

Southern Women's Action Network Inc

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

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/spwswan/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/southernwomensaction>

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

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



SWAN NEWSLETTER MARCH 2023

OUR monthly newsletter aims to inform readers of current issues and matters of interest. If you have information of interest to our members, please ensure you let us know via email by the first of the month so that the newsletter may be collated and sent out mid-month. Deadline for next issue 1st April.

FACEBOOK AND WEBPAGE You may also check out the photos of recent events on the SWAN Facebook page and the website for details of future meetings.

If members do not wish to be included in photos which are published on the SWAN website, Facebook page or Instagram, please advise swanwomen@outlook.com or at the door at a meeting. Otherwise, we will take it that you are happy to have your photo included.

SWAN NEEDS A SOCIAL JUSTICE CO-ORDINATOR

As we continue to have many actions proposed by members, we are in urgent need for this role to be filled. Several members may like to share this task and appoint a representative to the SWAN committee.

We also need someone to post on Instagram, to update the website as required and to send an article to the newspaper prior to and/or after meetings. These tasks could be done by one, two or three members and can be done without being on Committee. Please speak to any member of Committee if you can help.

FROM DIANE McDONALD

SWAN BOOK LAUNCH: *WHEN WOMEN MEET* 19 March

As mentioned in the February edition of SWAN NEWS, our book entitled '*When Women Meet*' will be launched at SWAN's International Women's Day meeting at Mt Martha House on 19 March. The launch takes place after our regular bi-monthly speaker presentation.

The flyer advertising the March meeting includes information about our guest speaker Jean Ker-Walsh. As well as being co-Chair of Grandmother for Refugees (G4R) Jean has extensive experience in facilitating groups that are engaged in community based social

action. Her presentation will focus on the recent history of G4R and the strategic approach that is being taken by the organisation and its members to advocate to change Australia's inhumane refugee policies.

In giving her address, Jean will help us to begin to dream about SWAN's future, and to explore how SWAN can be further developed to ensure that it continues to involve and inspire women in the current context. This discussion will provide some initial 'food for thought' that will be pursued further at our May meeting. We anticipate that allowing time for members to reflect on SWAN's history as recorded in '*When Women Meet*' will also help to stimulate the May discussion.

As usual the formalities of the March meeting will commence at 10.00am. Morning tea will be available for anyone who arrives early (from 9.30am onwards). We anticipate that the meeting, Jean's presentation and follow up discussion will conclude around 11.30am. After that we'll have a coffee/toilet break during which time special guests will start to arrive for the book launch. This includes female councilors and politicians, some of our former guest speakers and representatives from local First Nations organisations and women's groups.

Copies of '*When Women Meet*' will be available for you to purchase at the meeting, at the special price of \$15.00 each. The costs associated with the publication and the book launch are being supported by a Mornington Peninsula Shire Flexi-Grant.

Your donation at the door will help cover the cost of lunch if you can stay.

At midday The Hon. Peta Murphy will launch '*When Women Meet*'. This will be followed by a delicious finger food lunch comprising savory and sweet delicacies provided by Millers Bakery and Djambana Catering social enterprise. We encourage all women who have ever been a SWAN member and those who are interested to learn more about what we do, to join us as we celebrate SWAN's unique history and look to its future.

If you haven't already done so, please let Erica Churchill know you will attend and whether you can stay for lunch: 0404 811 422.

SUNDAY 19 MARCH
MAIN HALL MT MARTHA HOUSE COMMUNITY CENTRE
466 ESPLANADE, MT MARTHA
9.30AM-1.30PM

PLEASE PUT THIS DATE IN YOUR DIARY NOW

FROM MAUREEN DONELLY: [Worsening situation for Women Fleeing Violence](#)

SWAN has long campaigned for justice for women experiencing violence, and their right to short term refuge and longer-term low rental housing options, to facilitate leaving a violent situation. Having worked in the past in a women's refuge, I know that the systemic issues of

income security and housing are key factors in whether a women will be forced to return to a violent situation. Despite our efforts and those of other groups such as Shelter and Council to Homeless Persons, the recently released annual report of the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing (Sept. 2022) reveals a worsening situation.

The report's statistics show that vulnerable women and children fleeing family violence are finding it harder than ever to find long-term housing, while survivors in acute danger are waiting almost 18 months to get priority access to public housing. Last November, I tried to find out the waiting time for priority housing for women fleeing violence on the Mornington Peninsula, but the Dept. of Families, Fairness and Housing has still to respond. Probably the wait is longer than the Victorian average, given the dire shortage of public housing on the Mornington Peninsula. Additionally, the number of women and children fleeing family violence and seeking long-term housing has increased by 135 per cent since 2015. The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's [latest annual report](#). Time to seek out allies and renew our efforts for housing justice for vulnerable women!

SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS

Discussion and debates about the Enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice in the Constitution are really 'hotting up'! Many SWAN members are joining in the community education activities that are getting underway in the lead up to the Referendum. A group of members have been meeting to discuss various ways that SWAN can help to promote a successful referendum outcome. This includes:

1. Encouraging SWAN members to participate in the **'Together Yes' campaign** coordinated by Victorian Women's Trust: <https://togetheryes.com.au/>
We anticipate that once the 'Together Yes' kitchen table discussions commence in May, many SWAN members will be involved. Resources will be provided.
2. Supporting the work of the **From the Heart** campaign team. N.B: This campaign is now called **Yes23**. You can find it at: <https://yes23.com.au/>
3. Participate in **Yarning Circles** and other activities hosted by local First Nations organisations, including opportunities to discuss an Indigenous Voice. For example, go to ulurustatement.org and register for a Yarning Circle.
4. As well as this, a small working group is discussing plans for SWAN to host a **Public Forum** to be held on The Mornington Peninsula. This will enable local residents to hear from a leading First Nations guest speaker about the enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice, why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are asking for it and how this will lead to a better future for us all. More details about this will be provided in the next edition of SWAN NEWS.

5. MOST URGENTLY we are asking that as soon as possible you do the following:

A. EMAIL Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and Frankston City Council and their Ward Councillor asking them to:

- i) publicly support an Indigenous Voice enshrined in the constitution; and
- ii) host community education meetings/activities for their constituencies about the Voice and the Referendum.

Contact details for MPSC Mayor (Steve Holland) and Ward Councillors:

<https://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/About-Us/About-Our-Council/Our-Councillors>

Contact details for FCC Mayor (Nathan Conroy) and Ward Councillors:

<https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Council/Current-Councillors>

B. Your advocacy to urge local Member of Parliament Zoe McKenzie's active support for a 'YES' vote in the Referendum is now critical.

WRITE AN EMAIL/ LETTER IN YOUR OWN WORDS, KEEP IS SHORT AND SIMPLE

- i) State that you live on the Mornington Peninsula and are one of Zoe McKenzie's constituents.
- ii) Tell Zoe why you are writing – i.e. that you want her to support a constitutionally enshrined Indigenous Voice and to encourage her Liberal Party colleagues to support a YES vote in the referendum.
- iii) Tell Zoe why you believe *constitutional*, not simply *legislative* change is so crucial to Australia's future.

In essence: A constitutionally enshrined Indigenous Voice gives the Australian Government the opportunity to make laws and policies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, rather than simply about them.

For further information to help you to prepare your letter please refer to the following page on the **'From the Heart' website:**

<https://fromtheheart.com.au/what-is-a-voice-to-parliament/>

HOWEVER, IF YOU'RE SHORT OF TIME, PLEASE JUST EMAIL/SEND HER THE LETTER BELOW

RE: Public Commitment to Support a YES Vote in the Referendum for a Constitutionally Enshrined Indigenous Voice to Parliament

Date:

Dear Zoe,

As a resident of Mornington Peninsula and one of your constituents, I am writing to urge you to publicly support the YES vote in the upcoming Referendum for a Constitutionally Enshrined Voice to Parliament.

Supporting the YES vote is firstly, a matter of principle that acknowledges First Nations people as the original custodians of this land; of being on the right side of history. Secondly, meaningful change requires that the Indigenous Voice must be enshrined in the Constitution so that it cannot be removed at the whim and fancy of any political party that happens to be in government; thereby ensuring the Voice's permanence, longevity and progress. Last but certainly not least, Australia's Indigenous voices are asking for this.

Zoe, will you stand up and be a voice for change?

Your public support in the lead-up to the Referendum will assist with amplifying community support for an Indigenous Voice to be embedded in the Australian Constitution. This will ensure that First Nations People will have a say in the policies and programs that affect their lives.

I truly hope you will take a public stance in favour of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call for an Enshrined Indigenous Voice to Parliament as a matter of respect, human rights, healing and reconciliation, and for a better future for Australia.

Yours Sincerely, ETC.

YOU CAN EMAIL ZOE AT: Zoe.McKenzie.MP@aph.gov.au

OR POST TO: PO Box 6022, House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

FROM MAUREEN DONELLY A Local Retirement Village Supporting Voice, Treaty, Truth

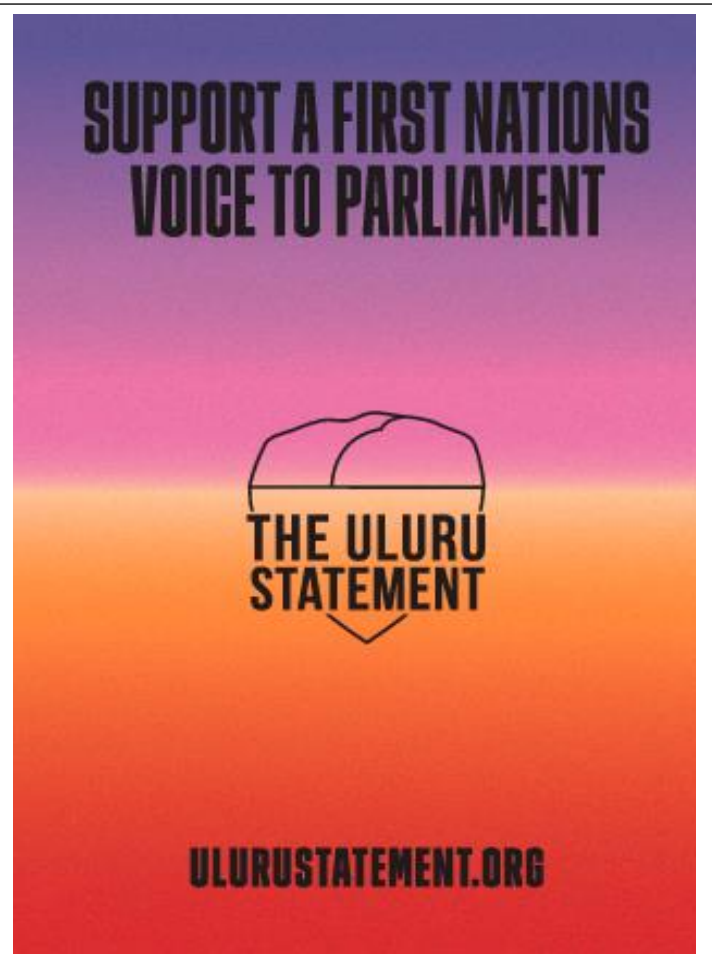
SWAN members are getting creative, tapping into networks and organisations to which they belong, in order to spread the message and reach potential supporters at the grass roots. For example, at Morven Manor Retirement Village, Mornington, one of our SWAN women has requested village operator, Australian Unity, distribute their Statement from the Heart position paper, along with resources, to all village residents. This sets the stage for 'kitchen table' discussions, potentially using the video developed by Australian Unity (AU). As a result of this action, AU are distributing the resources to all their retirement villages. The extract below outlines AU's position statement. You can also view their short video on YouTube: [Our vision for reconciliation - YouTube](#)

As a modern company, Australian Unity is strongly supportive of Australia's reconciliation journey and why this journey is important to our national identity. That's why we're also calling for the progression of actions outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including enabling a First Nations Voice to Parliament and enshrinement in the Australian Constitution (AU Newsletter, Feb. 2023).

Is there a Community Centre near you? How about printing one of the Uluru Dialogue posters and asking the centre manager to post it up in a prominent spot? The posters are at <https://ulurustatement.org/take-action/supporter-kit/>.

When printing, select 'print to page' to get an A4 copy.

Belinda Rodman from Southern Peninsula Community Information and Support Centre has managed to get the team put up the poster despite her being on holiday at the time in the Antarctic! No excuses for the rest of us then!



Peninsula Voice Survey

SWAN women may also want to participate in the Peninsula Voice survey and call for this organisation to put the Uluru Statement from the Heart top of their events calendar. Homelessness and housing affordability have been an important focus for Peninsula Voice www.peninsulavoices.org.au lately, and they've previously looked at domestic violence, gambling harm, young people and mental health, refugees, neighbouring, loneliness and drug addiction. As they plan the final event on homelessness in May, they are looking ahead to future issues they can support. Their newsletter offers:

We want to hear from you - our community, survey:

(<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3TNRRBS>)

Willum Warrain Hosts Yoorrook Commissioner, Hon. Kevin Bell

This cultural awareness evening on Wednesday 22 February was attended by around 25 people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, including SWAN members. Kevin spoke about the heartening progress being made in Victoria at the state level on 'voice' (The First Peoples' Assembly), Truth and Treaty.

Upcoming Events

- **Womin Djeka Community Festival** Saturday 25th March from 10am to 7pm. A family friendly event to honour and celebrate First Peoples Cultures. Entry by donation. Venue: Emu Plains Reserve, Coolart Road, Balnarring. Go for entertainment, food stalls, craft stalls, cultural workshops, children's activities, caring for country, engagement with local gathering places. Welcome to country at 11am.
- **'Healing Country', a film by Lionel Lauch and Tracee Hutchinson** about healing through connection to land and culture –
Friday April 21st at the Rosebud Green in the Village Tent.
Keep the date free! Details coming next SWAN newsletter and <https://www.facebook.com/driftartsfestival/>
- **March 16th Close the Gap Day** This year the focus is on the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in health. Ways to get involved, including taking the close the gap pledge at: <https://closethegap.org.au/close-the-gap-day/>

Early Years Cultural Education: a reason to take heart

Bunjil's Nest Project, Balnarring, recently hosted a 2-day cultural awareness event, attended by over 200 early years educators and with a strong Boon Wurrung presence. Their level of commitment to embedding First Nations cultural awareness in their programs was inspirational and a real cause for optimism for future change through the young. Peter Aldenhoven from Willum Warrain recently commented on the moving words of a pre-schooler visiting the gathering place: 'Sorry we took your land'. More information on Bunjil's Nest Project event: Maureen Donnelly 0423 806 525.



An example of the lead being taken by early years educators was the beautiful launch of the new intergenerational childcare centre, The Herd, in Mornington in March which commenced with a moving Welcome to Country delivered by Uncle Josh West, Bunurong and Palawa elder, followed by a moment of didgeridoo reflection on connection to the land and past generations.

Read about an extraordinary First Nations Woman

Available as hard copy or eBook **Lowitja** by Stuart Rintoul, is about one of Australia's most recognised and inspirational First Nations women, Lois O'Donoghue. Learn not just about Lowitja herself, but also the many historical events which are woven into the narrative.