

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Fri 11 March 2016



Sarrah Le Marquand wrote a piece in the Daily Telegraph that resonated with me. In answering the naysayers, Sarah commented: "Why do we have International Women's Day? Because every other day of the year is International Men's Day. Much progress has been made but there is a long way to go before women... achieve genuine equality."

To mark International Women's Day, I wanted to firstly acknowledge my personal commitment to ensuring gender equality in Anglicare, especially at the leadership table. Secondly I wanted to emphasise that addressing the structural and social injustices that women face is part of Anglicare's mission, and finally I want to honour the extraordinary contribution women make to fulfilling Anglicare's mission at every level of the organisation.



If you care about ending poverty then you will care about ending gender inequality. Gender inequality is a key reason that older women are the fastest growing demographic of homeless people in Australia. In my role as Co-Chair of Anti-Poverty Week ACT I have just spent a long day in Sydney planning for the campaign.

My ACT co-chair is Frances Crimmins ED of YWCA Canberra who is passionate about exposing the nexus between the social injustices experienced by many women and growing levels of hardship and poverty experienced by women. She shared with me their "This is not a wife beater" campaign launched today aimed at ending violence against women. They partnered with 50 Canberra cafes to deliver key messages about respectful relationships and ending violence against women printed on takeaway coffee cups.

Over recent years the organisation has made a conscious attempt to ensure gender balance in Anglicare's Executive and Board. Today our Board Chair and Deputy are women, as are two of our four Executive managers. I want to ensure that Anglicare is developing the next generation of female leaders and that especially through our own Anglicare College we are providing appropriate formal educational opportunities, especially for those women who may not have had the opportunity in the past to fulfil their potential.

As many of you would be aware the recent Social and Community Services (SACS) wage case identified gender inequality as the reason for the traditionally low pay in our sector. The outcome has been a process of lifting award wages for all community workers. But this wage case also reminds us of the many subtle ways that typically masculine traits are favoured and rewarded over feminine, to all our detriment. I believe that part of the battle of tackling gender inequality is also about recognising and giving higher status to the extraordinary contribution and leadership many people (but especially women) provide in transforming their local communities. With this in mind I wanted to share with you the story (below) of Flo and her team of emergency relief volunteers in Eden.

Flo Young – Volunteer

Sapphire Surprises is the Op Shop that has a reputation for having the best view in Australia. It is also run by one of Sapphire Coast Anglican Parish's dedicated volunteers, Mrs Flo Young.

Flo has always been involved in her local community. Her faith and beliefs that "we are not just here for ourselves" drives much of what Flo does. She runs Sapphire Surprises in Eden, operating not only the shop, but also working with her team of volunteers providing emergency relief to those in the community who are in need of emergency assistance. Her work in the shop "gives her purpose" and stems from an enjoyment of being able to help others. The provision of emergency relief, such as pantry items, and assistance with utility bills in times of financial crises, makes a significant difference in the lives of the individuals who are helped.

However, when you talk to Flo, you can see that she wants to do more than provide just emergency relief. She dreams of being able to help those in long term crisis move beyond just coping, to actually being able to get on top of the bills, and develop skills to be able to manage their finances on a long term basis.

Anglicare too wishes to support vulnerable members of the community, and help them to move from just getting by, to thriving. Anglicare, through Anglicare College, is delighted to have been successful in obtaining support from the NSW Government to deliver training to Flo and her team of volunteers in Eden.

The training will provide them with the skills and confidence to work with those individuals who seek assistance from the emergency relief services, and to help them understand and consider ways to get on top of their finances. Training is being provided across three key areas: communication, financial counselling, and first aid. It will provide the volunteers with the skills and confidence to do more than just provide emergency food.

Volunteers are essential for the delivery of services in many Parishes and within Anglicare. Anglicare highly values the work of volunteers like Flo, and is looking for opportunities to provide more formal training to our volunteers, to better equip them to support those in the community who come to us seeking assistance.

By **Jeremy Halcrow**