

Southern Women's Action Network Inc

Reg: A0038144Z, ABN. 50 089 314 052

P.O. Box 72 BITTERN 3918

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

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

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

Email: [swanwomen@outlook.com](mailto:swanwomen@outlook.com)

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

Donations: [www.trybooking.com/au/donate/swan](http://www.trybooking.com/au/donate/swan)



## SWAN NEWSLETTER APRIL 2023

We hope you have all enjoyed the Easter break, despite the weather.

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 1<sup>st</sup> May.

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEETING held on 19 March

**The guest speaker** at SWAN's International Women's Day meeting was Jean Ker Walsh, Co-chair of Grandmothers for Refugees (G4R). Jean addressed an audience of over 60 members and invited guests. She provided us with a comprehensive update on the current situation concerning refugees and asylum seekers who have sought protection and a safe haven in Australia, but whose lives have been in limbo for up to a decade.

Jean explained how the Federal Government had recently decided to allow 19,000 long-term refugees and asylum seekers to settle permanently in Australia, thus enabling them to begin to rebuild their lives. But, she said, the tragic story of Australia's callous treatment of people seeking asylum in our country is not over. There are a further 9,000 to 12,000 refugees and asylum seekers who are not covered by this decision. For them the uncertainty and hopelessness continue.

Jean told us how three years ago G4R reviewed its strategic direction. This led to a stronger focus on re-setting Australia's refugee policy to provide welcome, enduring protection, and safe settlement within our borders. It also included advocating for those subjected to the physical and psychological damage inflicted by Australia's offshore and onshore processing regime. A new committee structure has been developed with the aim of building a grassroots movement organised at a local level according to federal electoral boundaries.

Since then, G4R has transformed from being a small group of concerned women who generously volunteered their time to support refugees and asylum seekers, to becoming a national movement that in addition to providing direct support to these harshly treated and vulnerable people, pro-actively campaigns to achieve a just refugee policy. Further information about G4R, current and past campaigns and access to up-to-date resources can be found at: [www.grandmothersforrefugees.org](http://www.grandmothersforrefugees.org)

Jean congratulated SWAN on its long-term commitment to enabling women on the Mornington Peninsula to learn about and discuss local and national social justice issues, and to become involved in individual and collective action to address these concerns. She spoke of the importance of

grassroots advocacy work and encouraged SWAN to continue to inspire other women to take up this challenge.

Following Jean's inspiring address, participants took the opportunity to comment and ask questions. Jean also invited them to reflect on how, based on its strong history of social justice advocacy work as recorded in its new publication '**When Women Meet**,' SWAN might continue to stay relevant and further develop in coming years.

Within the plenary and in one-to-one discussions over lunch, members identified several justice and equity issues about which they were particularly concerned. This included the critical situation of aged care within the Mornington Shire, the escalating number of women experiencing homelessness on the Peninsula and continuing to walk alongside First Nations Peoples to enshrine an Indigenous Voice.

At the **next SWAN meeting on Sunday 21 May**, we will set aside some time to discuss how SWAN can further strengthen our social action focus on these and other issues. Further information about the May meeting will be provided in the May edition of SWAN NEWS.

### **The Book Launch of *WHEN WOMEN MEET* followed:**

SWAN members are proud of the amazing and unique history of our volunteer led organisation that was established in 1996 to increase women's active involvement in community decision-making and to empower them to take action to address social justice and equity concerns. And so, two years ago, the Committee decided to celebrate and record the SWAN story in a commemorative book. Since then, we have collated information from our archives and gathered considerable feedback from many of the women who participated in SWAN at some point in its 26-year lifespan.

Finally, with the most welcome support of a grant from the Mornington Shire Council together with some generous financial and in-kind donations (including time!) from many past and current members, **When Women Meet** was launched at the SWAN meeting on 19 March by Peta Murphy Federal Member for Dunkley in front of over 60 people, including members and special guests.

SWAN founding member and MC for the event, Judith Couacaud Graley, informed the audience that **When Women Meet** tells the story of how like-minded women were able to join together and learn from one another so they could advance social justice and equity issues in a conservative environment, saying: *'It's a feisty story about empowerment companionship and friendship'*.

In her address Peta Murphy congratulated SWAN on its impressive history and commitment to social justice and human rights issues and for fighting for many years against gender discrimination and family violence. She highlighted the outstanding number of female speakers who had addressed SWAN meetings over almost three decades and noted how fortunate she and the guest speaker for our March meeting, Jean Ker Walsh (co-convener of Grandmothers for Refugees) were to be part of this special celebration. The launch was followed by lunch provided by Djambana Catering, a locally based First Nations social enterprise and Miller's Bread Kitchen in Dromana.

SWAN Committee member and co-author of **When Women Meet**, Diane McDonald, said that she wanted the book to highlight the extraordinary achievements of SWAN women, that are so often understated, and to ensure that their efforts were not forgotten in the mist of

time. She hopes the book will inspire current members and new generations of women to continue to advocate for social change, most particularly, seizing the opportunity to make a difference at this most significant moment in our nation's history.



Above: Erica Churchill, Diane McDonald, MP Peta Murphy and Judith Couacaud Graley (Photo by Yanni Dellaportas)

Following the book launch, Maureen McPhate, one of SWAN's founding members commented: "**When Women Meet** is... an outstanding record of the history of SWAN which I am proud to share with our two daughters, two daughters-in-law and two granddaughters (as well as the men in their lives !!)."

Since then, we have received many congratulatory emails. One from Aline Burgess, a former SWAN guest speaker (September 2016). Here is what she said.

*"I have just finished reading 'When Women Meet.' What a wonderful expose of the amazing work you and all the SWAN members have performed in the past 26 years! Thanks for sending me a copy. There is such a breath-taking range of topics in the book and such a list of speakers. I think the meetings must lead to really interesting round table discussions when the Mothers come home. I would love to attend more frequently but (this is not so easy to do these days) ... a great friendship with (one of the long-term SWAN members) keeps me in touch with many topics. Thank you for your great work - the Mornington Peninsula is lucky to have such a wonderful group of women who really care about our local community and even take time to learn about and discuss in depth many situations, crises and even sometimes news of happiness and caring in places all over the world. I sometimes think what a wonderful world it would be if somehow everyone tried to*

care for each other instead of fighting and cheating. Perhaps one day?? Regards, thanks, and every good wish..."

Of especial interest, after the International Women's Day presentation by Jean Ker Walsh and the book launch, SWAN has recorded 16 new members. You may be interested to read the following feedback, written by a woman who, although a long-time resident of the Mornington Peninsula, had never heard of SWAN.

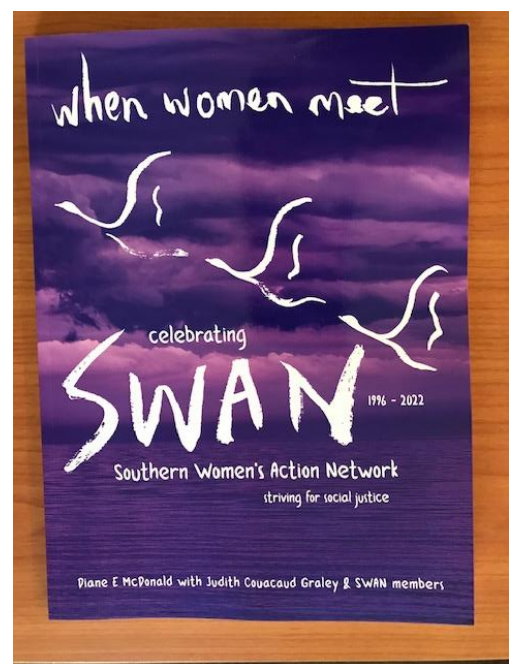
*"Sleepless nights can bring good things: I read **When Women Meet** in the wee hours and I just want to congratulate SWAN on a fabulous piece of work. What a group they have been and how good they have been at holding it together to such good effect and over such a time span. I was quite moved... When women gather to share their lives, to work together for social change, it is indeed and wonderful thing. SWAN reminds me of the group of women who fought for the right to vote at the beginning of the 20th Century: Vida Goldstein et al. Some of the campaigns and commitments are truly remarkable. I am so glad to have read this book and will share it with a friend who is looking to be involved in social justice activities in her retirement. I think she would fit in with SWAN very well" (HM).*

Further accolades about SWAN's incredible history were announced in Federal Parliament as well! You can hear what Peta Murphy, the Federal MP for Dunkley, told her Parliamentary colleagues via the attached link [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDgAZ\\_Tbe3Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDgAZ_Tbe3Y)

**Don't Miss Out on Your Copy** of "When Women Meet". This is the story of SWAN's journey over 26 years told through the eyes and in the voices of many of the women who have participated in its development and lifespan. The book has 118 pages with many colour photos, interesting reflections and snippets from SWAN's history.

The cost, subsidised for members, is \$15 if picked up and an extra \$7.50 for it to be posted to you. If you have not had a chance to purchase a copy, there are several ways you can do so.

1. Make the required payment as a donation via Trybooking  
<https://www.trybooking.com/au/donate/swan> with your name recorded and send an email to Vivienne Daniels at [swanwomen@outlook.com](mailto:swanwomen@outlook.com) to advise her of your payment and your address if you want it posted.
2. Send a cheque or postal order to SWAN, P.O. Box 72, Bittern 3918 with your name and address
3. Pick up the book and pay cash to Lesley Beasley. Please call Lesley on 0421 553 247 to make arrangements
4. Arrange to pay and collect at the next meeting via email to Vivienne Daniels, [swanwomen@outlook.com](mailto:swanwomen@outlook.com)



## SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS

### SWAN Promotion of an Indigenous Voice Interest Group

Since February this year, ten passionate SWAN members have regularly met to combine their skills and advocacy as 'SWAN Promotion of an Indigenous Voice Interest Group'. Actions taken to date include the dissemination of emails and letters to councillors of Mornington Peninsula Shire and Frankston City Council and to our local, state and federal parliamentary representatives strongly urging them to take a public stance in favour of the YES vote and an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. Additionally, we are asking both local councils to provide updated information and training on the Voice and the Referendum process to their staff. Of the 32 emails sent out, 11 recipients have responded directly to SWAN. From the 11 respondents, 7 who are predominantly Labor are in favour of the Voice, and of the 4 remaining predominantly Liberal politicians, 2 are against, 2 are undecided.

YES	NO	UNDECIDED
David Gill, MPSC	Chris Crewther Lib MP	Debra Mar, MPSC
Tanya Scicluna, MPSC	Kris Bolam, FCC	Zoe McKenzie Lib MP
Sarah Race, MPSC		
Despi O'Connor, MPSC		
Julia Young, MPSC		
Peta Murphy Lab MP		
Sonya Kilkenny Lab MP		

The eagerly awaited resource '**Kitchen Table Conversations**' to assist with informal small-group conversations about the Voice is still being developed by the Victorian Women's Trust 'Together Yes' campaign, hopefully accessible by May. Once received, our group will run a 'Kitchen Table Trial' to test the kit and hone our capability as 'Conversation Hosts'. If you wish to be a Conversation Host, see the link below.

Another key action the group is taking entails running a free **Public Forum on the Voice and the Referendum** to inform with facts, answer questions, and dispel myths and confusion. At present, we are sourcing a note-worthy Indigenous Speaker and networking with other community agencies and individuals to attend. In particular, we need those who are uncertain or a 'No' vote to come, and your help in bringing them along will most certainly be appreciated. Details about who, when and where to come.

### What You Can Do

1. Clearly, we have a long way to go to ensure a successful Referendum and Voice outcome. As per previous newsletters, your input is needed!!! If you haven't done so already, please **email or write ZOE MCKENZIE Liberal MP** for Flinders who remains



undecided. Last month's SWAN NEWSLETTER under SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS has a sample letter and clear points for you to follow. Your say could be the difference!

2. Sign up to be a **'Kitchen Table Conversation' host** at <https://togetheryes.com.au/>
3. Much is out there in the media about the Voice and the Referendum and many have strong views either way, or perhaps are unsure and want to know more or maybe just put it in the 'too hard basket'.

Apart from conversations with like-minded individuals, **what have been your personal experiences so far?**

When it comes to **negative or confusing interactions about the Voice and the Referendum**, we want to know about any **personal encounters** you've had with friends, family, neighbours, strangers (eg. local shopkeeper, fellow dog-walker, etc). *But not your media interactions.*

Some members of our group have relayed conversations they recently had with friends or family that surprised or even shocked them and left them unsure how to respond in a way that did not, for example, jeopardise a valued long-term relationship.

Your anonymous anecdotes will help with preparing and streamlining 'Kitchen Table' conversations and with the development of themes and questions to address for the Public Forum that the public are bound to raise.

We will endeavour to create helpful responses and collate these for you to access as well. Your name and email contact will remain confidential.

**Please email your anecdote to Moz Lucas (SWAN Committee) at [maureenfrances21@gmail.com](mailto:maureenfrances21@gmail.com)**

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**From Julie Pittle :** [Yoorrook Truth and Justice Commission Hearings Update](#)

During a recent directions hearing, Yoorrook Chair, Eleanor Bourke, reflected on the Victorian State's failure to meet Yoorrook's expectations to date, regarding compliance with the order to produce evidence related to past / present State injustices against First Nations people.

Antoinette Braybrook, CEO of Djirra which supports Aboriginal women, including those who experience violence, has commented in a post (28/3/23):

*"This is unacceptable. Djirra, like other ACCOs (Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations), is chronically under resourced yet we provided a comprehensive submission (to Yoorrook) because Aboriginal women's lives matter to us. We spent hours preparing it, which meant working weekends and evenings to get it done. I made sure I had an opening statement prepared for this important inquiry to get on the record, the Victorian government's failures when it comes to our women being incarcerated and our children being taken at alarmingly high rates. We want change. We must have change. Stop hiding the truth!"* [#Aboriginalwomenslivesmatter](#) [#wehavethesolutions](#)

SWAN members who wish to support the Yoorrook Commission's call for the State to provide documentation on the truth can contact Gabrielle Williams, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

By email: [gabrielle.williams@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:gabrielle.williams@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Or via her contact page <https://www.gabriellewilliams.com.au/contact/>

Here is a sample letter from SWAN member, Julie Pittle, that you may find useful.

Dear Minister,

I am greatly concerned that the relevant departments/ministers have not released crucial documents to the Yoorrook Commission by the deadline date. This is not only unacceptable in terms of your duty of care to Victorians who need to know the full truth of what happened, and is happening, in this state, but is a dereliction of your paid duties as representatives whose wages are paid by citizens. Organisations like Djirra, who are poorly funded, worked overtime and weekends to produce their submissions. To encounter this lack of accountability and respect from the government who created this Commission is insulting. I note that apologies have been issued. I put it to you that truly being sorry means not doing the same thing over and over again. I look forward to a speedy resolution of this matter.

#### NEWS SNIPPETS, ARTICLES TO READ AND OTHER ACTIONS TO TAKE

If you have **non-perishable food items** to donate for asylum-seekers they will be accepted at the Mt Martha IGA on any day, or you may drop them off on your way to our next meeting.

**Sign** the petition managed by the Human Rights Law Centre <https://raisetheage.org.au>

**Yet another Voice perspective seen on the ABC:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCnv3G0rDLo>

**From Susan Blackburn** Also worth reading is this article by First Nations academic Summer May Finlay in which she explains how the enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice will benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

*'The Voice to Parliament is a beginning, not an end'.*

<https://apple.news/AgpYa4NvIQ8mb1vKBx7DbYg>

**From Judith Couacaud Graley** If you are wondering how you might become better informed about the Voice and Treaty, these easy-to-read articles from 'The Conversation' cover the main points.

*'The Voice: what it is, where did it come from and what can it achieve'?*

<https://theconversation.com/the-voice-what-is-it-where-did-it-come-from-and-what-can-it-achieve-202138>

*'What actually is a Treaty and what could it mean for Indigenous People'?*

<https://theconversation.com/what-actually-is-a-treaty-what-could-it-mean-for-indigenous-people-200261>

**From Belinda Rodman** Southern Peninsula Community Support currently has 2 vacancies on the Board and invites interested SWAN members to apply. For more information

about the role contact the president Rachel Burdett-Baker at [president@spsic.org.au](mailto:president@spsic.org.au) or on 035986 1285 Mob: 0401642255

**From Maureen Donelly** Read about the recent Eastern Maar native title victory which saw the Traditional Owners' land rights formally recognised in Victoria's first native title decision in a decade: <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/site-4/historic-native-title-eastern-maar>

#### CALL TO ACTION

1. Although Peter Dutton will actively campaign against the Indigenous Voice ahead of the referendum and has bound his front bench to vote 'No', Liberal Party backbenchers will be free to vote and campaign as they wish. It's now more crucial than ever that we tell Zoe McKenzie, the Federal Member for Flinders, why she should pro-actively support the constitutional enshrinement of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.
2. Respond to the following request from recent guest speaker Jean Ker Walsh:

"Dear friends, please bombard all media organisations with letters in response to Dutton's announcement (on the Voice referendum). Please urge 20 of your friends to join in. Here is mine sent to The Age on 6 March 2023. JKW.

*Peter Dutton's refusal to hear the 'Canberra Voice' is one we must take seriously. His voice is the first one I will refuse to hear.*

*All those in his Coalition Party who support his position will also be silent to me. This is the Dutton logic; that we must only value voices raised in remote and regional places. So, can we please stop spending taxpayer dollars bringing Duttonites to Canberra where their voices are not worthy of our listening? The savings would be well spent on promoting the YES vote for the Indigenous Voice from the Heart. That's one I want to hear(t)."*

*Now, be seriously entertained!*

<https://youtu.be/X4U0S7OKyq8>

#### **RECLAIM THE CRONE - a seditious new mythology for the coming revolution**

**When:** Saturday April 22<sup>nd</sup> @7pm, and Sunday April 23<sup>rd</sup> @ 5pm  
followed by a free Q&A with the Artists at 6.15pm

**Where:** Peninsula Community Theatre. 91 Wilsons Rd, Mornington, 3931

**Tickets:** Full \$35, Concession \$25, Group of 5 \$150

**Free Event - Crone Walk:** Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 11.30 am at Rosebud Pier, 2 Jetty Road, Rosebud. Wear Red pants, skirts, shoes, tights- basically, Red on the Bottom... to walk together to support older women and our connection to the Earth...

<https://www.dancelife.com.au/reclaim-the-crone>