

# HOBART WOMEN'S HEALTH



# CENTRE NEWSLETTER

## WINTER 2011

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## Legal issues regarding same sex marriage

by **Olivia Rundle**

Lecturer in Law, University of Tasmania

Following the Federal Parliament's motion to engage with constituents about same sex marriage, a conversation has gained momentum in Australia. This is taking place at public forums, in the print media, meetings of community groups, around kitchen tables and through newsletters such as this one. The law both reflects the values of society and sets standards to guide society. By engaging with their constituents, our parliamentarians will gain a sense as to whether same sex marriage would reflect the social and cultural values of modern Australia.

Here, five questions about same sex marriage are briefly explored, to explain the legal view of the issues.

### Where does religion fit with the laws of marriage?

In Australia, we have a separation of church and state. A range of religious and spiritual beliefs are welcomed and people of faith are free to practise their religion within the boundaries of the law. Legal marriage and religious marriage are distinct institutions. The government approves religious organisations to conduct religious marriage ceremonies, according to religious rites, which will be automatically recognised as having satisfied the legal requirements for marriage. By contrast, there are particular words prescribed by the *Marriage Act 1961* (Cth) for civil marriage ceremonies.

Religious freedom also means religious institutions can choose who is eligible to marry within them. If marriage between two people of the same sex was legal, there would be no obligation imposed upon churches to marry same sex couples.

### Would children's rights be affected by same sex marriage?

In Australia, when a legal decision needs to be made about a child, the decision will be made according to the best interests of the child, taking into account the individual circumstances of that child and his or her family. There is no legal distinction in the rights or status of children whose parents are married, in a non-married relationship or not in a relationship.



continued over...



Children are cared for by same sex parents, whether parentage is legal or social. Same sex marriage would mean children who live in families headed by same sex couples might benefit from the financial, physical, emotional and social benefits of their parents being married, as marriage would be an available option.

### **Can the Commonwealth legislate for same sex marriage?**

In Australia, the Commonwealth parliament is able to make laws when the Constitution specifies it has the power to do so. One of those areas is marriage. There is an unresolved question about how the marriage power in the Constitution would be interpreted by the High Court. Would the power be interpreted broadly enough to include same sex marriage? This question cannot be resolved unless it comes before the High Court for determination which couldn't happen until after the parliament exercised the power by making a law and then the validity of that law was challenged. Therefore, this unresolved constitutional question is not on its own a reason for the parliament to decline to make a law for same sex marriage.

### **How would the law change?**

The *Marriage Act 1961* (Cth) was the first time the Commonwealth enacted its marriage power. The definition of marriage, inserted into the Act in 2004, reflects the common law definition of marriage. That definition is "the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life."

The elements of this definition are:

- Two people of opposite sex;
- Monogamous union;
- Voluntary; and
- Life-long commitment.

The definition proposed in the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2010 (Cth), presented by Senator Hanson-Young in September 2010, redefines marriage as "the union of two people, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life." All elements, except the first, are retained. The essence of the amendment is that instead of two people of opposite sex, any two people could marry. It should be noted other restrictions on who can marry, including age requirements, prohibited family relationships and bigamous relationships, would remain undisturbed.

### **What legal difference would marriage make for same sex couples?**

There has been recent, rapid, widespread and fundamental change in the way gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people are treated in law. The effect of these changes has been to treat LGBTI people and same sex couples equally to heterosexual individuals and couples. Marriage is one of the last areas of differential treatment of same sex couples. In Australia, non-married couples are now treated almost identically to married couples. This raises the question of what legal difference marriage would make for same sex couples. The answer is non-married couples may have more difficulty in accessing or enforcing their legal rights than married couples, because they do not have the certainties marriage offers. As same sex couples may find the existence of their relationship challenged more frequently than heterosexual couples, this lack of certainty can be significant.

In Tasmania, Victoria, the ACT and NSW there are relationship registration options other than marriage available to non-married couples. Putting aside the attractions of these options for many couples, there remain some fundamental things marriage offers which these schemes do not. Only marriage involves a state-sanctioned commitment to a life long union. The registration alternatives are of limited portability interstate and overseas, which is an issue in our mobile lifestyles. There is also a shared social understanding of what marriage means for two people in a legal sense, but limited awareness of the alternatives within the community. Some of these problems might be addressed by a Commonwealth civil union scheme. However, there are several problems with this proposal from a legal point of view. First, there is no Constitutional power to make laws regarding "relationships". Secondly, if a civil union scheme was offered instead of marriage equality for same sex couples, the unequal treatment of same sex couples would be highlighted rather than resolved. This proposal is therefore not a straightforward response to marriage equality.

The question parliamentarians are asking their constituents is "Should the legal institution of marriage be made available to all couples regardless of whether they are of opposite sex?" Given the conversation that we are having as a nation, and given the context of the law reforms that have occurred so far, there will be great symbolism in the Federal parliament's decision to either legislate or not legislate for same sex marriage.

# Are you OK with that?

An International Women's Day Project asks Tasmanians

## ARE YOU OK WITH THAT?

Women do 70% of the world's work, yet receive 10% of the world's income and own just 1% of the means of production;

One in four Australian women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime;

On average Tasmanian women working full time get \$140.10 a week less than men; and

Domestic violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness for women aged 15-44.

## ARE YOU OK WITH THAT?

A postcard campaign asking those questions was launched by the Minister for Health, Michelle O'Byrne, on the 8th March 2011, to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Women's Day. The lawns of Parliament House were alive with celebrations for the centenary of IWD and those attending the launch were entertained by performer, Kath Prescott, who gave a circus interpretation of how women manage to balance and juggle the daily issues of their lives.



Health Minister Michelle O'Byrne and young women

The *Are You OK With That?* campaign was developed in partnership with the Tasmanian Council of Social Service, Women's Legal Service, Yemaya Women's Support Service, Unions Tasmania and the Tasmanian Women's Health Program, Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania, and highlights the staggering rates of violence and inequities experienced by women in Australia and around the world.

Campaign spokeswoman Ms Susan Fahey, Managing Solicitor of Women's Legal Service Tasmania, said while much has changed since women took to the streets 100 years ago protesting poor pay, unsafe conditions and demanding their right to vote, inequities for working women and shocking rates of violence persist to this day - both in Australia and around the world.

"It is unacceptable that many women continue to live in fear of violence and still receive, on average in Australia, one hundred and forty dollars a week less than men."

"These are important issues for our whole community, not only for women, and it is time we stood together and said no more!", Ms Fahey said.

According to an Access Economics study commissioned by the Commonwealth and reported in 2009, violence against women costs the Australian economy in excess of \$13 billion per year, with this figure projected to grow substantially over the next few years if violence continues to blight the lives of women and children. For Tasmania, the cost of violence to the economy is very conservatively estimated at \$70 million annually.

The postcards invite community members to have their say about these facts by returning the postcards, with their comments, to the community organisation partners. Postcards are available around town, from the partner organisations and at the Hobart Women's Health Centre.

In addition to raising awareness of the issues, the feedback provided by the community will support and influence the future work of the partner organisations.



The Hobart Women's Health Centre has finally caught the social networking bug and we now have a fabulous Facebook page. We invite you to join the growing list of women who are fans of the Centre. You will receive regular updates on Centre events and you can participate in lively discussions on issues impacting on the health and well-being of women.

## WANTED



Ever considered being a member of the HWHC Board?

At our AGM in September we will be seeking women to join our Board team, to complement our existing membership, so we thought we might get you thinking early. Contact Glynis first on 6231 3212 or [glynis@hwbc.com.au](mailto:glynis@hwbc.com.au) for an information package.

# Surrogacy Bill 2010

by Susan Fahey  
Managing Solicitor  
Women's Legal Service

## What is the Surrogacy Bill about?

Surrogacy is when a woman carries a child from conception through to birth for another couple or individual. This arrangement is usually entered into because the couple or individual have problems with conception or carriage of a child.

In 2010, the Tasmanian Government introduced the *Surrogacy Bill 2010* to decriminalise altruistic or non-commercial surrogacy. Apart from decriminalising altruistic surrogacy, the aim of the Bill is to implement legislative rules or guidelines as to when and how a surrogacy agreement can be made. If the Bill passes in its current form, surrogacy would be legal in Tasmania and available to all Tasmanians regardless of their relationship or marital status.

Under this proposed legislation commercial surrogacy, or surrogacy for a fee, would remain illegal in Tasmania.

## Background

The Bill passed through the House of Assembly or Lower House of Parliament in April 2011. When the Bill was being debated, the Liberal Party proposed a number of amendments to the Bill including:

- Same sex couples be excluded from utilising surrogacy arrangements;
- A surrogate be 25 years of age or older;
- Women who have not had children be excluded from entering an agreement to be a surrogate; and
- Women entering an agreement to be a surrogate have their spouse's consent for them to enter that agreement.

Ultimately these proposed amendments and others were defeated - with the exception of a minimum age provision of 21 years, applied to the intended parents.

Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, ACT and Queensland have already moved to legally recognise altruistic surrogacy arrangements. The Bill is due to be debated by the Tasmanian Legislative Council in or around late May or the start of June 2011, including any new proposed amendments to the Bill or a re-introduction of those that failed in the House of Assembly.

## Discussion

It is likely the Legislative Council will debate the same issues raised in the House of Assembly, particularly who can enter a surrogacy agreement and who will be excluded.

Over the last decade, Tasmania has passed a number of laws with the intent of removing discrimination against same sex couples and their children and instead implementing full legal recognition of those families. The effect of excluding same sex couples from entering surrogacy arrangements, purely because of their sexuality, would be a discriminatory law representing a step back of more than a decade, socially and legislatively speaking.

Not allowing a woman to be a surrogate if she has not previously had a child, or to require a woman to obtain her spouse's consent, before agreeing to become a surrogate, is intended to protect women. The unintended consequence of both those propositions is to take away a woman's right to make a decision concerning her body, creating a dangerous precedent and again taking a giant step backwards.



The other possible amendments to the Bill being mooted include, for example, more rigorous counselling requirements for all parties and written surrogacy agreements as opposed to oral. These are all proposals which, if drafted properly, should enhance the protections of the Bill for those entering a surrogacy arrangement.

## Conclusion

Altruistic surrogacy should be legalised and, much like IVF in Tasmania, must be accessible to all Tasmanians with no exclusions based on sexuality, marital or relationship status.

Ensuring the legislative protections in the surrogacy process provide a secure outcome for the child born via the arrangement, along with the adults involved, should in our opinion be the focus of the State's lawmakers.

## More information

For more information contact the Women's Legal Service on 6231 9466 or via email at [admin@womenslegaltas.org.au](mailto:admin@womenslegaltas.org.au). You can also find out more from the Hobart Women's Health Centre. If you want to tell your local member what you think, go to [www.equalitytasmania.org](http://www.equalitytasmania.org) and click on the webform.

Starting from scratch just two years ago, 1 Million Women (1MW) has created one of Australia's largest community-based campaigns for action on climate change.

Launched on May 19th, 2009, 1MW speaks to women as 'a campaign of daughters, mothers, sisters, grandmothers getting on with climate action'.

1MW now has about 41,000 members who've committed collectively to cut over 80,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions in their daily lives, taking personal action guided by 50-plus carbon-cutting choices in the campaign's online activity centre.

The activities range across practical areas for householders such as home energy saving, eliminating food waste and embracing healthy diets, shopping and consuming less, choosing public transport and switching to clean energy.

In the past year, 1MW has moved decisively on to social networks as well as its main website, <http://1millionwomen.com.au>, and a fast-growing Facebook already has about 20,000 members.

A key element of the leadership shown by 1MW is the campaign decision to target women as a very major 'market niche' for climate action - who can be reached with well directed communications and who will influence their households, workplaces and society at large to act on climate change.

The distinctive 1MW branding focuses on the empowerment of women: the power of women networking and being part of something special; the role of women in society as individuals and as a community; and banding together with other women who share a common vision for change.

As was learned in developing the campaign, women are key makers and influencers of consumer purchasing decisions in Australian society (over 70%); and globally, women are disproportionately at risk from the harmful impacts of climate change, especially in the developing world.

Major corporations like Telstra and Lend Lease have adopted the 1 Million Women campaign as a gender empowerment program for their own internal audiences, as well as promoting its climate and sustainability attributes.

I am a mother of four and former businesswoman, who ran her own beauty care products company for 20 years,

before I 'got the message on climate change' a few years ago. In 2009, I sold my business to work full-time on 1MW.

1MW appeals directly to women's historically acknowledged strengths as community organisers and their contemporary passion for social networking.

Through women, 1MW aims to reach well beyond the 5 to 10% of the population who are already committed to environmental action in their lives; engaging more mainstream consumers and tapping into communities that need to know more about climate change and its implications for everyone.

The campaign has over 100 ambassadors reflecting the full diversity of women in Australia, located throughout the country, and in the past year has mobilised hundreds of volunteers for its recruitment events.

1MW has taken our campaign to mainstream major public events, like big shows, and also to more niche - but still major - events such as folk festivals, recruiting thousands of new members at each of them.

As a non-partisan but nonetheless engaged women's organisation for climate action, we've been building our collective "voice" - including running surveys of our members on key public policy issues, with our recent 1 Million Women Mother's Day Snap Survey attracting well over 3,000 respondents.

To join the 1 Million Women go to the website at <http://1millionwomen.com.au>

You can also 'Like' 1MW on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/1MillionWomen> and follow on Twitter @1millionwomen.



Two wonderful 1MW volunteers spreading the word at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, 2010

# WHAT'S ON



# HWHC

The following **group sessions and activities** are held at the Centre on a regular basis and are free unless otherwise stated. We welcome referrals to any of these programs.

<b>Ageing Well with Weights</b>	8 week strength training program on Fridays 2:15 - 3:30 pm. \$5 per class with physiotherapist Pat Sandercock. To be sent forms for the next course, please call the Centre on 6231 3212.
<b>AWWW Practice</b>	Practice times available, after course completion on Mondays 11:40 am to 1:00 pm and Wednesdays 3:00 to 4:00 pm.
<b>Birth and Beyond</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month 10 - 11:30 am. A mothers group for women interested in birth and parenting. Babies and children welcome. Phone Kelly for more information on 0411 127 870.
<b>Breast Cancer</b>	<b>Support Group</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month 11:45 am - 1:15 pm. For any woman diagnosed with breast cancer who would like information and support. <b>Secondary Support Group</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Monday of the month 10 am - 12 noon. For any woman diagnosed with secondary breast cancer who would like information and support. New members welcome. Please phone Karen on 0400 494 646 before attending.
<b>Community Health Nurse</b>	10 am to 12 pm one morning per week - ring the Centre to find out which day. Blood pressure, sugar and cholesterol level checks and lots more.
<b>Feldenkrais</b>	Tuesdays 2 pm from May 31 to July 5. Awareness Through Movement are gentle guided lessons suitable for anyone who wants to experience more ease of movement, an improved sense of balance and increased confidence and ability in everyday activities. Practitioner still completing qualification.
<b>Fitball Beginners' Class</b>	Tuesday and Thursday 10 - 11:30 am. \$5 per class with physiotherapist Pat Sandercock. Numbers are limited, so phone Pat for information and to book on 6229 7488.
<b>Herbalist</b>	Mondays 2 - 4 pm, by appointment only. Cost is \$30 for the 1 <sup>st</sup> one hour consultation and \$20 follow up appointment. To make an appointment, phone Sally on 0407 872 792..
<b>Massage</b>	<b>Shiatsu</b> by appointment, \$60 for 1½ hours or \$45 for one hour. Phone 0488 660 940 for a booking with Lynne Bradshaw. <b>Supportive</b> massage for women living with chronic illness. Wednesdays from 12 - 4 pm by appointment only. Specialised gentle touch therapy to ease pain and/or anxiety and provide appropriate comfort and support at every stage of cancer, lymphoedema, MS, Parkinsons, depression, fibromyalgia and other chronic conditions. Flexible fees. Phone Christine Lambrechts on 0409 060 475.
<b>Meditation</b>	<b>Guided and safe relaxation meditation</b> Tuesday 10:30 - 11:30 am (beginners welcome). <b>Singing the Rainbow</b> 7 week course on Mondays 7:30 to 8:15 pm starting June 20, 2011. Donations gratefully accepted. Meditation using the art of singing and creative visualisation through colour therapy. Phone Wolf Arrow Rain on 6234 1140 for more information.
<b>Stitches and Stories</b>	Last Thursday of the month from 1:30 – 3:30 pm. The group is open to women of all ages to come together to stitch, embroider, sew, mend, share knowledge and stories.
<b>Tai Chi</b>	Mondays 10:30 - 11:30 am and 1 - 2 pm. This is a low impact form of Tai Chi, which focuses on increasing mobility and flexibility, while developing inner strength and tranquility.
<b>Women's Friendship Group</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 1:30 - 3:00 pm. Interested in meeting new people, having a laugh with likeminded women and becoming better informed about issues affecting you? The group is small, friendly and welcomes new faces. Phone the Centre for more information.
<b>Women's Walks</b>	Thursday mornings, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm. Calendars are available from reception.
<b>Writers' Support Group</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month, 2 - 4 pm.
<b>Yoga</b>	Wednesday mornings, 9:45 - 11 am, for experienced participants and 11:15 am - 12:30 pm for beginners. \$5.50 per session with Kathy.

**Come in for a cuppa, browse in our library or use the photocopier.**

# TAXI !!!

by Petula Broad

In recent years, attendance at the Reclaim the Night events in Hobart has been so poor, it would be tempting to assume women no longer have any concerns about personal safety when we go out at night. Of course this is not the case.

Media reports about alcohol induced street violence in the city, particularly on the weekends, do little to allay our fear and I doubt there would be many of us who feel entirely comfortable walking home alone in the dark.

Those of us who do go out for a drink, and then opt to behave responsibly and get a taxi home, usually assume this is the safest option. Well, apparently not. A story brought to our attention here at the Centre illustrates the folly of that assumption.

A woman who caught a taxi from a rank had an incident where the taxi driver sexually harassed her after they had reached her destination, outside of the taxi, so it was not recorded on film. She called all the taxi companies listed in the directory in an attempt to trace the driver but, as she had caught the taxi from a rank, she was told without a driver number there was little they could do. The police echoed this response.

In fact this is not quite true, all taxis have GPS, but it requires a bit of extra work for the administration to search for a particular taxi, even with times and destination.

For this woman there was no physical harm done, but one could postulate had it been a young, vulnerable woman, the outcome may have been very different. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident and other women have reported being subjected to inappropriate questioning and behaviour late at night.

We need to be sure when we catch a taxi, or arrange for our daughters to catch a taxi, we will arrive safely at our destination unharmed or harassed.

There are some things you can do personally to increase your safety when you catch a taxi on a rank:

- When you get into a taxi, make a note of the driver's number, or car registration;
- Check the photo on display is of the actual driver - if it is not, get out of the taxi;
- Be aware it is safer to sit in the backseat, and
- If you travel alone, don't let the driver know where you live and ask to be dropped a few houses away.

Of course if you order a taxi by phone, this is a safer option because the driver is traceable.

Structurally, we can do more. Always call the taxi company if you believe the driver has behaved badly. They need to get feedback, if we expect them to implement change.

The Office of the Anti Discrimination Commissioner suggested taxi companies can be held responsible. Sexual harassment is a crime and drivers and their employers are accountable. You can make an incident report on their website, even if you decide not to report the incident to police at [www.antidiscrimination.gov.au/](http://www.antidiscrimination.gov.au/) [www.nadig/nadig.nsf/Page/Tasmania](http://www.nadig/nadig.nsf/Page/Tasmania). This assists with planning awareness training requirements.

In consultation with the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER) the Centre has suggested Tasmania adopt a practice common in other states. The taxi number is displayed in very bold large font on the outside of the vehicle, where it can be read from a distance, at night or when a taxi is driving away.

Driver Safety Services train taxi drivers. The Centre is currently involved in discussions with them about how they can make changes to the training package to address diversity. At present the taxi industry is self regulated and has no common code of conduct.

Taxi drivers come from many different backgrounds and hold a variety of views on women's rights. Regardless of their personal beliefs, all drivers need to understand acting on those beliefs may be inappropriate or worse, dangerous and illegal.

In the meantime, women have as much right to be out at night as men, but we still need to be aware of doing so in the safest possible way.

As women we still need to reclaim the night.



# Talking Herbs

by Sally Riley

## The Modern Herbalist

It occurred to me recently terms like natural therapy, alternative medicines or complementary therapies could be very confusing to people familiar only with "orthodox" medical treatments. It is true many more people are now including massage, acupuncture, Bowen therapy and osteopathy in their search for the elusive state of wellbeing. Well, all those listed are alternative therapies. They are natural and complimentary therapies because they compliment the better known muscular-skeletal (physiotherapy) or medical treatments. Herbal medicines and mineral therapies come under the same umbrella.

So, how does a modern natural therapist or herbalist help in the search for better health outcomes? A modern herbalist first and foremost is able to prescribe beneficial herbal medicines in the form of a liquid extract prescription of up to five herbs that may simultaneously help resolve a number of everyday complaints. These mixtures are often available in tablet form as well, since some people find liquid herbs distasteful.

A full medical history of the client is taken in total confidentiality, blood pressure is usually checked and dietary advice is given when required. A zinc taste test may be given to reveal any deficiency, since zinc is so important for our immune system, skin, hair and energy levels. The possibility of other mineral deficiencies is determined and appropriate mineral therapies may be suggested.

The aim is always to treat the cause of disease, not just the symptoms and thus to have a holistic approach to healing.

Referrals may be written to other practitioners, specialising in a particular area of expertise when needed.

Another area of investigation is called iridology. A herbalist is often trained to read signs in the iris of the eye which may indicate a weakness or tendency towards a particular ailment in any system of the body. These tendencies are often inherited. This is, of course, a whole other story.

Doses for herbs should always be checked with a professional health practitioner as therapeutic doses vary for each herb and some have cautions for certain health conditions.

Sally is available on 0407 872 792 for a consultation in herbal or mineral therapies and for nutritional advice, by appointment at the Centre on Monday afternoons.



Sally Riley and her grandson Felix



## Ageing Well with Weights

The next Ageing Well with Weights eight-week strength training program will commence on **August 12, 2011**.

The course, run by physiotherapist Pat Sandercock, consists of some theory and specific exercises utilising weights tailored to each individual's needs.

Sessions are held on Fridays from 2:15 – 3:30 pm and cost is \$5 per class or \$35 for the full course, if paid by/on the first day. The use of weights in class and exercise handouts is provided. Comfortable clothing is recommended.

Please phone reception on 6231 3212 to receive an enrolment form, or collect one from the Centre during opening hours. The course is very popular, so it's good to book early. If you need or want more information about the course, contact Ankarah.

Please note, practice times are available for women to maintain their strength after completing the program.

Ageing Well with Weights Practice Participant

# Honoured

by Glynis Flower

On March 11 this year, the Hobart Women's Health Centre was inducted into the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women. This year is the first time organisations have received this honour, as only individuals have been recognised in the past. The Australian Land Army (Tasmania Division) was similarly recognised on the day.

We are especially proud to note the Centre's inclusion was in recognition of our work in both health and human rights and our long history in both areas features in the citation below.

The feminist collective history is one of determined and persistent efforts by some remarkable women over the years and the current team considers this honour to be a

particular acknowledgement of those women who struggled to found the organisation almost 24 years ago.

As only a few of the current Board and worker team members could attend the ceremony in Launceston, we decided to have a celebration at our premises for those who had worked at the Centre over the years. We couldn't reach everyone but we had a fair representation of women who have been connected to the Centre.

Congratulations to any woman who has contributed over the years to keeping our doors open and for all those who supported women's health and wellbeing needs in Tasmania.

Thank you to Women Tasmania.



Caroline Jakeman and  
Cassy O'Conner



Ree Van Galen, Jane Dunsford and Anne Collins



Anne Collins, Kath McLean and  
Ruth Morgan

## Hobart Women's Health Centre Awarded for Service to Health and Human Rights

The 1970s were a time of great social activism and change for women. This activism led to the establishment of feminist, community-based, women's health centres throughout Australia. However, it was not until 1987, after much lobbying, that Tasmania received a small grant to organise a Women's Health Forum, followed by 18 months funding to do research on cardiovascular issues for women. This work led to the establishment of the Hobart Women's Health Centre.

The Centre initially operated from the Women's Health Foundation building in Moonah, moving to 'Weroona' in Elizabeth Street in 1991 where it remained until November 2002. The Centre is now located in Lefroy Street, North Hobart.

Since its establishment, the Hobart Women's Health Centre has taken a holistic approach to women's health and has been at the forefront of taking health out of surgeries and into the community. The Centre acknowledges the impact of societal influences such as

income, education, gender, sexual orientation and isolation on health outcomes for the individual.

The Centre has continuously lobbied for improved services and programs that meet women's needs. Nutrition and body image programs; the Encore breast cancer program; support groups for endometriosis and lymphoedema sufferers; social groups for same-sex attracted women; and, programs for older women are just some examples of the breadth of the Centre's work.

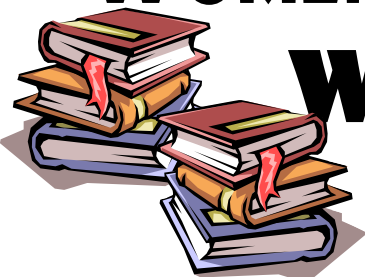
The Centre has also been a key advocate on issues such as a woman's right to make informed choices about her own body, migrant and refugee women's health and the arts in health. The Centre has continued to lobby both State and Commonwealth governments on a range of policies that impact on women's health.

The Hobart Women's Health Centre continues to uphold the Women's Health Services Principles with a commitment to providing

# WOMEN'S

# WISDOM

# LIBRARY



## ***The Brain That Changes Itself***

Stories of personal triumph from the frontiers of brain science

by Norman Doidge, MD

When you read this book, prepare to be 'blown away' with excitement and amazement at the fascinating stories and scientific evidence on how the brain can change itself. Learning how our thoughts can switch our genes on and off, changing brain anatomy, improving our intelligence with brain exercises, learning to play musical instruments and improving muscle strength through imagining.

This new scientific discovery is called neuroplasticity. "Neuro is for neuron, the nerve cells in our brains and nervous systems. Plastic is for changeable, malleable, modifiable". This breakthrough overrides centuries of the scientific belief the adult brain is fixed and unable to change to an understanding of just how the brain can change its own structure and function. The brain is remapping itself constantly.

The discovery of, and work carried out in, 'Neuroplasticity' provides deeper insights on how sex, grief, love, relationships, learning, addictions, culture, trauma, technology, meditation, and psychotherapies change our brains.

On a personal and professional level, I find all this information fascinating and exciting. In my many years of working with women who are survivors of childhood and/or adult abuse in all its many guises, I have seen and heard how the complexity of symptoms of post traumatic stress play out negatively in so many lives.

My understanding has increased about how the frontal lobe of the brain shuts down when it's

experiencing trauma – big traumas change the frontal lobe. However, positive change and rewiring of the brain is possible. It offers new hope for present and future practice. This book inspired me to attend a training forum on mindfulness and neuroplasticity and hopefully more in the future.

However, Doidge reflects the discovery of neuroplasticity is not all good news because, although our brains are more resourceful, they are also more vulnerable to outside influences producing more flexible and rigid behaviours - what he refers to as *"the plastic paradox"*. Through understanding the positive and negative effects and aspects of neuroplasticity, we can truly understand the extent of human possibilities.

Norman Doidge, MD, is a psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and researcher who travelled the US meeting brilliant scientists who championed neuroplasticity and the people whose lives have been transformed.

I had so many wow! and oh my gawd! moments reading this book, every chapter has an unbelievable story of miraculous transformation - such as "a woman born with half a brain which rewired itself to function as a whole brain. Another of a woman diagnosed as retarded who through observation, research and brain exercises cured herself and now works with children with special needs".

I did find it very difficult to read about the experimentation carried out on animals for the 'betterment' of understanding and scientific evidence and I guess I will always struggle with the concept. However, you might have noticed I feel immensely inspired about 'neuroplasticity', the hope it offers for the future and I urge you to read this book.

**Ankarah Grace**

## Web Spinning

Teddy Love Club Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support is an Australia wide support program for bereaved families who suffer the loss of their baby or babies at any time during pregnancy or after birth. This includes miscarriage, stillbirth, termination of pregnancy for foetal abnormality and neonatal death. [www.teddyloveclub.org.au](http://www.teddyloveclub.org.au)

The Dawn Chorus exists to provide a platform for young (and not so young!) Australian feminists to comment on and analyse the issues that affect us – sex, pop culture, health care, politics, relationships, publishing, sport, the media and beyond – from a feminist perspective, however we may choose to define it.

[www.thedawnchorus.wordpress.com](http://www.thedawnchorus.wordpress.com)

## Lesbian and Bi Women

### Rainbow Support & Discussion Group

Anyone over the age of 18 in the "rainbow family."

For more information, call  
Working It Out on 6231 1200.

### Tom, Dick and Harriet – Queer Radio

Tasmania's sexuality & gender issues radio show

Every Monday 10 am – 12 pm

Edge Radio 99.3 FM

Check out Tom, Dick and Harriet  
on Facebook and Twitter.

### Queens Ball

Around the World with 80 Gays

Sunday June 12, 2011 9 pm to 4 am

Venue: Republic Bar 229 Elizabeth St, North Hobart

Tickets: \$27.50 full/\$22.50 conc.

\$17.50 TasPride Inc Members

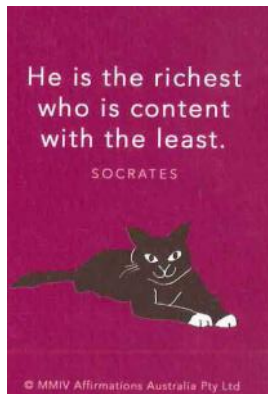
\$2.50 more at the door.

Pre sales: Centertainment and TGLRG stall at  
Salamanca Market.

Fees and charges are  
included.

### TasPride Events

Check out the TasPride website at  
[www.taspride.com](http://www.taspride.com)  
for further information.



## Birth and Beyond

Birth and Beyond North Hobart is a mothers group for women interested in birth and parenting. Babies and children are welcome.



Please bring a piece of fruit.

**Every second Friday of the month  
10 to 11:30 am**

**The dates for this season are as follows:**

June 10, July 8 and August 12

Phone Kelly for more information on  
0411 127 870.

## Breast Cancer Support Groups



For any woman diagnosed with breast cancer who would like information and support.

The next meeting dates are:

June 21, July 19, August 16 & September 20  
at 11:45 am - 1:15 pm

**Please phone the Centre on 6231 3212 for more information.**

## ENCORE NEWS

Encore is an eight-week program of two hours duration, specially designed for women who have had breast cancer. It helps restore mobility, flexibility and confidence through gentle exercise.

This is a national program, established with funding from Avon, and was auspiced in Tasmania by the Hobart Women's Health Centre.

The program provides trained facilitators, ground and warm water exercises and the opportunity for women to support one another.

Encore programs are free to participants and designed for women who have had breast cancer at any time in their lives.

### DATES FOR NEXT ENCORE PROGRAMS

#### Hobart

Mid October 2011

Dates to be confirmed

Phone Rosemary at the Hobart Women's Health Centre to enrol or for further details on 6231 3212 or 0408 127 330.



Photographer Sharon Hickey  
YWCA Encore website



## INTRODUCING. . .

My name is Bron Kelly. I have been associated with the Hobart Women's Health Centre for approximately three years as a Relief Health Worker. During my time here I have enjoyed meeting and helping a variety of women. Being part of the team has given me the opportunity to learn more and advance my skills whilst attending workshops/seminars expressly centred around women's needs.

My background in health issues stems from 25 years working with the Australian Red Cross Blood Service. Whilst there, I was involved in the collection of blood, manufacturing of Blood Products and testing blood samples.

My outside interests include Taiko Drumming and Line Dancing.



## . . .AND



My name is Lisa Flack. I am really happy to be involved with the HWHC again. I began in November 2010, as one of the Relief Health Workers. I had previously worked at HWHC in the building on Elizabeth Street in 2001 – 2002. Back then, I worked closely with the GP Service.

My background, before my three children, was in nursing. Being young, working in diverse environments including Aboriginal communities, correctional facilities and many hospitals provided me with strong experiences during my growing up years. The people and stories I had the privilege to hear and be involved with have given me a great appreciation of people's diversity and resilience.

My passion is people and our environments, what connects us and what sustains us. I worked for the Resource Co-Op for five years, better known as the Tip Shop, and this supported my interests in sustainable living practices.

My home life with children, pets and stuff we accumulate is always testing my ability to live life with less, and to be happier with less.

## CONTRIBUTIONS. . .

Contributions from readers are very welcome. If you have an article, review, comment or notice that would be of interest to our readers, please send it to the Newsletter Editor by post, email or drop it into reception when you visit the Centre.

To be considered for inclusion, all contributions must be received by the following deadline:

**Spring Edition: July 29, 2011** (newsletter distributed at the end of August)



## . . .GETTING IN TOUCH

Open: **Mon, Tues, Wed & Thurs 9:15 am to 4 pm**

Visit: **25 Lefroy Street North Hobart**

Post: **PO Box 248 North Hobart Tas 7002**

Tel: **03 6231 3212**

Outside the 62 area, freecall **1800 353 212**

Fax: **03 6236 9449**

Email: **info@hwhc.com.au** Website: **www.hwhc.com.au**

HWHC receives funding assistance from the Federal and State Governments, under PHOFA.