



2020

# MARY WARD JUSTICE FORUM

CONVERSATION. COMPASSION. CONNECTION.

## CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION... AUSTRALIAN WOMEN & COVID-19

Thank you to everyone who joined our first online Mary Ward Justice Forum on Wednesday October 14. We had around 150 participants, representing 8 countries from all around our global Mary Ward network.

Our panel members were:

Kirsty Roberston | [Caritas Australia](#)

Miriam Pellicano | [House of Welcome](#)

Leonie Dyer | [House of Welcome](#)  
Empowered to Work Employment program

Sabeen Saddiqe | [House of Welcome](#)  
Truth Be Told Speaker program

Sarah Rey | [Justitia Lawyers](#)

RECORDING OF  
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CAN BE FOUND [HERE](#).

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## REFLECTIONS

These reflections were shared by some panel members and by participants on the 'chat' during the event.

### SARAH REY

(Our)...Loreto education should be setting us up to be educated on the issues of the day, to be advocates for those less advantaged, and to be leaders and influencers in the spheres within which we work and live.

- We heard last night that casual workers bore the brunt of job losses at the start of the pandemic, many of whom are women. In fact the three hardest hit industries employ a majority of women, being hospitality, retail and tourism. I think we are hearing that this has not been acknowledged or addressed by the budget, and we need to talk more about a pink recession.
- Women work in relatively low paid jobs, and that makes the cost of childcare prohibitive for many. Hence the need to introduce universal childcare to make it more affordable and so women who do still have their jobs (in say education, aged care and health), can carry them out. As Kirsty observed, the budget is the government's de facto mission statement for the coming six months, until the next budget, and needs to demonstrate what it values and that it values our experiences.
- The government is proposing a subsidy for employers that encourages them to hire young people. This will inevitably mean it is harder for older people to get a job. Older women in particular are disadvantaged as they have often been absent from the workforce due to intermittent caring duties and so their networks are not the same as men's. We know women live longer and have less super, and so we are talking about a vulnerable cohort that should not be allowed to slip through the cracks into poverty, something that is going to be exacerbated by this year's increasing unemployment.

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- I offer these further thoughts so that we can keep the conversation going - and network through the technologies, platforms, Facebook groups etc that are available to us. Two groups on Facebook that I have seen thrive in recent months and provide incredible solace, camaraderie and practical support to their members are “Ladies Who Lawyer” and “Lawyer Mums Australia”. I offer these as examples, with their 1000s of members. Maybe the next group could be called “Ladies who are fed up”?

Whilst we may not all be in the same boat, we can connect our boats to create a formidable flotilla.

## FRAN C

I have been running an Arts and Health program at the Oberon MPS (hospital ) to re engage patients and give them opportunities to feel valued once again. This program had to cease due to Covid however along with Arts Out West we have managed to continue through weekly zoom. This has enabled a connection with dementia patients, the elderly etc. to continue, and we have music (a harp player) and art activities continuing to bring connections for these very isolated and lonely people. It has been so successful, it is being rolled out to other Multi Purpose Services across Central West N.S.W.

## JOHANNE G

Kirsty mentioned universal child care. There was some initial relief for families. It felt like COVID had created an opportunity to get real traction on the issue of access to quality universal child care. Given the evidence on, and the power of UCC for women, families, children, and breaking cycles of disadvantage (noting this is likely to increase as a result of COVID) is there anything we can do collectively to move this issue? Although it feels like we might have missed the COVID boat, given the economic impact of COVID is likely to continue into the future, and so this space for action may also continue.

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## SR CHRISTINE BURKE IBVM

The recent document by Pope Francis, despite its title, is actually saying exactly what the panel are saying here tonight and urging us to push the world leadership to radically change.

## SKYE W

I have been humbled to see young school age people I work with, and in the wider community, so aware of the effects of the pandemic and who have been so active in making a difference especially for people experiencing and at risk of homelessness by making home cooked meals with love. We had three year groups provide over 2400 cooked meals and 186 baby packs in one week and also have ongoing meals being cooked each week. They certainly are making a difference.

## SR JANET PALAFOX IBVM

Kindness is so important. There is research that demonstrates a caring economy actually creates more jobs (for both gender). [Read the WBG report.](#)

## JWAN K

One positive thing that has come out of COVID-19 is that we are beginning to look at and take notice of the environment and how we can live sustainably. Care for the earth means care for the poor. Thank you for the wonderful speakers today - very inspirational! Let's build more communities to journey with the 'other'. If anything, this pandemic has made us realise the need for kinship.

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## RESOURCES

TO FOLLOW UP ISSUES, QUESTIONS & THEMES RAISED DURING THE FORUM:

### ORGANISATIONS

#### Mary Ward International Australia

The justice, aid & development agency of the Loreto Sisters for Australia & South East Asia.

#### ASRC

Melbourne based advocacy and support for refugees and people seeking asylum.

#### Brigidine Asylum Seeker's Network

Network of support established by the Brigidine community for refugees and people seeking asylum.

#### Australian Council of Social Service

The peak agency for action on poverty and inequality in Australia.

#### Jesuit Social Service

Action and advocacy for building a more just Australian society from a Jesuit/Ignatian inspired model. Supports a range of programs in housing access, justice & crime prevention, education, employment and more.

#### Conversation in Isolation

A volunteer programme connecting people for conversation, established by some Monash Uni Health students in response to an increase in isolation during the pandemic response.

#### Catholic Earthcare

The ecological advisory agency for the Catholic Church in Australia. Range of great resources including on Laudato Si.

#### Women's Agenda

An Australian news source for female led journalism on politics, society, justice and more. Become a paid member or access a wealth of information via the site.

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## RESOURCES

### ORGANISATIONS CONTINUED...

#### Future Women

An online network for Australian women interested in leadership & the world of work. Become a paid member for certain access or just follow them for their podcasts & articles.

#### Her Place Museum

Celebrating the achievement of Australian women in shaping our nation.

## ARTICLES FOR FURTHER READING:

### ON FRATELLI TUTTI...

The new encyclical by Pope Francis centred on a call to re-imagine our global systems with a heart for justice, interconnectivity & solidarity.

Several reflections are shared here including one by Chris Burke IBVM and suggestions for further reading [HERE](#).

A reflection and overview by Anne Muirhead [HERE](#).

### WOMEN, WORK, CHILD CARE & THE 'COVID BUDGET'

An overview of the pattern of women's exclusion from the Budget [HERE](#).

Who makes the budget shapes the budget! [HERE](#).

"Credible women" fight back! Using social media to good effect [HERE](#).

A Big Ideas podcast on women and the future of work [HERE](#).



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## **FIRE FLOOD AND PLAGUE: ESSAYS IN THE GUARDIAN OVER RECENT MONTHS ON SOCIETY AND COVID-19**

To be published as a collection in December, one to look out for!

Jess Hill | [Privilege, Power & Patriarchy](#)

Nyadol Nyuon | [From the Wreck of the Pandemic](#)

Brenda Walker | [The Music of the Virus](#)

## **THE EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC.**

[The gendered pandemic](#)

[A personal response | Living in a gendered pandemic](#)

[Increased family violence during lockdowns - the long term impact](#)

## **WOMEN & POLITICS DURING COVID-19**

[Do women leaders make a difference in leading during the pandemic?](#)

[An essay by Julia Gillard on women's suffrage and women's political leadership in the world today | A global story](#)

[Farewelling two significant women leaders at this point in history: Susan Ryan and Ruth Bader Ginsburg | Exemplary leaders in an era of change](#)

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