



BOLD

Women and Leadership
Newsletter

July 2020



BOLD Women—Building a Better Future

Christine Cooper—IEUA Assistant Federal Secretary

Recently, IEU BOLD women have had to face some fast changing and confusing times. In a matter of days, we were pushed into the world of remote learning and isolated workplaces. We needed to learn to juggle the additional workload that presented. We learnt to build stronger collectives through online organising to protect our rights. With these online forums we fought for better workplace health and safety conditions. We fought against unfair dismissals and stand downs.

In this newsletter, we will hear from BOLD women from around the country about their experiences and actions during the pandemic. And from these articles, we can see that we did what BOLD women do – we supported each other, we kept each other safe and we fought back! COVID-19 presents us with an opportunity to reflect on our work and our roles in the economy. We quickly saw that COVID-19 was not gender neutral. Women comprise more than 76 per cent of IEU members and more than 70 per cent of workers in health and care sectors. Women also form the majority of carers for families, the ill and the vulnerable. The impact of COVID-19 on women as workers and carers is therefore substantial.

News flash to Governments! Women are essential workers. It is time to rethink and celebrate women’s essential role in society. It is time to reconsider how to value and remunerate the women who work in these essential areas. It is time to call on Federal Government to put the gender lens over their recovery policies to ensure that those most essential receive the support deserved.

COVID-19 presents us with an opportunity now to campaign for better systemic changes that protect women. As BOLD women, we can lead campaigns to have women and girls placed at the centre of economies and set us on a path towards gender equality.



Women of Steel

Tina Smith IEUA NSW/ACT organiser

Proud to be from the Gong. “Women of Steel” documentary makes festival of Sydney top 10!

The IEUA gives a heartfelt and solidarity salute in congratulating Director Robynne Murphy and all the other brave women of steel on this momentous achievement.

Women of Steel is a documentary film which depicts the struggles of a group of working-class, migrant women who were denied jobs by one of the biggest employers in the Illawarra in the 1980’s. BHP employed approximately 20,000 workers but didn’t have the ticker nor the will to hire women to do the same work as their male workforce. These women stood up to BHP. They wanted to work, they wanted equality, so they took the fight to the employer and continued the fight into the high courts and won. Through their efforts and struggle they can stand proud because they have helped to pave a path for gender equality, change discrimination laws, challenged social norms and have inspired a generation of females to be confident in pursuing any vocation they choose.

The film has been a long time in the making and would not have reached this point without the decades of support from local community volunteers, over 500 donors and Robynne’s 30 year career on the floor of the Port Kembla steelworks. The IEUA along with other unions have supported and promoted the film, including at the IEUA NSW/ACT 2018 Women’s Conference and at a Wollongong CEO IWD event, where Robynne was a guest speaker.

<https://ondemand.sff.org.au/film/women-of-steel/>

View Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/344035067>



(L to R) Former steelworker Yasim Riittau, SCLC Secretary Arthur Rorris, IEU Organiser Tina Smith, Film Director Robynne Murphy

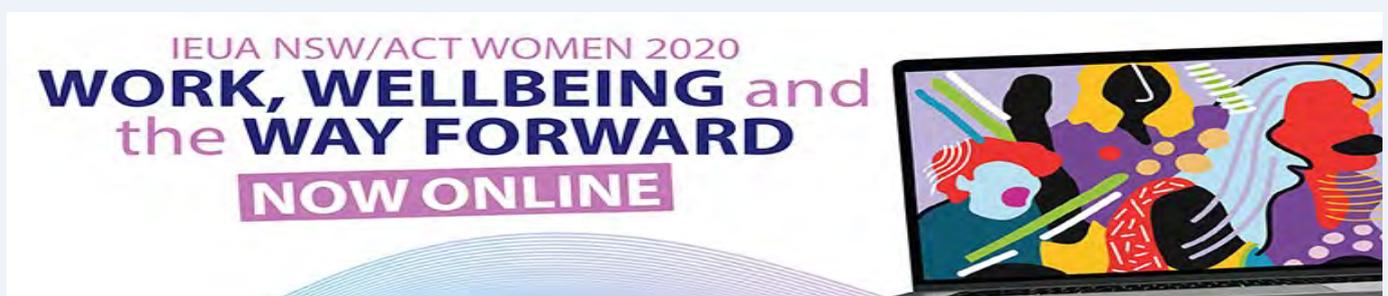
IEUA NSW/ACT Women's Conference:

IEU WOMEN 2020 – WORK, WELLBEING and the WAY FORWARD

The 2020 IEUA NSW/ACT Women's Conference has been reframed as a series of online sessions due to COVID 19. These sessions will be held in the late afternoon or early evening. This is exciting as now more BOLD IEU women can attend. **For registration details contact email pd@ieu.asn.au.**

The proposed online sessions include:

- **28 July - Women Working in Boys' Schools – issues, strategies and support *Therese O'Loughlin and Marit Clayton from IEUA Vic/Tas and Phoebe Lovett from Marist College North Sydney and an IEUA NSW/ACT Executive member***
This workshop will focus on the issues faced by women working in boys' schools and will consider ways to establish clear expectations with students in regard to challenging behaviour which has a gendered tone/background/source/target. There will be an exploration of workplaces where there are cultures of toxic masculinity and how to establish fair and respectful processes within a school to address gendered violence/discrimination/intolerance. Strategies will be discussed to model respectful behaviour for students.
- **4 August - the Australian industrial landscape and key issues for women *ACTU Legal and Industrial Officer Sophie Ismail in conversation with IEUA Assistant Secretary Christine Cooper***
Sophie Ismail played a major role in the development of the International Labour Organisation's Convention 190 which seeks to outlaw harassment and violence in the workplace and she was also involved with the ACTU's submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission's Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces.
- **11 August - Panel session - Union women discuss work, wellbeing and the way forward *Christine Cooper (IEUA), Vanessa Seagrove (Unions NSW), Pam Adams (secondary teacher in the Lismore Diocese) and Josephine Geer (SSSO Learning and Development Officer, Wollongong Diocese)***
- **19 August - Workload Issues in Schools – knowing your rights *Berna Simpson (IEU Officer), Bernadette Bradley (IEU secondary teacher member), Libby Lockwood (IEU primary teacher member/member of IEU Executive)***
This workshop will assist in understanding the provisions in Work Practices Agreements in the Catholic systemic sector, how to utilise WHS laws where appropriate, and the importance of collective action at workplace level.
- **12 October - BOLD – Building Our Leadership Development *Christine Cooper (IEUA Federal Assistant Secretary)***
This workshop will use a WRAW (Women's Rights at Work) Chat process to identify key issues in the workplace and then to discuss strategies to develop an agenda for change.
- **19 October - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives for Students and Staff *Marilyn Jervis (IEU Officer) and members of the IEU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee***
In this workshop, the presenters will share their own experiences and perspectives and focus on strategies which provide opportunities for all students to develop understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, communities, culture and languages. There will also be discussion of educational practices which are responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' learning and supportive of their wellbeing needs.





A BOLD Conversation with the IEUA Federal President Deb James

This year we celebrate the election of Deb James as the IEUA Federal President. Deb is also the General Secretary of the Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmania Branch and has held this position since 2006. Prior to being elected General Secretary of the Branch, Deb was the Deputy Secretary of the Branch for over 5 years and before moving to the Branch, Deb was Assistant Federal Secretary of the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) for 8 years. We took the opportunity to ask her about her journey and her experiences and what she saw as current challenges to BOLD women, especially now as we face the impact of the pandemic.

Tell us about your journey that has led you to where you are now.

I grew up in an extended, working class, Catholic family in Reservoir, one of four girls and the first in our family to go on to tertiary education. My mum was a strong, very capable, loving, and generous woman and the key organizer of just about everything in our lives. The women in our family made things happen and, together with a catholic girls' school education in the 70s led by some feisty nuns, I was surrounded by strong women who didn't see any barriers.

I went on to teach in catholic primary schools in the eighties and worked my way into both informal and formal leadership roles. You don't need to be in an official role to lead, you can lead by example, by speaking up, by promoting consultation and change.

What inspired you to step up to become a union activist?

I had become the union rep at St Stephen's in the mid-eighties when the Victorian Catholic Primary Staff Association was in its early days and went on to become a member of its Executive. Fighting for wages and conditions in those early days was important as was finding the balance between on one hand teaching as a vocation, doing it for the kids, love of the job and on the other, fairness, a just wage, respect, a say in decisions about your work. A vacancy for a 'field officer' came up at the VCPSA and I leapt at it. The office was in the Victorian Trades Hall Building, the heart of unionism in Victoria and home at the time to several other unions. It was an incredible opportunity to be so immersed in working for workers and surrounded by unionists. An opportunity came up to work in the Federal Office of the union filling in for Carol Matthews when she went on maternity leave. They were big shoes to fill and I'm very grateful for her support and mentoring. The Federal Office relocated to Melbourne and I became Assistant Federal Secretary working with a great network of women, and men, across all IEUA Branches. When leadership of the Victorian Branch was moving on back in 2000, I put my hand up to take the role of Deputy Secretary. The absolute best thing about moving out of the federal office and back to the Branch was the opportunity to be immersed in issues for members and fights on the ground. When Tony Keenan, then Secretary, moved on in 2005 I became the first woman to be Secretary of VIEU, working with a committed team of activists including many strong and supportive BOLD women.

What gives you the energy & drives you to do what you do?

I work with an amazing, dedicated and very talented crew at the IEUA Vic Tas branch. With a lot of passion, humour, and energy I reckon we contribute to making a real difference to the working lives of our members. From the big campaigns to the battles for individual members, it's energising knowing that you are on the side of fighting for fairness and empowering teachers, support staff through the strength and power that comes with union.

What gives you the courage to continue to deal with the pushback from individuals in a society that is still patriarchal?

The voice of the sisterhood is critical, but our actions speak much louder. It's not courage you need to deal with pushback rather a determination not to be pushed back and a willingness to call out individuals, leaders, businesses, politicians when they cross lines. We've come a long way but there's still a very long way to go. We'll be getting there when women in leadership reflect the proportion of women employed, when the boards of the top ASX listed companies have truly representative and gender equal boards, when childcare and aged care workers are paid salaries that properly value their work, when women retire with super equal to men, when women are not judged on their appearance, their age, their tone of voice, when women are not always the default parent looking after the kids in the perception of the community, when radio shock jocks are sacked for telling the Prime Minister to put a sock down the mouth of a Jacinda Ardern, when women can be safe on the way home and at home and so many more 'whens'!

The voice of the sisterhood is critical, but our actions speak much louder. It's not courage you need to deal with pushback rather a determination not to be pushed back and a willingness to call out individuals, leaders, businesses, politicians when they cross lines.

How do you think women can best prepare for a position of leadership? What are some examples you have done in preparation for leadership and as a leader supporting other women? Take every opportunity that comes your way. Don't wait to be 'ready' or for the right time or to get more experience - just do it and get better at it by doing it. As a leader, I try to give opportunities to others who might be holding back and waiting for the 'right time'. Build a trusted and mutually supportive network around yourself. You need a 'gang' where you can be honest, vulnerable, supportive, encouraging, give and take advice, debrief, decompress, plot and plan and have a few wines and a good laugh. Don't just stay in the silo of that group. They're your back up, your close network. Your leadership requires you to lead for everyone, with everyone.

As we combat the COVID 19 pandemic, what do you see as the most significant challenges for women? Do you think there will be a lasting impact on the value of essential work of roles that are traditionally held by women? In society's recovery from the pandemic, what do you see as the most essential changes needed to support women that we should fight for?

I hope this time has been a wake-up call for society generally about the real value of work predominantly undertaken by women in the 'care' sector and we see an adjustment to thinking what work is important. I hope also that the myths around working from home being impossible or too problematic to be agreed to by employers are busted once and for all. Finally, I hope the insight into having to get things done while caring for kids that so many men will have had over the last few months will bring change in attitude and behaviour.



What are your hopes for the future for IEU women?

It's simple: do what you want to do, be what you want to be – yeah!

Engaging young women to be BOLD activists – BOLD tLN Session

Jacqui Scott & Nicky Minus – IEU VicTas BOLD women

On 11 May, almost 40 members of the IEUA's BOLD network met online to talk about how they came to be activists and unionists. The conversation was hosted by IEU VicTas staff members Nicky Minus and Jacqui Scott, who narrated their personal activist journeys. The sharing of our stories and experiences was empowering and we found ourselves reflected in each other's stories, identifying how the personal became political.

Reading each other's experiences helped start a conversation on how to engage with and build the next generation of women activists in our BOLD movement. Nicky and Jacqui gave an overview of the current situation for young workers and reflected on the issues and barriers preventing them from being active in their union, before sharing practical tips and strategies to overcome these.

Here's what some IEUA BOLD members had to say:

Why are you part of this BOLD group and what brought you to activism?



Nicky Minus and Jacqui Scott, IEU VicTas



Elizabeth Heggart,
IEUNSW/ACT

"Through my involvement in the IEU NSW/ACT and meeting many wonderful, strong women who just keep fighting the fight. Never taking no for an answer and standing up for those who don't have a voice."

Elizabeth Heggart

"Because women supporting women is so important. No one else knows the struggle and how important sisterhood is. My dad instilled in me a social justice streak that is long and deep. My mum tempered that with compassion - I love them both dearly. I lost my first job standing up to a boss when I was 14. I was terrified my mum and dad would be cross - they were proud of me!"

Tracey Spiel

"Networking. I am passionate about women being heard. So much to offer, so much wisdom and yet often silenced."

Jan Cox

"My mum was a bold woman who taught me to stand up and speak out on my values. I have had the privilege to meet so many bold women along the way and together we are building a movement of BOLD women - to support each other and to lead for a better world."

Christine Cooper

"As an Aboriginal person, it is hard to work in both worlds and I found it difficult to understand the requirements of being a teacher and placing my culture around it. A lot of my support staff have trouble with the information sent out so a big part for me is to create information that is appropriate for Aboriginal people in my area."

Kym Oakley

"I have always been quite social justice oriented (I probably did my parents' heads in when I was at school). My dad has always been a strong supporter of the need for equity, equality, and fairness, so I probably got it off him a bit. I think it's so important that our voices are heard and that we support one another. Going in to teaching and seeing the inequity in things like the distribution of leadership positions and the treatment of female teachers in boys' schools really spurred me on."

Phoebe Lovett



"I decided to become a part of the BOLD group, because I had spent a long time looking at inequities in society and the work-place, for both students and teachers and I was tired of it. I needed to feel like I was doing something more. I needed to find like-minded people to gather with and learn from. I have been continually impressed with those I have found. My mother always promoted me to speak up and speak out."

Jenny Johnson

"My grandfather was the union rep at the mail centre he and my mother worked at for Australia Post. At a career's expo in high school I came across United Voice, joined, and started putting posters up in our tearoom at McDonald's in the town where I worked as a teenager! The union has always looked out for me and now that I'm a rep I can help look out for others."

Shanae Burnett-Raby

What is your takeaway from tonight's session about engaging young women to be BOLD activists?



"Use the content and language to meet the listener where they are - start at the point where they want to know and work with them from there (i.e. don't talk at them, but with them!)"

Amy Cotton

"Create more opportunities for activism and getting involved. Do not assume anything. Language is key."

Cherie Wills

"To strive for inclusivity, always. Oh, and to celebrate our wins and history!"

Elise Cuthbertson



Amy Cotton,
IEU NSW/ACT

"A good reminder to not assume that non-members have all the information about unions."

Ruth Pendavingh

Cherie Wills, IEUA-QNT

"Importance of sharing stories and experiences - we all have a story to share and tell and we are all still writing it!"

Rachael Evans

To get involved with the IEU BOLD network and join our conversations, contact your IEUA Branch Women & Equity committee member.



2020: Not what I expected

Jenny Johnson—IEU SA BOLD woman

As I wrote my first entries into my yearly planner, 2020 was looking good. I had a carefully spaced and considered assortment of events. I had planned a trip to my family interstate in April, I had enrolled in some Art workshops, was continuing my Master of Gifted Education, was going to take part in the Anna Stewart Memorial Project, was looking forward to being more proactive with IEU SA Equity Committee activities, was training in enterprise bargaining to become a bargaining rep, and was off on an interstate retreat. For some, this may not seem like much but these were all things I really wanted to do and it had been many years since I allowed myself this many opportunities just because I wanted to (but that's another story). Work and family commitments have always dominated my calendar.



Jenny Johnson (right) with Britta Jureckson, IEU SA

I left the school swimming carnival to have a drink with colleagues. I had arranged for my son to make his way home from school and my daughter to meet me there to get a lift home. I had never been so organised for personal benefit. After ordering a drink, an executive staff member came to our table and said we had to go home and not gather together. We found out that COVID-19 had affected our school community at the same time as the media did. We were the first school in South Australia affected. Little did I realise that this would make such an impact on my year. This was the beginning of a new 2020...not the one I had so meticulously composed.

Our school was automatically closed and cleaned, and we returned to work within three days. However, those three days were the start of something new. Our educational landscape changed.

We were supposed 'business as usual'.

But we weren't.

Some staff members were stood down. Some took time off. Some families withdrew their children immediately as the reality of the virus hit home. Others sent their children to school like every other day, but it wasn't. The emails started to pile up. The things we could say. The things we couldn't say. School expectations. Directions were contradictory. School events were postponed indefinitely and face- to- face meetings were cancelled.

We had to try and socially distance our students. We couldn't.

The plans for future teaching changed daily. The pressure was beginning to mount. But I was lucky, I still was working, unlike so many others across the nation.

At home, my husband would spend his days between working and self- isolating, while I was teaching and the kids were at school. Our house is small, so he had to 'camp out' and all the domestic duties became mine. Conversations changed. He became increasingly anxious about ensuring we were stocked for the inevitable worst and I tried to ignore his discussions of impending doom and sourcing more toilet paper, as he implored I wasn't taking the situation seriously. I worried about the general public not social-distancing. I worried about my children. I worried about what would happen if I got this virus.

My art classes started with hand washing and sanitising and finished with sanitising equipment and washing hands. This was the new norm. Eight times a day. Until the soap and sanitiser ran out. Colleagues began to map the supermarkets they would visit to buy soap and toilet paper on the way home from work, knowing full well that the aisles would be empty.

We taught face- to- face and online simultaneously. Student work completion and attendance varied. School reports were still due despite gaps in assessment submission. We had to assure the school we could 'deliver quality online learning'. Would we be stood down too if we didn't sound confident? We wrote new programs for students 'just- in case' and aimed for quality, like always. We had to assume the students had limited equipment, if any, at home (in a practical subject area I

had to get creative), or any learning support. For my children that was certainly the case. My Year 6 child stayed home teaching himself for nearly four weeks. My Year 10 child was sporadic in attendance, depending on the subjects of the day. I was at work and expending my energy at school and when I got a moment would hope that my kids were doing ok. Had they eaten? Were they engaged? Were they safe? I would feel jealous when watching parents complaining online about home-schooling their kids. The boundaries and expectations as a teacher changed daily. These were 'unprecedented times'.

State borders got closed. Our April interstate holiday got cancelled. Thankfully, I still needed the holidays to finish the Art Department's term's lessons for online teaching. I hadn't seen my parents for nearly two years (as I had cancelled the last trip because of the bushfires) and I couldn't justify visiting them due to their vulnerability. I was sure they would understand. I sent them sanitiser, gloves, and masks in the mail. Then a colleague lost a parent younger than mine.

Thankfully my friends could see beyond the virus and restrictions and helped to reduce any anxiety by continuing to interact online or meet one-on-one for a sanitised and socially- distanced coffee.

Businesses soon closed, restrictions were put in place and the official school holidays began. Friends cancelled weddings and birthday gatherings were postponed. All of my children's activities were cancelled and they weren't allowed to go out with friends. The art workshops eventually got cancelled, as did all the other things planned for 2020. That was OK and necessary. I set up my house for working from home. I felt 'safer' there. I had my children near and I was feeling more in control. I worked on finishing the term's programs and catching up on University work. I also had a break from the barrage of COVID-19 related emails from work. I watched COVID updates online, following transmission statistics instead. I didn't need to worry about students getting too close. If I had to go to the shops, I wore a mask and sanitised my hands. I used my elbows for buttons. I adhered to social distancing markers. I asked shop assistants to wipe down surfaces. I was very careful. Things seemed very manageable.

I learned how to Google Meet, Zoom, and Screencastify. I made 'how to' videos in preparation for online teaching and practiced online meetings. I was 'on fire'. But I wasn't. My hair was falling out in handfuls.

Just before home-school started, we were told we would return to face- to- face teaching. We wouldn't need all of the online lessons we had prepared. I wanted to cry. I had spent no time with my children during the holidays. However, returning to face-to-face teaching brought us closer to 'normal'. Some staff that was stood down started to return to work. Students came back to nearly 100% capacity. Exhaustion from the changes is still real.

A lot of restrictions have been lifted in South Australia and we are fortunate. I still worry for my family, friends, and colleagues interstate and the pressures put on them, in a different set of circumstances. 2020 is not what I expected, but as I wipe away another strand of hair from the keyboard, I can now exhale more freely.



Reflections from an SA Boldie on COVID-19

Britta Jureckson - IEU SA BOLD Woman & IEU SA President

'In these unprecedented times...' I feel like I have heard this phrase so many times during the last few months, that the magnitude of the words has been lost. When I looked up the word 'unprecedented', I found the definition to include: *'without previous instance; never before known or experienced; unexampled or unparalleled'*. Reflecting back on my personal and professional experience of navigating the delicate terrain of COVID-19, I have absolutely felt that the experience was never before known, and completely unparalleled to anything that had come into my life to date. Ever the optimist, I would like to start with the positives I have taken out of this 'unprecedented' experience. First and foremost, it was a sobering reminder about which things were most important in my life. When stripped away from social gatherings, regular outings, and usual routines, I became acutely aware of the things which made my life meaningful and happy. Without the distractions of my usual day today commitments, I was reminded about how much I value those who are closest to me, my own physical health and well-being, and the sometimes guilt-inducing level of privilege I feel to live in a country with such an incredible medical system.



Britta Jureckson, IEU SA

Some other, lower-level positive reflections have also eventuated via the pandemic restrictions. For example I am far more efficient when food shopping, as I have learnt to shop with a list (I always just wandered around hoping to remember what I needed), and to get in and out as quickly as possible! This has saved me a lot of time without darting to the shops each night after work. My personal hygiene is at an all-time high, and I have never been so conscious of washing my hands, using hand sanitiser, and wiping every hard surface in the vicinity. In addition my household is tidier, as I have had more time and energy to devote to smaller domestic projects which make my space feel both personalised and comfortable. Finally I have spent more time outside walking in nature, connecting with my local neighbourhood, chatting with neighbours as we pass each other on the street than I ever have before. I am sure there are many positive lessons I have learned during these times, which will carry into my future lifestyle choices and influence my decisions moving forward.

It is difficult to reflect on the Coronavirus experience without touching on a few negatives. In the first instance, I had never considered myself a 'frontline worker' as an educator. Historically, I had imagined that 'frontline workers' were nurses, doctors, police officers, and emergency first responders. It is now with great reverence that I hold supermarket cashiers, public transportation workers, post office employees, food/goods delivery drivers, warehouse workers, hairdressers, child-care providers, early educators and tradespeople not only as 'essential service workers' but also as the heroes that kept our community going when the future was most uncertain. I am sure I have left other integral members of our community off of my list, but wish to say how very thankful I am for the selflessness that all essential service workers demonstrated during the entirety of the COVID-19 escalation.

Further to this, I was shocked and dismayed to see how many workers were disadvantaged in their ability to work from home, or manage flexible working conditions, due to the very nature of their jobs. I am sure you are aware of how 'gendered' the Coronavirus implications may have been, and it is another timely reminder about generic inequalities in our current employment system. For those who are unable to afford a computer, or other suitable device, I'm sure the mayhem of the Coronavirus restrictions was even more stressful than my personal experience. It was difficult not to wish that things could be easier for those who are most in need, and I am sure that if we work together as a society we can achieve more equality for our workforce.

To my fellow educators, I have absolutely been in awe of the professionalism, flexibility, integrity, and bravery you have all shown during this period. With recommendations shifting almost daily, inordinate amounts of time being spent creating resources, shifting to an online learning platform, and constantly keeping our students' needs at the forefront of our minds, I could not be prouder to stand alongside such a fine group of professionals. The last few months have reminded me about how important face to face interaction is, and how much energy teachers gain from the feedback the students in front of them provide each day. It has been wonderful to be back at school with my regular students, teaching to my regular timetable, in my regular classroom. I certainly missed them during the online learning period!

I hope that whatever reflections you take from your own COVID-19 experiences include both positives to carry forward, and some negatives that spark your motivation to advocate change. I hope you are keeping healthy, safe, and looking after yourself during these 'unprecedented times'.

How to start a feminist book club

Elise Cuthbertson - IEUA-QNT BOLD woman & Communications Officer

“Women and fiction remain, so far as I am concerned, unsolved problems.”

So wrote Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, her blistering 1929 manifesto which argued women should have the same artistic independence as men. 90 years later, I believe the maxim holds true.

It has been a complete joy to meet at the intersection of these two great interests: feminism and books. With the confidence and support of the BOLD program, I founded the IEUA-QNT Feminist Book Club in 2017. The ground rules were simple: one hour, four times per year and the opportunity to discuss everything about the intentions, elucidations and culminations of books written by or concerning women. Like most things in life, we have gained momentum over time to become a strong contingent of women who are equally as passionate about the books we read as the themes they raise: sexism, heartbreak, paternalism, joy, liberation, equity, solidarity, hope and many other of the fundamental concerns of life. Our reading tastes have been deliberately broad. Sometimes the subject matter is heavy, other times light. We have made the journey from Indigenous history to wartime romance, from feminist polemic to murder mystery and back again. Like all satisfying narratives, these things come full circle.

For those seeking book recommendations, I've included our club's past and upcoming selections below.

Our feminist reads:

The Erratics by Vicki Laveau-Harvie (currently reading)

Breaking Badly by Georgie Dent (September 2019)

Boys Will Be Boys by Clementine Ford (May 2019)

The Sunday Girl by Pip Drysdale (February 2019)

Eggshell Skull by Bri Lee (November 2018)

Alias Grace by Margaret Atwood (August 2018)

Happiness for Humans by P.Z Reizin (May 2018)

The Force of Nature by Jane Harper (February 2018)

We That Are Left by Lisa Bigelow (November 2017)

Finding Eliza by Larissa Behrendt (October 2017)



Elise Cuthbertson, IEUA-QNT



How to start your own amazing feminist book club:

They say starting is the hardest part, but with books, for me at least, cracking open a cover (or switching on an e-reader) comes easily. So too did founding a book club. Speaking from my experience, all you need is a list of some great books and the email addresses of some great people. Hopefully assembling your list of people is easy: cast the net wide and you might be surprised by how many modest bookworms are lurking in your midst.

On the matter of deciding what to read, I find trawling through new releases, favourite lists and ratings on sites like [Goodreads](#) are great ways to start. I also like to keep things democratic by asking members for their book recommendations and running online polls through sites like [Poll-maker](#). Getting your club involved in book selections not only builds engagement in your club but, may I say, provides a handy scapegoat for when a book does not meet expectations. The club that chooses together, commiserates together! Fortunately, we haven't had too many disappointing reads in our club. And at the very least, every book has provided an impetus for quality discussion, if not praise for literary excellence.

For me, book club discussions always excite and surprise – whether it be an insight into a book that didn't occur to me or a personal reflection about a deeper topic that somebody feels comfortable to share. I think it's important to let conversation flow organically. While I always arrive at book club with a list of some key questions and reflections, I find my primary role is to listen and create opportunities to include all participants in discussions.

Ultimately, our little club has helped me to nurture my joy for reading and to be part of a fantastic network of intelligent and passionate women.

I have found not just *a room of one's own*, but a room for us all.

BOLD IEU Women: Our Proud History

Pam Smith – IEUA NSW/ACT Assistant Secretary

In the words of a recent headline, “Why does it take a crisis to recognise these women?” Within the context of COVID-19 there has been an enhanced focus on the work sectors which are largely employ women - health, community services, education and retail.

As IEU members will be aware from the Union’s Equal Remuneration (ERO) case on behalf of early childhood teachers, unfortunately much of this work has been undervalued, under appreciated and underpaid.

If there is a positive to arise from the COVID-19 situation, then it may be how we rethink and celebrate this work and how we better value and remunerate the women who work in these areas.

This year 2020 also marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action for women and it was intended to be a year to recognise achievements and to acknowledge the challenges going forward. Instead COVID-19 has forced a refocus on gender equity gains and the issues for women into the future.

While it is certainly important to reflect on the past 25 years, it is also appropriate to consider the gains for Australian women and their unions, at work and in the community, over the century since the last major pandemic - 'the Spanish Flu.'

Back in 1920, while 'white' Australian women had the vote since 1902 and the first stirrings of International Women's Day had occurred, no women had yet been elected to the Federal Parliament, women’s wages were at 54 per cent of the male rate and there was still a ban on married women working in the public service.

Inspirational women leaders such as Muriel Matters, a courageous activist and teacher born in Adelaide in 1877, had been making a significant contribution to women’s rights. In 1910 Muriel secured a resolution from the Australian Senate to the British Prime Minister outlining the benefits of the vote for Australian women. In education, Muriel campaigned for the education of the poor and was an advocate for the Montessori approach.

For women in the non government education sector, they were beginning to organise with initiatives in various States to engage with their own unions and with the broader union and feminist movements.

As an example, in Queensland, beginning with the foundation of the Assistant Mistresses Association in 1920, the now IEUA-QNT has fought for the rights of working women to be paid fairly and equally, to be treated respectfully in the classroom and beyond, and to be recognised as leaders of the profession. In the 1980s the Working Rights of Women Committee (WROW) was formed by a number of outstanding women activists, one of whom, Norma Nicholson, has been described by the current IEUA-QNT Secretary Terry Burke as having “redefined the agenda of our union at the time.”

In NSW/ACT, female teachers at private girls’ schools became active to join with male colleagues to form in 1966 the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association which became the Independent Teachers Association in 1972. At about that time, current NSW/ACT IEU Officer Liz Finlay was actively involved with teachers in Catholic schools gaining industrial rights, including payment for co-ordinators.

While the struggle for pay equity remains ongoing, especially in the early childhood education sector, at the national level between the 1950s and the 1970s, union women were at the forefront of the campaign for equal pay.

Unfortunately, it took a long time for women in Australia to receive equal pay, with over 25 years from a UN Convention of 1951 until the various equal pay decisions by the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in the early 1970s. These steps included:

- In 1951 a convention by the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations recommended “equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value...with a view to providing a classification of jobs without regard to sex.”
- In 1960 equal pay for work of equal value was awarded, although specifically female work was not included.
- In 1969 the Australia Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) ran a test case to remove the 25 per cent difference between pay rates. The Commission ruled that women should begin to receive 85 per cent of the male wage.
- In 1972 the Arbitration Commission awarded equal pay - 100 per cent of the male wage. The decision meant that women who were performing the same work as men should get the same award rate of pay. There could no longer



Pam Smith, IEUA NSW/ACT

be lower female rates for the same job. The Commission's decision automatically applied to women under federal awards but only covered about 40% of women in the workforce. This resulted in campaigning by unions to change the various state awards too, a complicated process because claims had to be formally heard on a state by state basis.

- In 1973, after the election of the Whitlam Government, the Commission set a minimum wage for all adults and in 1974 it dropped the concept of 'family support' as part of the wage system.

Some IEU members will have particular memories of union women equal pay activists campaigning in Melbourne outside Trades Hall and the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in the 1960s and 1970. Melbourne based activist Anna Stewart, who is remembered today via the Anna Stewart Memorial Project for training for women in unions, campaigned to have sexual harassment recognised as an industrial issue and also assisted with the ACTU's Maternity Leave Test Case which in 1969 gained 12 months unpaid maternity leave.

Today in Victoria 'We Are Union Women', with strong engagement by IEUA VicTas Branch women members, continues to play a major role in advocating for women's rights at work (including 'WRAW Chats') and especially in countering gendered violence.

Since the gains of the 1970s, women in all IEUA Branches have campaigned for paid parental leave, flexible work arrangement options for parents and carers, pay equity, safe and respectful workplaces, and to end unfair exemptions in anti-discrimination laws.

Campaigning with other unions. IEUA women were involved in achieving Australia's first national paid parental leave scheme, which was introduced by the Gillard Government in 2011, and in contributing to the recent Inquiry by the Australian Human Rights Commission into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces. Strong IEUA women members join with other union women in events such as International Women's Day, Equal Pay Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.



There is also a strong engagement by IEUA women in broader campaigns in support of the rights of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Australians, for refugees and asylum seekers, for the LGBTIQ community and for action on climate change.



While women's committees, conferences and forums have long been a feature at Branch levels, the IEUA national Women and Equity Committee held its first Building Our Leadership Development (BOLD) Conference in Canberra in 2017 and held a second Conference at Manly in Sydney in 2019. The national BOLD group continues to engage with members via webinars, a Facebook group and this BOLD newsletter. At this challenging time, the BOLD program provides opportunities for IEUA women to develop, empower and lead.

Again, within the context of COVID-19, what are the key issues for IEUA women and their Union going forward? The pandemic has deepened pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic structures. In IEUA Branches, this has been reflected in the impact on support staff, casual employees and on the early childhood education sector, affecting mainly women. The IEUA has been active in campaigning against stand downs of staff, taking cases the Fair Work Commission where appropriate.

Some of these vulnerabilities include: the overall greater economic insecurity of women • the gender pay gap (currently 13.9 percent) and generally lower superannuation balances for women; thus a greater long term adverse impact of accessing super early • inequalities in regard to expectations around unpaid domestic and care work • gendered violence in the home and the workplace

In the words of IEUA Assistant Secretary Christine Cooper in 'IEU Speaks on COVID19 is not Gender Neutral' in May 2020: "COVID-19 presents governments with an opportunity to effect systemic changes that could protect women from bearing the heaviest brunt of shocks like these in the future. As union members, we must campaign for this to occur. By campaigning for women and girls to be placed at the centre of economies, we can fundamentally support a more rapid recovery, drive better and more sustainable development outcomes for all and set communities on the path to achieve gender equality."

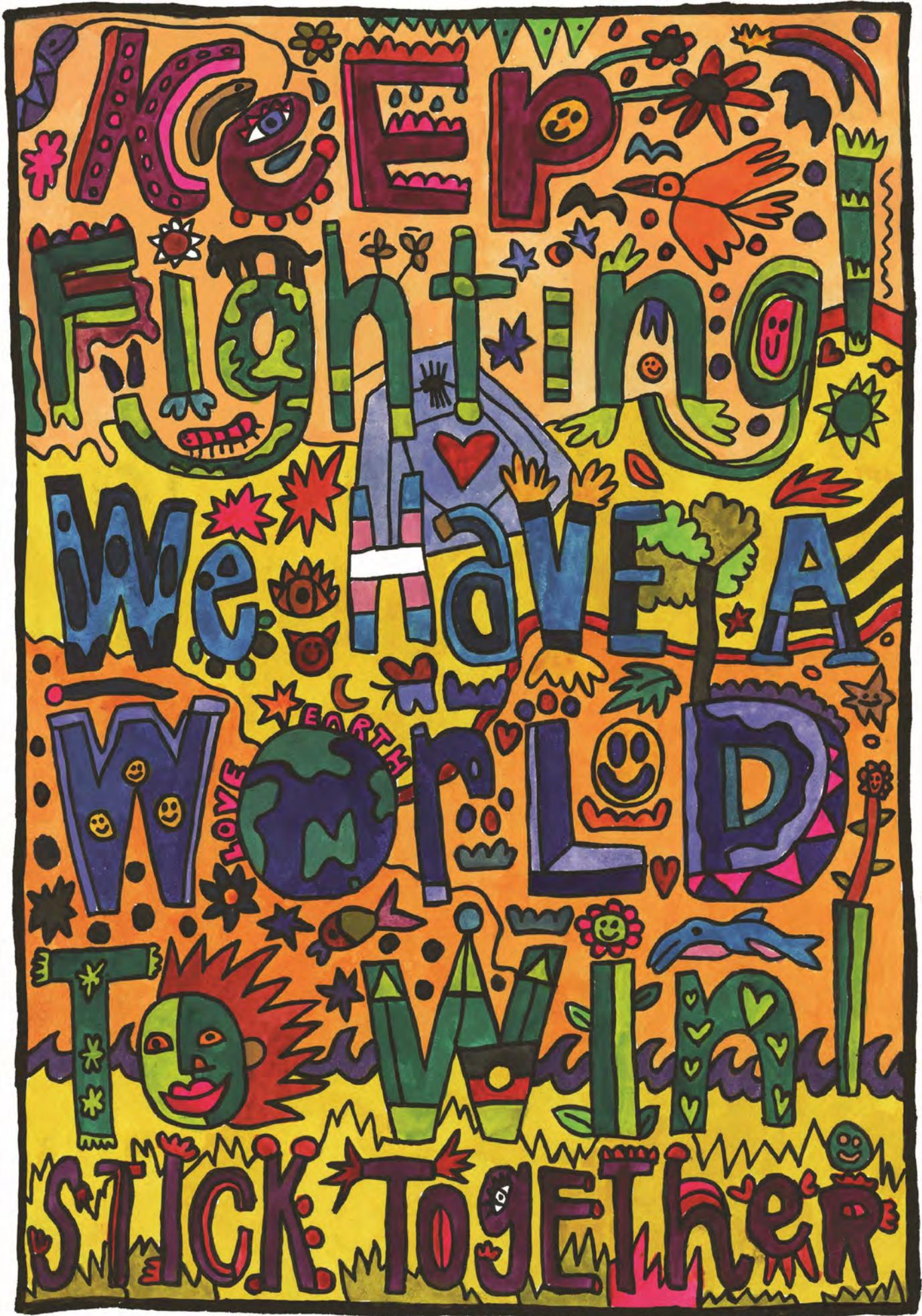


Illustration by Nicky Minus