

Winter 2011



Auckland  
**Women's  
Centre**

Auckland Women's Centre

**Gossip**

**Contact us**

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**Centre hours**

Monday to Friday  
9am - 4pm

**Additional  
Library hours**  
Saturday 11am - 1.30pm

Thanks to  
Pub Charity  
for funding this  
newsletter and  
course brochure.

## New SKIP Positive Parenting Project

Our new SKIP ([www.skip.org.nz](http://www.skip.org.nz)) project is a collaborative, community development initiative supporting solo mothers to positively guide children's behaviour. We are excited to introduce our new SKIP Coordinator, Chanel Dodd-Edwards, who is of Ngāti Rongomaiwahine and Ngāpuhi descent. Chanel has a Bachelor of Sport and Recreation majoring in Physical Activity and Nutrition. Her recent internship at the Heart Foundation, within the Pacific Heartbeat team, involved delivering culturally appropriate messages about physical activity and nutrition to community groups within the Auckland area.

Chanel, who has a three year old boy, Mathias, is passionate about positive parenting and enhancing women's health and well-being. She will be delivering our solo mother SKIP project - organising outreach workshops, running family/whānau/fanau events and promoting SKIP messages at community events. Solo mothers interested in being part of the solo mother peer leadership group can phone Chanel on 376 3227 x 203 or email her at [skip@womensz.org.nz](mailto:skip@womensz.org.nz) or text her on 021 0293 7195.



We are also fortunate to have Natalie Thorburn, a third-year social work student at Massey University, on placement at the Centre. Natalie has extensive experience supporting teenage girls who have been sexually abused. She will be part of our Information, Advice and Referral Service and the Coalition for the Safety of Women and Children until the end of this year.

## Our staff



From left to right - Chanel Dodd-Edwards, SKIP Coordinator; Leonie Morris, Manager; Natalie Thorburn, student social worker; Ellie Lim, Women's Services and Community Education Coordinator; Jo Easingwood, Frontline volunteer; Elizabeth Morey, Administrator.

## Support the Equal Pay Amendment Bill

The Alasdair Thompson debacle gave much-needed publicity to Green Party MP Catherine Delahunty's Bill amending the Equal Pay Act. This would allow for greater scrutiny of pay rates to ensure women are receiving equal pay. Our equal pay gap is an appalling 12.4% and an even worse 15% for public servants. Much of the gender pay gap is caused by the gendered nature of jobs with "women's jobs" - cleaning, kitchen hand, waiting tables, being paid at lower rates than "men's jobs" - painting, builder's labouring, electrician, etc. Significantly closing the gap requires pay equity legislation that promotes equal pay for work of equal value.

The Equal Pay Amendment Bill is a step in the right direction by requiring employers to disclose pay rates, so women can compare their rates to others. The Pay Equity Challenge ([www.payequity.wordpress.com](http://www.payequity.wordpress.com)) is a coalition of businesses, unions and women's groups fighting to close the gender pay gap. Email your support to [katesheppardnz@gmail.com](mailto:katesheppardnz@gmail.com), or join the Pay Equity Challenge group on Facebook. Our Government talks about women being paid fairly but they need to walk the talk, starting by supporting the Equal Pay Amendment Bill.

# 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

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:

- *A Visit from the Goon Squad* by Jennifer Egan
- *Do It Anyway: The New Generation of Activists* by Courtney E Martin
- *Sophie's Legacy: The Sophie Elliott Story* by Lesley Elliott
- *Goodbye Sarajevo: A True Story of Courage, Love and Survival* by Atka Reid and Hana Schofield
- *Caleb's Crossing* by Geraldine Brooks
- *The Equality Illusion* by Kat Banyard

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.

It costs \$5 for beneficiaries and between \$10-\$20 for non-beneficiaries to join the library per year. Books

are issued for a month, and there is a library returns box in the alcove on the porch if you return books after hours. **As well as being open during the week, the library is also open every Saturday from 11am to 1.30pm and is 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.

## Courses and Groups

This term we welcome back local artist Fran Marno to tutor the last art workshop in our series "Exploring the female form". Fran will be running a weekend life drawing class exploring various ways of observing and drawing the female body. There is a limit of eight participants for this workshop.

Also this term we have Amazing Assertiveness for Women, Women's Self defence, Building a New Life after Separation and Get Knitting. Enrol now so you don't miss out.

## SlutWalk: Nothing invites rape!

The SlutWalk was a fantastic event. In spite of legitimate concern that our message might be confused, the march spoke with one voice: blame rapists, not women. The march was initiated by two young women who did much of the organising work with support from other young women, the Campus Feminist Group, Rape Prevention Education and the Auckland Women's Centre. The SlutWalk attracted people from all ages and all walks of life. It was wonderfully loud and included some great placards including: "Sluts Love Consent", "Men

Can Stop Rape", "Rape is about Violence, not Sex" and the wonderfully tangential "Now that I am post-menopausal can I have equal pay?".

Aspects of our justice system still allow the survivor, not the rapist, to be on trial in a rape case. Next month some legal academics are recommending changes to our unjust rape laws. Watch this space for ways of supporting rape justice for women.



# Capital Gains Tax benefits women?

Before deciding who to vote for in the upcoming election, it might be helpful to learn more about the Labour Party's major tax change strategy. See David Cunliffe's video on:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=gjyHctIijPM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=gjyHctIijPM)

Labour's tax package has three parts:

1. They would reintroduce a maximum tax level of 39c on the dollar for earnings over \$150,000. They would use this income to lift GST from fresh fruit and vegetables, which will make them more affordable and thereby promote our collective health.
2. They would make the first \$5000 that each one of us earns tax free. This will especially help low income earners and beneficiaries.
3. They would introduce a Capital Gains Tax of 15%.

## What is a Capital Gains Tax (CGT)?

Currently there is no tax on the profit made from selling shares, property or companies. This means that people who make their money in this way pay no tax on it. As an example, when Trade Me was sold for 700 million dollars, the sellers paid no tax. (This would not have been the case if the sale had taken place in 17 other OECD countries, including Australia, who already have a CGT system in place.)

Labour proposes to charge only 15% on the profit from sales of capital, which is way below the maximum tax rate of 33%. They have made it clear that CGT would never be charged for the sale of the family home or for currently owned assets. And if you lose money on an asset, the loss would be offset against tax on future gains.

The Green Party has congratulated Labour for supporting a CGT while having some concerns about the details [www.greens.org.nz/press-releases/capital-gains-tax-will-benefit-economy](http://www.greens.org.nz/press-releases/capital-gains-tax-will-benefit-economy).

## CGT compared to asset sales

Faced with rapidly increasing debt, National prefers a policy of selling off assets owned by us all, such as power companies and airlines. Doing so means losing the income we make from them irrevocably, probably to overseas buyers who will

take the profits out of the country. This happened in the 1990s when the Government sold the BNZ.

In contrast, David Cunliffe states that Labour's proposed changes would accomplish the following:

1. We will have a fairer tax system. (National's own figures show that only half of the wealthiest people – generally men – pay the highest tax rate, while the low and middle income earners shoulder the great bulk of the tax burden.)
2. We can pay off our national debt (through CGT) while keeping our assets.
3. We will retain the income we make from our assets.
4. This revenue can be reinvested in social development, education, health and job creation.

The Government argues that Labour's CGT is too administratively complex and does not raise enough money to deal with our debt.

<http://tvnz.co.nz/politics-news/national-goes-attack-against-capital-gains-tax-4287802/video>

# Garage Sale

at the Auckland Women's Centre  
4 Warrnock St, Grey Lynn

*Come and support our  
**GARAGE SALE!**  
As a fundraising initiative  
we'll be holding a  
garage sale on  
**Saturday 20th August,**  
8am-9am.*

  
Auckland  
Women's  
Centre

*We are looking for donations  
of good quality working  
items, volunteers to help  
staff tables and most of all  
people to come and buy  
everything! Please call  
Reception on 09 376 3227  
to donate or volunteer.*

# Strict Legal Aid criteria tightened again

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## By Geraldine Whiteford

Going to a lawyer is expensive: most lawyers in Auckland will charge from \$200 an hour to over \$300 an hour. If you are involved in even a moderately difficult Court case, your legal fees can cost well over \$10,000.

To provide moderate to low income earners with access to justice, we have a Legal Aid system. Due to its complexity - exacerbated by recent changes by governments - many features of the system are poorly understood.

In brief, the current features of the system are that you can get Legal Aid more easily for criminal matters than family and civil matters, although generally you have to be charged with an offence that carries a sentence of six months or more imprisonment. So, for minor offences including traffic offences you are unlikely to get Legal Aid. For all civil and family matters, you have to meet three general tests:

1. You have to have a low income and very few savings.
2. You have to show some prospects of success - the Legal Services Agency does not fund hopeless cases.
3. And you have to have likely Court or Tribunal proceedings.

However, if there are children involved or violence issues, the "prospects of success" test is not strictly applied.

The income limits for Legal Aid are low. For example, a single person with no dependents has to earn less than \$22,366 per annum and have less than \$3,500 in a bank account. If a person has a dependent spouse or child, the limits are \$35,420 per annum and savings of less than \$5,000.

Apart from beneficiaries, most people granted Legal Aid will have to repay a portion of it, but without interest. The Act has a complicated repayment formula that the writer, along with most lawyers, doesn't fully understand. The Legal Services Agency also looks at the amount of equity in your home (another complicated formula is applied).

From 1 July, the Agency is now part of the Ministry of Justice and is going to set new approval and performance standards for Legal Aid lawyers.

Unfortunately these may deter some experienced lawyers from offering Legal Aid.

One of the strengths of the system is that it allows for departure from the above rules in exceptional cases. I once acted for a woman who sought a protection order: she was a bank manager and her income was over \$70,000. She had high debts due to her violent partner being a P addict. Because of this, she was granted Legal Aid to apply for a protection order. This sort of flexibility is really important for women in difficult family circumstances.

Due to cost increases in recent years - and the bulk of these are from criminal Legal Aid - the Government is proposing to tighten the eligibility rules for Legal Aid in the following ways:

1. It intends to toughen up the merits test for family cases so that minor issues can't be taken to the Family Court. This may hurt women with bullying ex-partners who turn even minor family matters into a major dispute. It is important for such women to be able to have the guidance and support of an experienced family lawyer.
2. It is proposing to apply a \$100 user charge on all applicants. This charge will, of course, hurt poor clients. Before the changes in 2006, a \$50 user charge was applied and many of my clients struggled to raise this. Consequently their Legal Aid applications were delayed pending payment of this charge.
3. It has indicated it intends to charge interest on repayment amounts.
4. It is proposing to impose fixed charges for certain cases. This will be a further admin burden for many family and civil lawyers.
5. Fortunately, the Government has stated that it will continue to give priority to people who face violence and protection issues and will not impose on them a "merits" test. Hopefully, the slightly more liberal rules that apply to victims of domestic violence will continue.

Despite these gloomy prospects, the Government has indicated it will continue to fund community law services. It is vital that they do so. Community law services play a significant role in providing access to justice for people whose cases do not meet the fairly strict criteria of the legal aid system.