



### **FROM THE EDITOR**

We are thrilled to announce that the beautiful book **“Marking Marks”** is now available for sale, with all proceeds going to OPAWC. The book is a collaboration between Australian artists and the women at the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul. **Read about the book and how to order a copy on Pages 1 & 2.** It would make a beautiful Christmas gift!

On **Page 2**, you'll also find news and photos from the Vocational Training Centre. English language and Computing classes have now commenced in response to requests from the women and girls at the Centre. This has been possible as the result of a generous donation from one of our members.

**Page 3** contains a story of the recent granting of naming rights to Afghanistan's women – a very significant outcome following many years of activism.

And, on **pages 4 and 5**, there are **updates from our Groups in NSW and South Australia.**

With very best wishes for the end of 2020.

**Margaret Gadd, Editor**

### **\*\*\*\* ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING POSTPONED**

Regrettably, due to the resurgence of Covid-19 in South Australia, the AGM planned for 17 November had to be postponed. SAWA will advise all members and supporters of the rescheduled date as soon as possible. It is hoped we'll be able to meet, as planned, for an Afghan meal at Rumi Palace before the meeting. We thank the management of this restaurant for their understanding and support.

### **Making Marks: Australia and Afghanistan**



is a beautiful art book created during an international arts exchange project, led by Australian artist, **Gali Weiss**. It involved 20 Australian women artists and 43 Afghan women who used the medium of the handkerchief to create artworks

that are diverse and yet also connected.

Handkerchiefs were painted or embroidered in Australia, then sent to Afghanistan for the women at the VTC to add their messages of hope.

**Cost is \$39.95, plus postage (See next page)  
ALL PROCEEDS GO TO OPAWC**

The following excerpts from an email from **Barbara Kameniar\*** paint a lovely description of the book launch in Hobart.

**“Making Marks; Australia and Afghanistan”** was launched in Hobart this month. The event was held at Zafira Cafe in Moonah. Zafira provides employment and training to people arriving from Afghanistan as refugees. The cafe and the community embraced the book from the very start. Some of the Afghan community provided support by checking translations prior to publication, and many of them worked together to support the launch.

Due to COVID restrictions, numbers were limited to 25 people. However, the event was a wonderful celebration of not only the book, but also the local Afghan Hazara community. All of the Afghan women at the book launch are Hazara. They have always been great supporters of female equality and female access to education. Only two weeks ago over 40 students were killed at a Hazara school in Kabul. Their support of the OPAWC vocational school represents their on-going commitment to the education of women.



Arezo, Najibeh and Barbara at the launch

The Afghan Hazara women cooked up an absolute storm. There were many happy and satisfied guests.

The evening began with some traditional Afghan drumming by Feyzieh (who was also one of the wonderful chefs). Najibeh Jafari began by acknowledging Country and welcoming everyone. Arezo then asked me a range of questions about the project.

I began, as this project did, with the encounter between the image of Malalai Joya and Gali – a powerful statement, not only of the commitment of women to one another but also of the importance of 'the visual' in moving people.

When I spoke about the symbolic meaning of handkerchiefs, both in Australia and in Afghanistan many of the Afghan women smiled and nodded. One of the guests came up afterwards to tell me of a recent movie she saw about a young Afghan man who came to Australia with nothing other than a handkerchief embroidered by, and given to him, by his mother.”

*Barbara.*

*[\* Barbara Kameniar is one of the Australian artists who contributed to the book, and worked with Gali to create it.]*

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For a wonderful review and description of the book, see the recent Melbourne Age article.

<https://www.theage.com.au/culture/art-and-design/handkerchiefs-offer-a-message-of-hope-to-the-women-of-kabul-20200831-p55qu8.html>

### How to purchase **"Making Marks"**: \$39.95 plus post

**"Making Marks"** can be purchased online from:

<https://galiweiss.wixsite.com/making-marks-book>

or through Vivid Publishing:

<http://www.vividpublishing.com.au/makingmarks/>

Alternatively, around Australia it may be possible to pick up a copy locally, saving the cost of postage.

**South Australia:** [sawacommittee@gmail.com](mailto:sawacommittee@gmail.com)

Arrangements can be made for pick-up or delivery in Adelaide.

**New South Wales:** [info.nsw@sawa-australia.org](mailto:info.nsw@sawa-australia.org)

**Tasmania:** Zafira Café, 35 Gormanston Rd, Moonah 7009

**Making Marks** is the second book to tell the story of the partnership between Australian artists and the women at the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul. The first book, *Two Trees*, also collated by Gali Weiss, raised over \$17,000 for the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul.

### LATEST NEWS AND PHOTOS FROM THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE in KABUL.

It's always exciting to receive emails and photos from the VTC and to share the latest news with everyone who supports SAWA's work in Afghanistan.

#### 1. English and Computing Classes

When the SAWA Committee spoke with Mursal, VTC Director, earlier this year, we asked if there were new ways in which we could assist the VTC.



Mursal explained that the students, particularly the younger girls, were asking for classes in English and Computing to assist them to find jobs.

With a generous donation from a SAWA member, we have been able to transfer funds to support the purchase of equipment and hiring of teachers for these programs.

English and Computing Classes have now been operating for two months with very enthusiastic students.



#### An online chat with the English class

Carol Shamsabadi, SAWA Treasurer, arranged with Mursal to chat with the English class via WhatsApp. Here is what happened ....

*"All the students introduced themselves and some, who were a little more confident, spoke about their families, why they are studying English and what they would like to do in the future. They are all keen to learn and support their families. Sama, the teacher, studied in Pakistan and is an architect. Her English is very good. When I was saying goodbye, one of the students asked about the continuation of the classes. They all want to keep studying English as they see it as offering hope for work in the future."*



Carol talking to the students in the English class (look closely at the computer screen!)

#### 2. Facemasks Project:

Mursal sent news that, in addition to distributing facemasks to the needy and to patients through the Hamoon Health Clinic, OPAWC also ran a seminar on COVID-19 awareness and distributed about 8000 facemasks at Farah Public University. More than 400 students and university staff benefited from this program.



Facemasks seminar at Farah University



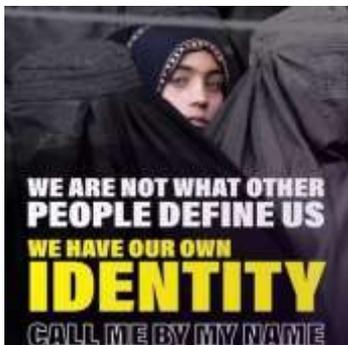
Eager students learning new skills



**AFGHANISTAN ALLOWS MOTHERS' NAMES ON BIRTH CERTIFICATES IN 'SIGNIFICANT' MILESTONE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has signed an amendment allowing mothers' names to be included on their children's birth certificates, after a three-year campaign by women's rights activists.

Through a poster widely circulated on social media, Afghan women urge, 'Call me by my name'.



Using the hashtag #WhereIsMyName, campaigners pushed for the right of women to be named on official documents including children's birth certificates, which previously named only the father.

They are fighting an ingrained Afghan tradition that states using a woman's name in public brings shame on the family. Instead, women are publicly referred to by the name of their closest male relatives. Their own names are generally not present on documents, on their wedding invitations or even on their own gravestones.

The Afghan cabinet's legal affairs committee said the move was a significant achievement.

"The decision to include the mother's name in the ID card is a big step towards gender equality and the realisation of women's rights," the committee said in a statement.

Heather Barr, of Human Rights Watch, stated "But it's really significant, because as long as women's names don't appear on identification cards, don't appear in public records, their identities really don't exist, and a lot of their legal rights don't exist."

Ms Barr said until now, basic things — like school registration, obtaining health care or a passport for their children or travelling with them — have been impossible for Afghan mothers to do without the father present.

It's a step toward being your own person, being recognised by your government as being your own person and that's why a lot of women have been campaigning for years to make this happen.



#WhereIsMyName founder Laleh Osmany has been supported by Herat Governor Wahid Qattali. (ABC News: Omid Sobhani)



Herat Governor Wahid Qattali praised the activists who led the campaign to reclaim the identities of Afghan women (Photo: Omid Sobhani)

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**More photos from the VTC English and Computing Classes**



**Editor's note:**

SAWA is happy to receive submissions from members on matters relevant to Afghanistan and Afghan women, and we will endeavour to publish your stories or links to other news sources when possible. Email: [sawacommittee@gmail.com](mailto:sawacommittee@gmail.com)

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Partner NGOs: **OPAWC** (Organization for Promoting Afghan Women's Capabilities), **AFCECO** (Afghan Child Education and Care Organization)

### Annual General Meeting postponed

We were disappointed to have to cancel the AGM on November 17, but we will reschedule as soon as we can all get together safely again. All members and supporters will be advised of the revised date.

### SAWA-Australia (SA) Inc is moving ahead

During this unusual year of 2020, the Committee has taken the opportunity to update our systems and prepare for new activities and events whenever these can take place. We've been fortunate in South Australia not to have experienced severe restrictions for most of the year, but it still wasn't possible to organize large fund-raising events, such as film screenings or concerts etc. With the latest wave of the virus, plans are again on hold, but we're ready to swing into action as soon as possible.

We've taken advantage of this time to redesign the SAWA website and develop our Strategic Plan for the next 5 years.

### Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025

Our key goals for the next five years are to:

- *Raise funds to support the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul.*
- *Advocate for, and promote the human rights of, the women of Afghanistan*
- *Communicate with everyone involved with SAWA-Australia (SA) Inc.*
- *Ensure the sound governance and administration of our organisation*

With strategies planned to meet all goals, our biggest task is to continue to raise \$50,000 each year to support the VTC – but we are determined to achieve it. The women and girls of Afghanistan deserve our ongoing support.

### Funds to Afghanistan

In September we sent a further \$38,730 (US\$27,490) to OPAWC for purchase of computers and employment of teachers for the English and computing classes.

### The new SAWA website

With the valued assistance of Peter Miller of PM Websites, we are updating the SAWA-Australia website. It's a steep learning curve for the Committee, but the site is taking shape and we trust that everyone will appreciate the new look and ease of access to information when it launches. Watch this space!

### The Ghan Film Festival

The Festival took place in Adelaide on 23-26 October. Some Committee members saw the film "Hava, Maryam, Ayesha", the story of three pregnant Afghan women from different social backgrounds, living in Kabul and facing challenges in their lives.



The Festival organisers kindly allowed us to display SAWA brochures and copies of the book "Making Marks". We are on their mailing list and hope to strengthen our contact and possibly work together if an opportunity presents in the future. Both our organisations seek to improve the lives of the disadvantaged and vulnerable in Afghanistan.



Committee member, Julie Irwin, at the book table.





**OUR PROJECT in NANGARHAR PROVINCE  
and A SPECIAL APPEAL**

Below are very heartening reflections from Shukriya and Somatra, two of the 140 participants of the Centre that we fund in Khewa district of Nangarhar Province.

We highlight these responses because this SAWAN comes with a special appeal. We are hoping that our generous supporters will be happy to donate some of what they would have paid to come to a SAWA Lunch or Dinner in pre Covid-19 days – perhaps around \$50.00.

This month we sent \$US10,000 (\$A14,394), about half of the \$US19,198 budget for the current school year (October 2020 to September 2021). This leaves a shortfall of about \$A15,000 depending on the exchange rate at the time, to send early in 2021.

**SHUKRIYA . . . . .**

I am Shukriya and my father is Aqel Muhammad. I live in a large family of 17 members which includes two mothers, father, ten brothers and four sisters.

I have studied till 5th grade. After some time of going to school, because of security issues, my father and brothers did not allow



me to go to school. Though my mother was strictly against this decision of my father and brothers but she could not do or say anything to stop them from it.

It is the second year that I have been away from school and education, but now that I have learnt about this opportunity to

learn in this course, I am really happy to come here so I could learn something but my brothers don't know about this because they work out of city and they visit home after some months. In fact, my brothers are against my learning. I try so hard to reach my dreams and make them fulfilled by learning and educating myself through this course, which at a time before finding this Organization I lost my hopes for making my dreams come true, now I am very happy that one day I can change them all to reality. . . . .

This literacy course has been a huge transformation in my life. I wish I could continue it more so in future I could make such a course for other girls and women like me who are facing obstacles by their families and society, and teach them.

AGM for SAWA-NSW was held on Wednesday, 18th November, 2020  
 A notice went out to members but due to covid restrictions our number was limited.

**SOMATRA . . . . .**

I am Somatra daughter of Ahmad from Kunar province. Nowadays we live in Woles Dara village, Khewa district of Nangarhar province.



We have grown in a place where we used to hear bombings and bullet fires every day and everywhere and after few years we migrated to Nangarhar province. . . . And I got admission at this tailoring and stitching course. At first I even didn't know how to even cut a piece of cloth but with the help and efforts of this center, I learned an art and now I can

stitch and design clothes and I also help and support my family financially.

At last I want to thank and appreciate OPAWC Organization and its work and wish them more success.

**FACE MASKS in Afghanistan**

This project, of the OPAWC Centre in Kabul, has produced many thousands of face masks for people who cannot find or afford this basic level of protection from COVID-19, particularly roadside workers. We received very positive thanks for the US\$10,000 (almost \$A15,000) we were able to send from your generous donations earlier in the year. The work continues, as shown by the photographs in the Special SAWAN in July. Masks have also been distributed to the Nangarhar students and families, to roadside workers in Khewa as well as to people from the Hamoon Health Centre in Farah Province, also run by OPAWC.

**LOCAL NEWS**

- Your Committee has been meeting monthly via Zoom to manage general administration, finances, the website and contact with OPAWC's Mursal Rahimi, the inspiring young Afghan Director of OPAWC, as well as with our SAWA colleagues in South Australia who have so positively picked up the reins after the death of Matthias Tomczak. We celebrated our first face to face meeting on 13th October, courtesy member Robyn Longhurst.
- SAWA NSW shopping bags. There has been a slight increase in price from \$10 to \$12 so you can still be an ambassador for SAWA as well as purchasing a great gift. The bags are very lightweight, machine washable, extremely strong (hold 15Kgs), and fold up in a tiny bundle to fit in your handbag. Colours in stock are red, ruby, pumpkin, gold, chocolate, emerald, aqua, peacock, purple, jacaranda, pink and burgundy. To order, email: [info.nsw@sawa-australia.org](mailto:info.nsw@sawa-australia.org) specifying numbers and colours, payment method (direct deposit or cheque) and delivery address.