

Spring 2011



Auckland  
**Women's  
Centre**

Auckland Women's Centre

**Gossip**

**Contact us**

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**Centre hours**

Monday to Friday  
9am - 4pm

**Library hours**

Monday to Friday  
9am - 4pm  
Saturday 11am -  
1.30pm

# See a great movie and support the Women's Centre

From Thursday 20 October to Wednesday 2 November, the Academy Cinema will be screening *Miss Representation*, a documentary about the outrageous portrayal of women and girls in the media. The Academy is kindly donating a dollar to the Centre for every ticket sold to the movie during this two week period. The film featured this year at the New Zealand International Film Festival to sold-out audiences, and the Academy is eager to bring it back. So, if you missed it the first time around, now's your chance to see it.

*Miss Representation's* motto, "You can't be what you can't see", highlights the documentary's core message: the media distorts, disparages, deforms and disappears positive portrayals of women. It also exposes how the media has neglected its unique opportunity to provide young women with positive role models. Instead, it offers up digitally enhanced bodies, sexualised girls and normalised violence against women. However, *Miss Representation*

refuses, to remain mired in the muck of onerous stereotypes. It documents the upswell of resistance and ways in which women are fighting back. The film includes interviews with teenage girls as well as with activists, politicians, academics, journalists and actors.

At turns feisty, funny, heart-warming and heartbreaking, *Miss Representation* is an energising call to action. For more information, see the *Miss Representation* website: [www.missrepresentation.org](http://www.missrepresentation.org)

**Academy Cinema contact details:**

Check the Academy's website ([www.iconiccinemas.co.nz/page-cinemas.php](http://www.iconiccinemas.co.nz/page-cinemas.php)) for exact screening times or ring them on 09 373 2761. The Academy is located in the Auckland Central Library Building, 44 Lorne Street. Their ticket prices are the best around, ranging from \$8 for every session on Tuesdays up to a max of \$14 in the evenings and on weekends. Please tell your friends, family and colleagues about the movie.



**Join us for Opening Night - Thur 20 Oct**

We'll be there from 7:45 onwards, selling raffle tickets and mingling. It's a great opportunity to catch up with friends before the movie starts and to buy a drink and some delicious food from the Academy. At 8:15 we will have a brief welcome and draw the raffle prizes before the movie begins.

**We are expecting a crowd, so please book, via the Academy, in advance.**

Thank you to the Academy for supporting the Women's Centre.

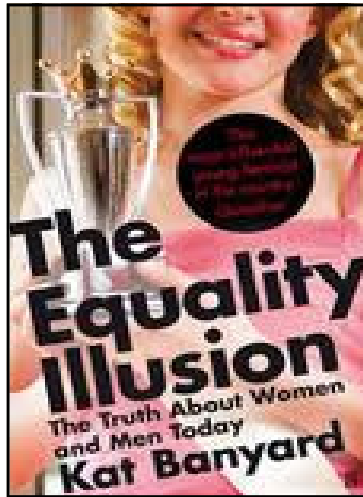
# Available at the Women's Centre...

## Information, Advice and Referral Service

Please phone, email, or drop in for friendly, non-judgemental assistance.

## Women's Library: recent additions

The fiction section of the library has had a bit of a revamp with many thanks to Sue, a fabulous volunteer who has spent hours and hours in the library. She has done a complete stocktake of all the fiction books (non-fiction still to be done) and has withdrawn books that have not proved popular over the last few years. That now means we have pockets of space on the shelves! Can we just remind you that we are always very happy to have books donated. Suitable books by women authors can be added to our library. The remaining books go on the sales trolley which generates funds for purchasing new releases for the library.



A year's sub is \$5 for beneficiaries and between \$10 and \$20 for everyone else. If you are wanting a particular book, phone 376 3227 to check if it is available. If it is out, when returned, we can hold it for you. There is an after hours returns box in the alcove on the porch.

If you have books that are overdue, we would love to have them back as some have a "waiting list". We promise not to give you a hard time about books that haven't been returned for some time. We would just be delighted to be able to put them on our shelves again or to be able to let those on the waiting list know they are available.

Thanks to the kindness of several women, we have had heaps of good books donated to the library over the last few months. We have also purchased a few goodies. Come in and have a look at the new and recommended shelf and choose something great to read. We love it when women return books and let us know how much they enjoyed a particular book. Here are few of the new and recommended books:

- *Living History - Memoirs* by **Hillary Rodham-Clinton**
- *Handle With Care* and *Change of Heart* by **Jodi Picoult**
- *Serious Pleasure - Lesbian Erotic Stories & Poetry* edited by the **Sheba Collective**

- *Corner Shop* and *The Way Things Look To Me* by **Roopa Farooki**
- *The Long Hot Summer* by **Mary Moody**
- *The Equality Illusion* by **Kat Banyard**
- *Portobello* by **Ruth Rendell**

**As well as being open during the week, the library is also open every Saturday from 11am to 1.30pm, staffed by a team of wonderful volunteers.**

## Therapeutic massage

Available for beneficiaries and other women on low incomes on Mondays between 9.30am and 2.30pm, for an hour-long session. Cost is \$25 for beneficiaries and \$40 for non-beneficiaries. Please book well in advance as demand is high.

## Counselling

Low cost one-to-one counselling is available at the Centre. All counsellors are professionally trained and supervised. They use a sliding scale of \$30 to \$80 for fees and cater for a diverse range of issues. Please ring the Centre for appointment availability.

## Cervical smears

Check it out at the Women's Centre. The Well Women's Nursing Service will be here in their cervical screening van on Monday 14 November. They have professional female practitioners who can also assist with answering other health-related questions in our women-only environment ... if you are due for a check up now's a great time to book. Call 376 3227 for a 20-minute appointment.

## Mammograms

The [Breast Screening Bus](#) will be parked outside our building from 10 October to 15 December. For mammogram appointments please phone BreastScreen Aotearoa on 0800 270 200.

## Courses and groups

This Term 4 is geared to arm you with skills and information to see you through the summer: Amazing Assertiveness for dealing with the extended family at Christmas; our facilitated support group for Solo Mums: Resourcing the Source, to help you cope emotionally with financial constraints over this summer; and Girls' Self Defence to provide our daughters with essential skills over their school holidays.

Perhaps yoga or pilates may be just what you need to de-stress when the household is going through end-of-year exams, or joining our bookclub could be a good way to meet new friends. Call 376 3227 to enrol or email [info@womensz.org.nz](mailto:info@womensz.org.nz)

## Transgender women welcome

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Recently there has been growing attention about transgender women using the Women's Centre. The Governance Collective has carefully considered this issue and revised its policies, and we want to make you aware of some changes.

Our previous Safe Spaces Policy did not welcome transgender women who wished to use the Centre. However, this was not reflected in practice and transgender women have in fact been using the Centre for some time. The Governance

Collective has affirmed the Centre's commitment to the inclusion of all women. We also believe that the key consideration is about personal identity, and that the Centre should be available to all women identifying as women.

Therefore, we have amended our Safe Spaces Policy to welcome all women identifying as women to use the Centre's services. We have welcomed this opportunity to revise our policy to reflect our practice.

## Picket of Court that acquitted a comedian after he admitted sexual abuse of his daughter

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The Auckland Coalition for the Safety of Women and Children picketed the District Court last month. The protest was against the acquittal of a comedian who admitted to performing a sex act on his four year old daughter while drunk.

Protestors gathered to show their outrage that a man who pled guilty to sexual assault was not convicted and not directed to attend sexual offender treatment, and that his celebrity status affected the judge's decision.

Chants such as "child sexual abuse: celebrity status no excuse" and slogans such as "stop using alcohol as an excuse" and "1 in 4 girls are

victims" told the public and the judiciary that offenders should be held accountable regardless of their profession or state of inebriation.

The Coalition has asked the Crown to appeal the decision. A short video of the protest is available:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhio5koEvDc>.



## Stay up-to-date with feminism - here and overseas

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The fabulous NZ Women's Studies Association has been undertaking, promoting and disseminating research about women from a feminist perspective for over 27 years. Their excellent journal is now on-line at <http://www.wsanz.org.nz/journal/current%20issue.htm>. Members receive three informative and thought-provoking newsletters a year and a discount on their conference papers.

The Association for Women's Rights in development ([www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org)) offers the latest news, in-depth analysis, practical tools, and announcements on women's rights and gender and development from the developing world. A recent focus has been women's campaign in Saudi Arabia for the right to drive(!). The campaign has been so successful that the police are now ignoring the scores of women who have defied the ban.



At left is a photo from the **Women's Choice 2011 Election Forum**. The speakers from left to right were Carol Beaumont, MP (Labour), Catherine Delahunty MP (Greens), Sue Bradford (Mana Party), Kath McCabe (ACT), and Dr Jackie Blue MP (National). Dr Judy McGregor (EEO Commissioner) was an excellent chair and there was a great turn out and interesting speeches. Thanks to the Hand Mirror (<http://thehandmirror.blogspot.com/>) and the Campus Feminist Collective for partnering with AWC to organise the event.

# Government Child Support proposals would further impoverish single mums and their children

The Government has signalled its intent to change Child Support calculations so that "receiving parents" (usually mothers) lose up to two-thirds of their support payments. The current legislation, which is already woefully inadequate, will be altered so that the threshold for reductions in Child Support payments for "paying parents" (usually fathers), due to them having shared care of their child, kicks in at a much lower rate. Currently fathers must have the child/ren 40% of the nights in a year to qualify for a lowering in the amount of support they must pay. With the new law, that will drop to just 28%.

This means a father with two children who currently contributes \$7,400 a year to their mother's expenses, and has his children for an average of two nights a week, would only have to pay \$2,600 a year – a reduction of 64%.

## **Whose best interests are served by this legislation? Not children's!**

There is a major problem with the legislation: it should have as its primary objective the best interests of the child. Yet while the Act references the child's right to be maintained, the welfare and best interests of the child are notably and regrettably absent. This is a breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which New Zealand is a party.

The Government's discussion paper identified the parts of the Act that they believe need changing. Unfortunately, **these changes are in the interest of fathers, not children or mothers.** For instance, a major problem of the legislation is that the formula used to determine how much Child Support a father will pay automatically assumes that if the father has a new partner, that person is a dependent, and consequently the Child Support amount is reduced!

Most of the submissions to the discussion paper supported the proposed changes. It is likely that these were made by fathers. Fathers have always been very vocal about Child Support, complaining that they are expected to pay too much. By comparison, mothers are seldom heard on this topic, partly because they are too busy childrearing and struggling to make ends meet and partly because mothers are often reluctant to

go on record saying anything that might be construed by their children, now or later, as a criticism of their father.

## **The Government's plan will make it even easier for fathers to avoid financially supporting their children**

This change to how Child Support is calculated provides a financial incentive for fathers to increase the amount of nights they spend with their children to at least two per week. At first glance, this might seem like a great result. Yet when the incentive to do so is the avoidance of paying Child Support, is this a quality outcome for children? **(As at 30 June 2011, the Child Support debt, excluding penalties, is \$605 million).**

The Government's discussion paper fails to address this issue. However, New Zealand research on this topic highlights that:

- The two most important things for children's psychological wellbeing after parents separate are: 1) to maintain and strengthen their relationship with their mother; and 2) to minimise exposure to inter-parental conflict.
- The studies do not consistently demonstrate that a high level of contact with the father is always in the best interests of children.
- The benefit of contact with fathers after separation depends on the *style and quality* of the father's parenting, as opposed to the *amount* of contact.
- The one thing that has been shown to be associated unquestionably with good outcomes for children is the father paying Child Support.
- With very young children, particular care is needed to preserve their relationship with the mother because of their need to have at least one secure attachment (New Zealand Universities Law Review, Vol 24, No 1, June, 2010, *Julia Tolmie, Vivienne Elizabeth and Nicola Gavey*).

The Government announced in August that the legislation will be passed before the election. Hopefully this won't happen, because it would not allow enough time for the legislation to go to a Parliamentary Select Committee to receive and discuss submissions from the public - an essential step in our democratic process.