

# **The Past is a Position: History, Activism and Privilege Abstracts & Speakers**

2018 Australian Women's History Network Symposium

Monday 2 July 2018

ANU School of Music, Canberra

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## **Keynote Speakers**

### **Opening Plenary**

#### **History, Activism, Writing and Doing**

##### **On giving and getting a history**

**Barbara Baird**

Barbara Baird is an Associate Professor in Women's Studies at Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia, an institution built on the un-ceded land of the Kurna people. Her research focuses on histories and cultural politics of sexuality and reproduction in Australia and the shaping of these by discourses of race and national identity. She is currently researching the provision of abortion services in Australia since 1990 and, with history colleagues from Macquarie University, the history of 'sexual citizenship' in Australia since 1970. She has for many years been actively engaged in a range of pro-abortion and LGBTIQ community activities and activism.

##### **Not your Jedda**

**Chelsea Bond**

Dr Chelsea Bond is a Munanjali and South Sea Islander woman and Senior Research Fellow at UQ's Poche Centre for Indigenous Health. Chelsea has over 20 years experience as an Aboriginal Health Worker and researcher working with communities across South East Qld. An Australian Learning and Teaching Fellow and recipient of an Australian Research Council Early Career Research Award, she is a founding board member of Inala Wangarra, an Indigenous community development organisation in her own community, board member of Screen Qld, regular contributor to IndigenousX and The Conversation, a mother of 5 children and co-host of 98.9FM's Wild Black Women.

##### **Bordering Solidarities**

**Suveni Perera**

Suveni (Suveni) Perera is John Curtin Distinguished Professor and Research Professor of Cultural Studies in the School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry at Curtin University. She completed her BA at the University of Sri Lanka and her PhD at Columbia University, New York. Perera has published widely on issues of social justice, including

decolonization, race, ethnicity and multiculturalism, refugee topics, critical whiteness studies and Asian-Australian studies. She has combined her academic career with participation in policymaking, public life and activism. She is the author/editor of seven books, including *Reaches of Empire; Australia and the Insular Imagination: Beaches, Borders, Boats and Bodies* and *Survival Media: The Politics and Poetics of Mobility and the War in Sri Lanka*. Currently she is the lead investigator on two major projects funded by the Australian Research Council, 'Old Atrocities, New Media' and 'Deathscapes: Mapping Racial Violence in Settler Societies'. She is a founding member of Researchers Against Pacific Black Sites.

## **Closing Plenary**

### **Networks, Movements, Land and Water – a panel in tribute to the late Tracey Banivanua Mar**

#### **Colonisation and Decolonisation: towards a feminist historiography** **Ann Curthoys**

Ann Curthoys is a historian whose writes about Australian history in a transnational and imperial frame and about questions of history, theory, and writing. In addition to many essays and co-edited essay collections on topics ranging from women's historical writing to the Cold War, her books include *For and Against Feminism* (1988); *Freedom Ride: A Freedomrider Remembers* (2002); (with John Docker) *Is History Fiction?* (2005); (with Ann Genovese and Alexander Reilly), *Rights and Redemption: History, Law, and Indigenous People* (2008), and (with Ann McGrath), *How to Write History that People Want to Read* (2009). Her latest book, currently in press, is (with Jessie Mitchell), *Taking Liberty: Indigenous Rights and Settler Self-Government in the Australian Colonies, 1830 - 1890*. She is an emeritus professor at ANU, and an honorary professor at the University of Western Australia and the University of Sydney.

#### **Networks of Solidarity** **Crystal McKinnon**

Crystal McKinnon is a Yamatji woman and is currently working at RMIT as a Vice Chancellor's Indigenous Research Fellow, where she sits within the Social Change Enabling Capability Platform (ECP) and an Australian Research Council Discovery Indigenous Project named: *Indigenous Leaders: Lawful Relations from Encounter to Treaty*. The Discovery Indigenous project looks at lawful encounters between the State and Aboriginal communities of Victoria as historic sovereign practices that may inform current Treaty practices. Her work has looked at concepts of Indigenous sovereignty, and Indigenous resistance through the use of the creative arts, including music and literature. Crystal is the co-editor of *History, Power and Text: Cultural Studies and Indigenous Studies* (UTS ePress, 2014), and her work has been published in several

books and journals, including *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity* (Palgrave, 2010), the *Alternative Law Journal*, and *Biography*.

**Imperial literacy and Indigenous activism: Jane Duren and Queen Victoria, for instance  
Maria Nugent**

Maria Nugent is based in the School of History in the College of Arts and Social Sciences at ANU, where she is co-director of the Australian Centre for Indigenous History. She co-edited with Sarah Carter, *Mistress of Everything: Queen Victoria in Indigenous Worlds* (Manchester University Press, 2016). She writes on Aboriginal history and memory, and is currently working on collaborative projects with the British Museum and the National Museum of Australia.

## Abstracts and speakers

(note Delinquent Girls as Activists Panel is listed first, followed by all other speakers in alphabetical order by first presenter family name)

### **Panel: Delinquent Girls as Activists: History from the Margins**

Revelations at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse demonstrated that children in the care of the state were routinely criminalised. From the 1960s–1990s girls admitted to the care and guardianship of the state were branded ‘delinquent’, and charged in court with ‘offences’ such as being ‘in moral danger’ and/or being ‘out of control’.

Court processes often routinely led to these girls being imprisoned. The reality of most such ‘offences’ was that the girls were victims of rape, child sexual abuse, child sex trafficking, domestic abuse or neglect, homelessness, and poverty. The legal and child welfare systems acted to incarcerate, criminalise and punish girls for being abused and neglected by adults, instead of arresting or charging the adults who harmed them.

Recent history indicates that survivor-driven activist movements have been crucial in bringing about needed change, but little attention has been given to the origins of these grassroots movements, or to how they came to challenge social workers and other welfare ‘experts’ who had, for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, seen themselves as activists of a very different type.

Social welfare in Australia is currently in a state of flux, given the revelations of child maltreatment stemming from various government inquiries into institutional care. As the nation grapples with how to balance the ‘expertise of the professional’ with the ‘expertise of experience’ it is timely, and of great potential benefit, to understand how the ‘expertise of experience’ gained its authority, and how this type of activism has confronted, shaped and changed Australian social welfare policy.

**This panel consists of four scholar-activists, three of whom are former wards of the State.**

#### **First speaker/Film screening: Nell Butler**

The panel begins with a screening of the twenty minute long documentary film *Winnie Girls*, written and directed by Nell Butler, who survived torture and rape in Winlaton as a child ward of the State of Victoria. She will introduce her film, which was entered as evidence at the recent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

*Winnie Girls* is a film about how the Victorian government treated abused girls, especially victims of rape and molestation. It was made eighteen years ago. It includes the

filmmaker's testimony and that of three other survivors of Winlaton Youth Residential Facility. The Victorian government threatened to sue the filmmaker at the time, but SBS TV had agreed to buy an extended, one hour version. The more survivors were interviewed, the clearer the picture of state wrongdoing and cover up became. The threat of legal action had a 'chilling effect' and the second film was not made. Then the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse happened and the film was accepted as evidence. Despite this, the story of Winlaton is still not well known.

**Nell Butler** is a Master of Arts candidate at the University of Melbourne, a writer and a library technician. Her award-winning documentary film *Winnie Girls*, along with the research archive created in the making of the film, were admitted as evidence to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in 2015.

### **Second Speaker: Jacqueline Z Wilson**

Jacqueline will speak on the panel's core theme of survivor-driven activist movements, the notion of "delinquent girls", and welfare policy reforms. She will focus on advocacy and activist movements that have helped to shape and challenge welfare reforms, state welfare record keeping practices, and legislative changes.

**Jacqueline Wilson**, a former ward of the State of Victoria and an Associate Professor in the Centre for Collaborative Research in Australian History at Federation University Australia. She is a graduate of La Trobe University, where she was awarded the David Myer University Medal, and Monash University (PhD History). She has authored over forty scholarly publications and is the sole author, editor and/or co-editor of five books, with research interests that broadly focus on heritage, activism and the representation of Australia's historic welfare and justice systems. Jacqueline is currently a chief investigator on several collaborative research projects funded by the Sidney Myer Fund and the Australian Research Council Discovery Awards.

### **Third Speaker: Bonney Djuric**

Bonnie Djuric OAM, a former resident of the notorious Parramatta Girls' Home, is an Adjunct Researcher at the National Institute of Experimental Arts (NIEA) at the University of New South Wales. She will discuss her activist work to establish the Parramatta Female Factory Institutions Precinct as Australia's first Site of Conscience that bears witness to the history, heritage and legacy of institutionalisation of women and children.

As a former resident of Parramatta Girls Home she promotes recognition for Care-leavers (Forgotten Australians) as primary contributors/researchers in the recording, documenting and interpreting of the institutional experience, its history and legacy in Australia. In ensuring that Australis's earliest site of institutional confinement of women and children is preserved, protected and appropriately utilised into the future, she nominated the PFF and Institutions Precinct as a National Heritage site in 2011, and in 2017 the precinct was inscribed on the National Heritage List in Nov 2017, as a place significant in the history and evolution of welfare provision in Australia. She has represented Parragirls - Forgotten Australians at State and Federal memorials and

community events and has a background in arts and administration with qualifications in Art and Education.

**Bonney Djuric** OAM is an Adjunct Researcher, National Institute of Experimental Arts, University of New South Wales, Paddington and founder of Parragirls support group and contact register. In 2012 she established the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Memory Project – a social history and contemporary art project aimed at activating the historic institutions of this precinct including the Parramatta Girls Home, as Australia’s first Site of Conscience so that the history, heritage and legacy of institutionalisation would not be forgotten.

**Fourth Speaker: Nell Musgrove**

Nell Musgrove, will draw on her fifteen years of research in the field of child welfare history, to discuss the profound transformations in approaches to this field of history over that time. In particular, if historians want to walk alongside Care Leavers—rather than speak for them—this needs to be a fundamental consideration of research design. This paper will take up three examples: the ethics of using child welfare records in research, the challenges of being a researcher in a dynamic research project which invites feedback from Care Leavers as part of its research model, and the benefits of working with Care Leavers as co-researchers and co-writers. It argues that these conversations reflect a fundamental shift in the speaking position of the historian, and make positive steps towards a new type of history which is both intellectually rigorous and also meaningful to the people whose own personal histories form part of the larger narratives and critiques we write.

**Nell Musgrove** is a Senior Lecturer in history at ACU. Her book, *The Scars Remain* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013), studies the history of institutional placement of children from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. Her forthcoming book, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia* (Palgrave, 2018), co-authored with Deidre Michell, examines the other major government provision for children separated from their families, also since the mid-nineteenth century.

**‘How much longer will we allow this country’s affairs to be run by radical feminists?’**

**Anti-feminist activism in late 1970s Australia**

**Michelle Arrow**

In histories of Australian women’s activism in the 1970s, remarkably little attention has been paid to the rise of right-wing, anti-feminist women’s groups, which emerged in the second half of the decade. They emerged in the era commonly characterised in histories of feminism as one of stasis, even backlash. While conservative political organisations like Right to Life were vocal in their denunciation of the so-called ‘permissive society’, of which women’s liberation was only one part, Women’s Action Alliance (formed 1975) and Women who Want to be Women (1979) were explicitly created in response to what they saw as the growing, and malign, influence of the women’s movement in government and society. Inspired by activists overseas, especially Phyllis Schlafly, these anti-feminist women organised explicitly, as Irene Webley noted, around the symbols of motherhood, the home, and the nuclear family.

The seventies was the decade when the ‘personal became political’: women, gays and lesbians deployed the evidence of their personal experiences in public ways to make claims for rights and protections from the state, and by 1975, the state had responded by creating feminist bureaucrats, structures to foster women’s access to government, and funding for feminist initiatives. In the Fraser era, anti-feminists worked to access the new women’s policy machinery in order to undermine and dismantle it. They too, used private experiences to make claims on the state. This paper will examine the rhetorical and political strategies of anti-feminist activists in the Fraser era to ask: what is the place of anti-feminist women in histories of Australian activism?

**Michelle Arrow** is an associate professor of modern history at Macquarie University. She is the author of two books and her radio documentary (produced with Catherine Freyne and Timothy Nicastrì), ‘Public Intimacies: the 1974 Royal Commission on Human Relationships’ was the winner of the 2014 NSW Premier’s Multimedia History Prize. Michelle has held research fellowships at the National Archives of Australia and the National Library of Australia, and she is a Chief Investigator (with Barbara Baird, Leigh Boucher and Robert Reynolds) on the ARC-funded project ‘Gender and Sexual Politics: Changing Citizenship in Australia since 1969’. Michelle is currently finishing her third monograph, a feminist history of the 1970s in Australia, for NewSouth Publishing.

**The long struggle for gender equality at the Australian Broadcasting Commission**

**Jeannine Baker**

This paper examines the mobilisation of women working in the Australian Broadcasting Commission in the 1970s and 1980s, beginning with the Script Assistants’ strike in 1973. Motivated by the United Nations’ declaration that 1975 would be International Women’s Year, and by the women’s liberation movement, female employees at the ABC formed

the Australian Women's Broadcasting Cooperative (AWBC), with the aim of tackling structural inequalities and sexual discrimination. The AWBC's numerous interventions included the production of an overtly feminist radio program (the *Coming Out Show*), the provision of production training to women, lobbying for the re-classification of jobs categorised as 'female', and pushing for a task force to conduct a formal inquiry into the status of women in the institution. The subsequent unpublished report, *Women in the ABC* (1977), found that women were working almost 'exclusively in secretarial, junior clerical and typing positions or as receptionists, tea-ladies, make-up assistants and producers' assistants', were unrepresented in management, and 'employed on only the lowest levels of the engineering division' (Task Force on Equal Opportunity for Women, 1977). Drawing on primary research and oral history interviews with former ABC women, this paper analyses the background to the AWBC, and assesses its impact.

Dr **Jeannine Baker** is a postdoctoral research fellow, and co-Deputy Director of the Centre for Media History in the Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney. She is the author of *Australian Women War Reporters: Boer War to Vietnam* (2015), and the co-editor (with Michelle Arrow and Clare Monagle) of *Small Screens: Essays on Contemporary Australian Television* (2016). With Justine Lloyd, she co-edited a special issue of *Media International Australia* on 'Gendered labour and media' (November 2016). Jeannine is currently researching the history of women in Australian broadcasting.

### **Feminism and Backlash Politics during the International Year of the Child (1979)** **Isabelle Barrett Meyering**

In 1979, Australian feminists vied with a range of groups to make their mark on local celebrations of the UN International Year of the Child (IYC). Feminists active in the children's rights arena sought to articulate an agenda that was both pro-child and pro-women, mobilising around issues including the provision of child care, access to sex education in schools and the prevention of child abuse. Yet, faced with an onslaught of conservative backlash, particularly from right-to-life groups intent on representing the women's movement as 'anti-child', feminist campaigns struggled to gain traction. While attacks on feminism as 'anti-child' were by no means new, conservative mobilisation around IYC was especially coordinated and well-targeted. This paper examines the impact of backlash politics on representations of feminism at the end of the 1970s and considers how revisiting this moment might help us to better understand why the charge that feminism is 'anti-child' has remained an enduring one.

Dr **Isabelle Barrett Meyering** is a Macquarie University Research Fellow. Her research interests include the history of Australian feminism, childhood and family. Her PhD, which she completed at UNSW in 2017, traced the history of 'children's liberation' as a component of 1970s feminist politics. She is now writing a history of children's rights in Australia since 1959. Isabelle has previously taught in history and gender studies at

UNSW, and also worked as a researcher at the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse from 2009 to 2013.

### **An Uncomfortable Activist?: Missionary Annie Lock** **Catherine Bishop**

What do we do with activists who fight for a cause or use tactics that we find uncomfortable today? Have they been overlooked in historical memory as we focus on those who have behaved in a way that is more appealing to 21<sup>st</sup> century sensibilities?

Recently feminist historians have begun to consider a broader range of female activists than in the past. Within the Australian context this has included the National Council of Women, Country Women's Association and the likes of Mary Montgomerie Bennett. United Aborigines Mission missionary Annie Lock (1876-1943) sits alongside these women. As someone who advocated the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents, Lock is surely not to be celebrated, but, like most missionaries, her story is much more complicated than that. She also stood up strongly in defence of Aboriginal women's rights not to be sexually abused by white men. In her own time she was regarded as a pariah by some sections of her society for being pro-Aboriginal and 'having the native interests too much at heart'.

This paper investigates the conundrum of uncomfortable activism and the changing ways in which its stories have been told, as the ideological imperatives of the society change, with reference to a missionary who was certainly an activist, but perhaps not always for good.

Dr **Catherine Bishop** is an honorary research fellow at the University of Sydney. She is writing a biography of Annie Lock and was State Library of NSW Religious History Fellow in 2016. She is also the author of *Minding Her Own Business: Colonial Businesswomen in Sydney* (NewSouth 2015), which won the 2016 Ashurst Business Literature Prize. She has published extensively in gender and business history. She is currently co-editing *Female Entrepreneurship in the Long Nineteenth Century: A Global Perspective*. Her 2<sup>nd</sup> book, on New Zealand colonial businesswomen, will appear in 2019. Her other research interests include twentieth-century Australian businesswomen and Cold War world youth forums.

### **Reclaiming women's voice and activism: the legacy of women's trade unions** **Cathy Brigden**

I will present my work-in-progress research which directly addresses 'collective acts of resistance and agitation' by women workers who formed women-only unions in early twentieth century Australia.

Women workers' voice, activism and agency from the 1880s to 1950s are usually interpreted as including a brief period of women's engagement in unions (1880 – 1920). This moment passed when these women were absorbed into a male-dominated union movement, after a series of mergers. My project aims to provide a different account of the impact and legacy of women's unions on the trade union movement: as the Call for expression of interest indicated 'how they have been understood historically and remembered, and to consider which stories have privileged places on the public record'.

**Cathy Brigden** is Professor in the School of Management and the Centre for People, Organisations and Work at RMIT University. Her ongoing historical and contemporary trade union research program has explored women's trade unions, in particular the Female Confectioners Union, union approaches to regulation and workers with a disability. She is currently undertaking a collaborative oral history project focusing on trade union women activists.

### **Activist History on the Frontline: Remembering Climate Resistance**

**Liz Conor**

Historians are often involved in community campaigns and organising or taking part in non-violent direct actions that might raise the occasional eyebrow among colleagues and the Heads of their faculties. They are acutely aware of the historical significance of the campaigns they work on. Often they relate directly to their research, or the strategies they deploy are informed by years of theorising around media history, public spheres, or governance and resistance. This paper tells the story of my parallel life as a community campaigner using spectacle in a series of campaigns from the media portrayal of sexual assault to maternity leave, native title and climate change. It reflects on how such campaigns are already being historicised and how they need to be remembered inclusively, in ways that credit all the people who invested their time, passion and talents.

Dr **Liz Conor** is an ARC Future Fellow in History at La Trobe University on the '[Graphic Encounters](#)': Prints of Indigenous Australians' project. She is the author of *Skin Deep: Settler Impressions of Aboriginal Women* (UWAP, 2016) and *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Indiana UP, 2004). Liz is a columnist at [New Matilda](#), her freelance essays have appeared in *The Saturday Paper*, *The Age*, *The Conversation*, *The Drum*, *Crikey.com*, and *Arena* and her blog has been archived by the National Library of Australia. She is former editor of the [Aboriginal History Journal](#), *Metro Magazine* and *Australian Screen Education* and has published extensively on colonial and modern visual and print history. Liz is a community campaigner, founding and convening the *Coalition Against Sexual Violence Propaganda* (1990) on media portrayal of sexual violence, the *Stick with Wik* (1997) campaign on native title, the *Mother's of Intervention* (2000) campaign on maternity leave, and the guerilla theatre troupe *The John Howard Ladies' Auxiliary Fanclub* (with Zelda Da, 1996) and most recently the Climate Guardian Angels (with Deborah Hart, 2012). She is working on a new troupe of Cigarette Girls, The Coquettes.

### **Clio Visualising History** **Melanie Gustafson**

I will discuss my collaborative work with Clio Visualizing History, a small nonprofit organization of feminist historians, and our most recent venture, a digital history exhibit titled *Click! The Ongoing Feminist Revolution*. *Click!* focuses on feminist activism in the United States from 1945 to the present and is divided into four sections: an Introduction; Politics & Social Movements; Body & Health; and Workplace & Family. Each section has a timeline, film clips, and illustrations. As we worked on this exhibit, we struggled with some of the questions proposed for this symposium, including what it means to privilege specific stories in larger narratives of activism. My presentation will begin with a brief overview of Clio Visualizing History, highlighting our transformation from making documentary films to creating digital projects. I will then explain the creation of *Click!*, our experiences with bringing feminist history to the web, and our future plans for this exhibit and (hopefully) other exhibits. I look forward to being part of this conversation about the importance of broadening public understandings of feminist histories and feminist activism today.

**Melanie Gustafson** is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Vermont. She teaches United States women's history and is the author or co-editor of *Women and the Republican Party, 1854-1924*; *We Have Come to Stay: American Women and Political Parties, 1880-1960*; *Major Problems in the History of World War Two*; *American Centuries, Volume 4*; and *Becoming a Historian: A Survival Manual for Women and Men*. She has served as President of the New England Historical Association, on the Vermont Advisory Committee of the United States Civil Rights Commission, and on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*.

### **The Multicultural Centre for Women's Health pushing towards radical change** **Monique Hameed and Rosi Aryal**

*Multicultural Centre for Women's Health* (MCWH) is a national, community-based organisation that has been active under several names since 1978. This year marked its 40th birthday and to celebrate, individuals from MCWH's history came together to remember 40 years of campaigning for migrant and refugee women's health. This paper will look at the changes in migrant women's activism throughout the decades and more specifically MCWH's changing relationships with State government, academia and migrant and refugee communities. Using projects run at various times throughout the 40-year history we will compare approaches to social justice over the years and the tensions and challenges faced throughout.

Exploring how our history is remembered and celebrated, which stories have been promoted and which ones romanticised we will reflect on the ways that dominant narratives often reflect the current political landscape. Through our own experiences as

workers at MCWH, we will discuss the possibility of subverting the role of not for profit's to work towards more radical visions for social change.

**Monique Hameed** is the National Training Officer for the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, a national advocacy, research and health promotion agency, promoting the health and wellbeing of immigrant and refugee women. Monique has experience working in the LGBTIQ sector, specifically running projects that seek to improve mainstream support of LGBT women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. She also runs the *Common Threads* training, a two-day cross-cultural workshop for workers. It is a challenging new course that explores linkages between individual and broader structural issues, between theory, policy and practice and the complexities that are embedded in every day work with immigrant and refugee communities.

**Rosi Aryal** coordinates Equality@Work, the first workplace prevention program in Australia to address gender inequality and other intersecting forms of inequality which make immigrant and refugee women particularly vulnerable to family violence other forms of violence against women. Rosi has conducted extensive consultations with stakeholders supporting immigrant and refugee carers, and has worked closely with MCWH's bilingual health educators to facilitate in-depth interviews and focus groups with carers. She has also analysed the structural barriers preventing immigrant and refugee carers from accessing services, and has presented her findings at national conferences and co-design forums for national health-sector reforms. Rosi has tertiary qualifications in cultural anthropology, human geography and development sociology.

### **Australian Women's Register** **Helen Morgan**

I will discuss *The Australian Women's Register*, giving a brief overview of its history, its beginnings in 2000 as an activist feminist project documenting second wave feminism in Australia, its development through the collaborative model of ARC Linkage grants, its role as research infrastructure both in its own right *and* through its partnership with Trove, along with its potential as its twentieth anniversary approaches. I would also briefly explore, alongside the critical position of Trove, what role, if any, Wikipedia and Wikidata could play in supporting women's history and women's activism via the *Register*. I would like to pose a series of questions to the audience. Are academics using the *Register* now? How could it be improved? There are gaps in the coverage of the *Register* which could be filled – are you and your institutions prepared to get involved? The *Register* now has an ISSN, but what would it take to get more scholars sharing their data in this space? Hopefully, like the *Register's* co-editors, the audience will feel another Linkage coming on...

**Helen Morgan** is a senior research fellow at the University of Melbourne's eScholarship Research Centre. A historian with archival and editing qualifications, she has worked as information architect and exhibition designer on the Australian Women's Archives Project

since its inception in 2000, and is co-editor of the Australian Women's Register. She is interested in the collecting and curating of personal, private (archival) and public domain biographical data and its publication online in a climate of waning privacy, including life histories and life writing as seen through the lens of oral history, archives, social informatics, biofiction and feminist theory.

### **Education and the Academy: Transformative Resource or Toxic Legacy?**

**Anastasia Kanjere**

The role of education and knowledge is a challenging one for activists. This challenge is especially salient to many of us who are in some capacity both academics and activists, and the bringing together of both kinds of work in this symposium is an admirable move towards holding these in productive tension. Education can be a process of liberation; it is also easily coopted and deployed by financial interests, struggles for status and hierarchical power, and colonial and colonising knowledge systems. Much 'theoretical' knowledge produced, even – perhaps especially – on what is called the 'Left,' is inaccessible to most people and dependent upon financial security, leisure time, and educational background to be engaged with. How as activists can we productively engage with knowledge, without becoming (overly) complicit in these systems?

**Anastasia Kanjere** is a white settler writer, activist and casual academic, born and raised on Wurundjeri country in so-called Melbourne. Her writing on race, gender, borders, motherhood and justice can be found at the ACRAWSA blog, *Going Down Swinging*, *The Pin*, *Writing from Below* and *xBorderOperationalMatters*. As an activist she has been particularly engaged in work around borders, deaths in custody and racialised police violence, and Aboriginal sovereignty. Her PhD research at La Trobe University analyses the interrelation between whiteness as an ideological sphere and discourses of innocence, and the implications of this link for anti-racist work and theory.

### **Pushing the boundaries: working-class women's participation in male workers' industrial disputes, 1928-1930.**

**Phoebe Kelloway**

Working-class women played an active part in the three major industrial disputes that marked the start of the 1930s Depression in Australia, all of which involved all-male workforces. Some of the women's activities, such as organising food relief, accorded with gendered expectations. Yet much of what they did to aid strikers or locked-out men tested – or broke – the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for women: public speaking, disruptive protest actions, picketing, and physical attacks on strike-breakers. This paper makes the case that these women should not be regarded as acting in a subordinate manner, putting men's interests ahead of their own, but as fighting for their own interests as much as those of their male counterparts.

**Phoebe Kelloway** is a PhD candidate in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. Her thesis investigates the three major industrial disputes (1928 waterside strike, 1929 timber strike and 1929-30 lockout of coal miners) that marked the start of the Depression in Australia, and Communist involvement in them. Phoebe's research interests include women's participation in union organising and industrial struggle.

**'The Ballad of Janet Oakden': Breaking Down Gendered Occupational Traditions**  
**Diane Kirkby and Emma Robertson**

In May 1976 the ABC Coming Out Show featured the story of one woman's struggle to become a train driver on the NSW railways. That woman was English migrant, Janet Oakden and the show included a song that told how she challenged the deeply ingrained masculine traditions of the railway industry with the lines: 'When she tried to join the union, the men all ran like hell!'. There were demonstrations in her support at Trades Hall when protestors and supporters marched through and around the building singing the "song composed for the occasion." Our paper looks at these feminist campaigns that were undertaken in the 1970s-80s to get women into occupations deemed non-traditional for women, as drivers on the railways and as wharfies and seafarers in the maritime industries. We explore how feminist activism confronted and challenged the traditions of these workplaces, and ask what made these occupations non-traditional for women.

**Diane Kirkby** is Research Professor (Emeritus) of History at La Trobe University Melbourne, and Professor of Law and Humanities at University of Technology Sydney. She has written extensively on women's labour history in both the US and Australia, and with Emma Robertson and Lee-Ann Monk is currently working on an Australian Research Council-funded project on women in non-traditional employment.

**Emma Robertson** is Senior Lecturer in History at La Trobe University (Bendigo campus) She is the author of *Chocolate, Women and Empire: A Social and Cultural History* (Manchester University Press, 2009) and is continuing to explore the gendered history of chocolate workers in transnational perspective, with a recent article on Cadbury in *Women's History Review*. In the co-authored book, *Rhythms of Labour: Music at Work in Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), she combined her interests in gender and workplace cultures with the history of music.

**Turning her over in her (unmarked) grave: a forgotten battle**  
**Catherine Layton**

When I used to lecture on non-sexist education and equal employment opportunity, I would introduce the need for change with a two-minute exercise. Might the same strategy be useful in bringing to life the problems faced by women in the Victorian era?

The example is Mary Caroline Michell (1848-1912), who was ostracised in her time as a predatory mistress who had the audacity to become the wife of the wealthiest of dukes. The challenge her step-son mounted to the duke's will was expected to be the scandal of the 1890s. Exactly how she successfully fought for her own and her daughter's rightful inheritance is shrouded in mystery, but the most probable solution is to be found in Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*. She was buried beside the duke, but there is no inscription on the headstone. Sensationalist descriptions that perpetuate the stereotype are still being published.

The session involves experiencing the exercise, brief coverage of the story in question and its political context, and discussion of the question, 'Is it worth revising gendered descriptions of long-dead women?'

Dr **Catherine Layton** worked in community development and universities. When she was a Sub-Dean (Learning and Teaching), she was awarded a Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Fellowship. She also has a Graduate Certificate in University Leadership and Management and an Award for Teaching Excellence in Distance Education. Her first retirement project was an article about the impact of housing policy changes in 1950s London on her mother's sense of identity. The second was a biography of Mary Caroline Michell, a distant relative she had found on her otherwise unremarkable family tree.

### **Testing and Creating Democracy: Community Education from Italy to the Wider World Samantha Owen**

In the late-1950s Ilys Booker, a young Canadian social worker living in London, set off to volunteer in western Sicily at Danilo Dolci's project. Dolci – the "Sicilian Gandhi" – was a human rights activist who had lived in western Sicily since 1952. Famous for his strikes in reverse Dolci and his followers took peaceful action to alleviate child poverty and activate civil society. In 1958 Dolci asked the Friends of Danilo Dolci branches to take over the community development centres he had established. Sent from the London branch, in Menfi Booker ran child and maternal health projects. When she returned to London in the early 1960s she continued to work in west and east London, until her early death in 1968. Both areas suffered from social deprivation and recent population increase as a result of new migrants responding to the calls for post-war labour to aid reconstruction. In the heart of liberal democracy, and using the resources of the just established welfare state, a transnational conversation occurred as Booker used the Menfi project to introduce measures for the inclusion of those who were excluded by the nation state. The legacy of her work are the Ilys Booker Children's Centres. This paper focuses on the work of Booker to consider how small acts of peaceful activism can use the tools of the state to protest and to institute measures that push towards a fairer and more equitable society.

**Samantha Owen** is an early career researcher and a Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) lecturer in the School of Education at Curtin University. Her research focuses on the post-1945 world and considers the relationship between nationalism and education. She studies the role of education in the formation and operation of civil society and how education and educational policies become vehicles for communicating social, cultural, economic, institutional and political change and norms. Samantha approaches her work as a historian and is a gender researcher.

**“You have to get up to the Mountain” Listening to Australian lesbian feminists**  
**Sophie Robinson**

Histories of the Women’s Liberation movement in Australia and elsewhere often describe the value that feminist activists increasingly placed on sisterhood and separatism during the 1970s as unique to second wave feminism, and key inspiration for lesbian feminism. Some also narrate lesbian feminism as gradually losing relevance and support by the 1980s and 1990s. In this paper I explore my four-and-a-half-year journey of immersion in the oral histories of women who were the drivers of lesbian feminist activism in Australia. Some started groups that form the origins of Australian lesbian feminism, including Kerryn Higgs, founding member of the Melbourne Radicalesbians and the ‘Amazon Acres’ collective who developed a self-sufficient rural space for women in Northern NSW – known as ‘the Mountain’, where I have been invited to go. Some were more peripheral activists, and yet lesbian feminism transformed their lives and became a core part of their personal and political narrative. Collectively, their reflections challenge dominant interpretations of lesbian feminism and need to be included in the historical record. My paper emphasises the academic, activist and feminist role (and obligation) of immersing oneself in these intimate histories. I consider the unique challenges I faced in negotiating my presence as both a researcher and ally of lesbian communities that have formed over a forty-year period and who want to have their stories recorded. As I will show, my research informed and enhanced my activism within lesbian and feminist communities, providing me with an ethical framework for listening to, disseminating, and sometimes protecting, these stories. Similarly, my involvement in feminist and lesbian spaces also enhanced my research, guiding how I pieced together the archive of Australian lesbian feminism.

**Sophie Robinson** is in the final year of her PhD candidature in Women’s and Gender Studies at UNSW. Her thesis explores the history of lesbian feminist activism in Australian from 1969 to 2000. Sophie is also a Committee member of Sydney’s Pride History Group which collects oral histories of Sydney’s LGBTIQ communities.

**“Love, Flo”: Friendship as Education, as Strategy, as Bridge, as Activism**  
**Rebecca Sheehan**

Florynce Kennedy. Roberta Sykes. Oonagh Lahr. These three very different women in the US, Australia, and England respectively, had some form of feminism in common. They were also all friends and correspondents of Germaine Greer's. In this paper, which I am happy to deliver as a traditional academic conference paper, a short paper, or part of a conversation, I examine and argue for the critical role of friendship in feminist activism and in bridging divides of difference. Most histories of second-wave feminism focus on white women, flatten the differences between women, or, as Benita Roth has done, map out the “separate roads to feminism” taken by women of colour and white women. Yet letters written in the 1970s between Greer, Kennedy, Sykes, and Lahr are evidence of both intersectional understanding and strategic alliances. The love and respect grounding their friendships provided a framework of trust that enabled honesty, direct communication, and learning. This paper argues that through these historical examples of intersectional feminist friendships, we can write new histories of how the personal was political, and potentially sketch a roadmap for inter-cultural alliances in the present and future.

**Rebecca Sheehan** is a Lecturer in the Sociology of Gender and Program Director of Gender Studies at Macquarie University. She is working on a monograph entitled *Rise of the Superwoman: How Sex Remade Gender in America's Long 1970s* (under contract with Harvard University Press) and has published articles on gender and rock music, boxing, and the American reception of Germaine Greer.

**Mary Montgomerie Bennett: Tory, Leftie, Feminist, Christian?: the hazards of categorising**  
**Sue Taffe**

Mary Bennett has been described as holding a Tory view of history. She has also been described as a left wing activist. She described Communists- ‘at least the real Communists’ as cold people, and yet she had warm and sustaining friendships with a number of activists who were members of the Communist Party of Australia.

She is often described as a feminist and in the 1930s she called on feminists to assist in her battle for justice for Aboriginal girls and women who were being prostituted by Aboriginal men to white men in exchanged for food and tobacco. She had a serious falling out with Perth feminists in the 1930s, over the issue of Aboriginal children being removed from their mothers, which was never really healed.

Mary was a devout Christian. She was sustained by her faith but at the same time she was forthright in her public criticisms of the Anglican Church which colluded with governments in not paying Aboriginal workers their full wage.

This paper will explore the dangers of categorising, while, nevertheless, recognising its usefulness. Mary Montgomerie Bennett was a complex, even contradictory activist, educator and writer. A consideration of her formative years and life-changing experiences can help us to better understand her mission to work for justice for Indigenous Australians and its genesis.

**Sue Taffe** is the author of *A White Hot Flame – Mary Montgomerie Bennett, author, educator, activist*, (Monash University Publishing, 2018). She is also the author of *Black and White Together, FCAATSI: the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders* (UQP, 2005) as well as articles and book chapters concerning twentieth century activists for Indigenous justice. Her research and writing form the basis for the website 'Collaborating for Indigenous Rights', hosted by the National Museum of Australia.

**'Some channels there must be for woman's faculties': First World War Doctors and Advocacy for Women's Progress**  
**Elicia Taylor**

During the First World War, approximately twenty Australian women served overseas as doctors. Historians have more recently rescued these women's experiences from their long neglect within Australia's broader First World War history. However, a less-examined aspect of these women's lives is their activist role in seeking acceptance for women's higher education and professional training. This paper draws on the lives of two such women, Agnes Bennett and Phoebe Chapple, to examine their influence in shifting societal attitudes towards women's progress. As economically and socially privileged women, Bennett and Chapple enjoyed access to higher education and medical training, yet they remained painfully aware of societal opinion that women's primary function was reproduction. Through both deliberate and unintentional actions, these women countered such perceptions in their early lives and later demonstrated their worth as medical professionals working under the difficult conditions of war. This paper brings critical perspective to Bennett's and Chapple's activism by examining their early attitudes towards privilege and philanthropy, and whether or not their war service influenced their capacity to advance the health and education of "less fortunate" women.

**Elicia Taylor** is a PhD Candidate (History) at the University of Newcastle. Her research examines the impact of the First World War on the lives of Australian unmarried women and widows.

**“Every Woman Is Another Droplet In The Great Tide”: Australian Women’s Anti-Nuclear Activism, 1950-1970.**

**Hannah Viney**

In 2018, when the Doomsday Clock is the closest it has been to midnight since 1953, there is a surprising lack of scholarship on the decades-long struggles against nuclear proliferation. In the decades after the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, peace activists around the world ran sustained campaigns against nuclear bombs and nuclear testing. Yet there are very few comprehensive studies of these campaigners, even fewer studies of the women who were involved. In Australia, and worldwide, women were an important part of the movement. Although Australian women have a long, documented history of activism and political agitation, it is their actions in the suffrage and women’s liberation movements that dominate the record. Any activist activity in the middle decades of the twentieth century is largely overlooked. To redress this neglect, this lightning paper will consider the Australian women who campaigned throughout the 1950s and 1960s against nuclear bombs. It will explore the extent of their involvement in the mid-century anti-nuclear movement, in particular how their involvement and experiences differed from their male counterparts. In doing so, this research will hopefully build a more complex and nuanced picture of women’s activism and add more context to the later second-wave feminist movement.

**Hannah Viney** recently completed her Bachelor of Arts (Honours) on The Australian Women's Weekly’s coverage of the Cold War. Realising that her honours research could only show her one side of the story, she has returned to academic study. Under the supervision of Professor Christina Twomey, Hannah is now undertaking a Master of Arts at Monash University on Australian women’s anti-nuclear activism in order to better understand the political involvement of women in the mid-twentieth century. She can usually be found getting lost in the archives, binge-watching *The Crown* or volunteering at the Old Treasury Building Museum in Melbourne.