

Australian Graduate Women Inc.



The Catalyst Newsletter 1 – 2020

Dear Members

I wanted to send this newsletter out on International Women's Day, however, the last two months have been frantic for me in my Dean International (Health Sciences) role at Curtin University.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in late January 2020, we have seen the Epicentre of the pandemic move from Wuhan in China, to Qom in Iran, to Lombardy in Italy, and now New York city in the US. Several other countries: Spain, France, Germany, South Korea, Switzerland and the UK continue to battle to contain the pandemic and prevent deaths.

Impact on Students around the world

The impact of COVID19 on global education has been unprecedented. With countries in lock down, borders closed and strict quarantine measures - international travel has been immensely impacted. According to UNESCO, as of 25 March 2020, **160 countries** around the world have closed educational institutions impacting **1.5 billion students**, more than half of these students are in Higher Education.

Universities across Australia have grappled with the Global Pandemic as it continues to evolve. All teaching has transitioned to online, students have been recalled from international and field placements, clinical placements have been cancelled and laboratory practicals suspended. International students in Australia continue to feel anxious and isolated. Many have wanted to return home as borders closed and flights were cancelled.

Measures by our government

As the world continues to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia has entered new and uncharted territory this week. Some important announcements shared by our government and national bodies were:

- 1) On 22 March, the Government [announced a second set of economic responses](#) to provide timely support to affected workers, businesses and the broader community.
- 2) Australian national regulators TEQSA and ASQA have [announced swift, flexible measures](#) in order to support students to study online either in Australia or offshore.
- 3) The Australian Government [announced special working arrangements](#) for international students who are employed by major supermarkets or working in Australia's aged care sector.

Impacts on Women

In every country, women have been hit harder by the impacts of COVID-19. Women are caregivers and educators for children, students, the sick, the elderly and the most vulnerable in our communities. UNWomen reports that 70% of health, education and social sector workers around the world are women and do three times more unpaid care work than men.

This is a particularly worrying time for pregnant women who need access to reliable information and care. During COVID-19, infection control measures need to be enhanced to protect women during antenatal, neonatal and maternal health care.

Many women in developing and developed countries, work in low paid, casual and insecure jobs, so the pandemic has disrupted their ability to support their families. Recent data from China and UK highlights that many women are not safe in their own homes as the threat of domestic violence increases given the additional strain due to quarantine and lockdown measures.

Stories of Generosity and Environmental Impacts

However, during this crisis there have been stories of resilience, generosity and kindness:

- ❖ Foodbanks in Australia have seen their biggest increase in drive through drop-offs of in the last two weekend to replenish depleted stocks;
- ❖ In the US, since school closures volunteers distribute bagged lunch to millions of children who live in food insecurity and depend on school lunches;
- ❖ In Italy, volunteers cycle and distribute groceries and essentials to the most vulnerable;
- ❖ Teachers and educators around the world are learning innovative ways of teaching students online;
- ❖ There has been a spike in bicycle riding since travel restrictions were set in several countries;
- ❖ Air pollution has fallen dramatically due to travel restrictions and reduction in vehicle, air and industrial emissions;
- ❖ The waters of Venice canals are clear due to the absence of motorised traffic and there is a surprising and wonderful sight: the revival of the ecosystem - shoals of tiny fish, scuttling crabs, multi-coloured plant-life, cormorants diving for fish and ducks laying eggs on the banks.

In the coming weeks as states announce stricter isolation measures, take time to nurture and support yourself, your family and your community, particularly those who are vulnerable and may need additional support. This is a time to come together with patience, understanding and kindness – recognising that the health crisis we face is challenging.

Health Authorities have been able to give us information we need: exercising basic hand hygiene, working remotely and physical distancing or isolation if exposed to the virus.





We are in a very different place to where we were a century ago, when the Spanish Flu struck at the end of the First World War, as we can translate superior capabilities to rapidly respond to the current pandemic using evidence-based research. This pandemic highlights the critical importance of investment in education, health, medical research and preparedness for global health and security.

This situation is difficult for us as parents, friends, partners, teachers, students and educators. All of us have family and friends who have been directly and indirectly impacted by COVID-19. Together our community - political, business and community leaders; health care providers; individuals and families - will come through this current crisis, and the contributions being made by our clinicians, medics, nurses and researchers, will help ensure the best possible outcomes.

This is a message of **Solidarity, Strength and Resilience** to all Australian Graduate Women. Let us stay focused on three important Cs — **Care, Collaboration and Creativity**. Stay safe and take care and let us all do our best to maintain social distancing to flatten the curve.

I conclude by sharing a message from GWI, some articles that you may find interesting and some AGW news:

- ❖ On Australia Day 2020, **Dr Mary Crawford**, President of Graduate Women Queensland and longstanding member of AFGW/AGW was honoured and made a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia for significant service to women, and to the people and Parliament of Australia. Congratulations Mary! Please find a picture and bio of Mary below.
- ❖ Our CIR - **Professor Shirley Randell**, turned 80 on 8 March 2020, International Women's Day. Shirley and I were supposed to celebrate in New York at CSW64 which was cancelled due to COVID-19. Our wishes to you Shirley.
- ❖ The **AGW fellowships** have been advertised and close on 30 April 2020. Please share this information amongst colleagues and friends. The details are available on <https://australiangradwomen.org.au/scholarships/>

Best wishes

Professor Jaya Dantas (President)

MEMBER (AM) IN THE GENERAL DIVISION OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

Dr The Honourable Mary Catherine CRAWFORD,

Mary Crawford has been a high school teacher, a member of the House of Representatives and an academic. Her field of study is gender and public institutions. She is passionate about education for women and girls and their empowerment. After being on the staff at QUT since 1997 Mary is currently a Visiting Scholar in QUT's Business School. In this capacity she is on the Media Experts' List for QUT and speaks for them on issues around woman, politics and education.

In 1987 she was elected to the Australian House of Representatives as the MP for Forde, was Secretary of Caucus, Chair of the Education Committee and Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government. She was also Chair of the Crawford Committee which developed childcare policy for the Hawke/Keating government.

In 2008 she completed her PhD on Gender and the Australian Parliament. In this work she exposed the dominance of the male practices and processes within Australia's democratic institution and the impact this has on women's ability to enter parliament and be full participants in the national government.

Mary was Chair of the National Foundation for Australian Women Board for 5 years and still supports their work on the production of a Gender Lens on the National budget. For the last 10 years she has been Chair of Graduate Women Queensland which provides bursaries for women to participate in tertiary education.

Mary is also the Executive Director of The T J Ryan Foundation which is a progressive think tank committed to the development of evidence – based policy for Queensland. She is also a member of the Queensland Advisory Board of the McKell Institute.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay our respects to their elders past and present.