

## Annual Report 2021

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Dear Members

It is my pleasure to present the 2020-2021 Annual Report for GW WA (Inc). I write this annual report as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our lives. Pandemic fatigue has set in and as NSW and Victoria open to the world all other states will watch how the situation evolves. As Dean International in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Curtin University in Western Australia, I continue to support students in lockdown across Australia and international students impacted by Australia's border closures and am working on two funded COVID projects. Many of our members have been busy with several issues to do with gender equality, the pay gap, older women, women in STEM, studying the gendered impacts of COVID-19. This report contains details of our successful scholarship recipients, our annual dinner, the Afghanistan crisis, reflections on refugee week, some reports on COVID-19 and gender, and Australian higher education highlights.



Best wishes

Professor Jaya Dantas  
President, GW WA (Inc)

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### Graduate Women WA 2021 Scholarships and Bursary Report

We have awarded six scholarships and bursaries in 2021 and the awardees are listed below. Six young women PhD scholars undertaking amazing research in a variety of fields.

#### Graduate Women (WA) Open Scholarship – Any discipline

(\$3000) awarded to **Rebecca Russell** Rebecca is enrolled in a PhD in Public health at Curtin University. She completed a BSc Nutrition and BSc Health (Hons 1<sup>st</sup> class), also at Curtin. She was a member of the Vice-Chancellor's List and received Letters of Commendations for much of her undergraduate studies. She has 7 first author journal publications and 3 conference presentations all related to her PhD or honours research. In addition to a Research Training Program scholarship she is a recipient of a Multiple Sclerosis WA Top-up



scholarship.

Rebecca's research focuses on the role of diet in the management of multiple sclerosis (MS). To date, her research has identified a reliance of MS sufferers on the internet for nutrition and dietary advice. The GWWA award will be used to enlist the services of Lingel Learning to provide the online site for the program, including hosting, support, training, and design development for the Moodle Learning Management System and to post to participants the hard copy resources needed to support the program. These costs are additional to those budgeted for to deliver the program face-to-face and covered by University support.

#### **Graduate Women (WA) Mary and Elsie Stevens Scholarship – Mathematics or Science**

(\$3000) awarded to **Vanessa Brown**



Vanessa is enrolled in a PhD in Botany at UWA. She completed a BSc in Environmental Biology with first class honours at Curtin University. During these studies she received numerous awards for excellence and Vice Chancellor letters of commendations. In 2017, she was awarded the Australian Council of Environmental Deans and Directors Scholar Award (2017) which recognises outstanding performance and potential amongst undergraduates taking environmental degrees in Australia.

Clearing land for human development has severely impacted many aspects of the existing landscape. Ecological restoration is relied upon to reverse this degradation, but faces a number of barriers to achieve success. Rebecca's project aims to improve restoration success of highly degraded Banksia woodlands using novel seed enhancement technologies (SETs) to overcome weed competition and poor native species establishment. The bursary will be used to rent Glasshouse space at the University of Western Australia (controlled environment room) for 24 weeks to conduct these experiments and to test a greater range of species and to test and validate an expanded range of SETs than originally planned.

#### **Graduate Women (WA) Jillian Bradshaw Scholarship – Humanities**

(\$2500) awarded to **Chloe Bartram**

Chloe is enrolled in a PhD in innovative photography-based arts practice at Murdoch University. She completed a Bachelor of Photography with first class honours at Griffith University and received a number of academic excellence awards.

The year 2022 marks the centenary of a Western Australian undertaking of global significance: the 1922 expedition to Wallal in the Pilbara to witness the solar eclipse. The goals of the original expedition were to witness the solar eclipse, to photograph starlight, and to prove Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity.

In her PhD Chloe will use images, letters and media sources found in the Battye Library of WA State Library's archive, and by combining these with alternative photographic techniques including cyanotypes and lumen prints, that places emphasis

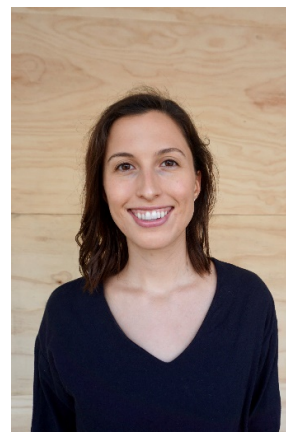


on landscape of the Pilbara region. In particular she will focus on the contribution of Aboriginal peoples to the expedition. Chloe's research will offer an artistic perspective on the contemporary and enduring significance of the Wallal expedition, culminating with an exhibition celebrating the centenary of the expedition. The GGWA grant will allow Chloe to undertake an intensive fieldwork expedition to Wallal to create a large portion of the visual work to supplement the archival data.

#### **Graduate Women (WA) Barbara Mary Hale Bursary – Any discipline**

(\$2970) awarded to **Claire Doll**

Claire is an international student enrolled in a PhD in Agricultural & Resource Economics at UWA. She received a BSc in Environmental and Conservation Sciences and a Master in Agricultural and Resource Economics, both with distinction, from the University of Alberta, Canada. She has 3 journal publications (1 as first author) and two significant Technical reports relevant to her PhD and earlier research. She received numerous scholarships and bursaries to support her undergraduate and master's level studies, and a number of educational awards.



Claire's research involves the study of parks as environmental assets that provide social, physical and mental health, and ecosystem benefits to communities. In response to water scarcity threats, cities are increasingly integrating native, drought-resistant vegetation into park designs. In her PhD Claire is estimating the value the public derives from parks generally, and more specifically, from park irrigation. Her project involves working closely with local governments to understand the costs associated with maintaining these spaces, to perform benefit-cost analyses and provide insights into the management practices that can contribute to building climate resilient cities.

She will use the bursary funds to develop essential skills in public participation by completing five online training courses conducted by the International Association for Public Participation. By undertaking the proposed training program, she will develop skills and tools to more effectively engage with stakeholders, including members of the public via focus groups and interviews, and effectively communicate her research findings back to stakeholders.

#### **Graduate Women (WA) Mary Walters Bursary – Science**

(\$3000) awarded to **Maria Jung**

Maria is an international student enrolled in a PhD in Marine ecology at UWA. She received a BSc in Biology and an MSc in Marine Biology, both with distinction, from the University of Bremen in Germany. She has three journal publications (2 as first author) in research related to her PhD and her Master's research. In addition to an International Student Research Training Program Stipend and Fee offset scholarship, she has received close to \$40K from 4 small research fellowships, endowments and student project awards to support her research.

Maria in her PhD is investigating the impact of algae overgrowth on seagrass through light deprivation and sediment stress. This is of environmental importance as seagrass meadows are considered 'blue carbon' ecosystems due to their enormous capacity for sequestering carbon dioxide that could otherwise be released into the atmosphere. Maria has already trialled a novel approach of applying metabolic indicators to assess seagrass health in Derbarl Yerrigan.

The bursary will allow her to conduct a mesocosm (tank) experiment where she aims to isolate stress response mechanisms in seagrass to light deprivation and sediment stress in a controlled

environment. She will apply metabolomics (a novel molecular technique) to investigate how the combination of the above stressors impact seagrasses. This experiment is additional to her prearranged project and therefore not budgeted for. It will address an important gap in the literature and provide an extra chapter to her thesis and basis for a high quality publication. The bursary will be used to conduct the metabolomics analysis.

#### **Graduate Women (WA) Joyce Riley Bursary – Humanities or Social Sciences**

(\$3000) awarded to **Bobbie Chew Bigby**

Bobby is enrolled in her final year of a PhD in Anthropology and Indigenous Tourism Studies. She received a BA in Anthropology from Washington University in St Louis and a MA in International Studies from the University of Queensland, both with distinction. She was on the Dean's List for all 4 years of her undergraduate degree. She has edited 2 books; written, 1 book chapter and 3 journal papers (2 as 1<sup>st</sup> author), and presented at 5 conferences on research related to her field of Indigenous Tourism. In addition to an International Student Research Training Program Stipend and Fee offset scholarship, she is the recipient of a WA State Government JTSI Innovation Fellowship (2019-2021).

Her research explores the ways that Indigenous-led tourism initiatives, both pre and during the COVID-19 pandemic context, are able to support and foster connections to traditional culture among local Indigenous communities in both the Kimberley, Western Australia and in Oklahoma Indian Country in the United States (which is the PhD student's own tribal community). By understanding the ways in which Indigenous-led tourism enables Indigenous people's opportunities to meaningful engagements with traditional culture and lands, while earning a livelihood at the same time.

The assistance provided by the Graduate Women WA Award will enable her to return to her primary field sites in the Kimberley and to complete the qualitative data collection that is essential to her dissertation. The funds will be used to cover the costs of facilitating gatherings of Traditional Owners and to cover meals and lodgings at fieldwork sites in Broome, Port Smith and Derby.

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#### **Centenary Celebration of Edith Cowan on International Women's Day with GWWA Members**





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### GWWA Anniversary Dinner

We celebrated the Graduate Women (WA) Annual Dinner 2021 on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June with the theme, Reflections on Women's Empowerment and Organisations: Impacts on Education, Advocacy and Resilience. Professor Shirley Randell, AGW Convener of International Relations, shared her interactions with amazing women in Rwanda and her global experiences. Professor Jaya Dantas spoke to her current research with refugee and migrant women. 43 women and two men attended the event and represented 19 countries.



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**The National Women's Safety Summit** was held on 2nd & 3rd September 2021, and Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) participated on behalf of its members. AGW also supported a submission to the summit through the Fair Agenda. I participated in a consultation for the Harmony Alliance on DV impacts on refugee and migrant women. Some reflections on the summit are available at:

- 1) <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/what-did-australia-s-women-s-safety-summit-achieve-and->

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### The precarious situation in Afghanistan for women and young girls

Afghanistan's historically persecuted minority ethnic and religious groups, such as the Hazara ethnic group, who faced widespread killings and genocide the last time the Taliban were in power, are now more at risk. There are also serious fears about the fate of numerous employees of western embassies and forces, human rights activists, employees working in Australian government funded schools and NGOs, and Australian-educated Afghans.

The Refugee Council of Australia and a number of national community organisations have strongly urged Prime Minister Scott Morrison to ease the suffering of the Afghan people by:

1. Committing to an additional humanitarian intake prioritising the most vulnerable persecuted people of Afghanistan, similar to Australia's response to the Syrian conflict in 2015 in accepting 12,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees.
2. Expediting the resettlement of interpreters in Afghanistan, and other personnel involved in Australia's mission in Afghanistan.
3. Granting permanent protection to more than 5,100 refugees from Afghanistan, predominantly from the historically persecuted Hazara ethnic group, currently on temporary protection visas in Australia.
4. Prioritising the family reunification visas of Afghan-Australians, including those who are prevented from reuniting with their families due to a government ministerial directive that requires the Department of Home Affairs to deprioritise family reunion of hundreds of Afghans in Australia.
5. Lifting the ban since 2014, on resettlement of refugees to Australia through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Indonesia. This ban continues to limit resettlement options for 10,000 refugees from Afghanistan awaiting safety and protection.



Half of the population in Afghanistan is in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. One third don't know where their next meal will come from, and there is a serious risk of a fourth COVID-19 wave because of the collapsing health infrastructure and the situation for women and girls is bleak. Afghan women and girls need our support. In my Public Health Association of Australia role, we have made a submission to Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee on Australia's engagement in Afghanistan.

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## Refugee Week

This year Refugee Week was celebrated from 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021 to Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Refugee Week offers many opportunities to learn from the lived experiences of refugees and consider how we can move forward in unity.

The week saw a wonderful display of unity as people all over Perth and Australia gathered to show support for the Murugappan family (Priya & Nades and their Australian born daughters Kopika and Tharnica), the youngest child received treatment at the Perth Children's Hospital after being flown in from Christmas Island Detention Centre. The Bileola community in Queensland has embraced the family and Immigration lawyer Carina Ford is providing legal advice.



An Australian series of interviews from “her words” sharing the stories of refugee women can be found at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erEVxY\\_DQjc&t=8s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erEVxY_DQjc&t=8s)

Professor Jaya Dantas, AGW President, presented her Photovoice project – a travelling exhibition of settlement experiences of refugee women in WA at the John Curtin Gallery.

**From left to right: Past Councillor Yaso Poonatharia (City of Canning, WA), Consul General of India in Perth, Charandasi Dantu, Prof Jaya Dantas, & Rehab Ahmed of Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre in Perth, WA**

For those members who wish to learn more about the experiences of refugeewomen in Western Australia, I include the following link to my talk at the John Curtin Gallery:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Za3xyiZPnY>

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**Emeritus Professor Lynette Abbott:** An expert in the field of soil science and soil biology has won the General Jeffery Soil Health Award, dedicated to Australia's first National Soils Advocate, Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery, AC, AO (Mil), CVO, MC (Retd). Professor Abbott is recognised for her work to champion, improve and educate others in soil health. Named in his honour, the General Jeffery Soil Health Award is a prestigious new soil health initiative



recognises an individual's work to champion, improve and or educate others in soil health.

<https://landcareaustralia.org.au/general-jeffery-soil-health-award/winner-of-2021-general-jeffery-soil-health-award/> GWWA is Very proud of you!

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## Impact of COVID on Working Women and Women in STEM

**Prof Cheryl Praegar**, AC (AGW member and recipient of Prime Minister's Scientist of the Year Award 2019) undertook a rapid research project to examine the impact of COVID-19 on women in the STEM workforce. You can download the report at the following link: <https://www.science.org.au/supporting-science/diversity-and-inclusion/impact-covid-19-women-stem-workforce-asia-pacific>. Or the summary here: <https://www.science.org.au/news-and-events/news-and-media-releases/new-report-covid-19-exacerbated-gender-inequity-stem-workforce-asia-pacific>

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### Park Road property

We continue to have tenants but reduced the rent at the request of some tenants for two months during the COVID-19 lockdown. Constant repairs due to the age of the property continue to be a problem. We will need to review this in 2021.

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It is my sincere hope that more of you will contribute your skills and encourage past and new members to join GWWA as we move closer to our centenary.

I thank my committee for their support during the year and wish all of you best wishes for the festive season and the New Year during this challenging time.

**Professor Jaya Dantas (PhD)**  
President, GWWA

I acknowledge Australia's First Nations Peoples as the traditional owners of the land on which we live, work and learn, and acknowledge their continuing connection to Country and Culture. We pay our deep respect to First Nations Elders past, present and to emerging leaders of the future.



# **Graduate Women WA**

## **Book Club Reports**

### **Saturday Morning Book Club**

#### **2021 Report**

The Saturday Book Club was able to meet on nine out of the ten sessions this year. We meet at the University Club Meeting Room and it has proved a very successful venue. Currently we have ten members.

An interesting program of books has been presented ranging from fiction of different categories to biography and autobiography. We explored historical fiction both English and Australian, the autobiography of an elite SAS soldier, a biography of early exploration and settlement of the Kimberley, current literary and award-winning writers' works and political fiction. We often meet as a group for lunch afterwards to socialize.

#### **VALE**

I would like to pay tribute to two of our members who passed away during the year Mrs Joyce Young and Mrs Elizabeth Killerby. They were two highly valued members of our group who could be guaranteed to provide very interesting and insightful comments to our discussions and whom we miss very much.

Helen Charlesworth

Coordinator

Saturday Morning Book Club

## **Friday Book Club**

### **2021 Report**

The Thursday book club has now become the Friday lunch time gathering. We meet at 11 am and discuss the book for an hour or hour and a half depending on how much discussion is generated. This year we have tried a few different venues, T Box, Domain on Loch and then back to The John St Cafe.

We have 9 active members who have suggested a wide variety of books. This year we trialled having questions sent a few days before the meeting and this has proved to be popular.

We all enjoy very much being part of the Book Club and welcome any member who would like to join us..

As Convenor I would like to say a very big Thank You to my fellow Readers who have certainly enriched my appreciation of many books.

Wendy McCallum

2021