



NSW Women



Working at Relationships

What's Happening To Our Relationships?

These days we all seem to be busier, and there never seems to be enough time to do things we would really like to do. It's hard to find the right balance between work, or looking for work, physical activity, socialising with friends and looking after our families.

One of the consequences of not getting the work/life balance right is the strain it places on relationships. Judging by the divorce rate, which continues to hover around 32% in Australia, we don't seem to be getting the balance right. Many factors contribute to relationship breakdown, but the amount of time or lack of time that people spend together is one of the most commonly cited.

Anne Hollonds, CEO of Relationships Australia (NSW), says that sustaining a relationship in the longer term is one of the most difficult things we will ever do, because there are such huge challenges.

'We live in a society which is not very supportive or sympathetic to relationships; where the individual is the basic unit of society, not the family. When it comes to forming and maintaining relationships we're up against it in a lot of ways.'

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Getting Our Relationships Right

Relationships which work best are based on mutual trust and respect. Unfortunately, not all relationships are like this - they can be characterised by abusive and sometimes violent behaviour.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics *Personal Safety Survey*, which was conducted across Australia in 2005, reported that about 40% of women have experienced violence since the age of 15 years.

In the twelve months prior to the survey almost 5% (363,000) of women experienced physical violence. Younger women, aged 18-24 years, experienced violence at higher rates than older women. Of all women experiencing violence, 38% were assaulted by their current or previous male partner. How could this happen?

Sometimes, women mistake the early signs of abusive behaviour for devoted love.

Continued on page 3

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

After four and half years as the Minister for Women and 12 newsletters, I will be stepping down from state politics in March 2007. I have been looking through old newsletters and marvelling at the range of women's issues tackled – health, rural isolation, career options, representation on boards and committees, sport and keeping active, and growing older. On some issues we have made great strides but we still need to keep working on others.

The theme of this newsletter is relationships. Relationships are important to all of us. We all need to have relationships with a partner, with children, friends or relatives, employers or work colleagues. If we could just get the communications part of relationships right, a lot of problems would be resolved. It's good to see mentioned in this newsletter the development of the many strategies, websites and advice available to help people with their relationships. I hope you find the articles interesting, but more importantly, that they provide help to those who may need it.

We are now working on plans for the 2007 International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March.

A record number of local councils have applied for grants to organise IWD events. Nominations for the NSW Woman of the Year have streamed in. The theme for 2007 is Valuing Difference- Leading Change. We will be celebrating women's development of strong, supportive, caring and collaborative relationships that value diversity, respect and responsibility and lead the community in change to support these values.

I am looking forward to meeting many of you at events around International Women's Day in March. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this issue of NSW Women.



Sandra Nori MP
Minister for Women



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In this issue of *NSW Women* we canvass all types of relationships - with partners, with children, on-line relationships, abusive relationships, networking for business relationships, and mentoring relationships to support personal and career development.

The NSW Office for Women believes in, and has actively supported, mentoring relationships and three of our programs/projects are profiled in this issue - the *Lucy Mentoring Program*, *SistaSpeak* and *Aiming High*.

I'm sure most of you could think of at least one person - a teacher, colleague, coach or friend - who has made a difference in your life by changing the way you think, or by opening up possibilities for you. Being a mentor is fulfilling because you have the opportunity to widen someone's horizons. I urge you to find the time in your own busy life to mentor and support someone. There are some ideas in this issue about how to start.

The Office is very excited about the DVD for first time parents, which we have produced with Tresillian.

It is the first in a series of new digital resources we are proposing (see pg 7), to assist people to understand what good relationships are and how to develop them.

I am sure you'll find this edition of *NSW Women* both stimulating and helpful.



Kerrie Bigsworth
Director
Office for Women
NSW Premier's Department



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GETTING OUR RELATIONSHIPS RIGHT (cont from pg 1)

So what are the signs of abusive behaviour?

Possessiveness

- one partner checks on the other all the time to see where they are, what they are doing and who they are with
- they try to control where their partner can go and who they can see

Jealousy

- one partner accuses the other, without good reason, of being unfaithful or flirting
- isolating them from family and friends, often by rude behaviour

Put downs

- one partner puts the other down, either publicly or privately, by attacking how smart they are, or their looks or capabilities
- constantly comparing them unfavourably with others
- blaming them for all the problems in the relationship

Menace & threats

- one partner yells, sulks and deliberately breaks things that the other values
- threatening to use violence against them, their family, friends or even a pet
- saying no one else will want them.

Violence can be a feature of this type of relationship but it may not be violent all the time. Sometimes violent people treat their partner very well. In a first relationship this can be very confusing.

It is never acceptable for someone to use abusive behaviour, or the threat of violence, to make someone do what they don't want to do. Help is always available by contacting the services below:

**The Department of Community Services,
DoCS Domestic Violence Line on 1800 656 463
(TTY 1800 671 442) operates 24 hours, 7 days a week.**

Violence Against Women - Australia Says No 24 hour Confidential Helpline: 1800 200 526. Callers who are deaf or have a hearing impairment can call through the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677 and quote 1800 200 526. Young people can call the 24 hour Confidential Helpline or the Kids Help Line on: 1800 551 800.

Information in this article was taken from the fact sheet *An Abusive Relationship* from the *Reach Out!* website. Reach Out! is an initiative of the Inspire Foundation, whose patron in chief is Governor of NSW Professor Marie Bashir, AC CVO. Visit *Reach Out!* at: www.reachout.com.au or visit the Inspire Foundation at: www.inspire.org.au.

The NSW Government provides information about the impacts of domestic and family violence and abusive relationships on the community services website: www.community.nsw.gov.au. Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a young person is being physically, sexually or emotionally abused should report it to the DoCS Helpline on 132 111 (TTY 029 633).

WEARING WHITE RIBBONS

Each year in NSW, the Violence Against Women (VAW) Unit in the Department of Community Services leads an awareness campaign known as *16 Days of Activism to Prevent Violence Against Women (16 Days)* from November 25 until December 10. November 25 is White Ribbon Day, an initiative which encourages men to wear white ribbons to signify they condemn violence towards women. December 10 is World Human Rights Day.

In 1999, the United Nations declared 25 November the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and since then the wearing of white ribbons on that day has spread across the world. The White Ribbon campaign is coordinated through the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

This year the *16 Days* campaign in NSW was launched by the Premier, the Hon Morris Iemma MP, who

announced that he has agreed to be a White Ribbon Ambassador. This title is given to men who are prominent in the community, willing and able to speak out to condemn violence against women, and who use their networks to raise awareness about the issue. The Premier also announced winners of the NSW Violence Prevention Awards, which included :

The Love Bites Program - a high school based, early intervention program, initiated on the NSW Mid-North Coast. Workshops are held for young people to raise awareness about sexual assault and domestic violence.

Purple Armband Games - an initiative of Football Fans Against Sexual Assault. Sports players wear a purple arm band in support of ending violence against women. Since July 2007, more than 700 sports teams Australia-wide have worn the purple armbands on-field.

More information is available on the Violence Against Women website: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vaw.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO OUR RELATIONSHIPS? (cont from pg 1)



Anne Hollonds, CEO,
Relationships Australia (NSW)

Yet for those who can maintain a healthy relationship there are significant benefits - it can improve our quality of life, contribute to our mental wellbeing and help us live longer.

One of the big problems, Anne says, is that people wait too long to get help when their relationship is under stress. 'On average people wait six years from when the problems began to show before they get any help. For many that is too late.'

'The sad truth is things don't resolve in time, they have to be dealt with head on and we are not very good at doing that. We tend to be avoiders and deniers when addressing our relationship issues.'

Counselling can help, but people need to tackle the problem early on.

Those that do, often cite communication as an issue. It's a catch-all term but Anne says that it is really about successfully negotiating the needs of each partner and the goals for the relationship.

'It's about how you pull together as a team, how you create an effective partnership.'

'I think for a lot of people who end up getting divorced - that partnership, that teamwork never got off the ground.'

One of the trends to emerge in the last few years is the increasing number of couples in longer-term relationships experiencing divorce - in 2005, 16.5% of couples who divorced had been married for 25 years or more. Commonly, they are from the baby boomer generation.

'The women in these relationships can see themselves living an independent life apart from their male partners. Attitudes to ageing are changing. People are more active, more healthy, more likely to pursue new interests and goals at that stage of life.'

'Because there is quite a lot of prosperity in that generation - they have the economic means to separate,' says Anne

Interestingly, it is the offspring of these baby boomers who are seeking pre-marriage counselling or education, before they commit to marriage.

'They are quite cautious about marriage and more knowledgeable about the damaging effects of divorce. They value education as a way of investing in their future life's success,' she says.

Caution, the pursuit of career, the luck of finding the right person, whatever the reason, it is resulting in people getting married later in life - in 2002 the median age for men was 29 years and 27 years for women.

'Most women will want to experience a career if they had higher education and they will make that their priority. Partnering and having babies has slipped down the list for young, well educated women and of course that has consequences for fertility rates,' says Anne.

In Australia, the fertility rate is at an all time low (1.75 babies/woman), well below the replacement level of 2.1.

Another feature of partnering for women now is that they can afford to be more discerning in their choice. They are more confident and independent - they don't feel the pressure to partner, and they have the financial back-up to wait a bit longer to find the right person. Anne says they are prepared to wait to find their 'soul mate', which she says, they are looking for in 'quite an idealised fashion.'

There are advantages and disadvantages arising from this - clearly women no longer need men to provide financial support or to be considered socially acceptable - as they did in decades past. The downside is they can have unrealistic expectations.

'There is a trend which suggests that although women are better educated, they still try to 'marry up'. This obviously reduces the pool they can select from, but it also leaves a group of marginalised men - low skilled, low earning men who are failing to marry.'

Anne says there is a bit of a backlash against later marriages.

'We're already seeing a trend to younger marriages and certainly more babies being born. It will be very interesting to see if young women in their 20s today wait until they are in their 30s before they try and have children, or whether some of the discussion about the risk of leaving it that late will affect their choices over the next few years.'

Pushed to give one piece of advice for people in relationships, Anne says - spend more time together.

'The truth is we don't spend much time together these days. In the national surveys we've done, people say the lack of time they spend together is the key stress factor in their lives.'

'If you only have one hour a day together, then try and eyeball each other, and talk about the things that matter,' she says.

Things To Think About

There are some key questions that everyone should ask themselves before entering into a new relationship:

The marriage question

Have you been fantasising about your wedding day since you were a child? Or would you be just as happy having another sort of commitment with your partner?

The future question

Do you have visions of growing old and grey with your partner? Or are you just looking for a few good years?

The kids question

Is your biological clock deafening you? Or does the thought of snotty brats fill you with dread? What do you feel about a relationship involving children from a previous marriage or relationship?

The best friend question

Do you want your partner to be your best friend, or is there someone else in your life that your partner will never compete with as a best friend?

The details question

Is it necessary for you to hear every detail about your partner's day? Or do you prefer to have some emotional space and have a brief recount of what your partner's been up to?

The (in)dependence question

Are you looking for someone to do absolutely everything with, or are you happy spending time being independent as well as together?

The sex question

Are you prepared to be in a relationship where the sex is so-so if every other aspect of the relationship is excellent? Or perhaps sex is the most crucial aspect of your relationship.

Identifying these things up front can help you choose a more suitable partner(s).

Reference: The Perfect Relationship, <http://health.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=56505> (accessed Jan 2007)

Relationships Australia is the largest community based organisation providing relationship support across the country. It receives just over half of its funding from the Federal Government and provides family support services to about 90,000 people each year.

It has a wide range of services, which include:

- Individual, couple and family counselling
- Relationship and parenting courses
- Adolescent services
- Services for families going through separation and divorce
- Family and workplace mediation
- Men and family relationships services
- Pre marriage counselling
- Parenting skills programs
- Family Safety Program
- Family Relationship Centres
- Children's Contact Services
- Professional Training & Consultation
- Corporate and Business Consultancy

Website: www.relationships.com.au

Online counselling is available at www.relationshipshelponline.com.au.

Telephone: 1300 364 277

ONLINE ROMANCE

In 2005, Swinburne University of Technology in Victoria conducted a national telephone survey of 1013 Australians (429 men and 584 women), which offers some insights into online romantic relationships. Their findings are reported in *Love Online: The Nature and Frequency of Australian Adults' Internet Relationships*.¹

Of the men and women who reported using the internet for online romantic relationships - they were as likely to be living with their partner as to be single and as equally likely to have no children or have up to two children.

For some, cyberdating lasted only weeks or months, but for others the online romance lasted for years. Most had reported they had met their partner face to face.

Just under half of online romantics were under 35 years of age. A similar proportion was aged between 36 and 55 years and the remainder 56 years and older.

Almost two-thirds were in paid employment and one-third was tertiary educated.

The authors say the research is consistent with recent reports about the growth of online matchmaking among all age groups, and increasing use of the internet as a replacement for marriage brokers and other traditional routes to romance.²

In the *Sydney Morning Herald (Love Bytes, 2004)* Jason Juma-Ross, a principle analyst from research company AMR Interactive, was quoted saying that 6% of Australians have used an online dating service.

In the same article it was reported that AC Nielsen found in an internet poll that more than 30% of those surveyed had dated someone online, with 65% saying their experience was positive.

According to a Nielson/NetRatings survey, close to one million Australians accessed online dating sites in September 2004.

The PC Authority (a monthly computer magazine) website (*Prolog: The dating game, October 2004*) reports '... that internet dating is the second most profitable business on the internet, right after pornography, and is Yahoo's second biggest source of revenue'.³

They offer the following advice on the safe way to go about online dating.

- Protect your privacy. Choose a new user name and obtain a new email account. Be careful about what personal information you enter because it can be searched and easily cross-referenced.
- Read the site's privacy policy. Some free sites will supplement their income by selling your details to marketers.

- Do not proceed if they ask for payment before you can create a profile.
- Include a good photo of yourself.
- State clearly what you're looking for in a relationship.
- Be careful with the information you provide. You don't have to reveal your surname or phone number.

Relationships Australia (www.relationships.com.au) says the risks are highest when people decide to meet. They offer some simple rules:

- Don't go alone, have someone you trust with you and meet in a public place.
- Start the relationship anew. Even if you think you know this person, they might not be who they say they are or who you expect them to be.
- Don't allow yourself to do anything that you don't want to do and make sure you have ways to leave the situation.

1 Australian Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society, Vol. 4, No.1 2006 pp. 1-14. www.swin.edu.au/ajets

2 Hardy, M. Mediated relationships, authenticity and the possibility of romance, *Information, Communication and Society*, 7, pp 207-222, 2004

3 www.pcauthority.com.au/feature.aspx?ClafID=997

Facts and Figures

* The proportion of people in their 20s living in the parental home has increased over the last few decades. In 1976, 21% of people in their 20s were living with at least one parent. By 2001, 30% in this age group were living with at least one parent and this was the most common living arrangement.

* Between the 1991 and 2001 censuses the number of men and women living as lone persons increased from 1.1 million to 1.6 million, an increase of 43%. While the majority of lone persons were females (55%), males outnumbered females in all age groups up to and including the age group 45-54 years. For the age group 65 years and over females outnumbered males by almost three to one. This is due to the high number of females who are widowed above this age.

Source: ABS *Australian Social Trends, 2004*.

PROVIDING RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT FOR NEW PARENTS

The arrival of a baby can be a challenging time, not just because of the demands of the baby but because of the impact on the parents' relationship.

Tresillian is used to dealing with these issues. It has been providing a child and family health service in New South Wales since the 1920s.

Ann Paton, Public Relations Manager for Tresillian, says the big problems with younger babies are sleep and settling, and also feeding. Coping with these issues can put a real strain on new parents.

With the aid of funding from the NSW Office for Women, Tresillian has produced a 10 minute DVD called 'You're a Parent Now'. It looks at the impact of a baby on the parents' relationship, provides useful advice on how to deal with the pressures and resources that can assist. It also highlights the responsibilities of new parents for their baby. The information didn't just come from health professionals, but also from parents who had real life experiences with babies.

The information in this DVD was taken from a video produced by Tresillian, which provides wide ranging advice on issues like sleep and settling, breastfeeding and child development. This video, 'A Baby in the Family' is also available on DVD and can be purchased direct from Tresillian for \$25.00 (including postage) by telephoning (02) 9787 0872.

Tresillian, which is funded by the NSW Government, has family care centres across Sydney. About 4,500 people use its day stay, residential and outreach services each year. Parents can access their residential services via a referral from their doctor, a paediatrician or a child and

family health nurse. Tresillian can also assist with anxiety and postnatal depression.

24 hour Parents Help Line phone number:
02 9787 6855

Freecall outside of metropolitan area: 1800 637 357

Online parent advice is available from 9.30am to 3.30pm, Tuesday to Friday at: www.health.ninemsn.com.au/messengermums.default.aspx.

Family Care Centres: Canterbury tel: 02 9787 0800
Willoughby tel: 02 8962 8300; Penrith tel: 4734 2124
Wollstonecraft tel: 02 9432 4000

Further information on the new DVD is available from the Office for Women on telephone 02 9228 3141.

Karitane

Like Tresillian, Karitane is a child and family health service, which is also government funded. They have a 24 hour help line, family care cottages where parents can come in for the day to get help with feeding, settling and sleeping problems with their babies. Their facility, Jade House, also provides support to parents with postnatal depression.

24 hour Karitane Care Line: 1300 227 464 or 9794 1852 for hearing impaired

Family care cottages: Liverpool tel: 02 9821 4555
Randwick tel: 02 9399 6999; Carramar tel: 02 9794 1800
and Jade House, Fairfield Heights tel: 02 9754 2655

Website: www.karitane.com.au



Tresillian nurses at work in the past courtesy of Tresillian

FAMILIES FIRST

The first three years of a child's life are considered critical to their lifelong development. Evidence suggests that nurturing and loving relationships between carers and children have a positive effect on the brain development of children. Equally, it has been shown that stress (as experienced in domestic violence situations), and lack of bonding and attachment to parents and caregivers can adversely affect babies' brain development, particularly their learning and emotional development. This can have a lifetime impact (The Benefits of Early Intervention, Ellen Fish, Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin no. 2 Spring-Summer 2002, 8-11 and Online, <http://www.aifs.gov.au/sf/pubs/bull2/ef.html> accessed Dec 2006).

Families First is an initiative, introduced by the NSW Government in 1998, to help parents give their children a good start in life.

Through a variety of programs, for example, midwife home visits to new parents, supported play groups and schools as community centres, parents are helped to build their parenting skills and confidence. Guidance on how to develop positive relationships with children and how to respond to problems early is also provided.

The program is resourced via NSW Health and Area Health Services and the Departments of Community Services, Education and Training, Housing, and Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

Families First

The Families First website has information about the programs available and a parent services directory, which is a comprehensive listing of agencies, programs and services in NSW to help parents, carers and families. It includes:

- Children's services
- Community services
- Counselling services
- Services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Disability support services
- Drug and alcohol services
- Emergency assistance
- Family support services
- Foster care services
- Health services
- Services for Aboriginal families

By typing in your suburb, town or postcode you can find the service closest to you.

www.familiesfirst.nsw.gov.au

Home Visiting Service

One family assisted by the Ballina Byron Home Visiting Service had recently arrived in Australia (from an English speaking country) with no family and a limited support network. The parents rang prior to the arrival of their second child, concerned since the first pregnancy had been difficult and the mother had suffered mild post natal depression. They felt they needed support in making the adjustment to life with a new baby and toddler, in a new country.

Two hour visits were made each week by a trained volunteer home visitor, and regular contact was made by a support worker. This gave the mother time to feed and build a relationship with the baby, as well as do other tasks around the home. If time allowed, an evening meal was also prepared to help during the

stressful time in the evening, before the father arrived home. Alternatively, the volunteer helped with the baby, which gave the mother important one-on-one time with the toddler who had been feeling the effects of having a new baby in the home. The mother was also taken to the early childhood clinic and her first few visits to the local playgroup. Local playgroups not only provide socialising opportunities for children but can be a place where carers can build supportive relationships with other carers.

The home visiting service encouraged the parents to care for themselves and for each other. The mother has now connected with other mothers through the playgroup, and has not experienced the symptoms of post natal depression that she did with her first baby.

Schools as Community Centres

The Fairfield 'Schools as Communities Centre', one of 49 across NSW, is located in the grounds of Fairfield Primary School. The Centre runs a number of activities for families with children in the Fairfield community.

One of their special activities is the 'Kids and Dads play session' initiative. Fathers and their children are invited to come together for two hours in the evening with other families, and a few community workers. They play interactive games together, and this is followed by dinner and a short meeting, just for the fathers.

In the meeting, fathers are reminded of their importance to their children. They also have opportunities to explore what they want in their relationships with their children.

At the end of the evening each father and child has a chance to say in the group what they liked best about the evening. 'Just playing together' is the most common response, though fathers often remark how useful it has been to mix with people from different cultures.

One of the outcomes of the program is that those fathers who participated in the evening are more likely to talk with each other in the school playground. Some fathers have also subsequently attended a six-week parenting program.

Information on Schools as Community Centres is available on the Families First website: www.familiesfirst.nsw.gov.au.



Fathers playing with their children at the Fairfield Schools as Community Centre

More On Brain Development

The quality of children's experience in the first three years of their lives can have an impact on the wiring and sculpting of the brain's billion's of neurons that lasts a lifetime (McCain and Mustard 1999). Early experiences affect physical and social development, the ability to learn, and the capacity to regulate emotions through the stimulation of sensing pathways. Nurturing and a good quality of care, such as reading to a toddler while they sit on your lap, can positively affect brain development. Conversely, 'a lack of

stimulation, or negative stresses [in extremes] can result in poor brain development so that babies who have been neglected or abused are more likely to grow up experiencing poor physical and mental health, drug and alcohol dependence, a lower standard of education, unemployment and crime' (The Benefits of Early Intervention, Ellen Fish, Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin no. 2 Spring-Summer 2002, 8-11 and Online, <http://www.aifs.gov.au/sf/pubs/bull2/ef.html> accessed Jan 2007).

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH MENTORING

Mentoring relationships have long been regarded as an effective, meaningful way to help young people to see and seize opportunities. Through leadership and friendship a mentor can make a huge difference to the life of someone who may feel inhibited to achieve their full potential, or who does not have the support system to help overcome disadvantage or low self esteem. The following very different programs demonstrate how mentoring can play a significant part in enhancing the lives of young people.

Big Brothers Big Sisters

'Huggable, kind and honest', that's how ten-year old Chenise describes her 'Big Sister' Rachel. '*Big Brothers Big Sisters*' in NSW is a YWCA sponsored mentoring program which pairs 'littles' (kids aged between seven and seventeen years of age) with 'bigs' - adults who volunteer time (2-6 hours) every week to spend with their 'littles'.

For Chenise, who lives with her Dad and an older brother (a cerebral palsy sufferer) the arrival of Rachel has given her a female role model and a friend. Seven months ago Chenise was introverted, overweight and lacking confidence - now she is learning to eat more healthily and live in a happier and more positive way. Rachel describes their relationship as a 'relaxed and natural friendship' and it is friendship which is the foundation for the program. Both the littles and the bigs reap the rewards of the bond which is formed. They each learn about the meaning of responsibility, mutual obligation and personal investment.

The 'littles' of *Big Brothers Big Sisters* are referred to the program from a government or non-government social service agency. They may come from single parent families where they lack a same-sex role-model, have experienced physical and mental disadvantage, or struggle with personal confidence. At the beginning of the program they are often shy, lack social skills, and are feeling the effects of being alone. Meeting with a mentor every week for 12 months (and often beyond, when the friendships strengthen into more permanent relationships) proves itself to be something of a sea-change for these kids.

Tegan and Amy have been paired for nine months and they each learn from the other. When Tegan began as a 'little' she had significant social anxiety - she spoke at a hundred miles an hour and she couldn't hold eye contact. Since meeting Amy she has been learning that life can be fun - she's been to the movies, and on picnics, played sport and visited cultural sites. Tegan is now attending group outings with children her own age, and mixing more easily and confidently with her

peers. Now at 15 years of age Tegan is starting to see that life presents opportunities.

For those whose lives are lacking the necessary systems of support, a mentor, such as those in the YWCA program, offers a chance to live and learn the possibilities of life - developing networking skills and building self-esteem along the way.

It takes about 3 months for a match to be made. Training is provided and there is ongoing supervision. The program currently has over 150 matches each year throughout Sydney.

If you are interested in the *Big Brothers Big Sisters* program then phone: (02) 9285 6214 or 1800 222 776 or email: bbbs@ywcansw.com.au

SistaSpeak - a program for young Aboriginal girls

Recognising their culture and feeling valued as Aboriginal people is critical for Aboriginal students to remain engaged in their schooling.

SistaSpeak is a program which aims to increase Aboriginal girls' self-esteem, strengthen their sense of identity, their culture and their connection to the community in which they live. These are the building blocks to getting them to continue their education, look at future career options and work towards financial independence.

The program targets Aboriginal girls in Years 6-9 and it works by using Aboriginal mentors and the Aboriginal community to guide the young women. The relationships the young women develop between themselves, and with the respected members of their communities, are crucial to the program's success.



Vivienne Roberts (left) and Alicia Roberts (right), mentors for Lismore SistaSpeak



Dubbo SistaSpeak participants with the Hon Sandra Nori MP, Minister for Women and HRH Prince Edward, Trustee of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

SistaSpeak was successfully piloted in Dubbo in 2005 and was run in Lismore and Wellington in 2006.

Eighteen girls from Years 7 and 8 in Lismore, Kadina and Richmond Rivers High Schools took part in the Lismore project. The girls and their mentors, three young Aboriginal women who had finished high school, enjoyed the workshops - especially the physical challenge activities at the Department of Sport and Recreation's Lake Ainsworth Centre. The girls organised a BBQ at Wade Park, Lismore to thank the adults who helped them during the six *SistaSpeak* workshops.

Kylie Caldwell, workshop facilitator and project coordinator, intends to bring the girls together one day each term next year to build on the mutual support, which comes from the relationships the girls have already started.

SistaSpeak is scheduled for Newcastle and Nowra during Term 1, 2007. For information about *SistaSpeak* contact the Office for Women on 9228 3141.

The Lucy Mentoring Program

The *Lucy Mentoring Program*, which is a partnership between the NSW Office for Women, the University of Western Sydney, the University of Sydney and Women Chiefs of Enterprises International, provides one avenue for young female university students to get ahead.

Students studying business, finance, economics, accounting and law are matched with high powered women mentors in the private and public sector. The mentor's role is to inspire, motivate and educate their student, but first, they have to get to the heart of what their student wants - it could be simple job satisfaction,

a career in senior management, successfully combining home and work responsibilities, or just being aware of the opportunities available to them. Once they know the answer to this they can guide them on how to achieve it.

Rose Williams, Director, Corporate Management, NSW Treasury is one of an impressive field of inspiring mentors from the private and public sectors.

Rose has mentored a number of young women and she is only too happy to help them with contacts and networks in their area of interest. Rose spends time with her students to get to know what they want from the relationship. Some have continued the relationship well after the program has finished.

One of Rose's students, Kitsa, was in her last year studying economics at Sydney University when she found out about the *Lucy Mentoring Program*. She was accepted into the program and matched with Rose because of her interest in public policy.

'Rose's warmth and genuine interest in helping me know where to start looking in the public service made all the difference. It's partly because of her encouragement that I applied for a job as an economist in NSW Treasury,' she said.

Successful mentors allocate genuine time and effort to the relationship. They understand what it is the student needs, they have a real desire to guide and share their experiences, and to be enthusiastic and to communicate on the same level, not as an employer.

'*Lucy*' is being expanded to the University of Newcastle and possibly to other universities in 2007. You can find out more about '*Lucy*' by contacting the Office for Women on 9228 3141.



From left, Lucy students Kitsa Papadopoulou and Jodie Krakowski and Lucy mentor Rose Williams

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH MENTORING (cont)

Aiming high

Thirty senior women in Qantas acted as mentors for a day to over 100 young female school students at a workshop hosted by Qantas, and held at Sydney Domestic Airport in late October.

The Year 9 and 10 students from nine Sydney metropolitan schools were able to hear first-hand the life and career experiences of the women who occupy a variety of positions at Qantas, including pilot, mechanic, economist, engineer and financial controller.

It prompted the students to think about their perception of women and careers, and encouraged them to challenge some stereotypes they may have had about 'business women'.

Aiming High is a pilot project, run by the NSW Office for Women (OFW) and Qantas. It was opened by Margaret Jackson AC, Chairman of Qantas Airways Pty Ltd and the Hon Sandra Nori MP, Minister for Women.

Written feedback after the workshop demonstrates how successful it was. 99% indicated that *Aiming High* had increased their knowledge about the range of roles and positions available for women in Qantas and 90% said that the workshop had helped them think about the career paths they might take.

The many favourable students comments included 'inspiring, interesting and relevant', "It made me more aware of my options."

inspiring
interesting
relevant



Margaret Jackson AC, Chairman of Qantas Airways Pty Ltd and the Hon Sandra Nori MP, Minister for Women



The Aiming High workshop introduced young female school students to some of the senior women working in Qantas

EXTENDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH NETWORKING

Relationships established through networking can have numerous benefits. For women, networking can provide the opportunity to share common experiences, for example, the stresses of work or balancing work and family. It is a useful way to make contacts with people working in a similar field who can identify work and training opportunities. It helps to forge contacts with potential mentors or employers, or simply someone to turn to for advice. By providing an opportunity to learn about the lives and careers of others, networking can also help to inspire and motivate women to do something for themselves.

In August, the Hon Sandra Nori MP, Minister for Women provided just such a networking opportunity for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women leaders, when she hosted a luncheon to celebrate the achievements of Aboriginal women in leadership positions.

Speakers included Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, Sylvia Scott, an Aboriginal Elder and the 2006 NSW Woman of the Year, Professor Sandra Eades.

Designer and Chairman of the SBS Corporation, Carla Zampatti, Emeritus Professor Di Yerbury and Linda Burney, the Member of Parliament for Canterbury, were just a few of the 150 guests who attended the event, which attracted women from the public and private sectors.

The NSW Office for Women provided information on mentoring and leadership opportunities and encouraged participants to get involved in mentoring programs.



Gail Wallace, 2006 Woman of the Year finalist, Carla Zampatti, fashion designer and businesswoman, and Sylvia Scott, Aboriginal Elder at the Aboriginal Women in Leadership luncheon



Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO at the Aboriginal Women in Leadership luncheon

A NEW DIRECTION FOR NSW - STATE PLAN

In November 2006, the Premier, the Hon Morris Iemma MP, launched *A New Direction for NSW – State Plan*, a directions statement and a guide to the way the NSW Government will improve key services, set priorities and plan to meet the challenges of the next 10 years. The release of the plan follows wide-ranging community consultations across the state on the draft plan, which was released in June.

The State Plan contains a number of critical issues for women. One of the key themes - *Rights, Respect and Responsibility* - has particular relevance to women in almost every aspect of their lives. It's about keeping people safe and building harmonious communities.

Under the theme of *Delivering Better Services*, the government plans to ensure better quality services in the areas of health, education, and transport - areas

that can impact daily on the lives of women. *The theme of Fairness and Opportunity*, is underpinned by the government's commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in our society, including the marginalised, those with a disability and those with a mental illness. Women amongst these groups can suffer serious disadvantage and need particular support to ensure they are provided with opportunities to fully participate and contribute to society and to reach their full potential.

Further information on the *State Plan* can be obtained from www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan.

PREMIER'S COUNCIL FOR WOMEN

Members of the Premier's Council for Women recently attended the very successful Women's Gathering held in Grafton from 20 to 22 October 2006. A couple of hundred women from across the state gathered together to share ideas on topics ranging from how to run a small rural business and sustainable farming, to leadership skills and improving health and wellbeing.

In fact, it was a \$100,000 grant from the then NSW Department for Women for *Clarence Valley Women – Discover Our Way* in 2002 that resulted in the formation of the *Clarence Valley Women Inc.*, which hosted this year's Gathering.

The Council felt privileged to be a part of the Gathering and congratulated the organising committee for coordinating such a complex event in the Jacaranda city so successfully. It was another excellent opportunity for women to come together to network, make new friendships, rekindle old ones, and feel part of a community.

One of the workshops at the Gathering was run by the Council. It focused on how violence impacts on women in the country. The Council has been consulting a diverse range of stakeholders across the state, including rural women, to find out what women think about this issue.

We conveyed these preliminary findings to the Premier recently and they informed the government's *State*

Plan, which provides new directions for the State over the next 10 years.

The Premier has indicated that he would now like us to focus on how women are affected by changes in Industrial Relations.

Deirdre Mason

Deputy Chair

Premiers' Council for Women



Premier's Council for Women members (from left) Monica Bates, Deirdre Mason, The Hon Sandra Nori MP, Kerrie Bigsworth, Bee Koh, Dianne Minnis (Minister's Office) and Neita Scott

MEMBERS OF THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL FOR WOMEN

Sandra NORI

The Council is chaired by The Hon Sandra Nori MP, Minister for Women.

Deirdre MASON

Deirdre Mason is the Council's Deputy Chair. She has an extensive background in the corporate sector and a long-standing commitment to community affairs. Deirdre was a City Councillor in Victoria from 1980 to 1983 and has held executive positions in Telstra and directorships with the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, the Australian Children's Television Foundation and the National Heart Foundation. She is currently the President of the St John Ambulance Foundation.

Ebony ALLEN

Ebony is a young Aboriginal woman, originally from Byron Bay, who has completed her Higher School

Certificate at Mullumbimby High School and is now studying a Bachelor of Laws in Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney. Ebony has been involved in a range of voluntary activities in her local community and was the Byron Shire Australia Day Young Citizen of the Year in 2003. She represents NSW on the National Planning Group for 2006 National Youth Week and is a member of the NSW Youth Advisory Council.

Monica ATTARD

Monica is a well regarded journalist and has received four Walkley Awards for journalism. She has a Bachelor of Arts with a major in psychology and a Bachelor of Laws and admitted to practice in Australia. Monica has extensive expertise in research, analysis and writing and has knowledge of current issues affecting women. She has received an Order of Australia and is currently the presenter of *Mediawatch* on ABC TV.

Monica BATES

Monica has been a teacher for 35 years. Her last school appointment was as principal of Leichhardt High School. She has worked as a consultant with the Disadvantaged Schools Program and the Girls' Education Strategy. Throughout her career, Monica has been committed to fostering students' self esteem and their respect for individual differences. Monica has a Master of Educational Administration and Bachelor of Science. She is currently working in recruitment for young people who wish to make teaching their career.

Janet DORE

Janet is currently General Manager, Newcastle City Council. She has expertise in public policy, strategic planning and community and corporate services. She has a Bachelor of Applied Science (Planning) and a Master of Business Administration. Janet is a member of several boards including NIB Health Funds, Newcastle Airport Ltd, Hunter Integrated Resources and the NSW Greenhouse Office Advisory Panel.

Belinda GREEN

Belinda is a former Miss World who now lives in rural NSW. She is a presenter, author and facilitator on issues affecting women and their families. Belinda has expertise in marketing, media and public relations and is currently involved with a *Women @ Work* program assisting women to return to the workforce. She also works with people with disabilities and raises funds through car rallies to support Australian Paralympics.

Judith HENDERSON

Judith is a consultant specialising in strategic planning and development, leadership and change, and knowledge management. She has experience in both the private and public sectors in the areas of education, immigration, gender, and the environment. She was responsible for the design of the World Bank's Cambodia Labour Law Project and has been a professional representative on the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Her current interests include small business establishment, leadership and mentoring.

Randa KATTAN

Randa has been a strong voice promoting the status of women, human rights and social justice principles. She has worked in the area of settlement, employment, women and youth and has initiated a range of anti-racist, cultural and community development strategies. Randa is Executive Director, Arab Council of Australia and is currently a member of a number of state government and community committees including Council on Crime Prevention, Implementation

Committee of Premier's Youth Partnership with Arabic Speaking Communities and NSW State Facilitating Group for Anti-Poverty Week 2006.

Bee KOH

Bee is the Chief Executive Officer for Chinese Australian Services Society Co-op Ltd (CASS) and has been actively involved in the Chinese and mainstream communities for over a decade. She has extensive experience in community issues, especially those relating to women from migrant backgrounds. Bee speaks English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew and Hainanese and is an active committee member in a number of community organisations. She is President of the Australian Longyan Association, Honourable Public Relations Secretary of the Australian Council of Chinese Organisations inc. (AUCOCO) and Treasurer of Canterbury Multicultural Aged and Disability Support Services Management Committee.

Annie OWENS

Annie has an extensive background in industrial relations and is currently NSW State Secretary of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, of which she has been an official since 1990. She has a BA (Hons) in Industrial Relations/History and was a registered nurse for 10 years. Annie has a great interest in women's issues, especially those relating to working women.

Neita SCOTT

A rural based Aboriginal woman, Neita is a member of the Narromine Health Council, Narromine Local Aboriginal Land Council, and Regional Domestic Violence Committee. She is a women's court support official and supervises the Narromine Youth Committee. Neita is highly regarded by her community and has extensive committee experience and expertise in the areas of employment, health and domestic violence within Aboriginal communities.

Africa ZANELLA

Africa has over 20 years experience in the private and public sectors and in managing her own small international development business. Much of her background pertains to global economic trade and investment initiatives. She is an expert in strategic planning, and identifying and capitalising on international market opportunities. Africa has extensive experience in building critical relationships and working in collaboration with stakeholders.

The Director of the NSW Office for Women, NSW Premier's Department is an ex-officio member of the Council.

FAIR PLAY

The third in a series of posters, which promotes an end to violence against women, was launched on 25 November by the Hon Sandra Nori MP, Minister for Women, to coincide with the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women. The launch was attended by Craig Foster, football commentator and analyst, and some players from the A-League Clubs.

Soccer NSW have sponsored the poster, 'fair play on and off the field', which will be distributed to local councils, community and sporting clubs, and state schools.

Two years ago the Minister launched the first in the poster series - a cricket poster, produced by Cricket NSW, the Department of Sport and Recreation and the NSW Office for Women.

The second poster, for young rugby league players, was launched by the Minister and rugby league players, Benji Marshall and Robert Farrah at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 2005.

All have the same simple message that 'ending violence against women is everyone's business.' That means coaches, players, parents and the community must all make a commitment that there is no place for bullying or violence, on or off the field.

Posters may be obtained from the Office for Women



SURVEY RESULTS

More than 200 responses were received for the *NSW Women* survey. Thank you to all those who replied. The findings are as follows:

Demographic details of respondents

- 97% are female
- 97% of readers are over the age of 25 years
- 74% are employed
- 61% indicated they are employed as executive officers, managers, administrators or professionals
- 42% are self employed
- 31% are employed in the public sector

Responses on use and format

- 83% of readers read the newsletter for personal interest
- 66% found a theme based approach useful
- 76% wanted the title to remain unchanged
- 96% thought the format was easy to read and its size satisfactory

Responses on content

The majority of readers found the articles interesting and informative; a number thought the articles are not sufficiently 'cutting edge' and others thought too many activities were reported on after the event. Many readers wanted to know about upcoming activities.

The following future themes and stories were most frequently nominated:

- Women in the workforce - career and study options, non traditional employment, work and family, industrial relations issues
- Women in leadership - opportunities, boards and committees, networking
- The NSW Office for Women and Government - current and future policies and programs
- Violence against women - domestic violence, violence against older women
- Families - raising children, child protection
- Culturally and linguistically diverse women
- Women's health issues
- Rural women's issues

If you have a comment or suggestion, at any time, about *NSW Women* please contact the **Office for Women on telephone 02 9228 3141.**

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