



Victorian Honour Roll of Women 2007

Inspirational women from all walks of life

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Foreword



I am pleased to present the stories of the remarkable women who have joined the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2007.

These women have used their skills, knowledge, commitment and compassion to better their communities and have made a lasting contribution to women in Victoria. They have excelled in their chosen fields and are testament to the depth of talented women we have in this State.

Given their tireless work for others, it is fitting that we honour them, and the causes they serve, on International Women's Day.

They join 356 women already inducted on the Honour Roll, which began in 2001 as part of our Centenary of Federation celebrations and continues until 2008, when we mark the centenary of women's suffrage in Victoria.

I'd like to thank these extraordinary women for their passion and determination. They are role models for women's leadership and their achievements stand as an inspiration to us all.

Jacinta Allan

Jacinta Allan MP
Minister for Women's Affairs

Phyllis Andy

Strengthening Indigenous communities

For more than 20 years Phyllis Andy has been an active community leader and tireless worker for the East Gippsland communities of Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance and Lake Tyers, focusing on women and children.

Using her standing as a respected Indigenous Elder, Phyllis has influenced change and established partnerships, programs and services that create lasting benefits and a growing sense of local reconciliation.

Phyllis sees education as the key to a better future.

“I try to make it a little bit better for the next generation of Indigenous women and children to access things better than what we did as kids and young adults,” Phyllis said.

“The inspiration to help others came when I presented graduation certificates to 10 Indigenous women on a childcare course. It meant the future and it felt special to see the Indigenous women standing side-by-side with the white people and they were equal at that moment,” she said.

Phyllis later campaigned to improve the health and safety of Indigenous families and often placed herself in difficult and dangerous circumstances to protect vulnerable Elders, women and children.

Her exposure and deep understanding of Indigenous issues was garnered from her various roles working in childcare, family support and community health.

Phyllis was a founding member of Lakes Entrance Koori Elder groups and Lakes Entrance and Lake Tyers women’s groups. She was also involved in the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative Board, Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust Board, and the Gippsland Lakes Community Health Board of Management.

To her community, Phyllis has also become an unofficial adviser, giving guidance and showing leadership on Indigenous community issues, as well as advocating for women’s issues.

“Women are the drive behind our families like our mothers were and their mothers before that. We are always out front making changes for the betterment of our communities,” Phyllis said.



Dianne Bailey-Tribe

Dedicated crusader in the field of autism

For the parents of a child diagnosed with the complex, lifelong condition of autism spectrum disorder, their child’s difficult and challenging day-to-day behaviour requires sensitive understanding, specialist support and intervention.

Dianne Bailey-Tribe has become a renowned expert and leader in the field of autism. She has pioneered the delivery of services for children with autism to give all those associated with the child the tools and understanding to better work with them.

“The secret is that it’s an all-of-family approach and we are no longer working just with the child. Now the parents are first, then the parents together in partnership with the child,” Dianne said.

Much of Dianne’s work involves helping parents to grieve in the early stages of diagnosis and understand the challenges they face, as well as offering cautious optimism about the future for them and their child.

Her inspiration is seeing the milestones reached and says “it is important to provide opportunities for parents to get enjoyment out of their children and remember that they are children first and autism is secondary.”

Children with autism can be anxious, rigid, have pedantic speech patterns, throw tantrums and Dianne says “we use a lot of pictures to help the child understand the world around them and it works like magic.”

Dianne trained and became a leader in her fields of occupational therapy, psychotherapy and community service and has always worked with children and adolescents with mental health issues.

She recognises the need for greater knowledge and understanding for occupational therapy treatment for children with autism. This has become not only her hobby but her working passion.

Dianne is a Trustee of Occupational Therapy Research Trust Fund. She is a mentor, trainer, counsellor and friend to many in her role as Chief Executive Officer at Irabina Childhood Autism Services, and she continues to raise awareness of the complexity of autism spectrum disorders in the community.

Annette Bear-Crawford

1853 – 1899

Social reformer for women and children

Annette Bear-Crawford was a leading force in Victoria's feminist movement and a passionate advocate for equal rights for women. She worked tirelessly to improve the status and conditions of women and children in the late nineteenth century.

Annette united the existing suffrage societies to establish the Victorian Women's Franchise League in 1894, and formed the United Council for Women's Suffrage.

Both groups were influential in gaining equal opportunities for women and ultimately the vote for the women of Victoria.

As an important social reformer of her time, Annette's influence extended to encouraging and educating women to undertake public work, attend speaking engagements and to stand for election on all-male boards and committees.

Annette was born in Melbourne, trained in England and worked as a social worker in the London slums before returning to Victoria, where she became one of the first members of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Victorian Vigilance Society.

She helped obtain amendments to legislation affecting women including successfully raising the age of consent for girls to sixteen years and the appointing of women as factory inspectors. She also campaigned for police matrons and for women to administer the *Infant Life Protection Act 1890*.

One of her most enduring achievements grew out of her concerns for the welfare of unmarried mothers and their children.

Annette led the fundraising campaign to establish the Queen Victoria Hospital and as a result, the Queen's Shilling Fund raised 63,250 shillings from the women of Victoria, equivalent to around \$2.5 million today.

Sadly, she did not live to see this hospital opened, dying prematurely from pneumonia while in London representing Australia at the Women's International Conference.

Annette is buried in London and a plaque in Christ Church, South Yarra, commemorates her life.

Marilyn Beaumont

Creating healthy environments

Marilyn Beaumont is passionate about standing up for what is right and is driven by the way women unite.

"Together we have to be courageous and name whatever it is that's not right, from the really big issues about women being unequal to women's access to superannuation," Marilyn said.

Marilyn's forthright attitude, enduring vision and women's health knowledge have been used to inform policy, influence government and health professionals, and create healthy environments for women.

After training as a nurse, Marilyn was involved in the grass roots women's movement and gay liberation, and emerged in the 1970s as an activist for street kid services and for women with drug and alcohol dependence.

As State Secretary South Australia and then Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) she raised the professional recognition of nurses to an unprecedented degree on national health policy issues. She campaigned for the introduction of important working conditions that have, and continue to have, a positive and enduring effect on nurses across Australia.

"The longer I worked in advocacy the more I've learnt to speak the truth and bring others along with me. I trust my instincts and give voice to what I see around me that isn't right. To act upon it, stand up and say it."

Now the Executive Director of Women's Health Victoria, Marilyn continues to provide leadership and advocates for the specific health needs of women.

"Seeing how the health system works or doesn't work and using resources more efficiently is what drives me now," she said.

Her commitment extends to mentoring staff and she sits on a number of boards including Melbourne Health and Corrections Victoria, as well as being a member of the Women's Correctional Services Advisory Committee and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Bisexual Health.

Josie Black OAM

Community activist and educator

Josie Black has been leading, shaping and enhancing the lives of people in Victoria's southwest regional community for the past 25 years.

"I am a champion for rural people and particularly those in small communities, for education, youth and arts, and for some unpopular things like reconciliation," Josie said.

With her hallmarks of energy and persistence, Josie regularly initiates and supports programs and projects that benefit her community and promote social justice.

In addition to her professional working life as an educator, her influence has extended from community development initiatives, tourism, health services, arts and culture projects to rural counselling services and as a representative on many community forums and committees.

Josie organises activities ranging from festivals to leadership programs, and also mentors women and advocates for people who are socially and culturally marginalised or disadvantaged.

She says this is shaped by her earlier experiences as an Italian immigrant and sole parent.

"I have witnessed what does and doesn't happen to people without the English language or adequate education who find it difficult to pursue and get their entitlements, or are afraid of appearing discontented with their situation," Josie said.

Establishing the Great South Coast Community Foundation, her work in adult education and community centres, and raising three sons who have become wonderful parents, are the achievements Josie cites as her most significant.

In recognition of her community work, Josie was named Corangamite Shire Citizen of the Year in 1998 and received a Centenary Medal in 2003. She was also awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2000 for services to education, particularly as Chairperson of the Corangamite District Adult Education Group and to the community.

As a qualified teacher, Josie says that she has been "mainly providing opportunities for people to shape their own lives through education".

"It gives people a chance to be able to participate better in their communities," Josie said.

Anne Brunell OAM

Inspiring those who have set their limits

Dressed in her jeans, Anne Brunell looks like every other young mum attending to her two active young sons.

She speaks to many school children and gives inspiration, encouraging them to do something with their lives.

"I think you have to grasp life. You need to be out there doing things," Anne said.

Anne's determination and drive came from the challenges early in her life.

She was a Ward of the State until she was four years old and is a double above-knee leg amputee – beneath the jeans are two artificial legs.

Always adapting to the situation at hand no matter how difficult, Anne devoted her energies and reached the pinnacle of success in the swimming pool.

A defining moment came when Anne was the youngest competitor at the 1984 International Disabled Games in New York, and won a bronze medal.

"I saw people with disabilities worse than mine. I hadn't had much exposure to other disabled people, only amputees, and there I saw people competing that were blind or in a wheelchair," she said.

"I was only 13 and decided then I needed to be more serious. My mindset changed and I wanted a gold medal in world record time. I had a new attitude and a new maturity towards my swimming."

Anne's achievements include four world records, a silver medal at the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games and three gold and one bronze medal at the 1992 Barcelona Paralympic Games, where she was honoured as the Australian female team captain.

She was awarded an Order of Australia Medal and supported the Australian Paralympics team as an athlete liaison officer in Sydney 2000.

Anne retired from her swimming career on a high note although her involvement continues as a volunteer and as Vice President of the Amputees Association.

When Anne set out she did not realise the opportunities her success would present, or the role model she would become for others.

Ola (Carola) Cohn MBE

1892 – 1964

A lasting impression on Victoria's art world

Talented artist and professional sculptor Ola Cohn left a remarkable gift to Victoria in Melbourne's Fitzroy Gardens. "The Fairies' Tree" continues to enchant generations of children who visit the gardens.

Ola's other works in bronze, wood, terracotta and freestone are found in many state and provincial galleries throughout Australia. Large freestone works include Adelaide's *Pioneer Woman* and Hobart Hospital's *Science and Humanity* and her bronze, *Head of a Virgin* is displayed in the National Gallery of Victoria.

Despite being drawn to works of religion and mysticism, success came with her avant-garde Modernism style which was ridiculed by the media. She was the first of the 'Moderns' in Australia.

Born in Bendigo, Ola developed her interest in art at an early age and went on to graduate as an Associate of the Royal College of Art in London, exhibiting in London and Paris. Upon returning to Melbourne, Ola used her prestige to tirelessly support and promote art and artists, particularly the women artists of early twentieth century Victoria.

Ola inspired female artists and influenced the subject matter of other sculptors away from works of triumphant men with war-like stances to more general topics of wide appeal. Her East Melbourne property was a meeting place for women artists and Melbourne's cultural hub for almost 30 years.

Ola established the Sculptors Society of Melbourne and was President of the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors from 1948 to 1964. She arranged competitions for public memorials and statues, and hosted charity events and exhibitions at her property.

During her lifetime she was a stalwart for many charities including the Red Cross, wartime charities and animal charities, as well as giving wide support to other committees.

Ola bequeathed her East Melbourne property and a collection of her works and other artefacts to the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) for the advancement of female artists and sculptors. Today her home is known as the "Ola Cohn Centre for the Arts".

Ola was posthumously appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1965, for services to art and sculpture.

Lynda Gibson

1956 – 2004

A leading light in comedy

Lynda Jane Wiseman Gibson – but almost universally known as Gibbo – was a comedy star.

Her CV starts at Sydney's famous Nimrod Theatre in the 1970s. It moves to the Murray River Performing Group in the 80s and then blossoms into a huge diversity of theatre, stand up, television and film.

From *Let The Blood Run Free* to *The Natural Normans*, from *The Big Gig* to *Frontline* and the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, Lynda Gibson's career charts the emergence of Melbourne as Australia's comedy capital.

But her contribution was far greater than the sum of her performances on stage and screen.

Also known as 'The Benefit Queen', Lynda had a passionate belief in supporting people and communities in need.

From Yooralla and the Victorian Women's Trust to East Timor and striking waterside workers, there were few community causes that she would not donate her time and talents towards.

Diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2000, she threw her energy into founding and supporting OvCa – the National Ovarian Cancer Network.

Despite her illness, she worked tirelessly to help raise funds for patient services, medical education and community awareness of a disease that claims more than one woman every 10 hours.

Lynda, It's Not Nasty, her one-woman show about cancer, chemotherapy and wigs, was a hit at the 2001 Fringe Festival.

Two years later, her performance in *Comedy Is Still Not Pretty*, wearing nude suits with Judith Lucy and Denise Scott, won The Age Critics' Award at the 2003 Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

Her extraordinary accomplishments were recognised through the creation of the annual Golden Gibbo Award, now presented each year at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

The criteria for that award – Australasian, self produced, work which is original, adventurous and has a strong social political content – embodies much of what Lynda contributed to comedy and to our community.

Barbara Jennings

Building a women's coalition

Barbara Jennings is a tenacious, creative and tireless worker on behalf of women, addressing the social, political and economic challenges they face.

Willing to take on any role, Barbara is an inspirational leader who has ignited and unified broad coalitions on behalf of major infrastructure projects involving the Royal Women's Hospital and the Queen Victoria Hospital.

She was also in the forefront of campaigns through the 1980s to tackle discrimination in education, workforce participation and equal pay for equal work.

Barbara has been recognised for showing amazing resourcefulness, leadership and ingenuity spearheading the three-year campaign to save the Royal Women's Hospital from demolition and downgrading in 1993.

Barbara became the spokesperson and coordinator for the *Eyes on the Women's* campaign to raise community awareness of the importance of a specialist hospital for women's health.

"Coalitions with broad agreement on common goals are one of the most effective ways to effect social change," Barbara said.

The success of the *Eyes on the Women's* campaign meant that the Royal Women's Hospital was saved to celebrate its 150th anniversary in September 2006 and is now looking forward to the completion of its new hospital building in mid-2008, next to the Royal Melbourne Hospital in Parkville.

Barbara was also instrumental in the campaign to preserve a core part of the Queen Victoria Hospital in Lonsdale Street after plans were announced to demolish the buildings and relocate its health services to the Monash Medical Centre.

"I was only one of many women fighting like mad to stop it being demolished. We had a long campaign including a huge public meeting of around 2000 women."

"It was clear that women wanted the building to be a women's centre, which could house organisations and be a credible, effective advocate for women's issues," she said.

Licia Kokocinski

Advocating for those without a voice

"My driving force has always been a burning passion for social justice," Licia Kokocinski said of her work over many years in fields as varied as politics, womens, seniors and multicultural affairs.

"It's the fire in my belly and I don't think that will ever fade."

In 1988, as Member for Melbourne West, Licia became the first woman of a non-English speaking background elected to the Victorian Parliament.

Currently the Executive Director of Action on Disabilities within Ethnic Communities, Licia has also played roles as varied as coordinating the campaign to establish the West Sunshine Multicultural Senior Citizens facility, to serving as President of a community radio station in Melbourne's west.

Among her many other campaigns and activities, she also founded the Western Region Ethnic Communities Council and served on the Advisory Board for Victoria University of Technology.

Barriers have always been present for Licia, although they never held her back for long. "I was acutely aware that women from backgrounds like mine faced two 'glass ceilings'," she said.

"We face one that every woman faces in the workplace, based on gender, but there is also another when you are from a different background and are judged according to stereotypes," she said.

Licia said she now takes mentoring other women very seriously. "If I haven't inculcated a sense of the need to fight for what's right, to fix what needs to be fixed and to inspire others to do more than I have done, then I've failed," she said.

"Leadership is about taking risks; it's about sticking your neck out, inspiring others and leading from the front."

"I hope to have conveyed that you can't just sit there saying 'someone should do something' – you've just got to get out there and do it yourself."

Cuc Lam

A sense of belonging

Cuc Lam is proud to be an Australian.

Arriving as a refugee from Vietnam in 1978, Cuc embraced life in her new country and has since worked tirelessly to help other migrants, and particularly women, adapt to life in a new land.

“From my own experience I found that women from different cultures were disadvantaged – and even more so if they could not speak the language – and I wanted to help them overcome their difficulties and help them feel confident in adapting to a new society and contributing to Australian society,” she said.

Cuc said one of the greatest challenges she faced was overcoming culture shock.

Cuc said even though she spoke English she found the application of the language, and therefore finding employment and education, a real challenge. But overcoming those challenges she has built a rewarding and community-orientated life for her family and herself.

In 1997, Cuc turned her attention to local government and spent one term as councillor for the City of Maribyrnong.

“I enjoyed being a councillor where I could represent residents regardless of where they come from and give them a voice. I am very satisfied with what I did,” she said.

In 2002, Cuc was awarded a Commonwealth Public Service Medal.

Her advice to other migrants is to work hard and stay motivated and focused on their goals.

“Never give up. For whatever you want to do have a strong motivation and commitment,” she said.

Today she looks back with confidence on her selection of Australia over Canada, America and France as her new home.

“I look back and I know I made the right decision,” she said.

“I love living in Australia. I love Melbourne. And every time I hear the national anthem I feel a real belonging. I am very proud to be an Australian.”

Professor Pranee Liamputtong

The birth of a cause

Almost 20 years ago Pranee Liamputtong was eagerly anticipating the birth of her first child. Yet what should have been one of the happiest times of her life was confusing and disappointing because of her experience in hospital.

“I was doing my PhD at Monash yet people were treating me badly because they assumed that I did not know any English,” she said.

“They would walk past me without saying anything and I thought if I was able to speak English and they treated me like that, how did people who could not speak any English cope?”

A migrant from Thailand, Pranee became determined to ensure that women from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds received appropriate care and so began her quest to educate health care professionals about their needs.

Pranee started volunteering to present at seminars, and after the publication of her resource book *My Forty Days*, she was sought out for advice.

“I think people started to open their eyes,” she said.

Today, almost 20 years later, Pranee can see her persistence – and her hard work – is paying off.

“I can see changes happening in hospitals,” she said.

Changes such as respecting the cultural beliefs of patients and providing culturally relevant food and ensuring interpreters are available.

Pranee has a long list of achievements, among them her continual work as a leader in qualitative research methodology in health in Australia, and she has been teaching and training generations of health care providers through her position at La Trobe University.

Her future focus includes research into the sexual health of culturally and linguistically diverse women.

She said her most important message is encouraging others to understand the social and cultural backgrounds of women.

“And that can be simply to ask the women! You do not need to go and read 10 books, just ask!”



Voula Messimeri-Kianidis

A resounding voice for cultural diversity

Voula Messimeri-Kianidis is adding her voice to the development of a strong, cohesive and culturally diverse Australia.

“I am working for an Australia that is proud of its diversity and a country that embraces people from other parts of the world,” she said.

“Fundamentally creating a society that is open and embracing of cultural diversity for the social and economic good of all Australians.”

Voula has been involved in the community services field for more than 20 years. Among her many positions – many of them honorary – is her role as the Chairperson of the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA) – the nation’s peak body promoting multiculturalism, community harmony and social justice.

As Chairperson she is blazing a trail for women – becoming the first female in the role in the organisation’s 25-year history.

Voula said women needed to be encouraged to step up to leadership positions and not just work quietly from the sidelines.

“I hope it helps to pave the way for women to assume that they have a right to put themselves up as leaders,” she said.

Voula’s motivation to help migrant women stems from her own background and she said she felt a responsibility to give back to the community.

Among her future focus is promoting the health of migrant women.

She said these women worked hard to provide for their families – often to the detriment of their own psychological and physical health.

“The need for them to cater economically and socially for their families often means they relegate their health to the background. I want to encourage them to put their own health higher in their priorities and government instrumentalities to allocate appropriate resources to meet their needs,” she said.

Voula will also continue to work for the acceptance and support of those making Australia their home.

“Migrants and refugees need to feel that they are welcome, there are adequate settlement resources for them and recognition that they add value to the Australian society.”

Maggie Millar

Acting on many levels

It wasn’t type casting but it was true to character for actor Maggie Millar to play the role of a crusading country doctor in the ABC’s evergreen TV series, *Bellbird*.

While pursuing a distinguished acting career in theatre and television with the Melbourne Theatre Company, *Prisoner*, *The Sullivans* and *Neighbours*, Maggie has always been ready to contribute her energy and talent for the benefit of the wider community.

She was a volunteer at the Buoyancy Foundation, the support system set up for young drug addicts by Father Jim Armstrong.

As both an adopted child and a relinquishing mother, Maggie played a leading role in Jigsaw Victoria, which waged a 10-year campaign to change the law to give adoptees access to their birth records.

“Whether you realise it or not, on some level, an adopted person feels a profound sense of abandonment. And, as a relinquishing mother, you fear that you’ve damaged your child,” Maggie said.

Maggie also devoted a number of years to helping women experiencing difficulties with body image, questioning the negative messages about body size and ageing in the media, and serving on advisory committees in NSW and Victoria.

A year before being cast as the Reverend Rosie Hoyland in *Neighbours*, Maggie was diagnosed with type-2 diabetes.

Maggie approached writer and actor Alan Hopgood, her on-screen husband in *Bellbird*, and together they developed a storyline on diabetes which Alan made into a play.

“Called *A Pill, A Pump and A Needle*, it is entertaining, educational and amusing,” she said.

“I feel very strongly that people who are at risk of diabetes need to know about it and to understand that they can manage it and get on with their lives.

“I believe you can learn from whatever life deals you. Rather than cave in, it’s better to understand what we need to learn, and to share the insights we gain,” Maggie said.

Bruna Pasqua

Making people an important part of their community

“My parents set an example that you should help anybody you can.”

And with her parents as her inspiration, Bruna Pasqua has contributed much to helping others and creating a community that cares for all members of society.

As an Italian migrant, she has naturally been drawn to helping the Italian community and was a foundation member of the Association of Italian-Australian Women.

Bruna has been vice president of CO.AS.IT – an Italian assistance agency – for more than a decade and involved for several years with the Assisi Italian Aged Care Centre.

But for more than 20 years her volunteer community work has extended to other non-English speaking community groups particularly advocating for those who are disadvantaged – women, migrant and refugee children and senior citizens.

“I’m interested in everybody getting a fair go, irrespective of who they are or where they come from, or what ideology they follow,” Bruna said.

Bruna has been secretary of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) for more than 12 years and was the woman deputy chair of the national body, the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA). She also is currently involved with the Victorian School of Languages, where she was president for 13 years.

Bruna is a federal public servant and has trained as a social worker and teacher. She says she’s committed to developing relationships between ethnic communities throughout Victoria, as well as linking in with the broader Victorian and Australian communities.

“I’m interested in connecting with people and making them feel like they belong and are an important part of the community in which they live,” Bruna said.

“It has been my experience that individuals working together can make good things happen for their community.”

Bruna is particularly proud of her past involvement on the Ministerial Advisory Council for Languages other than English, Kara House Migrant Women’s Refuge and FKA Children’s Services Incorporated.

Maureen Postma

The faith to make a difference

Unity, support and cooperation are the words by which Maureen Postma lives and works.

As general secretary of the Victorian Council of Churches since March 2001, her daily working life is dedicated to bringing people together for the betterment of the community.

But it is her personal commitment to these aims that makes her work exceptional.

A committed Christian, Maureen says her strength comes from her faith, and her inspiration from the people, often those suffering hardship, whom she meets in her role.

Maureen is a strong advocate for church and agency cooperation.

She is also a member of the Premier’s Multifaith Leaders’ Forum, which provides strategic advice to the Premier on multifaith and community harmony issues.

The Victorian Council of Churches membership includes representatives from the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Uniting and Orthodox faiths from across Victoria and Tasmania.

“We are continually working on ways of bringing people of faith together,” she said.

“There has been a strong commitment by the churches to work together in the past and really I am continually strengthening the good work that has been done in the past 50 to 100 years.”

Maureen promotes a variety of activities and committees to enable churches to work together and reaches out to women of all faiths to establish frameworks, build understanding and promote community harmony and respect for all women.

She said the biggest challenge the council, and indeed the community, would face in the future was overcoming divisions in the community and dealing with the continuing impact of drought and bushfires.

“They are adding another layer of complexity to the issues people are already facing,” Maureen said.

“But I would hope that we, as people of faith, can do whatever we can to help people face these issues.”

Dr Belle (Isabel) Reid 1883 – 1945 Pioneer veterinary surgeon

When Belle Reid was growing up in Melbourne, her Balwyn home was surrounded by market gardens and dairy herds.

She had a particular passion for horses and, perhaps, because of that interest she became a student at the Melbourne Veterinary College when she was 19 years old.

When she graduated with honours in 1906, she created history by being the first woman in Australia to be registered as a veterinary surgeon and one of the first in the English speaking world.

She built up a successful practice in Balwyn, one that is still operating today, and became a familiar sight visiting patients on her pony and trap.

In addition to her private practice, Belle was deeply involved in animal welfare.

She worked as voluntary veterinarian for a number of animal welfare organisations including the RSPCA, the Lost Dogs' Home and the Lort Smith Animal Hospital.

Support for these organisations not only improved the lives of countless animals, it also helped extend the benefits of pet ownership to low income families.

Significantly, one of the next two female veterinarians registered in Victoria became the first paid veterinary practitioner to work at an animal welfare clinic – working at both the Lort Smith Animal Hospital and the Lost Dogs' Home.

After 18 years of practice Belle retired to a farm in Bundoora where she showed a similar dedication by establishing a number of award winning stud lines.

The male dominated professional environment in which Belle worked at the beginning of the 20th century was in many ways typical of other professional workplaces at the time.

Through her entry into Melbourne Veterinary College and her graduation with honours, her subsequent successful career as a veterinarian and as a farmer, and in her long association with animal welfare organisations, Belle helped blaze a trail that many other women have followed.

Professor Doreen Rosenthal AO Advancing our understanding of sexuality

For more than 30 years, Professor Doreen Rosenthal's research has helped to advance our understanding of human sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health.

Sexuality and reproductive health are areas of scientific research where social and biological distinctions often overlap or are complex.

"But it's really important to be able to translate research findings into policy that can make a real difference to people's lives," Doreen said.

The relative success of Australia's attempts to limit the spread of HIV AIDS has been achieved, in part, through the linking of work by researchers including Doreen with community leaders, educators and government.

More recently, her work has explored homelessness and the critical roles played by parents, peers, the media, social institutions and youth culture in adolescent sexual adjustment.

In a distinguished academic career, Doreen is currently Director and Professor of Women's Health at Melbourne University's Key Centre for Women's Health in Society.

Her views have been sought after by governments and academic institutions, both in Australia and internationally, and she has produced a series of widely respected publications.

Doreen is on the editorial board, or is associate editor, of seven international journals and has held positions as a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University, University of California (Los Angeles) and at universities in Italy, Greece and the United Kingdom.

In 2003, Doreen was made an Officer in the Order of Australia in recognition of her contribution to adolescent health, particularly in the fields of sexual health and HIV/AIDS.

From the role of the Internet in adolescent romance to the pros and cons of abstinence education versus harm minimisation, Doreen's work covers areas of high community interest.

Through her personal career as a leading Australian academic, and through her internationally recognised capacity to produce influential and insightful research, she has also helped to develop a new wave of researchers in these important areas of study.



Kay Vrieze

Creating second chances

The desire to help people improve their lives has always been the driver for community leader Kay Vrieze.

“My inspiration is that feeling of giving someone a second chance,” Kay said of her work with her community in Narre Warren, in outer south-eastern Melbourne.

Kay has managed the largest neighbourhood house in Australia for the past 25 years and was a counsellor for Nursing Mothers Australia (now Australian Breastfeeding Association) for 15 years, supporting new mothers in breastfeeding their babies.

“It’s a wonderful thing to be there for a significant moments in someone’s life – like helping a new mother breastfeed or seeing a father who has never been able to read who is reading a book to his child for the first time,” Kay said.

As Community Development Manager at the Narre Community Learning Centre, Kay provides training in areas of policy and procedures, planning, communications and development of community-based management committees.

Her work with Narre Neighbours began in 1981 as a part-time co-ordinator of what was initially a small, self-help organisation, assisting women to enrich their lives in a new, outlying suburb of Melbourne.

“In those days Narre Warren had limited social and emotional support services outside womens’ own homes,” Kay said.

Narre Neighbours has now grown from 200 to 2000 participants and Kay said that even though it has expanded, the organisation is still “open, welcoming, fun-loving and very genuine in its approach to people”.

Kay has been a leading influence in adult education in Victoria over the past decade. Her leadership style and management techniques which focus on empowering individuals to develop and bring their ideas to fruition, have been studied by academics.

“What I like to think I’ve achieved is offering second chances for people, whether that’s new skills for young people or helping older people getting back into meaningful participation in their communities – it’s all about reconnecting people.”

Kaele Way

Encouraging representation at a local level

“Never forget that you are an advocate for the community.”

That is the advice Kaele Way gives to those considering standing for local government.

Kaele is passionate about local government. A councillor for two terms, from 1997 to 2003, and the National President of the Australian Local Government Women’s Association since 2004, Kaele says it is possible to make a real difference as a local government representative.

“It is something that is closest to the people and is something that is truly local,” she said.

“You have a very strong involvement with the community, see the difference you can make and really feel that you are contributing to the wellbeing of others.”

Kaele stood for election after deciding she could be a conduit between the community and the council on a range of issues.

After her six years as a City of Whitehorse Councillor she was able to see the fruits of her labour and on leaving office turned her attention to encouraging others, particularly women and young women, to stand for office.

A balance of all people in our community in representation is vitally important,” she said.

“And women bring a great deal of skill and experience with them.”

Under her leadership, the Association has established a mentor network to support and encourage women standing for local government, as councillors and council officers.

“We are making sure they have the knowledge of what local government is about,” she said.

“They need to know of the commitment – it’s a lot of time. You need to read minutes and documents to be informed, attend meetings and you need to really like people.

“And you should remember that you are there to represent the people and it is an honour to do so. You are not there because the community thinks you know it all. You are an advocate for the community and you should never forget that.”

Queen Victoria Hospital Founders

Setting the course of history

Dr Emily Mary Page Stone
1865 – 1910

Dr Bertha Main (Lady Leitch)
1873 – 1957

Dr Elfreda Hilda Gamble
1871 – 1947

Dr Marie Elizabeth Amy Castilla
1868 – 1899

Dr Hannah Mary Helen Sexton
1863 – 1950

Dr Gertrude Halley
1867 – 1939

Dr Janet Lindsay Greig
1874 – 1950

Dr Jane Stocks Greig
1872 – 1939

Dr Lilian Helen Alexander
1862 – 1934

Dr Grace Clara Stone
1860 – 1957

Founders pictured at top right, from left to right.

It is difficult to imagine the challenges faced by women in becoming doctors in the 1800s. Yet the tenacity of a group of formidable ladies who had a great vision was to change the course of history and set a benchmark for women's health in Victoria and indeed the world.

These 10 remarkable and visionary women join fellow Queen Victoria Hospital founders Dr Constance Stone (2001 inductee) and social worker Annette Bear-Crawford (2007 inductee) on the Victorian Honour Roll of Women.

As pioneers in their field, these women challenged conventions, empowered themselves and set about providing an entirely new way of offering better health services for women.

They realised there was an urgent need for medical assistance specifically for women and set about establishing a medical service for women run by women.

Historical documents show that in September 1896, Dr Constance Stone took the first tentative steps by inviting these women to meet in her home.



They supported her resolution to establish a hospital and one month later the Victoria Hospital – named after the state – opened three mornings a week in St David's Hall in La Trobe Street, in the very heart of Melbourne.

When created it was the first in Australia and one of only three hospitals in the world to have been founded, managed and staffed by women.

Their idea was revolutionary and they treated the poorest of women, gave out medicine free and were not paid for their services.

Recognising a need to expand, the women then supported an idea to ask every Victorian woman to donate a shilling to fund a new hospital.

Marking the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign, the Queen's Shilling Fund, as it was called, raised enough money for the renamed Queen Victoria Hospital to move to Mint Place in 1899.

Further successful Shilling Appeals were made over the following decades to acquire land and buildings for the hospital, and in 1951 the Queen Victoria Hospital was the biggest in the British Commonwealth.

"The story of the Queen Victoria Hospital began in the way that so many women's campaigns begin – a group of visionary women met in someone's home to plan a way to improve life for women less fortunate," said Barbara Jennings, member of the Queen Victoria Women's Centre Trust.

In 1979 the Queen Victoria became the first hospital in the state to introduce a birth centre and in 1986 as part of moves to decentralise hospital and other government services, it became part of the Monash Medical Centre.

Reminiscent of these pioneering women who established the hospital, a new generation of tenacious women stepped in to save the tower building of the hospital from redevelopment works.

Today, the spirit which bore the Queen Victoria Hospital lives on in the home of the Queen Victoria Women's Centre, a physical and virtual home of information and services specifically for women across Victoria.

"These amazing women made a very significant contribution to women's health care in the state and leave an inspiring legacy for all Victorian women," Barbara said.

Messages

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