

Victorian Honour Roll of Women

2009



Inspirational women from all walks of life

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MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Courage. Compassion. Strength. Determination. Vision. These are some of the attributes that shine through in the women who are honoured in the 2009 Victorian Honour Roll of Women.

The 20 inductees who join the Honour Roll this year are remarkable women, who have made a significant impact in our community. They join 419 other great women who have been recognised through our Honour Roll since its inception in 2001.

These remarkable women have worked to improve the lives of individuals and their communities. These women have backgrounds of enormous diversity and have led their communities to better ways of living and learning and working.

The Victorian Honour Roll of Women is an important way by which the Brumby government recognises the valuable contribution that Victorian women make to the economy, to their communities and families, and to the prosperity and innovation of our society.

I am proud to present the 2009 women on the Honour Roll as outstanding role models of leadership, who have demonstrated commitment and passion to their cause. I have no doubt their stories will be of immense inspiration to all Victorians.



Maxine Morand MP
Minister for Women's Affairs



“One of my proudest achievements would be supporting young lesbian women in the bush, helping them see a life for themselves in the country and seeing mainstream agencies take up their issue and support needs.”

Rowena Allen



A LEADING ADVOCATE FOR MARGINALISED GROUPS

A trip to Korea with the National Council of Churches has led Rowena Allen to spend more than a decade championing the cause of marginalised groups in rural Victoria.

While in Korea, Rowena was questioned about the issues facing young people in country areas. The resulting discussion prompted the Melbourne-raised 20-year-old to apply for a 12-month position in Shepparton.

“I went to the country for a year about 14 years ago. There were so many issues and hardly any youth services. I was absolutely shocked.”

The Uniting Church asked Rowena to start a welfare agency, UnitingCare – Cutting Edge (UCCE), in the Goulburn Valley and “at 21 I thought it was a great idea.”

“The issues were so large and I have kept my passion about the bush ever since. Every time I thought I would go back to Melbourne the next big adventure turned up.”

As Chief Executive Officer of UCCE, and through various other roles, Rowena has promoted the rights of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (GLBTI) communities, refugees, young people and single parents.

Her agency recently won a Victorian Multicultural Council award for services around multicultural communities.

“The stuff that makes me really smile is when a refugee Sudanese woman comes in with her driving license. They are those daily things now. It was nose to the ground at the beginning and now we are seeing some fruits of our work.”

One of Rowena’s proudest achievements was the groundbreaking establishment of same-sex attracted programs more than 13 years ago.

“At the start I had death threats, lemons thrown at my house. Now those programs are just standard practice in rural Victoria.”

Rowena’s achievements extend well beyond rural Victoria. She is chair of the Victorian Government Ministerial Advisory Committee on GLBTI Health and Wellbeing, and former chair of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Goulburn Regional Youth Affairs Network. She is also the acting chair of the Victorian Skills Commission, working to include marginalised groups in the Victorian Education and Skills Training Framework.

In 2003 Rowena received a Centenary Medal for services to youth.

*"I think I can feel quite proud that the team I worked with didn't ever rest on their laurels.
We were always saying: What is going on here? Is there a gap? What can we do?
Who can we work with?"*

Ros Beaton



ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY THROUGH EDUCATION

Ros Beaton has been a key representative and advocate for newly arrived, multicultural and English as a second language students.

She has worked with federal and state governments, schools, universities and community organisations to respond to and aid Victorian culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Ros was a key member of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Languages Other Than English (LOTE), English as a Second Language (ESL) and Multicultural Education, providing strategic input and advice to ensure effective programs for all ESL students in Victoria.

Ros has a genuine interest in supporting individuals, "people whose situations are not easy".

"I have an in-built sense of social justice that people should be given equal opportunity, and particularly for education ... a strong sense that everybody deserves that opportunity to be supported as much as they can be through education."

As a teacher at Moreland High School in the 1970s, Ros taught many migrant students "when migrant services were starting out".

Her next main teaching appointment was at the Collingwood Education Centre (now Collingwood College), which was experiencing a wave of Vietnamese, Cambodian and African migration.

"I became involved with developing courses for young adults and, together with other providers, we developed a really comprehensive range of programs."

Ros then spent 11 years as ESL Manager at the Department of Education and Training.

"I think we consistently looked to improve the provision of services for migrant and refugee students.

"While I was managing ESL we probably extended the new arrivals program considerably. In the beginning it was really English language schools and centres as the main form of provision and students had to travel to those locations.

"We managed to extend those services to many more students. We made programs available where the students were, rather than expecting the students to hop on the train and come to us."

Ros served on the Victorian Settlement and Planning Committee to develop initiatives that support the settlement of students and their families. She has also worked with the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc to ensure schools are aware of the support services available.

Ros received the Premier's Community Harmony Award in 2005 for her outstanding contribution to further cross-cultural harmony.

"It started with us going out to the prison with an exercise book and having women standing five deep to speak to us. We'd take down their names and details, and then go back to the office and start sorting them out. What we now have is a fully integrated statewide program."

Jocelyn Bignold



PROVIDING INVALUABLE SUPPORT FOR WOMEN PRISONERS

Clutching plastic bags holding their belongings, women who had just been released from prison were turning up at the Melbourne Citymission in Footscray with nowhere to go.

According to Jocelyn Bignold, at that time the role of prison operators was solely statutory care: "Their role ended at the prison gate."

Jocelyn was community services manager at Melbourne Citymission, which responded to the need by developing a program specifically to support women. From its humble beginnings with exercise books and queues, Melbourne Citymission has been a significant player in the development of a fully integrated statewide program that offers support with housing, health, employment, social activities and family reunification.

The Women's Integrated Support Program (WISP) is a partnership between three organisations, Corrections Victoria and the Women's Prison System and Melbourne Citymission.

"It has been an absolute privilege to be part of this development... The program was a real team effort, and a genuine model of partnership – I had not been part of something like this before."

The WISP began in October 2006 with the philosophy of housing first. Every year it supports about 130 women."

At Melbourne Citymission, Jocelyn was also responsible for managing the development of programs supporting adults and families experiencing homelessness as well as young people at risk of homelessness.

Jocelyn spent eight years at Melbourne Citymission, and in August 2008 began as Chief Executive Officer at McAuley Community Services for Women, a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy. The organisation provides accommodation and support to women and children leaving family violence and those who have experienced mental illness and homelessness.

Jocelyn has now started scoping a project to help women who have come to Australia on spousal visas and are suffering domestic violence: "If their husband is violent within the two-year qualifying period, and they leave, they are not eligible for financial support and cannot maintain separate accommodation. Services cannot afford to house them without an income, which means they often have no option but to return home.

"Our program is to initially provide housing support, we then move onto employment – to allow economic independence."

"I just wanted to prove that I could become a Station Officer."

Louise Cannon

MELBOURNE'S FIRST FEMALE FIRE STATION OFFICER



In 2001 Louise Cannon became the first woman to hold the rank of Station Officer in the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). It wasn't until December 2008 that she was joined by two other women.

Louise joined the brigade in 1989 after completing a teaching degree and deciding it was not the career path for her. She wanted a challenge and, when she applied, the fire brigade had never employed a female firefighter.

She did not work with another female for the first eight years of her career.

Louise's leadership and success in a new field of endeavour for women has meant that female firefighters are now judged on their skills, rather than their gender. Her achievements have led to a better acceptance of women both within and outside the organisation.

"I have always tried to do the right thing and be seen to be doing my job properly. In some respects, I wanted to try and make it easier for anyone else coming along.

"I was always reasonably conscious that at the beginning I sort of stuck out like a sore thumb ... but when you put your gear on you are the same as everybody else."

Louise's proudest achievements are lasting almost 20 years in the fire brigade with a good reputation intact and completing her Station Officer qualification.

Gaining admittance on to the arduous Station Officer course is very difficult whether you are male or female, as is passing the comprehensive course.

"I was the first woman to apply and it was like, 'Who does she think she's kidding?'"

Louise is now responsible for a team of people – their safety and their actions.

She believes her temperament, her tolerance, her sense of humour and her ability to think quickly on her feet suit her current role.

Her goal now is to emulate her mentor, Station Officer Robert Short, and encourage and instill confidence in others she believes are capable of attaining Station Officer status.

"It took him a couple of years of persuading before I had the guts to apply for it. He was a fantastic mentor and I want to do for others what this officer did for me."

*"I listen to people and I like to let people have their say.
I listen to them, if I think I can help, I hop in and help."*

Colleen Condliffe

AVITAL SUPPORT FOR DROUGHT-AFFECTED FARMERS
AND THE RURAL COMMUNITY



In 1995 Colleen Condliffe started as chairperson of a new group called Australia Help Ltd. Its aim was to feed and provide support to drought-affected farmers, and the original thinking was it would continue for one or two years.

However, when some of the original helpers moved away the organisation folded and Colleen was left to wind it up.

"One day I was here at home and a family came for some food and I didn't have the heart to turn them away. I thought I had to keep it going.

"I took myself to town and went to see a Minister asking if they could help me. They formed a committee and it's been bigger and stronger ever since."

Colleen still does most of the work for Australia Help Ltd, handing out food from her farm in Salisbury West. Food is provided by VicRelief Foodbank and local companies such as Bakers Delight in Bendigo.

"We are feeding about 70 farmers a week at home here. It's a huge job.

"They have a chat with you and it's a good way of keeping in touch with who is in strife. You can then forward them on to get other help if it's needed."

Colleen's contribution to her rural area has been immense. She spent nine years as a councillor for Loddon Shire Council, serving on a diverse range of committees.

"I have had many achievements and I look at them when I drive around and I think, 'That was because of me'. I loved council. I loved what I did."

Colleen is also actively involved in the Victorian Farmers Federation and in 2002 represented Australia at the Third World Congress for Rural Women in Spain. From this experience she has applied new knowledge to the committees of organisations she is involved with.

In 2006 Colleen successfully completed the Australian Rural Leadership Program. While doing so she advocated for a higher representation of women on the program.

Colleen said of about 33 participants there had only ever been four women in the past, and they were aged under 45.

"I said I thought they should have had a bit more of a balance."

Since then, there have been about 13 female participants in each program, with about five aged over 50.

"I look at the lives of the refugee women I have met, who fled countries like Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, and I look at the decisions they have had to make and I can only have the deepest respect for them; for their strength of character and for being able to do things that I have never had to face."

Pamela Curr



A TIRELESS CAMPAIGNER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Pamela Curr has dedicated the past 15 years to fighting for the human rights of outworkers and asylum seekers. She has been a tireless social justice advocate and worked with others to improve the lives of outworkers, culminating in legislation to protect their pay and conditions.

Pamela worked with the refugee advocacy movement to expose the harsh conditions in detention centres as well as assisting men, women and children to adjust to a new life outside detention. She helped in the release of detainee Cornelia Rau by working with a trusted female journalist to find Cornelia's family when all other avenues failed.

"We all have commitments to those things we have decided are important in our lives. Social justice and human rights happen to be the two areas that I feel are very important in my life."

After working in Australia as a nurse and midwife, Pamela worked overseas before returning in 1992 and undertook a diploma in welfare studies. This led to an Arts degree focusing on community development.

In 1994 she watched a Four Corners program about outworkers, which showed women sewing in their homes for as little as \$2 an hour.

"I immediately thought, 'That is not right. How can this happen when we have industrial legislation and minimum wages in this country'? That got me started."

Annie Delaney from the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union was initiating a community-based campaign with the Uniting Church. Pamela was asked to join the 'Fairwear' campaign on a student placement for 12 weeks. She stayed for five years.

In 1999 Pamela also became aware of refugees and asylum seekers "being detained in desert centres in appalling conditions," which led her to the refugee advocacy movement.

Pamela is now campaign coordinator at the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, which provides services to asylum seekers and refugees while fighting for their human rights. "We are all migrants, except the Indigenous folk. Let's acknowledge that and embrace the people who come today with compassion..."

"If you tell me I can't do something because I'm a woman, I'll show you. It comes from years of being told I couldn't have the job because I was a woman, and the lack of recognition of the skills and talents I had because I had done voluntary work. The thing that drives me at the moment is gaining recognition for the skills women learn on the job, especially in volunteer areas."

Yvonne Evans



CREATED AN AWARD-WINNING COMMUNITY CENTRE

In 2000 the Alpine Shire Council Mayor told Yvonne Evans that the neighbourhood centre she had just started managing was an eyesore that should be bulldozed.

Three years later, the same mayor had to ring Yvonne to tell her the Mount Beauty Neighbourhood Centre had just won an Australia Day award for Organisation of the Year. It was a feat the centre repeated in 2005.

Yvonne has dedicated more than 35 years to working for community groups. Her work for the Mount Beauty centre moved it from the threat of foreclosure in 1999 to an award-winning centre that boasts a membership of 1,772 in a town of 2,400 people.

The turnaround all started with Yvonne, the centre's then-84-year-old-chairman, and a few tins of paint.

After a refurbishment and 16 successful grants submissions, the centre was offering internet access and courses including computer training.

Yvonne then decided the centre should become a registered training organisation, to broaden the range of courses and put an end to townspeople having to travel 100 kilometres to the nearest registered provider.

The centre now works in partnership with Wodonga TAFE, which supports Mount Beauty Neighbourhood Centre to deliver programs.

"We worked really hard to get a good reputation. We go the extra mile for our students."

Alongside the TAFE courses, two of the centre's most popular courses are the 'Secret Men's Business' and 'Saucy Sheila's' hospitality and cooking programs, which were developed by Yvonne. Those courses helped the centre win a 2008 State Government Award for innovation in adult and community education.

"What I see now is we have a centre that members of the community of Mount Beauty stop me in the street and tell me how fantastic the place is and how proud they are of it."

Yvonne is now working on a project to benefit coordinators of neighbourhood houses around Victoria. "Coordinators are often women who are underpaid and overworked, and I think their skills and talents go largely unrecognised. It is my goal through this project to change that."

"It's about how you be inclusive and bring people on to champion your cause, not just the blackfellas of Victoria saying, 'We need this and we need that'. It's about non-Indigenous people standing up and saying, 'This is the right thing to do'."

Jillian (Jill) Gallagher



A DEDICATED ADVOCATE FOR HER COMMUNITY

Jill Gallagher has one burning ambition – to develop the capacity of her community to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Jill is a Gunditjmara woman from western Victoria who has worked within, led and advocated for the Victorian Aboriginal community all her life.

Since 1998 this has been through the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), now one of Australia's largest and most effective state Aboriginal peak advocacy organisations. As CEO since 2001, Jill has exacted a major change in the organisation's status, by working to raise its profile and highlight its pivotal role in addressing Indigenous health issues.

Jill's work was instrumental in achieving bipartisan support for the 'Statement of Intent' signed by the Premier in August 2008 on behalf of the State Government to 'Close the Gap' in Indigenous life expectancy.

Jill says for her community to achieve its full potential issues such as health problems must be identified and addressed.

To further this, she developed comprehensive Well Persons Health Checks, which are run across Victoria and a Koori Maternity Services Program, which began in 2000 to help Indigenous women

access pregnancy services and information. In 2007-08 about 200 Indigenous babies were born to mothers who had accessed the program.

Given that VACCHO is not a service delivery agency, a key focus of Jill's work is linking with other agencies to deliver programs.

"We believe if we are going to achieve anything we need to work with others. We try to develop good relationships."

As well as tackling health issues, Jill is passionate about Indigenous culture, and her people, being valued.

"When you look at all the tourism ads for Victoria and Australia, they never talk about Australia having one of the oldest cultures in the world. Why don't we value that?"

Prior to her work at VACCHO, Jill was a member of the Museum of Victoria and worked for the return of Indigenous skeletal remains and Indigenous cultural property.

She has also sat on various committees including the Victorian Early Childhood Development Advisory Committee, the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria Indigenous Reference Group, the Child Death Review and the Cooperative Research Centre on Aboriginal Health.

"I certainly think we developed an awareness in women of the importance of local government for the community and the importance of women playing an equal role."

Gwenyth (Gwen) Goedecke



INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

As a child growing up in Seddon during the Great Depression, Gwen Goedecke learned first-hand the extraordinary impact local government could have on people's lives.

"In those days in Footscray, 1929, the poverty was shocking. But in that terrible Depression, Footscray Council built the baths where we all learnt to swim. They beautified those magnificent gardens in Footscray. They created the Yarraville Gardens out of another eyesore that was a swamp and a chemical dump."

In Gwen this implanted an admiration for, and confidence in, local government. It also ignited a desire to ensure female representation at all levels of decision-making.

Gwen has campaigned for women's rights and advancement for more than 50 years. Her achievements include membership of the Union of Australian Women since 1955, advocating for equal pay, better child care and greater representation for women at all levels of government.

Gwen was also the second ever female councillor on the Sunshine City Council where she served from 1984 to 1987.

"I got so fond of the western suburbs growing up here as a child I was proud to be part of a community effort to make the place a bit nicer.

"There was an incredible stigma about living in Footscray, when you need to be proud of where you live. It gives you strength if you recognise social and environmental needs and start to do something about it. It gives you that purpose in life and it gives people collectively some dignity."

Gwen was a founding member of the Sunshine International Women's Committee in 1974 and remains the secretary today. Her work in this organisation has enhanced and informed local women's participation in public life. She is a member of the Footscray Local Governance Association, a campaign to encourage more women to stand for council.

Gwen was also a founding member of the Footscray Centre for Working Women in 1974 where she was instrumental in helping many migrant women working in local factories obtain appropriate advice, information and assistance.

Gwen was the 2006 Dame Phyllis Frost Woman of the Year, in recognition of her significant contribution to the status of women. In 2001 she was awarded the Centenary Medal for services to the community.

"Nessie was inspirational to so many people, in a very quiet way. She was both an ordinary and extraordinary woman taking on the chemical industry." SUE PENNICUIK MLC.

Nessie Hardy 1936 - 2007



A LEADING ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNER FOR HER COMMUNITY

With her quiet and non-confrontational approach, Nessie Hardy took on the chemical giants operating near her home and convinced them to improve their environmental performance.

She was instrumental in the 1989 formation of the Altona Complex Neighbourhood Consultative Group, which brought together the chemical industry, regulators and residents to work to reduce the negative effects of the industry on the local environment.

Her work led to fundamental reforms to the operation of companies in the Altona Complex and her consultative model is now used as a template for industrial neighbourhood environmental improvement programs throughout Australia.

Greens MP Sue Pennicuik says there was initially a lot of resistance from industry but that didn't deter Nessie.

"She patiently chipped away at that in her very nice way. She wasn't conflict-driven or ego-driven, and she wasn't confrontational.

"She was about bringing people together and seeing if they could work together. She cared. She really did care about people and the environment."

At the time, the chemical industry was largely the domain of men.

"Nessie wasn't a trained chemist. She was an ordinary woman from the local community who cared about the impacts that the chemical plants in her area were having on the people who lived in their shadow and on the local environment and she wanted to do something about it.

"She played a big part in the industry becoming more responsible."

Nessie was dedicated to ensuring the workers and the broader community were always informed of health, safety and environment issues.

Her work on behalf of the community earned her the respect of those in the chemical industry.

Nessie was also a friend to many friends' groups. The list of groups she was involved with is vast, and includes the Altona Properties Soil and Groundwater Review Group, Hobsons Bay Interfaith Group, Hobsons Bay Community First, Altona Clean Air Project, Truganina Explosives Reserve Preservation Society, Friends of Cherry Lake and the Enviro Friends of Hobsons Bay.

In 2001 she was awarded the Centenary Medal for her services to the Altona community and the environment.

*“At school it’s the idea of really inspiring the girls that they are unique and important.
When people ask me what is important I say the individual is important.”*

Helen Jackson



A LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

Helen Jackson’s dedication to youth and learning has been the driving force of her service to education. Almost 60 years has been dedicated to improving the educational outcomes for every student she has taught.

Since 1980 she has been associated with Pascoe Vale Girls College, firstly as assistant principal, then principal since 1987. Today Pascoe Vale Girls College is the largest public girls school in Victoria catering for about 1430 students.

Helen says her proudest achievements are those of her students: “The majority are balanced citizens who reach out into the community. I think this is what is important.”

Recently the Department of Education and Early Childhood honoured Helen’s 58 years of service at the Principals Day Out. At 77 she is the oldest serving principal and is as vibrant, creative and dynamic as ever. She says she has no intention of retiring as she has so much to give to the college community and beyond.

Teamwork is one of Helen’s key philosophies, she invests many hours not only to her students, but her staff and the parents.

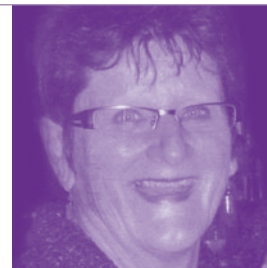
“No matter what your position is and how old you are, you need to listen to what you are hearing from the students and staff as well as providing encouragement and praise – acknowledgement of terrific work that is done.”

Helen’s contributions to education have been at a local, state and national level on many committees including: president and treasurer of the Victorian Association of Girls State Schools; Victorian State School past representative on the Executive of the Alliance of Girls Schools of Australia; principal representative on the Principal Selection Panels and member of the Australian Council of Educational Leadership.

In short Helen believes: “To create a harmonious, learning and stimulating society we need to acknowledge the individual, her talents and her contributions to the lives of all.”

"I have tried to provide opportunities for girls where there were no opportunities and get over to them that the boundaries are limitless provided we keep pushing away."

Margaret (Marg) Jennings



LEADING AUSTRALIA'S WOMEN TO CRICKET GLORY

Marg Jennings' father used to set up fruit boxes as stumps, give his daughter a cricket bat and say to the neighbourhood boys, "I bet you can't get her out."

It's a fair bet they could not, given Marg's outstanding skill as a cricketer.

Over her 47 years of being involved with cricket, Marg has represented Victoria and Australia. She was appointed Australian captain in 1977 and achieved a World Cup victory as captain in 1978.

Marg was also the first Australian female wicketkeeper to score a century and she coached the Victorian cricket team to win the Open National Championship in 1990-1991.

She was coach of the Victorian Institute of Sport women's cricket squad, has been national Chairperson of Selectors since 1991 and received the Australian Sports Medal in 2000.

As well as her on-field exploits, Marg has provided strong leadership and mentoring to encourage women and girls to participate in sport.

"One thing I like to get through to the kids is that if you really want it, go for it and opportunity will present itself."

While teaching at Aberfeldie Primary School Marg was annoyed when only the boys would play cricket for the school.

"I took on coaching and got the girls in. We were the only ones to have girls in our school team. With a couple of the other teachers we set up a girls' team."

In the 1981-82 season, Marg established the Brunswick Park Ladies Cricket Club.

"My father got a ground for us, and we tried to get kids down there to play."

Brunswick Park has since become the most successful cricket club in the Victorian Women's Cricket Association.

By example and encouragement Marg has mentored many women to aspire and achieve positions that in the past were only available to men. This includes currently-held positions of manager of the Australian Cricket Centre of Excellence (Belinda Clark) and radio and television commentator (Melanie Jones).

"We are taking little steps but there's still a long way to go. I would love to see women get equal opportunity within Cricket Australia and see Australian women on the stage with the men."

“Being the first female PhD in physics showed it could be done. She pushed on the doors that were locked to women and burst through them.”

PROFESSOR DAVID JAMIESON, HEAD OF SCHOOL OF PHYSICS, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE.

Dr Jean E Laby 1915 – 2008



A PIONEER IN THE FIELD OF PHYSICS

In 1959 Dr Jean Laby became the first woman to receive the Doctor of Philosophy degree in physics at the University of Melbourne.

Jean was one of Australia's pioneer atmospheric physicists and the sole female atmospheric physicist of her generation, and her work gained international recognition. She had several papers published in *Nature*, the most prestigious scientific journal.

As a role model she opened the way for women to participate equally with men within the scientific and academic world at a time when it involved obstinate gender hurdles.

Professor David Jamieson from the University of Melbourne described Jean as a 'trailblazer'.

“There is a legion of female PhD students who have followed on from Jean's legacy.”

Jean and her sister, Betty, spent much of their childhood at the university, accompanying their father, Professor Thomas Laby, who was head of what is now called the physics department.

Not only did Jean inherit her father's love of physics, but also the desire to teach.

According to Professor Jamieson: *“The two don't always go together. Scientists aren't always the best communicators.”*

In 1961 Jean took up the position of senior lecturer at the Royal Australian Air Force Academy at Point Cook and remained the only woman on staff until 1980.

In 1975 she obtained a \$US25,000 grant for a global study of climatic impact and developed lightweight micro-electric control systems to automate the collection of high altitude atmospheric data.

Jean and her colleagues can claim to be the pioneers in an experimental technique that continues to be of critical importance today to our understanding of, and the interaction with, the earth's climate.

“She laid the foundations for climate change and pollution studies with the techniques they developed.”

Jean also travelled to South Africa and South America to undertake atmospheric research with high-altitude balloons.

“They camped out in fields in primitive conditions and she just put up with it, along with all the discrimination”.

"One particular young girl came here as a single mum with a young child. She was from another country and didn't have any family here. She became involved with volunteering and through that I encouraged her to go back and resume some further study. She completed a community development degree and is now a very successful young woman."

Gloria Mahoney OAM



A PASSION FOR VOLUNTEERING

About 22 years ago, Gloria Mahoney began work on a pilot project now called the Monash Volunteer Resource Centre.

Today she is the Chief Executive Officer of an innovative organisation that is a role model for volunteer centres and other agencies.

The Monash-based centre, which recruits and trains volunteers, refers about 1,300 volunteers annually to more than 400 registered community-based agencies.

"Volunteering makes a difference to so many people's lives. It's not only the people that they are helping but the people who are volunteering. Volunteering gives them a sense of purpose."

Gloria coordinates volunteers to help reduce the isolation and loneliness of diverse groups, such as the recently-established Mandarin and Cantonese women's groups. She also administers the Senior Citizens Register, a service that monitors the welfare of the frail elderly and ensures they have a support network.

When Gloria moved from Queensland with three young children she believed that becoming involved in the local community would help her settle in.

"I had a passion for finding volunteers for a community's need and it grew from there.

"When I first came here volunteers were hard to find. Many of the larger well-known agencies were finding they had so many volunteers knocking on their doors they didn't know what to do while the smaller agencies found it difficult to recruit volunteers.

"Today, we are attracting many retirees and university students into volunteering. And with unemployment many people are coming through who want to gain some experience and try other fields which might lead to employment."

Gloria's support and attention to detail to ensure the volunteers are well matched to agencies has inspired many of the unemployed volunteers to return to the workforce.

Gloria also works with the peak bodies for volunteering in Victoria and has a close relationship with the volunteer networks in the eastern metropolitan region to develop new resources and improve standards for volunteer management.

She has been involved in many local committees and networks, including the Monash Welfare Committee and Primary Care Partnerships.

In 2001 Gloria received a Centenary Medal and in 2003 she was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for service to the community.

"I'm probably most proud of the direct contact with the women – treating them with dignity and humanity. To me the women are not just clients, they are human beings."

Valli Mendez



EMPOWERING AND SUPPORTING WOMEN IN THE SEX INDUSTRY

Through her work with Project Respect, a small advocacy and support organisation for women in the sex industry, Valli Mendez has improved the lives of many.

She tirelessly lobbied for funding to provide outreach workers in brothels and support services for women in the industry and doggedly pursued a commitment from the Federal Government to tackle the problem of women and girls being trafficked to Australia for prostitution.

In 2001 Valli started working one day a week at Project Respect alongside founder Kathleen Maltzahn, who spearheaded the campaign that preceded the Federal Government's October 2003 announcement of a \$20 million counter-trafficking program.

Valli secured Victorian Government funding to offer emergency accommodation to trafficked women ineligible for Federal Government support.

At a local level she worked with the Brunswick Women's Theatre and artist Catherine Simmonds to develop a theatre project to provide community education on issues of prostitution and trafficking. This culminated in a powerful drama performance in 2008.

In 2006 Valli took over as co-ordinator of Project Respect, a position she held until October 2008.

"You listen as empathically as you can to women's stories but it really took its toll. It was so hard trying to get money to support the women."

Despite leaving the role as co-ordinator, Valli continues to work on a Project Respect enterprise to open a Thai noodle bar in Melbourne. The aim is to provide a community venture offering long-term employment for former trafficked women.

Valli's proudest achievements have been her direct contact with the women – treating them with humanity and respect.

"I see myself as being committed and passionate about the women. If any of the women we support in Sydney have to come to Melbourne I always say to them, 'You are more than welcome to come and stay at my house'."

Prior to working at Project Respect, Valli worked at the East Timor Human Rights Centre documenting human rights violations in East Timor.

Her focus has also now shifted to the classroom, teaching community development at Chisholm Institute of TAFE. There she hopes to, "Share my experience and impart a passion and compassionate way of working with people".

“Clare would be very proud of the fact that government responded to her call and more importantly people are changing behaviours.” ANNE RAHILLY, PETER MACCALLUM CANCER CENTRE.

Clare Oliver 1981 – 2007



AMAZING BRAVERY AND AN EXTRAORDINARY LEGACY

In just 48 hours Clare Oliver achieved what years of campaigns had been attempting to – she put skin cancer into the forefront of people’s minds.

Her bravery and determination, at a time when she was desperately ill, has led to legislative and behavioural change that will undoubtedly save many lives.

In 2004 Clare was diagnosed with cancer. She was 22, had just finished a Bachelor of Media and Communication and a Master of Cinema at the University of Melbourne and had begun work as a sports journalist.

Clare underwent treatment but the cancer returned in 2005. Radiotherapy followed, and she was cancer-free for 19 months before she found a lump in her neck. Doctors found more tumours and could provide no further treatment.

It was then that Clare decided she needed to share her story and warn others of the risks associated with sunbaking and using solaria.

Anne Rahilly from the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre worked with Clare, and was struck by her strength, determination and energy.

“She genuinely believed her story was worth telling. She was totally committed to doing that. Clare said: ‘I need to tell people this. Don’t let this happen to you’. That is the legacy she has left us with.”

Just weeks before she died, Clare wrote: “I have never been one to keep my silence about anything I have felt passionate about.”

The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre established a collaborative group including the Alfred and Austin hospitals to continue the public awareness campaign begun by Clare – the Clare Oliver Melanoma Fund.

Proceeds are directed to the Melanoma Research Project to increase the knowledge about melanoma by combining medical and laboratory research to fund a national advertising campaign about the dangers of solarium use.

In December 2007, three months after Clare’s death, the State Government announced tightened regulations for solaria, including compulsory licensing and mandatory displays of health warnings about the risks of skin cancer. In February 2009 state legislation banned under-18s from using solaria.

Clare’s courage instigated a dramatic reduction in the use of solaria. In 2007 a Cancer Council Victoria study showed a 500 per cent increase in solarium facilities in Melbourne in the previous decade but since Clare’s campaign their numbers have continued to fall.

“One of the things that inspired me to stand for council was to provide a voice in local government for multicultural communities.”

Rosetta Parisotto



INVALUABLE SUPPORT FOR MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES AND AN ADVOCATE FOR FEMALE COUNCILLORS

Growing up in north-east Victoria, Rozi Parisotto often heard her widowed mother bemoaning the lack of support or assistance for Italian migrants.

The shortage of services for multicultural groups led to a strong feeling of isolation and Rozi was galvanised into action.

She established and continues to be president of the North East Multicultural Association (NEMA) – a collaboration of five local government regions. The association, which has more than 500 members, acts as the “voice of multiculturalism” in north-eastern Victoria.

Now, she says, her mother “feels like there is support”.

“There is camaraderie through pensioner groups, she has developed some wonderful friendships and there is always someone there.”

One particular project that has drawn many migrant women together has involved creating 18 banners to symbolise the breadth of communities represented by NEMA.

Rozi’s community activities extend well beyond NEMA. She has been a councillor in Wangaratta since 2000 and has lobbied for more female representation on the council. In 2000 she coordinated a workshop to encourage women to stand for local government.

“This year, for the first time, we have three women councillors, which is amazing.”

Rozi’s other roles have included the first female president of Wangaratta Soccer Club, where she advocated strongly for increased women’s participation in soccer, and the regional representative of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria.

Rozi initiated the development of the Education Advisory Committee and Strategy for the Rural City of Wangaratta, and is a Justice of the Peace and volunteer radio presenter and panellist for the multicultural hour on Wangaratta community radio. She also facilitated, with the Victorian Local Governance Association, the development of the Local Government Leadership Program, which was a first for Australia.

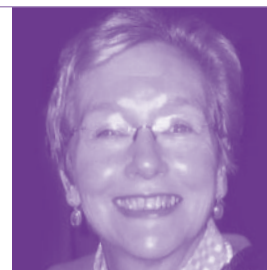
“My passion is for people. I work closely with many volunteers and I am an outspoken advocate for equality, respecting the rights and values of people regardless of race, culture and religion - one face, one heart and one family.”

“If you can assist people and better their lives... I think that is really what life is about.”

In 2007 Rozi received the Victorian Government’s Excellence in Multicultural Affairs – Meritorious Service Award from the Victorian Multicultural Commission for her contribution to multiculturalism in the region.

“The opening of equality for women in the church is important not only for the church and for churchwomen but for all women in Australian society because of the church’s continuing influence on issues of social justice.”

Dr Muriel Porter OAM



CAMPAIGNER FOR EQUALITY IN THE CHURCH

Despite playing a pivotal role, Muriel Porter still finds it hard to believe she has seen women bishops consecrated in the Anglican Church in Australia.

“I still have to pinch myself.

“It’s been the culmination of the achievement of a lifetime of work.”

In 2005, after many years of advocacy, Muriel initiated a reference concerning women bishops to the church’s highest court, the Appellate Tribunal. The reference sought clarification of the church’s Constitution regarding women.

In 2007 the Tribunal ruled that women priests could be bishops without further church legislation, and in 2008 two were consecrated, Kay Goldsworthy in Perth and Barbara Darling in Melbourne.

“It means that women priests are no longer barred by a stained glass ceiling. There is no longer a ceiling that says, ‘This far and no further’.”

Muriel’s advocacy for women clergy began in the 1980s, when she was a founding member of the Melbourne branch of the ‘Movement for the Ordination of Women’. It continued through her membership of more than ten state and national Anglican Church committees.

She has always passionately believed in the full equality of women before God.

“I was brought up to believe in the equality of women. I have really fought for it in the church for the past 25 years.

“To be female is to be made as much in God’s image as to be male, but the church and society had conveniently forgotten that for thousands of years.

“The full equality of women is critical to the psychological, physical and emotional wellbeing of women in every walk of life. It protects women from all the damage that can happen to them when people regard them as less worthy.”

Muriel attributes her successful campaign to “sheer dogged persistence and refusing to take no for an answer”.

“The only thing that overcomes failure is to pick yourself up and try again. I think that is a quality women have.”

In 2002 Muriel was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for service to the community as an advocate for women’s and social justice issues, and to the Anglican Church of Australia.

"She spent much of her career trying to find practical, realistic outcomes for girls' education so they could do more, see more, and achieve more."

MS ADRIANE WHITICKER, GRANDDAUGHTER.

Dr Shirley Sampson 1927 – 2007



REVOLUTIONISED GIRLS' EDUCATION

Shirley Sampson was a pioneer in the field of equal opportunity in education for girls, and her groundbreaking research led to a revolution in the way girls are educated in Australia.

She was a passionate advocate, activist and role model for the improved education of girls, and a life-long school and university teacher.

Shirley attended the Perth Modern School on a scholarship and in 1948 graduated from the University of Western Australia with a Bachelor of Arts. She was one of the few women who graduated from Australian universities at that time.

Shirley married a fellow teacher and in 1958, with four children under the age of eight, relocated overseas and then to Nigeria to teach alongside her husband. The family spent two years in very primitive conditions before moving to Tasmania and finally settling in Melbourne.

While teaching at a girls' college, Shirley encountered many students who expressed no desire to continue to university. They saw their role in life only as getting married and having children, which Shirley deemed a "terrible waste".

She became quite impassioned and dedicated the rest of her career to seeking ways of ensuring that girls' education instilled in them a desire to embrace the amazing possibilities on offer.

Shirley developed and introduced two major fields of study at the post-graduate level, in gender and schooling, and health and human relationships education. She was the first person to establish a Bachelor of Education on sex roles in education (1975) and a Masters program on gender in education.

A burning anger about the disparity of women and men in senior education positions also propelled her. She succeeded in increasing the appointment of women to senior roles through her active involvement in the Victorian Government's three-year Action Plan for Women and Promotion.

Shirley was also chairperson of the Premier's Committee of Equal Opportunity in Victorian Schools from 1975-77 and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women and Girls. In 1978-82 she was a member of the Victorian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

She founded the Australian Women's Education Coalition in 1976 and held office until 1986, and was a founding and committed member of the Women's Electoral Lobby.

"I really do have a strong interest in how you connect people and stop them being isolated and on their own. I see the importance of this connecting people as a key role of all the community organisations I have been involved in."

Lynne Wannan AM



A PIONEER IN CHILD CARE AND A LEADER IN COMMUNITY SERVICES

Lynne Wannan is the Director of the Office for the Community Sector, a Victorian Government initiative set up in 2008 to strengthen and support 'not for profit' organisations.

This position recognises Lynne's knowledge of the community, along with her management, policy and strategic planning skills.

She is an advocate for children, families and the communities in which they live and is widely recognised as a leading campaigner in the establishment of the modern community-based child care system in Australia.

Lynne was chairperson of the Community Child Care Association for 14 years and convener of the National Association of Community Based Children's Services for 12 years. She was also the inaugural chair of the Victorian Children's Council.

"I started involvement in children's services pretty much as a women's issue. At that stage it was really about trying to make sure women could do things with their lives.

"It was very much working at a local level, getting women together and helping them establish child care centres."

She attributes her success to her ability to "articulate a vision and strategy and get people to come on board."

"It means I chair everything!"

One of Lynne's proudest achievements was establishing the Western Chances organisation alongside Terri Bracks about six years ago. Western Chances provides scholarships to disadvantaged young people in the western suburbs.

"We pick up a young person, usually around Year 10 and with economic disadvantage but the desire to pursue a certain path. They can stay with us until they complete their qualifications in whatever they have been pursuing."

Since its inception Western Chances has awarded more than 1,000 scholarships to more than 700 students. In 2007, about 90% of scholarship recipients completed Year 12 or equivalent studies and went on to university or TAFE.

"It has become a very serious pathway organisation. We pick them (students) up at a point when they are very vulnerable.

"We know that for some of them the recognition the Western Chances scholarship gives is incredibly significant as they have never had anyone tell them they are good at anything."

In 2007 Lynne was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for her leadership in community services and education.

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