



Women's Network Hunter NSW

April 2010

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here? Contact
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details.**

It's hard to believe it is already April, many of you will be wondering where the first quarter of 2010 has gone. The Women's Network (Hunter NSW) is keen to get our function calendar rolling and we hope you will be able to join us for at least one of the events we have planned this year.

2010 - The Year of Women in Local Government...

With the start of the Year of Women in Local Government in 2010, network president Jenny Aitchison and secretary, Vicki Woods met with Leanne Harris and Lynn Morton from Maitland City Council in February to try and establish a more formal working relationship with the council.

Nicole Bennett, one of the key contacts for the network had resigned early in 2010, and with the Time Capture Project having been completed, the network did not have a formal relationship with the council. We see it as important to support council to ensure that women remain a key target group for council in their programs and policy making. I am hoping to meet with David Evans, general manager of Maitland City Council and Roger Stephan, CEO of Hunter Councils, to progress this in the next few weeks.

The contribution of women to our community from both inside and external to the council needs to be recognised, and the network would like to engage more strongly with women working in local government areas either as council employees or community workers.

Jenny Aitchison

International Women's Day events...

International Women's Day events kicked off with an evening soiree on March 5 organised by Women's Network member,

Sheila Turnbull, on behalf of Unifem, the United Nations Development Fund for Women. NSW minister for women, Jodi McKay, opened the event, at which guests were informed about the difference Unifem was making to the lives of women especially in poorer countries. Attendees were impressed by the tenacity and dedication of keynote speaker, Margaret Aggar, who established Midwives for East Timor, to improve the birthing experience of women in East Timor, many of whom walked 20 kilometres or more through jungle to a clinic to give birth - if they made it at all. It was a very inspiring start to International Women's Day.

Jann Gardner

The network again partnered with Maitland City Council, to help celebrate international Women's Day with a breakfast at Maitland Regional Art Gallery on March 8. This year's theme for IWD was Equal Rights, Equal Opportunity - Progress for All. Guest speaker for the morning was Rosalind Strong, immediate past president for Unifem Australia, who previously was the assistant director general in NSW for Education and Training. Additional to a very informative talk we were also entertained by a delightful young trio who presented a play/story about twin girls who were separated and grew up with two totally different lives. It highlighted how education impacts on the opportunities available to women.

Vicki Woods

The annual Steel Magnolia Awards were held on March 12 at West Leagues Club and attended by representatives of the network. Throughout the event the work of the 15 nominees was acknowledged and celebrated, The Steel Magnolia Awards acknowledge women who have shown



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strength and an unbreakable spirit in the face of adversity and compassion in improving the lives of others. Melinda Smith was the compere for the evening, with the Award Patron being lady mayoress Cathy Tate.

This year's winner was Juliet Rosendaal, who at the age of four took a fall, was unable to walk and hospitalised for two years. It took many years to diagnose her with Idiopathic Juvenile Arthritis, Lupus and Sjorgren's Syndrome. Rosendaal established the Lupus Association and raised \$60,000 for medical research into the disease.

Michelle Hunter

Where are we heading? Time to learn about how to smash that glass ceiling...

The Women's Network is gearing up for a busy year, with federal and state elections to be held in the next 12 months, and a strong push from a variety of sources for more gender equity in the appointment of women to high level boards and committees. We see this as a real opportunity to hear from a number of women about the progress of women in decision making roles in both the public and private sector. We are organising a panel event called "Smashing the Glass", reflecting the view that we are now beyond individual women trying to break through the glass ceiling, rather, we need to take action on quotas, and other legal mechanisms to promote equity for women in being appointed to decision making roles. Smashing the Glass will be held on May 6 at 6pm at Northern Highland Travel's new Headquarters, 3 Woodford Place, Thornton, with more details to come towards the end of next week.

TAFE scholarship increases...

Once again the Women's Network (Hunter NSW) will be offering a scholarship to a female TAFE student who has just completed their first year, is studying to work in a non-traditional role and can show a need for the scholarship. This year, thanks to the generosity of attendees at our functions, we have been able to increase the scholarship to \$500. The aim is to provide female students with recognition and support and to encourage them to complete their studies. The winner will be announced at the network's AGM in June.

Respond to our survey...

It is over three years since we last surveyed our members as to what they want from the network and we thought it would be an opportune time to ask you

for some of your ideas. The survey will be coming out by the end of this week, and we look forward to your responses. Please feel free to pass the survey onto other women who may be interested in joining the network as well.

Jenny Aitchison

Succession planning should start at home...

We have decided to put a stronger focus on mentoring, training and developing women in our forward planning for 2010. Key members of the executive committee are looking to step down from their roles at the next Annual General Meeting (AGM), to be held in the middle of 2010, as we believe it is time for other women to have the opportunity to participate at a more active level. We urge you to consider increasing your role in the network, and bring a friend or colleague to functions/training this year. If you know someone who would be interested in pursuing a role on the executive, please contact any of the executive members.

Jenny Aitchison

Carrie's Place survivors tell their story...

On February 19 Jenny Aitchison attended the launch of the Carrie's Place Photo Voice Project: *Walking in My Shoes* at Wallsend Library and Gallery. The exhibition is a photo story project which took place over 18 months, involving 13 women who told their stories of surviving violence. It was a powerful event and a shame that there were very few people from Maitland other than project participants at the launch. It would be nice to see something like this exhibited in Maitland, however I understand "space constraints" in various city venues precluded it from being held there this time.

Jenny Aitchison

Congratulations to one of our own...

We congratulate network member, Robyn Parker, MLC on being selected by the Liberal Party to stand for the NSW seat of Maitland, and we wish her all the best in her campaign.

EVENTS DIARY:

6 May - Smashing the Glass panel event

24 June - AGM and TAFE sponsorship winner announcement

October - Pink Ribbon High Tea