

Southern Women's Action Network Inc

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Website: <https://swanwomen.org.au/>

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YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHua3ynobWOxAUEfOPLt1yQ>

Donations: www.trybooking.com/au/donate/swan



SWAN NEWS JULY 2022

THIS MONTH we were to have our SWAN meeting at Mt Martha House, however, due to ongoing COVID issues we will present our two speakers, Stephanie Ross and Alice Ugle, over Zoom on July 17th. This could be a social opportunity for some members to gather at another's home, especially if able to watch together on a larger screen. Here is the link:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88576432332?pwd=YnhhODh2TlpXaWZldTYxWkQwSFhmZz09>

Meeting ID: 885 7643 2332

Passcode: 389305

Dial by your location

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From the First People's Assembly of Victoria, Stephanie will address SWAN on negotiations for a Treaty or Treaties expected to be implemented in 2023, as well as other initiatives of this Assembly.

See attached flyer re details.

Please use Trybooking, at above URL, to donate to SWAN. The coffers need recharging.

To share matters of interest the deadline for next SWAN News issue is 1st August.

BURSARY

On June 18th, the SWAN Bursary was presented over Zoom by Graduate Women Victoria to Nicole Harding who will use it towards a master's degree. We hope soon to be able to share more about her studies with you.

GWV also presented the May Kentish Award to Natalie Petrellis, studying theatre costume and design.

REPOWER Mornington Peninsula is now the new name for MPower. SWAN member, Belinda Rodman, is encouraging local people to become involved in empowering the Mornington Peninsula community to decarbonise our energy use at home and work.

If you would like to be a part of the solution and get together with local people from across the Peninsula to work together on this, please register your interest at info@empowermornpen.org.au to help get Mornington Peninsula decarbonised. For more information go to <https://repowermornpen.org.au/> or join the Repower Facebook group

SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS GROUP

SWAN Supporting First Nations Group: next meeting Monday, July 12th at 11:30 am. New members welcome. Contact Maureen 0423 806 525

In recent weeks SWAN members have participated in several events conducted by **local First Nations groups**. This includes the **Reconciliation Week** Walk at Willum Warrain Aboriginal Gathering Place, Hastings on Sunday 29 May. During **NAIDOC Week** (3-10 July) SWAN was represented at Flag Raising ceremonies at Willum Warrain and Nairn Marr Djambana Aboriginal Gathering Place. We were also invited to join in the Native Tree Planting event that was organised by Our Songlines in Main Ridge.

We have slightly amended the **SWAN Position Paper on an Indigenous Voice** that was circulated to SWAN members last month. This reflects the commitment made by the new government to holding a Referendum on the Constitutional Enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice in its first term. The revised version is on the SWAN website and circulated to local media and selected community organisations: <https://swanwomen.org.au/> Please share it in your own networks.

In late May SFN member Maureen Donnelly wrote to MPSC to enquire as to whether the new **Peninsula Trail will reference First Nations cultural heritage** and seek clarification of who is involved in the planning. She recently received a response from the Council Project Coordinator to confirm that the Shire is working to formalise an arrangement with the Bunurong Land Council (BLC), that will ensure First Nations cultural heritage and history is included in Peninsula Trail signage. The first stage of this engagement with the BLC will see Council officers working with the BLC to identify appropriate signage and/or other cultural interpretation features for the Somerville to Baxter section of the Peninsula Trail. First Nations, cultural heritage and history will also be incorporated in the remaining sections of the Peninsula Trail in conjunction with the BLC as those sections develop.

The SWAN Committee recently approved a letter written by some SFN members to the Victorian Government expressing concern about the government's decision to delay the introduction of vital, long overdue legislation that aims to reduce youth offending and to protect the rights and wellbeing of vulnerable First Nations children. Of particular concern – we ask that the Andrews government **raise the age of criminalisation** from 10 to 14 years. A copy of this letter is attached below. SWAN members are encouraged to write their own letters and/or to sign the Raise the Age Petition that can be accessed via:

<https://raisetheage.org.au>

Finally, if you missed the very moving and inspiring presentation given by our **first female Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, listen to the 2022 Lowidja O'Donohue Oration** via the following link: <https://www.dunstan.org.au/events/lodo22/>

Position Paper re the Constitutional Enshrinement of an Indigenous Voiceⁱ

Our country is facing a critical moment in our history. There is significant unfinished business to address. ‘The Uluru Statement from the Heart’ (2017) gifted by First Nations Peoples to all Australians guides the way. It invites us to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to create an equitable future for us all.

The Southern Women’s Action Network (SWAN) comprising over 200 members across the Mornington Peninsula accepts this historic proposal as originally formulated and requested by First Nations Peoples. We strongly support its call for lasting systemic change through the Enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice in the Australian Constitution. Furthermore, we support the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to oversee a process of Agreement-making between governments and First Nations and Truth-Telling about our history. These reforms are practical and just. They are long overdue. In March 2021 we documented our position on constitutional protection in a submission to the Indigenous Voice Co-design process commissioned by the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt. We expressed our concern that Australia lags well behind other countries in upholding the key principles of The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. First Nations Peoples in this country do not have “autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs”.ⁱⁱ

Our proposal was amongst the 90% of submissions received from over 9,400 people, communities and organisations to disregard the government’s requirement that respondents restrict any recommendations to mere *legislative* change. We argued that matters dealt with by *legislation* alone can too readily be amended or eliminated. This will not ensure that the concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are addressed. Moreover, *legislating a voice prior* to the nation endorsing a constitutionally protected First Nations Voice to Parliament will not achieve the long-lasting systemic change that is required. Constitutional protection would ensure that any significant alterations concerning the First Nations Voice would need to be passed by Referendum.

SWAN applauds the commitment made by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in his election speech (May 2022) to implement The Uluru Statement from the Heart - in full and support his pledge to hold a referendum to Constitutionally Enshrine an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

When enacted, this will ensure that our Constitution is amended in line with international standards on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. This will guarantee that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have a lasting say in the laws and policies that affect their lives and lead to better policies and outcomes for their communities. It will profoundly enhance government capacity in Indigenous affairs policy development and law-making.

Bipartisan support is critical for such a Referendum to succeed. All Australians must be well informed before they cast their vote. SWAN is contributing to this advocacy and

education process. Our members are actively sharing information in their communities and political forums about why a decision to proclaim a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Australian Constitution is so crucial for the future of our nation.

Southern Women's Action Network, June 2022

There are many ways to become better informed and show your solidarity and support.

- Sign up to The Uluru Statement from the Heart website: ulurustatement.org to learn more about the process that led to the Statement, the background to the key reforms and to receive update on how you can be part of this movement for change.
- Listen to the Lowidja O'Donohue Oration by the first female Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney. <https://www.dunstan.org.au/events/lodo22/>
- Listen to the 2021 Mabo Oration by Megan Davis: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/presentation/summit-keynote-megan-davis/>
- Share this position paper with others and start a conversation with your family and friends about the reforms that are required to achieve justice for First Nations.
- Read the SWAN submission to the Indigenous Voice Co-design process on the Supporting First Nations Peoples page on the SWAN website: swanwomen.org.au
- Download this factsheet prepared by Reconciliation NSW to share with your family, friends, and co-workers: reconciliationnsw.org.au
- Sign the digital Uluru Statement from the Heart canvas: fromtheheart.com.au
- Write to your MP to show your support for the Uluru Statement and to ask them to actively request that a Referendum be held as a priority. ulurustatement.org
- Read *'Everything you need to know about the Uluru Statement from the Heart'* (2021) by leading First Nations Constitutional experts, Megan Davis and George Williams.

¹ N. B. SWAN acknowledges that while a substantial majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Peoples unequivocally support a Constitutionally Enshrined Indigenous Voice to Parliament, not all First Nations People share the same perspective.

¹ The United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples, Article 4. (2007). un.org



Email to: The Hon Daniel Andrews, Premier of Victoria
daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au

Copied to:

Ms Gabrielle Williams, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples
Ms Sonya Kilkenny MP, Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support
Mr Anthony Carbines MP, Minister for Police and Crime Prevention
The Hon Colin Brooks MP, Minister for Child Protection and Family Services

Dear Premier,

The Southern Women's Action Network (SWAN) comprising over 200 members across the Mornington Peninsula has advocated for social justice for over 25 years. Our members are actively engaged in addressing a broad range of human rights concerns both locally and at a national level. We have a strong commitment to supporting the rights of First Nations Peoples.

I write on behalf of the SWAN Committee and our Supporting First Nations group to acknowledge the important steps that you have taken to begin to address the structural injustices in Victoria's youth justice system, especially with respect to Aboriginal children and youth. The recommendations documented in two comprehensive, independent reviews¹ commissioned by your government clearly identify the systemic, legislative and program level reforms that are long overdue. These recommendations must be implemented without delay.

We acknowledge that some important initiatives have been taken. Your proposed new law entitled 'The Children and Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2022' aims to ensure that fewer Aboriginal children are separated from their families. However, we are deeply concerned that debate on a second piece of legislation to protect the rights and wellbeing of vulnerable First Nations children has been delayed until after the November Election. I refer to 'The Children's, Youth and Families Amendment (Child Protection) Bill 2021' that would address systemic injustices related to youth offending and would raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years.

Your decision to postpone debate on this Bill that was passed in the Legislative Assembly last year is not in line with your government's election commitment to urgently address systemic problems in the youth justice system. Moreover, it is at odds with your

¹ Armytage P & Ogloff J (2017) 'Youth Justice Review & Strategy' <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/justice-system/youth-justice/youth-justice-review-and-strategy-meeting-needs-and-reducing-offending> AND Mohamed J. & Buchanan. L. 'Our Youth Our Way' (June 2021) <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/Publications-inquiries/CCYP-OYOW-Summary-Final-090621.pdf>

government's strong rhetoric that it will tackle discrimination against First Nations Peoples.

It is critical that legislation be introduced immediately to:

1. **Raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years without exception.** This complies with the recommendation made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019)². This higher age level is already law in over 30 other countries and aligns with the commitments made by the ACT, Tasmania, South Australia and the Northern Territory.
2. **Address the over representation of First Nations children in our youth justice system.** Your 2021 Review found that despite some valuable initiatives that have been undertaken the current laws continue to 'disproportionately harm Aboriginal children... (who) are targeted by the police, sentenced by the courts, and removed from their families and communities.'³ It is essential that resourcing and access of preventative programs and therapeutic services be significantly increased. These must be age and culturally appropriate and targeted to help Aboriginal children and youth stay outside the criminal legal system altogether.

You now have the opportunity to legislate these vital, long-awaited reforms. 'The Children's, Youth and Families Amendment (Child Protection) Bill' was tabled in the Upper House more than 8 months ago. It is supported by the Coalition and the Greens⁴. We urge you to show strong leadership by reintroducing it without further delay to allow it to be ratified by the Senate. The Victorian electorate will commend such progressive action to enact these critical reforms.

Yours sincerely,

Melissa Kelly
Facilitator
Southern Women's Action Network

² <https://www.hrlc.org.au/news/2021/1/20/un-review-highlights-need-for-aust-to-raise-the-age-criminal-responsibility>

³ Ibid p. 2. <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/Publications-inquiries/CCYP-OYOW-Summary-Final-090621.pdf>

⁴ Ilanbey, S. <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/child-protection-bill-aims-to-keep-indigenous-families-together-20220622-p5av1b.html>

SOUTHERN WOMEN'S ACTION NETWORK



ALICE UGLE & STEPHANIE ROSS

SWAN's NAIDOC Week speakers

Our NAIDOC Week celebration will be your chance to learn about Victorian Treaty negotiations from Stephanie Ross and Alice Ugle, Engagement Project Officers for the **First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria**. This Assembly is the independent and democratically elected body to represent Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria. They are the elected voice for Aboriginal people and communities in Treaty discussions which are expected to begin in 2023. Alice looks after South West Victoria and Stephanie takes care of the Metropolitan area.



Stephanie: "I love working in a culturally safe environment, connecting to community and culture, and learning from our Elders. Treaty will empower community to make decisions that affect them, enrich non-indigenous and more importantly First Peoples in culture, language and unity across Victoria, there is nothing to lose and everything to gain!"

For women interested in deepening their knowledge of community issues and promoting action for social justice.

Alice: "The focus of my role is to engage with community, to give knowledge and understanding of what Treaty is and how you can be a part of it. This will allow mob to have a full understanding of Treaty and encourage everyone to be able to vote and have their voice heard."



GET UP!
STAND UP!
SHOW UP!

This speaker event is a **Zoom Meeting**. The link will be emailed to every member.

10:00 AM | SUNDAY 17 | JULY | 2022



spwswan



@southernwomensaction



www.swanwomen.org.au

