

*Victorian Honour Roll of Women*

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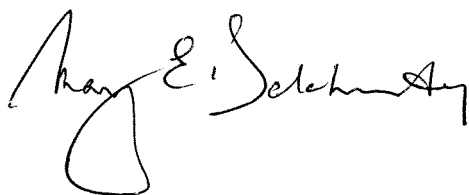
## Introduction

In May 2001 the Victorian Honour Roll of Women was launched at the Victorian Centenary of Federation Women Shaping the Nation event.

The inaugural Honour Roll recognised the contributions of 250 women in all walks of life, such as education, the arts, social justice, medical research and politics. These women have triumphed in their chosen fields and, or made a major contribution at a local, state, national or international level.

This year a further twenty women are inducted onto the Victorian Honour Roll of Women. Their achievements in Indigenous affairs, justice, science, education, community and welfare services, and ethnic affairs have been recognised by community organisations as especially significant.

The Honour Roll is an ongoing initiative of the Victorian Government and provides a tribute to the breadth of women's participation in our community.



**THE HON MARY DELAHUNTY**  
Minister for Women's Affairs



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## Dr Jean Blackburn



### Education of girls and the advancement of women

Jean Blackburn was an academic, an educator and a policy maker whose work on several landmark reviews of schooling in Australia made a unique contribution to education in Australia.

Born Jean Muir in 1919, the brilliant young student became a trainee teacher after leaving High School. In 1938 she left teaching and entered the University of Melbourne against her father's wishes but with the support of her mother. As a young economics graduate she worked in the inner circle of the Labor government's Public Service. She married in 1946, moved to Adelaide with her husband and as a result of her family responsibilities and her youthful affiliations with the communist party, she was unable to work in public policy. She eventually got a job teaching at an exclusive girls' school where she worked for nearly a decade.

In 1966 her public policy career began again. After taking a lecturing position at Western Teachers' College, she was invited by Peter Karmel, an old university friend to work with him on a review of South Australian schooling. This later led to her contribution to the Australian Schools Commission Review of Schools in Australia, in particular the report *Girls, Schools and Society* (1975). Sometimes referred to as the Karmel Report this was extremely influential and established the current school system.

In 1980 she returned to Victoria and as head of the Labor government's review of post compulsory schooling, produced *The Blackburn Report* in 1985. This report effectively established the Victorian Certificate of Education. In 1982 when the report was commissioned, about one third of students completed Year 12. By 1993 the retention rate had risen to 80 per cent. In later life Dr Blackburn was Chair of the State Board of Education (Victoria), Chancellor of the University of Canberra, Chair of South Australia's Suffrage Centenary Committee and received four honorary doctorates.

Jean Blackburn died in 2001 and is remembered for her view of education as an introduction to "....important achievements of the human mind, imagination and spirit to which all have the right of access" and as a mentor, role model and inspiration to several decades of women and men in education.

## Maria Dimopoulos



### Elimination of violence against women and the promotion of cross cultural awareness

Maria Dimopoulos is an activist who works to promote women's rights, eliminate domestic violence and to increase cross-cultural awareness of the issues affecting immigrant, indigenous and refugee women.

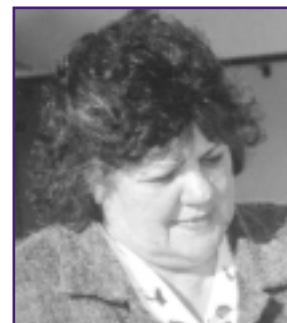
Born in Niki, Greece in 1965, Maria Dimopolous completed an Arts/Law Degree at Monash University in 1989. She immediately took up a research position with the Women's Coalition Against Family Violence located at the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre. The project resulted in her co-authoring the book: "Blood on Whose Hands? The Killing of women and children in Victoria" and launched her decade long association with the domestic violence sector.

Maria Dimopoulos held various positions at the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre, the Federation of Community Legal Centres, Zelda's Young Women's Refuge and Refuge Referrals (now known as the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria). Since 1996 Maria has worked as a freelance consultant and in that capacity has undertaken projects dealing with training in diversity awareness, community safety, domestic violence, sexual harassment, relations between police and indigenous peoples and training and mentoring for

refugee and immigrant women. In addition to her professional activities, Maria is active in many community groups that seek to address the issues confronting migrant and refugee women. She is currently serving on the North Eastern Migrant Resource Centre Management Committee; the Women's Rights Action Network; Race and Gender Advisory Group; the Diversity Conference Organising Committee and works regularly in an unpaid capacity with the Islamic Women's Welfare Council and the Victorian Arabic Social Services. She served on the Chief Justice's Ethnic Advisory Committee to the Family Court (1996-98); the Board of Governors of the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) (1998-99); the Board of Governors of the YWCA of Australia (1992-2000) and was a founding member and Chairperson (1997-99) of the Association of Non English Speaking Background Women of Australia.

Maria Dimopoulos is committed to breaking down segregation within the Australian community of groups with differing race, gender, class and sexual identities. She is passionate about human rights, especially women's rights and continues to work for increased cross-cultural understanding and the advancement of women.

## Pamela Griffin



### Koori educator, community worker, elder and mentor

Pamela Griffin is an Aboriginal community worker whose career spans welfare work, education, working within the Victorian Public Service and now serving in a voluntary capacity her local Aboriginal community.

Born in South Australia in 1939, Pamela was inspired by her mother who she describes as a “very fine, proud and principled woman” who worked as a maid in Adelaide homes and cleaned offices at night to ensure her children were well kept and who vowed, during those years of unofficial child removal, that her children would never be taken. Pamela spent five years at college in New South Wales and showed her ability and her will to achieve. Her marriage, which lasted 33 years, was difficult and for a while damaged her self esteem, but gave her four sons. In her mid thirties, she effectively began her career by taking a welfare course at the Community Welfare Training Institute in Watsonia. She topped the class and the following year she was the coordinator of the course.

After several years at the Institute in Watsonia, her confidence grew and in the mid 1980's she applied for and got the newly created position of coordinator of the Aboriginal Employment Unit at the Public Service Board. Her next position was as a Senior Conciliator for the Commission for Equal Opportunity. One of only three Aboriginals in the Public Service, Pam had been 'head

hunted' for the job by the then Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, Faye Marles, who continued to be Pam's mentor throughout her career. Pam then worked for the ANZ Bank (National Employment and Education), in the Alice Springs Central Regional Aboriginal Hostel and finished her professional career as head of the TAFE Aboriginal Education Unit at Wodonga TAFE. Pamela Griffin joined the Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation in 1994, was later its Vice-Chairperson (2000-01) and is now a volunteer worker at Mungab who is in constant demand by members of the Aboriginal community. She is a mentor for several young women in the Koori community, encouraging them to strive for excellence in their chosen field.

Pamela describes her professional life as “first of all fighting down the stereotypes; and then fighting for my people”.



## *Dr Margaret McLorinan*

### **Founder of the Obstetrics Department at the Queen Victoria hospital and a pioneer of health care for women by women**

Margaret McLorinan was one of the first female members of the Royal Australian College of Surgeons. She was a gifted administrator and organiser as well as an able and brilliant surgeon and used both of those talents in the service of women's health at the Queen Victoria Hospital.

Born in South Melbourne in 1887 Margaret McLorinan matriculated from Mentone High School at the age of 14. In 1919 she graduated from Melbourne University as a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery. Initially appointed Medical Officer at the Kyneton Hospital, Margaret returned to Melbourne in 1913 and practiced for a short time in Clayton. In 1914 she became clinical assistant outpatient staff at the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital. The outbreak of the First World War meant that women doctors took over the practices of serving doctors and Dr McLorinan filled an honorary position at the Melbourne hospital where she developed an antenatal clinic that returned outstanding results. After the war her priority was the setting up of an obstetrics department at the Queen Victoria Hospital. This was achieved in 1920. 'Dr Peggy' as she was known to her patients, became President of the medical staff at the Queen Victoria Hospital.

She and her committee supervised in detail the construction and equipping of a new maternity block, the Rachel Foster wing that opened in 1929.

During this time, Melbourne auxiliaries formed to support the hospital and Dr McLorinan encouraged this development by her enthusiasm and her interest in their work. In 1931 she saw the laying of the foundation stone for what was to be the Jessie McPherson Community Hospital, but returning unwell from a trip to Colombo, she resigned as president of the medical staff and as senior obstetrician although she retained her position as consulting obstetrician. She became ill again and died in 1932 at age 46 years.

Dr McLorinan was a woman of exceptional professional ability known for her kindness to her patients as well as her outstanding ability as a surgeon and her inspirational work as an administrator.

## Marjorie Oke



### Community worker, campaigner for social justice for women and indigenous Australians

Marjorie Oke, now a retired primary school teacher, has spent her life working for social justice wherever she has found herself.

Born in Richmond in 1911 to a community activist mother and a trade unionist father, Marjorie left school in the Great Depression. Her first job was as a teacher in a one-room school in Scoresby. After work she cycled to Caulfield Technical College and studied for her Primary Teaching Art and Craft Certificate. In 1935 she enrolled at Melbourne Teachers' College. After her marriage in 1942 her teaching career was suspended because married women were not allowed to teach. She got a job with the Australian Jam Company where the poor employment conditions caused her to join the Food Preservers' Union and became active in the Australian Labor Party.

In 1950 after joining with other women to fight for peace and social justice, Marjorie became a founding member of the Union of Australian Women. A few years later she went with her husband to Moe where she was able to return to teaching. Marjorie campaigned for equal pay for women teachers, the abolition of the marriage bar and access to superannuation.

In addition she formed a branch of the Aboriginal Advancement League, ensuring that it was chaired by an Aboriginal woman and helped to set up Victoria's first rural respite care for intellectually handicapped children. Later in life Marjorie became interested in the problems faced by ageing women and successfully promoted the idea of hydrotherapy for older women, leading a class at the Northcote City Baths. At 80 years of age she became a founding member of the Network for Older Women, established in 1992 as a forum for the concerns of older women. Marjorie Oke received the City of Moe Decasma award for outstanding service rendered to the city (1976), the Ministry of Housing rooming house for women in Fairfield was named Marjorie Oke House in her honour (1990), she was one of three women honoured by the National Council of Women of Victoria at its 90th Anniversary dinner and in 1991 Marjorie was awarded the Order of the Medal of Australia.

Marjorie Oke is recognised for her indomitable spirit and her unwavering commitment to working collaboratively with others for the advancement of women, the rights of indigenous people, peace and social justice.

## Lyn Swinburne



### Community action in the field of women's health

Lyn Swinburne is the founder and National Coordinator of Breast Cancer Network and works constantly to make a better future for women with breast cancer and to ensure that their voices are heard by those who make decisions at research and treatment levels.

Born in Melbourne in 1952, Lyn trained and worked as a primary school teacher. She married and had two children and after a break she returned to her profession. In 1994 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Many of her experiences during her treatment made her angry and determined to change the way care and services were delivered to women with breast cancer and their families. She made contact with other women of like mind and with Marcia O'Keefe set up the Breast Cancer Action Group of Victoria. The National Breast Cancer Centre in Sydney, an organisation of professionals set up after a Ministerial Inquiry into the treatment of breast cancer, approached Lyn to join their management committee as a consumer representative.

Her involvement in the breast cancer cause intensified and spread outside Victoria. She persuaded the Breast Cancer Centre to fund the National Conference for Women with Breast Cancer that took place in 1998. Lyn created and realised the concept "A Field of

Women" where 10,000 pink and 2,500 white silhouettes of women are planted in the ground to represent the number of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer and the number who die from the disease in Australia every year. The first Field was planted in the lawns of Parliament House Canberra as a finale to the Conference. The funds raised from sponsorship of the silhouettes provided funding for the needed national peak body for women with breast cancer. In July 1999 Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) was established. Lyn currently holds the position of National Coordinator, and is the Editor of the Network's free quarterly publication *The Beacon*. She developed the "A Seat at the Table" project which is internationally recognised as a world-first initiative to ensure that women with breast cancer have an effective voice within decision making forums. Lyn has represented BCNA at several international forums, chairs the BreastCare Victoria's Advisory Committee, is Board Director of the National Breast Cancer Centre, serves on the Australian Cancer Network's Council and the Management Committee of the National Cancer Control Initiative.

Lyn Swinburne says of her work, "I felt the most incredibly strong compulsion to do something with the experiences I had undergone - to make a difference; to make something useful and worthwhile out of my own cancer experience."

## Melva Johnson



### Koori activist, health educator and community leader

Melva Johnson is a respected elder of the Yorta Yorta people and a pioneer in developing health and education services for the Aboriginal community in and around Echuca.

Born in 1935 at Cummergunja Mission, Melva left school at 13. At 15 years of age she went to Melbourne where she worked as a domestic at the Salvation Army Hostel. She returned to Echuca, married at 21, had four children and worked at the Echuca Hospital as a domestic for 10 years. She became more aware of the results of local prejudice against Aboriginal people. At that time the local kindergarten would accept only two Aboriginal children per year and Aboriginal women who gave birth in the Echuca hospital were placed on the verandah, not inside the wards.

In the climate of change that began in the seventies Melva worked with the newly formed Aboriginal Cooperative. Because local Aboriginal children lacked a sense of identity, the Co-op worked to set up a Multifunctional Centre that could be used as a child care centre. Aboriginal children came to the Centre for some time each day as a way of encouraging their sense of belonging and community. In 1978, when the Centre started, no Aboriginal child in the area had completed VCE. Since 1992 eight young people have done so.

In 1986-87 through ATSIC funding, the community was able to purchase a house and set up a Women and Children's Safe House. Echuca at that time had no medical services that bulk billed. Using the Safe House as a base and with funding from the Pap Smear Program, the Co-op was able to employ Melva and obtain the services of a doctor on a sessional basis. The service continued to expand and in 1998 more funding was obtained and the Cooperative purchased the house next door. The Campaspe Council supported the extension in spite of a petition by nearby residents. The service currently employs a full time nurse, two Aboriginal health workers, a domestic violence worker, a supported accommodation worker and a podiatrist on a sessional basis.

Currently, Melva works as a family support worker, is the regional ATSIC Councillor, sits on the Echuca Hospital Board, the Women's Health Advisory, the Aboriginal Housing Board and the Aboriginal Education Committee. The Victoria University Melva Johnson Campus is named in her honour and in 2000 Melva received the VACCHO Aboriginal Health Worker Achievement Award.

Melva says of her work, "What I wanted was a fair go for my people."

## Myrtle Muir



### Koori elder and community worker in the field of housing

Myrtle Muir has worked with and supported her community for 40 years, helping those in need in whatever way she can, whether it is by offering them a bed and a feed, or by liaising with a charity or a welfare worker. In addition, she has been associated with Aboriginal housing for 23 years spending her time and energy in that area on an entirely voluntary basis.

Born in 1932 in Maryborough, Myrtle moved to Benalla after her marriage, where she lived for 10 years. Forty years ago, she moved to the Ballarat area and she currently lives in Wendouree. A public housing tenant for 50 years, Myrtle enjoys the community life of public housing and many of the friendships she has made with other tenant families have lasted for many years.

In 1979 Myrtle became a member of the Steering Committee on Aboriginal Housing. This group established the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria, which comprises elected representatives from all regions of Victoria. Myrtle was elected as the representative for the Ballarat Region (now the Central Highlands Wimmera Region) at the first elections and has held the position for 20 years.

Myrtle has also been Chairperson of the Aboriginal Community State Justice Panel, a program administered by the Victoria Police. As a result of that membership, Myrtle received the Chief Commissioner's Citizen Commendation for work in improving Aboriginal and Police relations in 1996. In addition to raising her own large family of four daughters (one child passed away) and five sons, Myrtle has fostered more than 48 children. In 1998 Myrtle received the inaugural Mollie Dyer Award, an honour designed to advance the observance of the rights of Victorian Aboriginal children and the maintenance of their families. In 2000 she received the Frances Pennington Award which recognises Victorians who live in public housing and contribute to their communities.

Myrtle's motto is "To do my utmost". She says, "Being a Board member means that you're out there helping your own and just to see the thanks on peoples' faces when they receive a house is enough reward".

## Mary Grant Bruce



### Early Australian author and feminist

Mary Grant Bruce is one of Australia's best known children's authors. Together with Ethel Turner her work formed the backbone of reading material available for children from 1894 to 1942.

Born in Sale in 1878, Mary grew up in and around the Gippsland area her mother's family lived in Traralgon and were regarded as part of the local "squattocracy". Always interested in reading and writing, Mary won the Melbourne Shakespeare Society prize for writing three years running, the first when she was 16.

At the age of 20, in an era when young ladies were expected to stay at home, Mary went to Melbourne with five pounds in her pocket to look for a job. Mary spent the next 13 years living in Melbourne and in 1900 she became the editor of the Children's Page in The Leader and began writing short stories. In 1910 these stories were collected and published as *A Little Bush Maid*. This began the popular and famous series of 'Billabong' books, based on her early years in Gippsland, they created an idealised bush family, the Lintons, who were much loved by her readers. The last of the Billabong books was published in 1942 when Mary was 64.

While living in Melbourne, Mary bought one of the new 3-speed bicycles and was a pioneering skirted woman cyclist who sometimes pedalled the 160 kilometres from Melbourne to Traralgon to visit her family. Mary left Melbourne in 1912 to return to Traralgon, the following year she visited family in Ireland and while there, she met her cousin, George Bruce who she married in Australia the next year. From there on she divided her time between Australia, Ireland and England. She had two sons, one of whom died. She continued to write throughout her life. She lived in Australia during the Second World War and between 1940 and 1942 Mary gave over 200 war talks on the radio. She wrote articles for newspapers until about 1951. In 1954 she returned to England and died there in 1958 at 80 years of age.

Mary was a founding member of the Women Writers Club and the Fellowship of Gippsland Women. She is described as a "feminist and an independent professional woman". It was also said of her that during her era, no writer was better known or loved.

## Mary Gaunt

### Early Australian author

Mary Gaunt was an early Australian author who wrote articles, short stories, novels and travel books. Her early work was set in Australia and much of it dealt with the goldfields of the Woolshed and Indigo diggings.

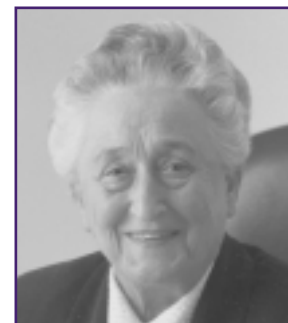
Born in 1861 in Victoria, Mary was the daughter of William Gaunt, a Victorian Gold Commissioner and grew up in Chiltern, Beechworth, Sale and Ballarat. When admission to Melbourne University was granted to women in 1881 Mary Gaunt was one of the first to enrol. After one year at University she began writing and in the next six years published three novels and a collection of short stories. One of the novels, "Kirkham's Find", was republished by Penguin in 1988. She was married in 1894 to Dr. Hubert Lindsay however he became ill and died in 1900, leaving Mary a widow at 39.

Mary left for England in 1901 and on her departure Melbourne's Table Talk called her, "one of the best known and successful of Victorian authoresses". After London, she travelled extensively in West Africa and China producing several successful travel books as a result. During World War 1 she lived in England for a time, then moved to the Italian Riviera.

When the Second World War broke out, Mary who had been living on the Ligurian coast of Italy for twenty years was forced to leave her home there and cross into France. As a refugee trying to flee France, she lost all her writings, unpublished manuscripts and belongings. She died in Cannes, France in 1942.

Mary said of herself that if she had been born a man she would have become a sailor, like her brothers. She instead became a writer, an independent woman and an adventurous traveller.

## Concetta Benn



### A leader and advocate for social justice

Concetta Benn has worked professionally for more than 40 years as a caseworker, researcher, social policy development worker, teacher, administrator and social change agent in the fields of welfare, education and health.

Born in 1926 in Australia of Italian parents, Concetta (Connie) Benn graduated from the University of Melbourne with an Arts degree and in 1949 married Keith Benn, a young psychiatrist. They subsequently had three children. She returned to study social work in 1955 and gained her qualification in that discipline in 1957. Her first position was as a psychiatric social worker for the Mental Health Authority.

She became Vice-President of the Australian Association of Social Workers in 1958 and she was later President until 1972. Connie Benn's first senior appointment was in 1961 as the Director of Social Work and Research for the Citizens Welfare Service.

Subsequently she was Associate Director, Social Policy and Research at the Brotherhood of St Laurence (1977-82), Head of School of Social Work (Phillip Institute of Technology, 1982-83), Director, Social Development Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet (1983-85), Deputy Director-General, Community Services Victoria (1985-88), Director, Older Persons Planning Office, Community Services Victoria (1988-89), Professor, School of Social Work, University of Melbourne (1989-91) and Chairperson, Adult Community and Further Education Board Victoria (1992-95). Professor Benn has served on more than 20 Boards, Commissions and Task Forces and undertaken many significant reviews and consultancies.

Throughout her long career in social work, human services and social policy development, Connie Benn has always been passionately committed to social justice. She has championed the rights of people living in poverty, women, Aboriginal people, immigrants, people with disabilities, the unemployed and all who suffer social exclusion.



## Lady Millie Peacock

### First woman member of Parliament in Victoria

Lady Peacock was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly in 1933 at a by-election held as a result of the death of her husband.

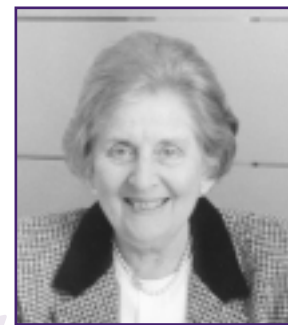
Born Millie Holden in 1870 in East Framlingham, Millie married Alexander Peacock in 1901. Alexander Peacock was already a Member of Parliament and he represented Allandale for the next 44 years. During his parliamentary career, he was three times Premier of Victoria, six times Minister for Education and when he died he was the speaker of the Legislative Assembly. He received a knighthood in 1904. He was known as the 'father' of the Factories and Shops Act (Amendment) Bill that he introduced in 1895 to abolish sweated labor. He also inaugurated wages boards.

The Peacocks lived all of their married life in a plain weatherboard house that still stands in Creswick. Lady Peacock supported all her husband's political campaigns and earned the affection of many for her kindly disposition and winning ways. She made herself familiar with the people of her part of the country, their needs and problems and she was sometimes known as the "Deputy Member" for her work. Lady Peacock was the first president elected to the Crewsick branch of the Australian Red Cross Society in 1915, a position she held until 1941.

After the death of Sir Alexander, she was elected without having addressed a single meeting. Because she was in mourning when she entered parliament, Lady Peacock made her first and only speech in 1934. It was a controversial speech, dealing with the issue of the day, the Factories and Shops Bill, in particular that part of the Bill that dealt with out-workers, their children and persons employed by them. Lady Peacock did not contest a second election and is recorded as saying that Parliament was not a place for women. In 1937 she switched on the power and light in Creswick in the presence of thousands of enthusiastic spectators.

It was said of Lady Peacock that she had shared in the public life of Creswick for 50 years and that she was one of Victoria's distinguished daughters.

## *The Hon Judith Cohen, A.O.*



### **Justice, leadership and community service**

Judith Cohen is a lawyer, a Commissioner of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, a founding member of the National Council of Jewish Women's Foundation and serves on several statutory committees and councils.

Born Judith Selig in 1926, she went to both the University of Sydney and the University of Victoria. Admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in 1950 she practiced there until 1953, the year of her marriage to Sam Cohen, a brilliant young lawyer who was deeply committed to social justice. Sam Cohen was later a Labor Senator and Judith constantly supported him in his career. Admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor to the Supreme Court of Victoria in 1953, she practiced law in Melbourne from 1953-1955; 1962-1966 and 1970-1975.

In 1975 she was the first woman appointed as a Commissioner of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. In 1980 she became the Deputy President of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and in 1989 Deputy President of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. She retired in 1991.

In addition to her distinguished career as a jurist, Judith Cohen has been active in a broad range of community roles. A member of the National Council of Jewish Women since 1953, she assisted in the inception of the National Council for Jewish Women Foundation in 1977 and was thereafter a Trustee; a Trustee of Norman Smorgon House Foundation and the Norman Smorgon House Scholarship Fund (1986-1996); she has also been a member of the Victorian Women Lawyers Association since 1953. Judith Cohen's statutory appointments include: Chairperson, Federal Costs Advisory Committee (1990-1991), Member of the Melbourne Advisory Committee, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1973-1976), Member of the Advisory Committee in the Social Sciences National Library (1982-1984), Member of the Council of the National Library (1984-1990), Member of the Council of the Victorian University of Technology (1990-1993) and Chair of the General Insurance Claims Review Panel (1991-1996). The Honourable Judith Cohen was awarded the Order of Australia in 1992.

Judith Cohen's career has been characterised by her determination, dedication and her commitment to fairness and justice for all. Her daughter Susan Cohen is now a Justice of the County Court.

## Liz Jones



### Actress, director and innovator in Australian theatre

Liz Jones has been a major contributor to the development of a distinctive Australian dramatic voice through her long association with La Mama both as an actress and as a director.

Born in 1946, Liz Jones graduated from the Australian National University in 1966 and although passionate about theatre, began a teaching career that included a period as a volunteer graduate in Indonesia. In 1972 Liz met Betty Burstall, the founder of Melbourne's experimental La Mama theatre. After a trip to England where her enthusiasm for theatre was rekindled, she returned to Melbourne and began working as a performer and staff member at La Mama in 1973. In that year Liz also started working with Lloyd Jones who she later married.

Liz Jones has steered La Mama since 1976 and for the past 20 years Liz has been both the Artistic Director and Chief Executive Officer. Liz Jones has a deeply felt belief in its basic philosophy and is committed to defend, support and nurture those artists willing to put their creative visions on the line. Today La Mama is seen as symbolising the autonomy of Australian theatre; it was classified by the National Trust and it is the only theatre to be nominated solely for its cultural contribution.

Liz Jones was a peer committee member on the Australian Council for the Arts for three years, she travelled in Europe, UK and the USA on a Churchill Fellowship to study the relationship between theatre and community. She was awarded the Kenneth Myer Medallion for the Performing Arts (1995) and received an honorary Doctorate in Laws from the Australian National University (1996), the Sidney Myer Facilitator's Award (2000) and the Green Room Lifetime Achievement Award (2001).

Liz Jones has unbounded energy and enthusiasm for her work. She is committed to exploring diversity in artistic approach and innovation in form. Through her chosen medium of theatre, she has explored the cultural and social concerns of both mainstream and minority Australian groups.

## Panagiota Zacharias



### Voluntary worker in the Greek community

Panagiota Zacharias lives in Preston and works to serve the Greek community in the Darebin area. She works with elderly Greek women, through the Greek Women's Elderly Friendly Club and by visiting nursing home residents who are often isolated by their lack of English.

Born in 1940 in Thessaloniki in Greece, Panagiota Zacharias migrated to Australia in 1961 to join her sister in Melbourne. She had no English and for the first four years worked nightshift in a factory. In 1965 she married and she has five children. Her parents joined the two sisters in Australia in the mid 1970's. Panagiota continued to work until her parents became old and ill, she then gave up work to look after them.

After the death of her parents in the early 1990's Panagiota became very involved in voluntary work with the Greek community in Darebin. She joined the Greek Women's Elderly Friendly Club and became first Treasurer and then President in 1984. Panagiota encouraged many women to join the club so that they could share ideas, gain skills and knowledge. She organised regular guest speakers from other organisations and arranged excursions.

Panagiota also visits many frail elderly Greek widows in their homes, offering many small and important services. For the past 10 years, she has been a regular visitor to the Greek residents of a nursing home in Coburg. Many of the old people in the nursing home speak little English and find communication with the staff very difficult. Panagiota is able to provide them with company and to make them feel less isolated.

Panagiota sees much of the work she does within the community as 'being a good neighbour'. In Greece she says, people enjoyed a big extended family and a wide social network. In Australia Panagiota wants Greek women who have worked long and hard to be able to age with dignity and to share their experiences with other women.

## Jean Taylor

### Feminist and lesbian activist, writer and performer

Jean Taylor works for the advancement of women, the rights of lesbians and the elimination of racism. She is an author, a founding member of the Women's Circus and has voluntarily given her time to a wide variety of community action groups.

Born in 1944, Jean Taylor grew up in Mildura. She married and had three children. In the early 1970's, influenced by feminism, she began to reconstruct her life. She returned to study gaining her Higher School Certificate through the Council of Adult Education, won a place at La Trobe University and graduated in Arts in 1976. While she was a student, Jean was a member of the La Trobe Women's Group. Over this period she ended her marriage.

In 1972 she joined the Brunswick Consciousness Raising Group and from that time became committed to feminist activism. She worked as a volunteer at Melbourne's first refuge, the Women's Liberation Half Way House (1972-76), at the Women's Liberation Centre (1974-76), the Women's Liberation Switchboard (1979-92), and was instrumental in setting up the Matilda Women's Refuge in 1978.



During this time she constantly wrote and under the pseudonym Emily George, Jean published 18 books as well as novellas, plays and poetry. Jean came out as a lesbian in 1979 and in 1984 she established Dykebooks to enable the lesbian community to have full control of their own writing and publishing. Jean Taylor has a long-standing relationship with the Brunswick Aboriginal community and runs racism awareness workshops. A founding member of the Women's Circus in 1991, she performed with the Circus for several years, travelling to Beijing in 1995. Jean became the founding director of the Performing Older Women's Circus in 1995. When Jean's partner, Maureen O'Connor, was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, Jean established the Lesbian Cancer Support Group in 1996 and began to raise awareness of the higher-than-average risk of cancer in the lesbian community. Jean cared for Maureen during the final years of her life, the book she subsequently wrote about her experiences, *The C Word*, was published by Spinifex Press in 2000.

Jean Taylor's commitment to activism on behalf of women has been unstinting, the kind of grass roots activity she has engaged in is an essential part of community vitality.

## Rosanna Baini JP



### Community worker, Justice of the Peace

Rosanna Baini was the first Lebanese woman to be appointed a Justice of the Peace in Victoria and a Bail Justice and the first Lebanese woman to be appointed a Commissioner of the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

Rosanna Baini was born in 1963 in Sydney; her parents were migrants from Lebanon. In 1984 she had almost finished a Diploma in Business and Marketing when she gave up her studies to marry and move to Melbourne where she assisted her husband in his business. She has four children. Rosanna recognised the needs within the Lebanese community and has consistently worked to make a difference. After her marriage, she returned to study and undertook a Diploma in Health Sciences and she is currently studying for a Degree in Criminal Justice Administration at RMIT.

In 1995 Rosanna was appointed a Justice of the Peace and a Bail Justice. In 1997 she became a Commissioner with the Victorian Multicultural Commission. Her particular interests are troubled youth, isolated women and newly arrived migrants. She is an executive board member of the steering committee with the Victorian Maronite Committee which oversees service delivery for youth in the form of a 'one-stop-shop' in the North East and North West region of Melbourne.

Rosanna has assisted many young Muslim women to be active in the workforce, to showcase their skills and not to be concerned that they might be looked on as 'different'. She has encouraged them to present themselves with confidence and offered practical help in ways to combine 'dress sense' with a culturally appropriate dress code. Rosanna was instrumental in the success of the Victorian Multicultural Youth Conferences. Aware that many young women's groups from various cultural backgrounds did not intend to go to the Conference, Rosanna got in touch with every group, assuring them that all young women attending would be treated with the utmost respect. The result was a series of successful conferences. Her most recent interest is in getting more musically talented young women from diverse cultural backgrounds to become part of the urban music industry. The aim is to incorporate the lyrics and tunes of many cultures into the dance music of today and to increase the proportion of radio and television air-time given to local talent.

Rosanna is committed to cultural diversity. She seeks to empower people, especially young women, with the leadership skills they need to participate in all aspects of the wider Victorian community, in government, in community, in sport, in the arts and in business.

## Nazra Ibrahim



### Service to the Islamic community, leadership and commitment to human rights and social justice

Nazra Ibrahim works tirelessly to provide support to the Islamic community, particularly women and their families in the northern region in Melbourne. Her leadership ability and her understanding of cross-cultural issues has resulted in the provision of more culturally sensitive services by local government and has fostered the support of the community.

Born in 1963 in Fiji, Nazra Ibrahim met and married an Ethiopian Australian and migrated to Australia in 1984. Nazra's three children were born between 1987 and 1992 and during those years she studied, receiving a Diploma of Education in 1989. From that time she worked part time as a Teacher Aid for children and young adults with intellectual disabilities. In 1997 she gained an Advanced Certificate in Intellectual Disability and in 1999 a Bachelor of Science - Intellectual Disability.

In 1993 Nazra and her family had a life changing experience. Her husband was severely incapacitated in an accident and during the ensuing long legal battle the family suffered severe financial difficulties until they received compensation. Nazra became aware of the struggles experienced by those in need and began to work for change.

She now combines part time work and care of her husband with voluntary work for the Muslim community. Realising that existing respite care services for carers of children with intellectual disabilities were not appropriate to the needs of the Islamic community, Nazra successfully established in 1997 a Volunteer Respite Care service, which she still coordinates.

In 1998, with the cooperation of the Moreland City Council and neighbouring councils, she initiated and continues to coordinate a culturally appropriate recreation program for young Muslim women. She is also the principal contact person called on by the Islamic community in Melbourne to support and counsel Muslim women with domestic violence issues. She has been an active member of the Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition since mid 2000 and is a volunteer community worker for refugees on temporary protection visas. In 2001, in partnership with the Moreland City Council, Nazra has developed a project under the Strengthening Families and Communities program to address issues facing Muslim young people and their families as a result of the conflict between the influence of Australian values and the expectations of overseas-born parents.

Nazra Ibrahim is motivated by her strong sense of social justice and is committed to helping people in need and promoting cross-cultural understanding among service providers and within the community.

## Vivienne Vy Nguyen



### Community worker for Vietnamese youth

Vivienne Nguyen has for the past decade given countless hours of service to the Vietnamese Community. Her major concern is young people and in particular, the impact of drug abuse and misuse. She is a role model and an advocate for Vietnamese women in community leadership roles.

Born in Vietnam in 1971, Vivienne arrived in Australia in 1983 after a year living as a refugee in Malaysia. She completed her Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Melbourne in 1992, married in 1998 and completed a Masters degree in Applied Finance in 2001. Vivienne is currently a National Sales and Marketing Manager for a financial services organisation.

As well as her studies and later a demanding career, Vivienne Nguyen has consistently worked for the community. She was President of the Vietnamese Students Association of Melbourne University (1992-93), President of the Vietnamese Students Association of Victoria (1995-96), President, Organising Committee member for Austcare Refugee Week (96-97) and Secretary, Face-It drug Education/Prevention initiative for young Vietnamese people (1998-99).

She is currently a Board Member of the Foundation for Young Australians, Vice President for Finance and Planning, Vietnamese Community in Australia - Victorian Chapter and a founding member and Executive Member Australian Vietnamese Youth Today Council.

Vivienne says of her work, "I believe I have been fortunate to receive and achieve what I have in life and I want to put something back". She is deeply passionate about helping to create a strong and positive Vietnamese community able to make a unique contribution to the larger society.



## Joanne Wainer



### Women's access to health services

Joanne Wainer is an academic and health activist in Victoria. An early abortion campaigner, she has consistently promoted women's access to contraception and safe legal abortion. Since 1995 she has worked to include gender issues on the medical curriculum and improve health services in rural areas.

Born in 1946 Jo Wainer completed a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) at the University of Melbourne in 1968. While still a student Jo became a foundation Secretary of the Abortion Law Reform Association. Involved in the campaign to decriminalise abortion, she met and married Dr. Bertram Wainer and together they fought a dangerous battle to expose the abortion rackets being run by corrupt detectives in the Victorian Police Force. In 1986 Bertram Wainer died and Jo, a widow at 40 supported their family by being a farmer of wool, mohair and cashmere.

In 1990 Jo Wainer established and managed until 1994 a multi-disciplinary women's health clinic. By 1994, the clinic employed 24 staff and serviced 5,000 patients a year. As a journalist for the ABC she attended the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development.

In 1995 working for several weeks in New York as a consultant on gender issues to the UN Secretary General of the 4th World Conference on Women she attended the Beijing conference attached to the Secretary General's staff and represented Australian non-government women's health organisations. In 1995, Jo took up a Research Fellowship at the Monash University School of Rural Health and in 1996 became a Senior Lecturer in the School. She completed several research projects on medical service delivery in rural areas and women rural doctors and introduced a new curriculum unit "Women in Rural General Practice". She is currently Convenor of the Gender Working Party of the Five Year Curriculum Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences and was Convenor of the gender session of the World Organisation of Family Doctors 5th World Rural Health Congress. In 1996 Jo was the Non-Government Representative in the Australian delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Jo Wainer has described herself as a feminist, "...as a woman who has spent much of her adult life honouring the feminine and working to make a space so that women's voice can be heard and women's experience incorporated into the public domain"

