

President message: AGM 2019

Good morning to you all. I would like to start by thanking you all preferring to be here today for this annual general meeting. We say farewell and Rest in peace to members of the Council who passed away during 2018- Maria Tabone, Pauline Meli, Lina Caruana, Evelyn Vella Brincat, Precedes Contarini and Rita Gauci – Lord Grant them Eternal Rest- Amen.

We have important work during this AGM, so shall not bore you with a long speech since Doris will be giving details in her report about the Council's activities, Events and achievements. The Council has continued to grow in stature and in membership during 2018, but we do not sit on our laurels, but rather move ahead to acquire more as each one is an achievement for all women and not just for the Council.

So what is planned for this year? What are the topics that need to be discussed ?

- The Gender pay gap- women earning less than their male counterparts for same work- equal pay for equal work. Although we have this as a law, it is not respected in all sectors. So a just pay check at the end of the month according to the contribution at work. Women are earning more but generally earn less due to working lesser hours on account of family responsibilities- so what can be done about that? Sharing responsibilities, balancing of work and family life.
- Prostitution: To legalise or not to legalise. The Netherlands lifted the ban on brothels- The results are that the lives of persons in prostitution worsened rather than got better. The Nordic Model on the other hand criminalises the buyer. Results show that whereas in neighbouring countries prostitution has increased, in Sweden the law has acted as a barrier to traffickers and other organised crime, especially trafficking of women. This law seems to be very acceptable to the young, which is encouraging as it means that life values are being conveyed and accepted.

- The fight against plastics- A scary subject that has surfaced with a certain force, the day Europeans faced with their sins as to where they have dumped their plastics. Originally thinking that this material was directed for recycling but finally realising that all of this ended up polluting the rivers and oceans, with the consequence that we are in now dire straits as to how to manage this monumental problem, how to clean the mess and remove all the plastics that are now finding its way to the fish stomachs and finally in ours!! So let us take more care of our earth.
- Forthcoming European Elections: Lets get the best people elected and lets get the right women elected . We always knew that they could do a great job, now we have the proof.
- Skill Cards- NCW has been pushing for skill cards for the last years. These have been introduced so far for some skills, mostly in the building industry, but now and finally, it seems that this subject is reaching the higher levels of discussions in order to introduce these skill cards across the board. Many women who have so many skills and no certificates will now have the possibility to acquire these desirable cards!
- Financial Literacy- when I was young we always seemed to be made aware of how much things cost and how to make a few pennies of pocket money last throughout the week. I personally remember not buying anything for 2 days so that on the 3rd day I could buy a packet of Twistees. This thought me how to budget from a very early age. To buy what I wished for but at the opportune time. Our young need to start learning this too as otherwise there will be a risk of poverty in older age.
- Education- we know that our girls are now better educated, but let us encourage them towards more scientific subjects. These are the subjects of the future, those that will pay well and therefore those that will balance out the difference in earnings between males and females. As parents, sisters, aunts and grandparents we must encourage the girls to choose these subjects

at school and later on at university in order to progress in a career in such as IT, research, and so on

- These are but a few aspects that will be tackled during this year . There is also work, family life, health, violence, migration, and so much more.

We shall hear about the resolutions which are basically prepared around identified concerns that are prepared for this year. We can say that a number of resolutions get adopted by the government and we must appreciate and thank those who prepared them and brought them forward for discussion.

So going forward - Each one of us has a responsibility to better the environment they live in, starting with those closest to us and moving outwards towards those we meet in our daily lives. Lets keep this as our guiding light for 2019! 2018 was a success for the Council and we look forward to you all being part of this family and its success, so we may pass on what we are working for now as an achievement to our children and grandchildren. It is said that the beneficiaries of each change is enjoyed by the next generation.

I would like to end by saying a huge THANK YOU to all of you for being here, and for supporting the Council . Thanks go to Grace, Marie, Therese for their work and all the Executive for their time, the volunteers and most especially to Doris . A thank you also to all of you who have prayed for my husband and me whilst he was in hospital and supported me with kind words and an ear to listen to my woes. One does not realise her vulnerability until she experiences the situation. So again Thank you and God bless you.