

NATIONAL WOMEN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONFERENCE

HELD AT

P E R T H

WEDNESDAY, 4TH APRIL, 1979

CONVENOR : MS BERYL BEAUREPAIRE

T R A N S C R I P T

CONVENOR: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Now I hope you have had your coffee and it is my pleasure to welcome you to our meeting this evening. We are really delighted to see so many people here. We hoped this time we had advertised the meeting in sufficient time ahead that we would be able to get a good gathering and we are delighted to have you here.

As you would know, this is the first time the National Women's Advisory Council has come to Perth as a whole council. Unfortunately, two of our members are not with us this evening. Dr Margaret Rosenthal is not able to come till tomorrow due to a commitment - giving some lecture she had in New South Wales - and Mamma Lina (Lina Guistin - our Italian member who is absolutely delightful and I am sorry you are not meeting her) - - unfortunately her husband is unwell and she is unwell also. She sends her apologies and she is very sorry she is not here.

I think some of you have met members of the council, but those of you who just know the names and can't put the face to the name - - I will introduce you to them along the table.

We have Dee Boss-Walker first, on my right; then Wendy McCarthy, Valerie Fisher, Judy Roberts, and I am Beryl Beaurepaire, Joyce McConnell, Connie Bush, Sue Broad, Jan March and Quentin Bryce. Now you know who we all are.

We are here, not for us to tell you things; we are here as part of a learning exercise. It is very necessary for the operation of the Advisory Council that we know what the women particularly - and we are happy to hear from men, too - think should be done in this wonderful country of ours to improve the lot of women. Unless we do get a feedback from you all, it is not possible for us to do the job that we have been asked to do by the government.

There are a couple of points I would make clear - and I think some of you have been to some meetings where some of us have been over here before and would already know - and they are that the 12 of us were appointed by Cabinet. We were not elected or we were not recommended by people. We were appointed by Cabinet. None of us really know why, or who did the appointing, but anyway we are here and we were appointed by Cabinet for two years. Then it is to be assessed whether they wish us to continue or not. We may be, according to the rules, appointed for a further two years but that would be the longest term that anyone could serve - and we think that is a jolly good idea.

We are supported in Canberra by a secretariat and we have some members of our secretariat here with us. Our executive officer is Carolyn Wilshire, who is sitting in the front row; Sue Taylor (over on that side) and Angela Wilkinson (on that side). I particularly point out that when we ask you to speak to us and give us your questions or comments, Sue and Angela will have microphones over their sides and we would like you to go to their microphones if you possibly could. If you cannot get to them, we will try to get a microphone to you.

So that we, the members of the council, may get the most benefit from tonight's meeting we wish to tape what is being said tonight. If when anyone is speaking they have any objection to their remarks being taped, we would ask you to say so before you speak. We would also ask you, if you have no objection, to give your name and, if you are representing an organisation, to give us the name of your organisation as well. We believe that that will help us to do any follow-up that may be possible for us to do after tonight's meeting.

I think that is all that I wish to say because, as I said earlier, we wish to learn here. I did say that we had an apology from Mamma Lina, and we have a telegram from her wishing us all a very good night.

We have received some submissions from people who are here tonight, and we will take those and study them.

I think now it is up to you all. I hope we will get some very interesting questions. Hopefully we will be able to help you with some of them. I could ask you to keep your questions and comments as brief as possible so that as many people who would like to will be able to have a say. Now it is up to you all. You may address questions or comments to any members of the panel - and please do, because I don't want to be on the microphone all the time. Thank you.

Who is first?

MS O'BRIEN: My name is Pat O'Brien and I am representing EMMAUS Women's Refuge. We receive 75 per cent of our funds from the Federal Government and 12½ per cent from Public Health, which represents the State, and 12½ we raised by donating back the small amount of money we had for wages.

The refuge has been going for about a year and quite recently we have had a lot of Aboriginal women who are really finding it hard to get State Housing or any sort of accommodation. We have also turned away quite a lot of people and children who we could not accommodate.

A month ago we were given notice to quite from our premises, which we agreed to comply with because the house was unsuitable. We went to Public Health and they said: "Good, find another house and we will keep funding you", so for a month we searched around finding a house - which was hard to get - to get approval from local governments. There are only two local governments in Perth who will accept refugees.

We found a place and we were ready to shift in this Monday, and on Thursday Public Health told us they had cut off our funds - which meant we are not getting any funds from Federal Government either. We had been granted a year grant and they just cut us off in the middle of it. Public Health didn't inform us until after they had informed Bayswater Council, which was supporting us and wanting us to set up a refuge in their place, and also the media heard before we did. We were never given the right to find out first.

Now we are unable to continue and we have got no funds. We haven't been told why. They just said a change of house constitutes a change in project. That's one refuge less in Perth and it sets really bad precedents for the other refuges.

CONVENOR: Have you put in a submission to the Social Security minister about this?

MS O'BRIEN: Not yet. We only found out on Thursday. It is through Community Health.

CONVENOR: When you put in your submission, would you be so kind as to send a copy of it to the Office of Women's Affairs in Canberra?

MS O'BRIEN: Yes. The thing is, now that we have lost our money we have lost the house that we have got, so it virtually means the end of the refuge - and for no good reason. Public Health just decided to step in and cut off the funds.

PANEL MEMBER: Did you get that statement in writing or did you only get it verbally - that your funds are now cut off?

MS O'BRIEN: I've got the letter here.

PANEL MEMBER: You have got a letter?

MS O'BRIEN: Yes.

PANEL MEMBER: Who from - from the minister?

MS O'BRIEN: We have got a letter from the Commissioner of Public Health, and in the letter it states that we were told to

find a place in Bayswater, which we did. The reason given in that letter is "Change of location constitutes a new project", so we have got to give up all our funds and be reassessed.

MS FISHER: Have you gone directly to the Federal Minister for Health who is responsible for Community Health funding?

MS O'BRIEN: We rang John McCauley in Canberra and he said that once Federal Government has passed over the funds to State you can't do anything.

MS FISHER: You can't retrieve them.

MS O'BRIEN: But we had already changed house once before and they never cut our funds.

MS FISHER: So there must be another reason.

MS O'BRIEN: Yes.

SPEAKER: I'd like to say that if the policy in future (and I'm from the Lucy Saw Women's Refuge) is that a change of house means change of project, that now directly affects my refuge which is under threat of demolition from another government department and therefore has to find a new house.

MS FISHER: Have you got any money from local government sources? Is there any way that you can turn around and see if you can strangle something out of the local council as an interim thing, while you reapply for the other?

SPEAKER: Bayswater Shire is willing to consider us at the end of the financial year but at the moment they have got their funds committed. The State has committed its funds until the end of the financial year to us, too.

MS FISHER: So what has happened to the money? That is what you want to know, isn't it?

SPEAKER: Yes. The thing is that in Perth there is a real need for refuges.

CONVENOR: That we are very conscious of - that there is a real need for refuges - and in fact the Premier talked with us today about the problem of refuges in Perth, but as we don't know the local scene and the local regulations of what has happened here, I find it very difficult for us to give you an answer, or give you any hope or help, other than to say that if you give us the circumstances in writing we will do what we can to follow it up; but that is no help to you in paying your rent immediately. We as a National Women's Advisory Council have no money to give out. We don't control any funds that we can give you to help in an area like that. That is not in our charter. We just do not have that money.

I don't know whether any other members of the council would have any suggestions as to how we can help you.

MS MARSH: I just want to ask a question. You said the media were informed before you were. What reason was the media given the news first?

MS O'BRIEN: They were at the Bayswater Shire Council meeting.

MS MARSH: And they heard it there before you were informed of it? What reason was given?

MS O'BRIEN: Yes. Change of vocation.

MS BRYCE: But do you not have an ombudsman in this State?

MS O'BRIEN: We do, yes, but he is not really effective. So many people - -

CONVENOR: Well, I think you have got to make him effective and just keep on his back until he is effective.

MS BRYCE: That's his role.

CONVENOR: Yes.

SPEAKER: If we can get a submission about this issue to you before Friday, can you do some investigating on our behalf?

CONVENOR: You can get us a submission but we can't guarantee that we can do anything for you. All we can say is that if we get a submission we can have it looked at. We can't give you any guarantee because we don't have control of any funds. All we can do - and I know that Sue and Carol (and I) went to the refuge last year; to the EMMAUS one - is say we think it is worthwhile, but we haven't got any control of the Social Security funds or the Community Health funds.

SPEAKER: We would like to know the real reason for EMMAUS losing its funds, and if the stated reason is the real reason, how is that going to affect every other refuge?

CONVENOR: Yes.

MS BROAD: If I could just comment, I think the issue of women's refuges is one which council hasn't looked at in a wide spectrum, and since I've been doing country trips - particularly in the mining towns of South Hedland and Kalgoorlie - there is obviously a tremendous need for them in some of these areas and it is obviously an issue which we are going to have to take up and look at it overall, and hopefully recommend some firm policy on women's refuges. This is in no way helping you in your plight at the moment, but I don't honestly think - apart from sympathising with you - as an advisory body

there is anything we can do in the immediate future. I am sorry - that is fairly depressing - but perhaps we can make sure it doesn't happen again by recommending firm guidelines for refuges.

CONVENOR: We might remind them (we remind ourselves) that we do have the matter of the funding of refuges on our agenda to be discussed during our meeting. This has not been brought about just because of the situation that you are bringing to our notice. This is because this situation has been brought to us from a number of places. We would be pleased to receive any information whatsoever on the situation of women's refuges here, and if you do not get it to us this week you can follow it up. We will be leaving some cards here with the address in Canberra and we would be very happy to hear any details - or give it to Sue after the meeting.

SPEAKER: Well, Ms Beaurepaire,....(away from microphone)...in Western Australia, but one of the real issues which has come about through EMMAUS being cut is the security of funding for women's refuges, whether it is in Western Australia or anywhere.

CONVENOR: Yes.

SPEAKER: What it tells us is that women's refuges still aren't recognised as a necessary, ongoing, needy service in the community. What they are saying to us is that "We can afford to cut women's refuges. They are not needed in the community." That is something which I think should be of vital concern to the National Advisory Council.

CONVENOR: This is why we do have it on our agenda, and each of us who work in our various States and areas are very conscious of the problem. I think each one of us separately has been in contact with refuges in our own areas, so we are not forgetting it and it is not being put in the "Too Hard" basket. We really are very conscious of it - but again I would stress that any of you connected with refuges of any sort - - we would be pleased to receive any submissions and data of how you run, how you have been financed and how you feel you should be financed, what sort of people you have, how long they stay, and all those bookkeeping details which are an awful bore to have to do. It is a great help to us when we are putting recommendations to government to have those sorts of things. Thank you.

SPEAKER: I don't see why you can't make a statement on the issue.

CONVENOR: How do you mean - "make a statement on the issue"?

SPEAKER: To the minister concerned.

MS FISHER: What - on this particular issue?

SPEAKER: Yes. Women are being chucked out.

MS FISHER: Is there any precedent that you are aware of?

CONVENOR: You see, we can't come into Western Australia and tell your Western Australian ministers what to do. That would be very wrong of us to do that.

SPEAKER: No, can you make a statement....(away from microphone)...

CONVENOR: We can hardly do that until we know all the details.

MS McCARTHY: Could I just ask a question? I didn't understand quite what you said when you were giving me the figures and the percentages in the beginning, and I think it is fairly relevant, particularly if we do end up making a statement. You said "75 per cent Federal funding, 12½ per cent from the State Government". Are you putting the other 12½ per cent in yourselves?

MS O'BRIEN: Yes.

MS McCARTHY: And there is no problem about you putting that in? Okay, so what's the problem?

SPEAKER: There is a real problem because women's refuges are in our State are funded differently to other States. From what we can gather, the State Government doesn't meet the 25 per cent as they do in other States, and until 1st January 1979 they were meeting no proportion of the funding at all. All women's refuges were relying on 75 per cent funding from the Federal Government. As of January 1st, 1979, one refuge was cut back by 12½ per cent, and the State Government reallocated 12½ per cent to three or four voluntary women's refuges in this State. Not every women's refuge receives 12½ per cent from the State; only those supported by voluntary groups (which we have made in our submission).

It is particularly difficult for women's refuges which are relying on voluntary labour to also fund-raise at the same time, so that's the reason that most of the funds allocated last year to women's refuges and to new women's refuges starting up were not used; because people don't have the resources to raise the 12½ per cent or the 25 per cent, whichever is the case. It is really difficult, whatever the situation, in Western Australia where they have to raise 12½ or 25 per cent. The State Government does not meet the contribution, as was intended through its programme.

MS McCARTHY: So, if I can just summarise very briefly, you cannot find the 12½ per cent and that could be a way of someone else being able to say "Well, we can't afford it." Is that reasonable?

SPEAKER: No.

MS McCARTHY: Could the government say that? Could the government say "We can't afford to give you 25 per cent and you can't afford 12½"?

SPEAKER: No. We are always matching the 12½. We find the 12½.

MS McCARTHY: You can find that?

SPEAKER: Yes. We can find it. That's not a good enough excuse. It just means that the quality of service and how much you can give is dependent on how much you can raise, but people do raise a limited 12½ per cent.

MS McCARTHY: Right.

MS FISHER: It is a State issue. Can you tell me if you have discussed this with your local Member of Parliament? Have you discussed it with Sir Charles Court?

SPEAKER: Yes, we have. That was the reason we got 12½ per cent... (away from microphone)....

MS FISHER: Fine, because the other States have the 25 per cent funding and I can't understand why you don't get that.

SPEAKER: We don't either.

MS FISHER: Right - okay.

CONVENOR: I can only repeat that we do have the whole position of women's refuges on our agenda for further discussion. Would you please keep us informed of what goes on? We will do everything we can to help, but we do have limits on what we can do. We must not interfere too much in matters that are State concerns. Thank you very much.

MS HANNAH DOWNEY: I work mainly in the field of Adult Education but I am speaking here as a layman. I feel that the whole issue of women's refuges is just the tip of the iceberg and I am very sympathetic with the problems which they face in this State. You see, my impression as a layman in this State is that women have an enormous number of problems, ranging from single mothers who are struggling economically and socially in many ways.

Just to give you an example of this, I want to explain that, for instance, our mental hospitals are largely filled with women. If you have a look at the statistics of a hospital like Heathcote, they are largely women who are there and they are women placed there mainly because of a whole host of stresses which come on them. I suppose it's the same in many other States but my feeling has always been in Western Australia that a woman has to take so many roles. She is running around, not only in terms of trying to earn money perhaps, in running the household, in being the chauffeur, in taking the children to school and taking responsibilities in committees, and perhaps also being hostess, wife, lover and many other roles that she has to take, and she finds this enormously difficult.

Coming back to the women's refuges, I would like to bring this up because I wanted some possible answers of what we can do to improve the position of women in Western Australia. It seems to me that in some areas it is the legislation which is at fault. Take women who come to refuges, perhaps because of a violent attack on them by their husband. The legislation in this State is such that it is enormously difficult for anything to be done about it in order for them to place a charge. The people who are working in refuges will know how very difficult it is legally for them to do anything. In fact, I have personally been in situations, trying to help a woman on the street with her children, trying to find a refuge to take them, some refuges (probably not the ones which are represented here) separating the mother from the children because they have regulations where you can't have, say, a boy and a girl in the same refuge. So on top of the stresses which the mother may be faced with in relation to her husband, she is also now being separated from the children and yet legally has almost no protection.

The doctors who are working in hospitals say very much the same thing; that they are treating women patients who go back again and again into the same situation because they don't have legal protection.

It seems to me that one of the things we might be able to do here is to talk a little bit about some of the ways in which we can remove the stresses which are sending people into the refuge situation. Thank you.

CONVENOR: Thank you for your comment. Would anyone else like to comment on the remarks of the last speaker? (No response.)

Would anyone else like to throw in any comments about the refuge problem before we leave that one?

SPEAKER:....(away from microphone)....I just have this comment to make: Today I had to give advice to a young man of 22 who is not married to the woman he has been living with, and he has a nine-month old child. He was thrown out of her home and I have been very sympathetic to the problems of all people who are homeless. I do want to just say that it isn't just women who are facing this problem today.

CONVENOR: Thank you.

SPEAKER: We are talking about women, though.

CONVENOR: Yes. Women are people, too, and men are people too.

SPEAKER: I was doing the vegetables for the Jesus People, and there are destitute young men - and this was one of them who wanted a lunch. His problem was due to the interaction between men and women.

CONVENOR: Thank you. I think the whole area of communications between men and women is very important to be improved.

MS McCARTHY: Can I just say one thing, when you are talking about legal protection? My experience in New South Wales has been that things have changed enormously in the last three years in terms of legal protection or getting any sort of legislative changes since there has been a women's unit, because all of the women who have been working in the field, in various parts of the women's movement - and I include all women's activities in that - have found they have just run out of steam. If they have gone to work there has just not been enough back-up and enough support. It is very difficult to get themselves taken seriously and have credibility when they are trying to get legislative changes.

The changes which have occurred in terms of legislation - - legislation does not cure all the problems but it goes a long way to educate people, and if you can't change their attitudes, if you can change their behaviour that will do in the short term. Having a women's unit, and indeed having an Office of Women's Affairs in the Federal Government, has made an enormous difference because there is no piece of legislation in New South Wales now which that women's unit doesn't get hold of to look at and monitor in terms of how it affects women. I think it would be a great thing if women in Western Australia could get some sort of unit set up which had access to the Public Service and access to the government. I think that is something you really ought to go for.

CONVENOR: Thank you, Wendy.

MS JEAN GOADBY: I do not represent anybody. I just want to draw something to your attention.

I would like to draw attention to the plight of women who are suffering under the injustices of the notorious Family Law Act, or the "Unfamily Law Act". I refer to the situation of the older women where perhaps a husband has left many years ago, leaving the woman to look after and rear the young children of the family. Since the Family Law Act came into operation in 1975 the availability of this has been made possible for these errant spouses to come in and claim half of the home. This is happening quite frequently, with the result that the order is made by the judge that the home be sold and the woman has to either buy her husband's share out or find other accommodation.

I do point out that in the time of life when this is usually happening, it is the time when the woman is far beyond being acceptable for employment these days. It is hard enough to get employment for the younger people; let alone women of mature years. The position of women is that they cannot (I think you would know) borrow money. If you are a top executive this might be possible but ordinary people just cannot borrow money - this sort of money - so they

are thrown to the winds. Their community life they have built up becomes a dire stress factor.

I feel that so many millions of dollars are being paid by the governments or being put by governments into rural reconstruction for the rehabilitation of farmers, etc., in other vocations, so I would like to see some thought being given, or consideration being given, by governments to forming a fund - establishing a fund - so these women can borrow on a minimal interest loan, repayable over a lengthy time; sufficient money for them to buy out the share or whatever is allocated by the judges so they can stay in their home; so they can retain their dignity; so they can mortgage with security - and still live in the area where they have been. I think there is a very strong need that the women be able to stay where they are and help the community, and not become burdens on other taxpayers.

CONVENOR: Thank you very much, madam. I wonder if Quentin, who knows more about the Family Law Act than the rest of us, might like to respond to that.

MS BRYCE: The council has just made its submission to the joint parliamentary committee which is inquiring into the operation of the Family Law Act, and this is certainly one of the issues - the one you raise about the massive social problems which women of that age and in that situation face. Council is very aware of them. We had, I would think, over 100 submissions on that very point and we have put those in detail before this joint parliamentary committee.

I think some of the issues you raise and some of the practical solutions you present about financial arrangements being available for these women are very true. I assure you that everybody on this council is very aware of those issues and I think that many other submissions which have been made to this committee from women's organisations have put those same problems, and women across this country have become aware of them.

CONVENOR: Would anyone else like to make any comment on the Family Law Act stance?

SPEAKER: The Family Law is covering for married women but nothing is being done for de facto wives, and any woman who is a de facto wife and who is suffering from violence gets no protection whatsoever. If she lays a charge on a person who has beaten her up, she can lay a charge today and it might take her three months to get it into court. In the meantime he is left in her house. She usually gets maybe another three or four attacks before it is in court and she has just got no access whatsoever to get any protection. The court is not the Family Law Court that she goes to; she has to go into the Petty Sessions and sit amongst petty criminals, and feel like one herself.

I feel that if she is in a bona fide de facto relationship she should have access to the Family Law Court, too.

CONVENOR: Thank you.

(ACCLAMATION)

MS BRYCE: One of the issues of law is that the Family Law Court does have jurisdiction, as you say, only to deal with people who are legally married and to the children of those marriages, but I think often the woman who is in the situation that you are talking about has the same difficulties because of the costs involved in the Family Court. I think all people concerned with violence against women must face up to the fact that something has to be done about charges being brought and being substantiated. Of course, the police have learnt a sorry lesson many times when a woman is physically abused, in that she just won't proceed with the charges and when the time comes she doesn't go and give evidence in court. It is for those reasons that the police hesitate to carry on the proceedings.

CONVENOR: Thank you, Quentin. Does anyone else wish to comment?

MS BRYCE: But that certainly is a State matter, too.

CONVENOR: Yes. Does anyone else wish to comment on the operation of the Family Law Act?

SPEAKER: The thing about the Family Law Act is that it reads quite well. The basic consideration is supposed to be the children first and there is supposed to be a settlement or maintenance in view of need.

My own personal experience has been that it caters first for the breadwinner's need, and when the breadwinner's need is satisfied in a way that he can dictate, and say "Well, I need so much to live on", what is left over is for the wife and children. I feel that many children are going without because of this, and many wives are having to work because the amount Social Welfare gives them is so far away from their usual standard of living, and children are being left at home while their mothers are out working and while their fathers are not there anyway.

CONVENOR: Thank you. Quentin, would you like to comment on that?

MS BRYCE: The last point you made raises one of the big issues for women in this country, and that is adequate child care; but I think the only comment I would make about that is that you emphasise the importance of concerned persons to make submissions to the joint parliamentary committee.

I think one of the list of problems we had from the lady there in the second row brings to my mind how

uninvolved many women are and what little energy they really put into lobbying, and I think when opportunities are available to make submissions which may bring about change - and that is why they are set up; I think there is very much in the mind of that inquiry the idea of some changes to the Act because of great dissatisfaction in various areas of the community - - it emphasises to me the responsibility of all concerned persons to lobby and to send submissions to the joint parliamentary committee.

The issues you raised are those which have been put to the council in the many submissions that we have had about the Family Law Act. It would appear to me, as a lawyer who practises in that field, that it certainly is a cause of great concern to women - that they generally come through the Family Law Court process feeling distressed, and I think the letters which we get from the community (a great proportion of them) are concerned with Family Law issues.

SPEAKER: ... (away from microphone) ... in the Family Law Act, though; it is in the administration of it.

MS BRYCE: To me they are not separate. The administration is the Act. I do not see how you separate them.

CONVENOR: There is a lady up the back who has her hand up to speak about this.

MS BARBARA DUKE (Lone Mothers' Association): A submission I think has gone through from our association on aspects of the Family Law Act, but here I would like to bring out some of the problems with which I have been associated. As the lady in the front said, the assessment of maintenance is made after the nonsupporting spouse has fled the field and after he has found himself comfortably retained, and what's left over the assessment is made on for the children whom he has born - at whatever stage of the life of the parent he has just left or the state of the children.

In these things I have backed up this report which has been sent in with evidence. A couple of things concern me. I think it is s.121 of the Family Law Act - that any details arising from the courts are not allowed to be published through the media or through anything. It puts paid on any information or anything left. Other sections within the Act refer to the discretion of the judge. That doesn't give anyone entering marriage any guidelines by which that marriage is going to hold them bound to any type of contract whatsoever. Therefore you don't know when you come out of it exactly where you stand in any situation of property or children, and you are unable to protect yourself during the period of time, whatever that might be.

I am not too sure if there is a Western Australian on the committee here or whether you are familiar with the fact that the Western Australian application of the Family Law Act is something different to that of other States. I believe there are so many amendments they are not printing any more print-outs through government on the Family Law Act as it is in Western Australia, because the amendments come out so often that it is hard to keep pace with them.

So on that basis, has any family got to find out where they stand here?

MS BRYCE: I think the issues you raise perhaps relate to submissions which we have certainly made for further counselling services. In financial counselling, you mentioned those issues of the man (and I forget your words) "fleeing the next" and that what is left is there for the children. There certainly should be - I believe, anyway - further provision for financial counselling by the court. There is very little of that at present. There should also be more general counselling earlier in the whole matrimonial breakdown process.

CONVENOR: I think that possibly the Act in Western Australia is slightly different.

MS DUKE: It is different. That is another statement, I would think. There was an issue in the paper Friday last (or Friday week) where a case was brought to court and Judge Ferrier said it was sad that the woman could not bring an action of contempt of court through the Family Law in Western Australia. Why is it that a person can enter into the Family Court in Western Australia and understand that this is the law, and yet it is only lip service really.

CONVENOR: I think we should ask you after the meeting to make yourself known to Sue Broad, who is here and who is resident in Western Australia, and perhaps she may be able to take up some of the problems here which you have raised. Thank you.

MS FRENCH: One of the issues which came to my mind earlier was that there hasn't been any woman judge in the Family Law Courts here. I feel this could be quite an area to be looked into and perhaps submissions made which may help the women a little bit more.

CONVENOR: I thought there was a woman judge in the Family Court here.

SPEAKER: No, there's not.

MS FISHER: Whatever happened to Alison Robbie² who was in the Family Court?

SPEAKER: She is not a judge.

MS FISHER: She is not a judge?