- Other: be creative!

Student Elective Experience

Every newsletter we invite you to join our student members as they recount varied, fascinating and often confronting medical electives.

Hej from Copenhagen.

I am actually writing this reflection from a Swedish summerhouse, the home of some friends of my mothers. This is just one of the brief vacations I am able to take whilst I undertaking a medical elective in neurology and traumatic brain at the hospitals of Hvidovre and Glostrup in Copenhagen, Denmark.

When I told people that I would be travelling to Copenhagen for my elective I was met by many a confused stare and a puzzled: "why would you want to go there?" (This is also a common question from the Danish people I have met who cannot understand why I chose to come to Copenhagen of all places). I have many reasons.

First, I wanted to go to a country with a high quality health care system. While I believe that we are fortunate in Australia to receive the quality of health care that we do, I also believe there is still a lot Australia can learn from countries such as Denmark. High income taxes enable the government to deliver universal health care. While a small private sector does exist, it is really for elective procedures and very minor in comparison. But this is not the only thing the Danes

do well. They also have much better gender equality within education and the workforce. There is a high rate of female participation in the workforce, small differences between the salaries of men and women and many more opportunities for women to secure leadership positions. As a result, Denmark has been able to maximise economic returns, placing it in the top 25 of the economic and opportunity pillar of the Global Gender Gap Index. They support maternity leave with a generous fifty-two week period of leave. Thirty-two weeks of the allocated fifty-two are able to be divided freely between the parents, in addition to two weeks of paternity leave which provides a great opportunity for mothers to return to work and fathers to spend time bonding with their child. This combined with post-maternity re-entry programmes has led to more women in the work place and has also made it more possible for families to achieve a better work-life balance for both women and men.

Second, I have a long standing interest in the field of neurology and acquired brain injury stemming from my time completing a psychology major as part of my undergraduate Arts degree. So when the offer came through to work with some of the international pioneers in this field I was understandably thrilled. While there are many similarities in the way we practice medicine, there are also vital differences between the systems which were interesting to understand.

Finally, I saw my medical elective as a wonderful opportunity to have some time to actually live in another country, something that is not really available to junior doctors as it was previously, when it was common place for young doctors to complete some of their training in the UK. So I wanted a place where I could actually see myself living and enjoying the lifestyle. In many ways Copenhagen is similar to Melbourne. People enjoy being out and socialising, they have a big food culture with the highest number of Michelin stars awarded to any European nation and they really appreciate art and culture. During the summer months (which is when I am here) everyone is outdoors and they are very active, choosing to cycle to their respective destinations and to gather in parks and social squares. The Danes really value a good work-life balance and during the summer it is not uncommon for the work day to finish at around 3pm, leaving me plenty of time to explore the city!

Now that I've explained why I came to Copenhagen, I would like to tell you a bit about my work while I am here. As part of my elective I will spend four weeks working in the



Francesca, writing this article in Sweden

department of traumatic brain injury (TBI) at Hvidovre and two weeks as part of the neurology team at Glostrup hospital. The TBI department services the capital region of Denmark as well as the Faroe Islands and Greenland. They take the most severe patients with both traumatic and non-traumatic brain injuries, most of whom are in a vegetable state or a minimally conscious state, and engage them in early intensive interdisciplinary rehabilitation. Medically there are very few limitations to the patients they will accept. Patients are not denied admission on the basis of age or 'futility' and the only patients they will not admit are those requiring ventilatory support. Most patients will be discharged after on average three months either to a community based rehabilitation facility, a nursing home or home to the care of their family depending on their level of functioning.

During my time with the neurology department at Glostrup I am able to take part in a number of specialty clinics including epilepsy, MS and headache. The Glostrup has one of the largest neurological departments in Denmark along with an innovative research institute. They also offer wonderful educational opportunities with daily morning case presentations of their most interesting admissions from the previous day. The level of English spoken by most of the Danish people I meet is exceptional, which makes my life so much easier as my Danish is essentially nonexistent!

I consider myself so lucky to have the opportunity to complete my medical elective in Copenhagen. It truly is an amazing city with such a wealth of culture, innovation and energy. I would love to bring some of their ideas regarding gender equality and maintaining a work-life balance as well as their medical insights and knowledge back to Australia. There is a lot we stand to learn from Denmark!

*Written by: Francesca Bridge
- Student Representative, Deakin University*

An Elective Encounter.

Experiencing 'the gap', that sits at our doorstep, firsthand.

Early last year, after taking a leave-of-absence for a semester to have my first child, I spent two weeks completing an elective placement at the Joyce Palmer Health Service on Palm Island in Queensland before recommencing my MBBS. It was certainly an interesting way to get back into medicine.

Palm Island is a small, remote island off the coast of Townsville with a population of 3000. The population is almost all Indigenous Australian. The Joyce Palmer Health Service is a small primary care hospital situated on the island. Palm Island also has a small supermarket, a milk-bar, a hotel, multiple schools, including primary and secondary, a police station, a pub and a few other small businesses. The population of 3000 is very fluctuant as many people move between 'Palm', as the locals call it, Townsville and other Indigenous communities.

The island only has about 300 houses on it. When you do the maths, you will quickly realise that this equates to an average of ten people per house. To make matters worse, the housing is extremely basic and of course this has many health consequences for the population. Although many more houses were being built while we were there, the waiting list for housing was huge, so this was not going to make much difference unfortunately.

Palm Island is a beautiful, picturesque island: it hosts tropical weather, palm trees and luscious bush surrounded by aqua-coloured, warm waters and white sand. It neighbours Magnetic Island, an extremely popular tourist destination. Unfortunately when we visited 'Palm' the season was not optimal for swimming due to 'stingers' occupying the water... oh and the 'caution: crocodile' signs posted in many languages all over the place.

During my time on the island I shadowed each of the five Generalists and/or General Practitioners who ran the hospital. The doctors were fantastic hosts and teachers. Some lived on the island and had done so for many years, while others commuted from Townsville each week and were only there transiently. Specialists from Townsville ran clinics, including Endocrinology, Infectious Diseases, Diabetes, on a weekly or monthly basis. There is an Emergency Department at the JPHS for resuscitation and stabilisation, however any seriously ill patients, well enough to travel, are transported to a secondary or tertiary facility as soon as possible. Helicopter, airplane and ferry transport are all utilised for this purpose.

I learnt a lot about Indigenous health and culture, both in and out of the hospital. Palm Island is a unique environment in Australia, in that the population is almost 100 % Indigenous, that is Aboriginal and/or Torres Straight Islander. I saw first hand 'the gap' between Indigenous Australians and the remainder of the Australian population. It was obvious in the hospital and on the streets of Palm Island that the general health of many of the 'Palm' people is poor. Some of the physical and mental health issues I learnt about were: diabetes, obesity, tropical infections, skin infections and hygiene, depression, substance abuse and suicide. I also learnt a lot about General Practice and remote medicine.

Shockingly, there was (probably still is) a 90 % unemployment rate on the island. So it is no surprise that there are many mental health problems, including large rates of depression and substance abuse and one of the highest incidents of suicide in Australia. On top of the unemployment there is not much to do on the island and there seemed to be a lack of community - perhaps being an outsider I was remiss to this, or excluded from seeing this though. As an example, prior to our arrival, there had been a local football competition running, however sadly this had stopped due to the cessation of sponsorship and no one getting around to renewing it.

I learnt firsthand that 'Bush Medicine' is real practise. Many locals preferred to use Bush Medicine alone or with Western medicine, than Western medicine alone, for their ailments. I also learnt that many Aboriginals present to health professionals quite late in their illnesses. They put up with a lot of symptoms before consulting a Western doctor or nurse.

Contrary to popular belief 'Palm' was not a dangerous place to stay. We felt safe and welcome the entire time. Yes, the island is run-down and is in need of a lot of public health measures to lift the health and quality-of-life of the locals, and it is different to any other place I have visited in Australia, but it is certainly safe enough to recommend the experience to others.

My experience on Palm Island was extremely worthwhile and will, no doubt, shape my future practise, especially from a public health perspective. My partner and son enjoyed their 'holiday'. We mixed with the locals every few nights for a meal at the pub, we went for walks and runs all over the island and we even swam a few times, against local advice. It was a great way for me to get back into my studies. There was a lot of general, remote and Indigenous medicine to experience and I was able to have my son close enough to be able to breastfeed him as necessary.

Over a year has passed now since we left and I still think of ways I could contribute to the 'Palm' community. Perhaps I will sponsor their football competition in the future. Although this seems like a small contribution, and like it couldn't possibly make much of a difference, it is important to realise that everything little bit counts. Perhaps I will return one day to actually practise medicine there. It is easy to leave these places and

take a great experience; it is not always easy to give something back, but I feel like I owe it to the 'Palm' to endeavour to do so at least!

On a side note, I visited the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre at the Melbourne Museum recently. Currently there is an exhibition called 'Empty Coolamons' by Robyne Latham that recognises the Stolen Generation. It is absolutely beautiful and truly moving and I highly recommend experiencing it. It is on until early October.

By Elysia Robb The University of Melbourne Student Representative



Elysia and her son, Orlando, outside of the Joyce Palmer Health Service in the very bright sunshine!

Dr Rosalind Terry (Vice President of VMWS) has kindly offered transportation for our members wishing to attend the AGM this year in November. Those who are interested please contact, Ros on 0427 366 516.

Reminder
VMWS Newsletter is going GREEN and moving towards an electronic newsletter platform. If you opt to still receive your VMWS newsletter via post please contact us at vic@afmw.org.au

VMWS Booth at University of Melbourne MD Conference

As some of you may be aware, the new medical course at the University of Melbourne – a four-year Doctor of Medicine/Masters program – includes a yearly conference for all students, run by students. In previous years, each year level attended a separate conference, however this year all year levels of the MD course met to attend the one conference. This meant that approximately 1300 students attended a four-day conference, with many sessions run in parallel and many social events after hours – a record attendance at any student conference, world-wide, boasted the head of the Medical Education Unit at the opening!!

On the second day of the conference, Allison Hempenstall and I, the University of Melbourne VMWS Student Representatives, set up a VMWS booth at a lunchtime trade fair. With the help of Marissa, Deb and Melissa we put a lot of VMWS paraphernalia on display and attracted a lot of interest from both women and men.

We ran a competition: ‘Guess how many condoms in the container?’ – to promote safe sex

– which attracted a lot of interest and two winners, who guessed within six. Winners, Tristan and Stewart, are pictured with their MWIA t-shirt prizes.

We received a lot of interest and hopefully some new members. Some students expressed that they would like the VMWS to have more of a presence at the University of Melbourne. A couple of students suggested that we could start up a ‘coffee group’ to meet regularly and discuss the stresses and strains of university and any issues we had – especially regarding sexism, as well as positive experiences of course. To this end, Allison and I plan to run an event later in the year to promote the VMWS at the University of Melbourne and will discuss the possibility of such a ‘coffee group’ at the next committee meeting.

In addition we had some interest from a potential sponsor, which will also be discussed at the next committee meeting.

Overall it was an enjoyable exercise and great to get some additional exposure for the VMWS.

By Elysia Robb, The University of Melbourne Student Representative



Winners of the VMWS competition - Stewart (above) and Tristan (right - centre) with their prize t-shirts



The Victorian Medical Women's Society Inc.

Celebrating our history, advancing our future

TO:

Membership Application Invoice 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015

ABN 67 120 250 797

(MEMBERSHIP PERIOD IS FROM 1 JULY TO 30TH JUNE)

Membership Eligibility: Full membership is open to registered female medical practitioners (FMP); non-registered FMPs can join as an associate member, and Student membership is open to female medical students.

(NOTE: this invoice becomes a tax receipt upon payment, please retain the top section for your records)

Full Membership	Senior Members (>65 years old)
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year \$160	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year \$120
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 years \$432	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 years \$324
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 years \$680	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 years \$510
Rural Members (>100km from GPO)	Student Members
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year \$70	1 year \$35 (* only receive electronic corresp)
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 years \$189	Retired Members
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 years \$297.50	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year \$120
<input type="checkbox"/> Life member	<input type="checkbox"/> Donation

Please complete and send the bottom section of this form to the VMWS via email or mail so we can ensure your membership details and preferences are kept up to date

Payment Method:

CHQ/money order to Victorian Medical Women's Society. Post: VMWS Secretariat, PO Box 202, East Melb VIC 8002

Electronic Transfer to Victorian Medical Women's Society;

BSB: 033 089; Act No: 297664. Please **include your name** in the **transfer info** enter the transfer date here: _____

Membership Details:

(1 July 2014-30 June 2015)

Membership type:	Duration:	Amount: \$
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Personal Details:

First Name & Surname:	Date:
Date of Birth:	
Mailing Address:	
Phone:	Fax:
Email:	
Specialty/ Area of practice:	
Year of Graduation:	

- Tick here if you wish to continue receiving newsletters via mail
- Tick here if you do not wish to receive VMWS email correspondence
- Tick here if you do not wish other VMWS members to have access to your e-mail address
- Tick if you do not wish to receive email correspondence from the Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW)
- Tick here if you do not wish other AFMW members to have access to your e-mail address

Car-pooling: Potential driver: Potential passenger:

Donations are gratefully received. Please advise if you wish for your donation to be used for a specific purpose.

<http://www.afmw.org.au/vic>

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