

# PEER SUPPORT ADVOCACY NETWORK (PSAN) UPDATE

Thanks again for your responses to our questionnaire. Almost one third of our members responded, and this phenomenal response rate demonstrates the interest and importance of this project to our members.

Data entry is now complete and some interesting results have emerged. As might be expected, over 91% of respondents saw income security as the most important issue for older women with transport and attitudes towards older women coming next at 87% followed closely by health and housing at 85% and social isolation at 83%. Other concerns were raised and these are at present being collated.

Health issues are 'followed with interest' by almost half of the respondents with up to 40% 'following with interest' each of the other issues. Over half of the respondents are currently involved as consumer advocates.

A range of possible advocacy activities was identified on the questionnaire, and we asked people to indicate what they would be prepared to undertake. Every suggested activity attracted some response with 'attending meetings at OWN' being the most popular. This valuable information is now part of the database and this means that we can follow up individual interests as needs arise.

Just a word about the PSAN database. It will comprise several interrelated database files of contact lists and publications to ensure that PSAN volunteers can satisfy requests for assistance with advocacy quickly and easily. So that appropriate information is in the database and our volunteers confident about providing assistance two major activities are underway. Firstly, information is being identified and categorised and secondly, a training program is being designed by Justine, our PSAN consultant. Members who already have computer skills and who have expressed an interest in being trained in database entry and information retrieval have been invited to indicate when they are available for training. It is expected that training will commence within a few weeks.

The next major event will be the completion of a prototype PSAN database and acceptance testing of the design. Members who wanted some involvement in the project will be invited to test that the database is user friendly, that it is consistent with OWN philosophy, that the information it contains is readily accessible, and that the input of new information can be easily achieved.

Margaret Bridger

## Job Vacancy: **Volunteers' Coordinator**

The Older Women's Network is run by volunteers right through from management to answering the phone. While we are lucky to have two very experienced part-time workers to assist us with our work, OWN has grown enormously over the years and this has put extra pressure on the regular volunteers who undertake a wide variety of roles. Recently, those of us undertaking coordination roles met with our workers to discuss strategies to deal with the issue of coordinating rostered volunteers.

We identified a new role: Volunteers' Coordinator. The tasks allocated to the Volunteers' Coordinator would include:

- \* Actively recruiting volunteers
- \* Organising skill development and training
- \* Providing information about OWN's policies and procedures
- \* Coordinating and supporting volunteers' work
- \* Maintaining a weekly volunteers' roster

If you think you might be interested in this exciting role, please phone Margaret Bridger at OWN on 9247 7046 or at home on 9569 6092 to have a chat.

# Coordinator's Report

Well, April felt like a month of interruptions with the public holidays over Easter and the Anzac Day long weekend but lots happened, as usual.

In line with a decision made by the Working Committee at our February Review and Planning Session (RAPS), we held a workshop in March to identify strategies that might help us to deal with our work (over) load. Some of the suggestions, ratified at the April Working Committee meeting, include splitting up activities into more manageable tasks and then (hopefully) sharing them out amongst more women. For instance, newsletter production is being streamlined with the appointment of Merle Hight to a new position of 'Production Coordinator'. Merle's job is to coordinate production by recruiting more volunteers for specific tasks such as printing and collation, and ensuring that everyone is available at the right time and on the right day!

Another position, to coordinate rostered and occasional volunteers, has also been created. We hope that the advertisement for a Volunteers' Coordinator, prepared for this newsletter by Margaret Bridger, will have positive responses from interested members.

We reviewed the tasks assigned to Sam Smart who has been Membership Coordinator for nearly a year and realised that they are better being split up amongst a number of people. So Sam is now the Wellness Coordinator which, on its own, is a big task. Her work is currently very focused on the July Wellness Forum which we hope will promote the blossoming of OWN's Wellness philosophy throughout the State.

We also hoping to find someone to step into Peg's Theatre Group Coordinator shoes by the end of the year, so if you know someone who would really love to manage the Theatre Group, please dob them in immediately!

The Peer Support Advocacy Network (PSAN) project is moving at a tremendous pace with Justine, our project worker, now preparing a design for the database that will help us in our advocacy work. PSAN has been acknowledged by other older peoples' organisations involved in advocacy as an excellent model for assisting people to support each other to get what they want both personally and politically.

We have also started to discuss some changes to OWN's Constitution. Suggested changes will be circulated to members for discussion via the Newsletter and final recommendations will then be presented for members to vote on at the next AGM.

**Many of our members have recently been actively promoting OWN at a number of functions and forums (see Joy's IYOP Report), and we are happy to report a significant increase in our membership as a result. Welcome to all new members. We hope that you find that being a member of the Older Women's Network is both rewarding and enjoyable.**

Margaret Bridger, Sam Smart, Renate Watkinson

## ON THE WELLNESS FRONT

Second term programs are up and running at Bankstown and Northside, with attendance up at both Centres this year. The Bankstown Centre offers 16 sessions each week at three locations - ring Julie on 9708 2245 for information. The Northside Centre is operating at three locations three days per week, although a funding crisis is looming large as June 30th comes closer. Cara has done a wonderful job seeking out small grants from local councils and other bodies, and she is continuing negotiations with Northern Sydney Health... here's hoping!

Keep in mind the State-wide Wellness Forum to be held at the Women's College, Sydney University on July 6 & 7. The program promises to be varied, interesting and productive; a brochure with registration details will be going out early in May. NSW Health has provided a generous grant for the Forum, enabling us to sponsor travel and accommodation costs for two delegates from each OWN group within NSW. Registration for these two delegates will be \$20 each. Older women who are not OWN members will be partially subsidised, to encourage participation. Full registration details will be included with the brochure in the next couple of weeks.

The Theatre Group and Wellness representatives will be off on a tour of small towns in southern NSW later in the year, to meet with older women and share ideas and experiences. Again we are fortunate to have received a grant from NSW Health for this. The Health Department has put \$\$ behind their commitment to support OWN's Wellness model, written into the Healthy Ageing Framework and in celebration of IYOP. State Departments for Ageing and Disability, Sport and Recreation, and Women are all backing the Forum, helping us to work towards lasting and widespread benefits for older women across NSW.

Sam Smart

### MOVING WITH THE TIMES IN SHOALHAVEN

OWN member and Shoalhaven City Council Community Worker, Aged and Disabled, Isabel MacCallum gets a big bouquet for organising a really splendid 3-day conference & expo to celebrate IYOP at Nowra. The capacity crowd really appreciated the wealth of information and discussion, covering housing, safety, finance, transport, health matters, local government, and many other personal and community issues. All this interspersed with exercise, entertainment and loads of healthy food! You really had to be there!

OWN's Theatre Group were there on Day 1, receiving their usual warm welcome, and the Wellness project was included in a panel discussion on day 2, along with representatives from local over 50's groups and the Coast Centre for Seniors at Little Bay. Day 3 was given over to U3As regional conference, all in all a huge effort, well organised and well attended - congratulations Isabel! The program makes a great model for other energetic communities looking for an event to organise!

Sam Smart

## Older People Short-changed in the GST Compensation Stakes

The following press release was recently circulated by the Australian Pensioners and Superannuants' Federation (AP&SF).

"Age pensioners remain unconvinced that the GST compensation will not be totally eroded within just five years," Edith Morgan, President of AP&SF said today, as she warned that 1.7 million age pensioners would be shocked and angry to learn that the GST compensation begins to fade away a few months after it is introduced.

AP&SF wrote to the Prime Minister during the election campaign warning that the compensation would be undermined and would quickly erode because of the link between the GST pension rise and male total average weekly earnings. The PM's response was to evade the issue, as he continues to do.

"If Treasury officials can see a major flaw in the compensation for pensions, why can't the Government? Perhaps Pensioners should enlist the services of Perry Mason to help them in this most baffling mystery - 'The Case of the Disappearing GST Compensation'.

AP&SF's Norah McGuire said, 'Pensioners and low income retirees living off their ever diminishing savings are feeling anything but 'relaxed and comfortable'. The GST compensation offered borders on the insulting. Older Australians have serious reservations with the tax package as a whole - in addition to whether or not food is taxed'.

A complex and expensive billion dollar rescue plan would now be needed to salvage the compensation package. However, AP&SF cautions against relying too heavily on compensation that could be taken away with the stroke of a legislative pen. Governments simply cannot be trusted to guarantee that the compensation will be maintained.

"No fair-minded Australian could support a tax plan that would short change millions of Australians," concluded Edith Morgan of AP&SF.

### Poems of the Moment

Bright lorikeets

With royal fuchsia heads

Devour my grevilleas.

The wattle luminous in late afternoon

Measures the meander of the creek:

I mourn the beloved dead.

Everald Garner

## Learning With Uni Students

On March 30th, I enjoyed joining a team to speak to third year social work students at Sydney University. Some students followed up with a personal visit to OWN headquarters to learn more about us.

Some years ago, I spoke to social work students at universities and TAFE colleges, but things have changed! I used to ask where students' preferences lay in future works - with youth, in corrective services, etc.? Overwhelmingly the majority wanted NOT to work with older people. This time it was clear there is not the same stigma today attached to working with and for older people.

I told these young people how many older women are affected by government policies. The positive policies, like Healthy Ageing, have only restricted funding. I spoke of our fears about user pays policies, and our opposition to funding cuts for community health services such as podiatry, dental and physiotherapy which maintain the mobility and health of older people in their own communities. And I enthused about new innovative paths to maintaining health opened up by our Older Women's Wellness Centres.

We exchanged concerns about early release from hospitals and the burdens it placed on women especially, unless adequate services were provided; about Aboriginal women elders, the respect held for them and their contribution to their families and communities. And how the OWN theatre group converted influential people to more positive attitudes to older women (I sang snatches from "Ms Cellophane" and "I'm Not an Elle McPherson" - if it could be called singing!) They kindly applauded a reading of my verse, "What am I?" I'm afraid I performed rather than informed, putting aside prepared notes to speak off the cuff. But I'm assured the results were OK.

I learned from two other speakers, both students. One, who was doing post-graduate studies, had controlled schizophrenia. She was able graphically to describe discriminatory practices against her because of her condition - including a sacking from a job she did well - and other negative experiences based on sexuality. It was great to see that she was being encouraged in further studies at the university in an atmosphere of non-discrimination.

The other, a male student, was a refugee from Chile, where he had been a victim of the political oppression. He described the conditions refugees faced in Australia under present Federal policies and the lack of understanding of their difficulties. He spoke of their desire to demonstrate their loyalty to their compatriots through retaining Chilean citizenship - a situation which created problems with Australian authorities.

Together with the audience of students, we demonstrated how intergenerational understanding - and hopefully partnerships - can be fostered in this Year of Older People.

Noreen Hewett

## AGE DISCRIMINATION - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Have you been discriminated against because of your age? 'Ageism' or prejudice against people based on their age is well and truly alive, just as racism and sexism are a fact of life. However, the Anti-Discrimination Act, 1977 (NSW) gives you the right not to be discriminated against or harassed because of your age. The law covers discrimination in many situations such as:

### Getting the goods and services you are entitled to

Organisations that offer goods and services such as those provided by health providers, insurance companies, retail stores, local councils or State Government Departments, must ensure that they do not discriminate. For example, you can't be denied goods or a service because of your age. *A 67 year old woman received marketing mail inviting her to apply for a credit card with a financial institution. When she followed it up, she was told that there was a rule that all people on age pensions were ineligible, regardless of their incomes. The Anti-Discrimination Board provided her with information on age discrimination, and after much negotiating, she was able to get a credit card. The financial institution also agreed to drop this requirement.*

### Your right to education

In public education, it is against the law for an educational institution to refuse to enrol you because of your age. But they can set up a special course based on a person's age to meet their special needs. *For example, a TAFE course for mature workers aged over 45 years old who have been made redundant that is helping people to access employment would not be unlawful under the Act.*

### A place called home

When applying to rent, or when renting accommodation, treating someone differently because of their age may be discriminatory. An advertisement for example, which says that 'people over 30 years need not apply' is discriminatory. *Another example of a person acting against the law is where a new apartment block is marketed to trendy young people and the agent will not allow a person who is looking after their elderly mother to rent or buy in the block.*

### Exceptions to the law

Not all kinds of unfair treatment are against the law. Sometimes discrimination is 'desirable', such as when it meets a special need of a particular age group, or if it protects a particular age group. That's why concessions and discounts offered to seniors are not considered unlawful and why alcohol cannot be sold to people under the age of 18 years.

### Unfair treatment and discrimination

Sometimes the law simply doesn't cover the kind of unfair treatment and discrimination you experience. For example, the Act does not cover neighbourhood disputes. But that shouldn't stop you from letting the other party know that you feel their treatment is unfair.

If you are experiencing discrimination in any of the areas described above, you should first try to work it out with the other party. If you have exhausted your possibilities with them, you have the right to make a complaint to the Anti-Discrimination Board. It is important to phone first to find out if it is covered by the law, or if there may be another way to solve the problem. Stand up for your rights and let's kick age discrimination in 1999!

The Board is eager to spread the word on preventing all forms of discrimination through our education and training work so that people are better informed about where they stand. We are targeting age discrimination issues during the International Year of Older People, and can provide training on anti-discrimination laws to assist groups.

If you want more information, call the Anti-Discrimination Board on (02) 9318 5444 or 1800 670 812 (freecall STD) or TTY (02) 9310 2376. Also, visit our Internet site for copies of our brochures and frequently asked questions at <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb>. We also have offices in Newcastle (02) 4926 4300 and Wollongong (02) 4226 8190.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

OWN (Australia) has just published the I.Y.O.P. edition of "Making Known", their national newsletter. Unfortunately, severe funding cuts this year have prevented us from posting a copy to all Sydney Newsletter readers.

You may obtain your copy either from 87 Lower Fort Street, the National Office at Room 410, 147a King St., or by sending a postage stamp for \$1.25 for delivery.

This edition contains forty pages of articles, serious and funny, as well as poems, personal stories and information of interest to older women.

It is a book to dip into and savour. Make sure you get your copy. Muriel Hortin

### Oops!

The poem in "Making Known" called "The Great Bush Tour" which followed the article on the Theatre Group was wrongly accredited to Dorothy Cox.

It was written by Lucy Porter and appeared in the Sydney Newsletter in May, 1994.

Lucy, a stalwart of the Theatre Group is both a wonderful performer and a talented script-and song writer. She is at present overseas enjoying a well-earned holiday.

We apologise to both her and Dorothy.

Editor, "Making Known"

## THEATRE GROUP REPORT

This report is being written about halfway through the month to meet Newsletter deadlines, and because the Theatre Group has been on holidays (those two weeks in April we take off to recover from March madness).

All I have to report is that before we finished in March we were auditioned by a Sydney City Council person who is putting together a "Cabaret Showcase" in June. It offers an opportunity for entertainers to "Strut their Stuff" in front of entrepreneurs who are looking for entertainment for clubs, etc., so as well as a prize, there could be offers of work. I was a bit wary of our being involved as it was not the prize that interests us. Couldn't see us being a club event, either. But it was another opportunity in this "Year of the Older Person" to "have our say!" When the day arrived our numbers were depleted with Lucy overseas, Judith off to Perth, and Merle away so our stalwart Louise made up a "seven minutes" group of songs. That's the time we get on stage. And perform we did. We still have to be selected and provide biographies of our group, etc., but she was quite impressed with us. So there, we may make it with the pros.

Oh, and the Bankstown Council (Health Promotion) Aged Care Team day went well despite my getting the performance time a half an hour out and then having to fill in. As we were leaving the stage, and I was the last to leave, she said, "Could you sing an Irish song?" Another first! So quickly rattling through the grey matter, I went back to the microphone, and led the audience in "When Irish Eyes are Smiling." When the rest of the group realised what had happened, they came back and backed me up. Talk about being troupers.

We've been to Nowra to the I.Y.O.P. conference and what a trip! Quite a well organised day. We were welcomed to the land by local Aboriginal identities. Hugh McKay, social commentator, was the guest speaker and he chose diversity as his theme, but not with the usual connotation. Instead, he used the realities of the generation born in the twenties - their children the "baby boomers", and their children, and the differences between the realities and expectations of each. Most impressive. Politicians, Joanna Gash MP for Gilmore and Senator Kay Patterson from Victoria were on the welcome panel, and when the Chair was thanking them with the usual excusing of Politicians who have to go early, Joanna said they were coming back to see the Older Women's Network Theatre Group. The show received the usual enthusiastic response, and when I suggested time might not allow an encore, the audience demanded it by acclamation and that settled that. So we made "Whoopee"!

By the time you read this we will have been to Queanbeyan to perform at "Older and Wiser", a Conference on Violence Against Older Women. We were flown down, and we've opted to have a day in Canberra. We do get around as members of OWN, don't we?

We finish off April at Kooloora Community Centre, Malabar. So, till next month, when I'll tell you how we fared - my, how this year is moving along - roll on the Olympics. Ho Hum.

Peggy Hewett

### REPORT ON OLDER DRIVERS SURVEY

Thank you all who replied to the survey. It has been very helpful in identifying members' attitudes to the over 85 driving test. The following report was written for the Working Committee before all the replies were in, so while forty-two women responded, this report only covers the first thirty-eight responses. The later responses did not in any way alter the trend of the first thirty-eight replies

All of the respondents held current licences and intended to renew them. All owned a car, and all were aware that they had to undergo retesting at 85 years to renew licences.

None of them had been tested so far. They were all less than 85 years old. The age range of the respondents was 56 to 80 years.

Cars were mainly used for social reasons, then shopping, and then keeping appointments.

Of the thirtyeight respondents, twentyfive agreed that it was fair that drivers should do tests at 85 to renew licences Eleven did not. Only nine thought their driving skills had deteriorated with age. One thought they'd improved!

Many respondents had driving strategies that they didn't see as at all compensatory for ageing. Many avoided peak hour, busy intersections and driving at night. Some always had, some did it for preference now that daily work meant they didn't have to travel in definite patterns.

On whether age specific information should be made available to older drivers, fifteen thought that it should, twenty one thought not. Twenty two were interested in driver retraining, though thirteen would do it only if it were free.

Eighteen respondents thought they would replace their cars eventually, eight were unsure, and twelve said they would not, but some of those thought their present car would last their driving life.

Pam Ledden

# SOCIAL ISOLATION

The fourth and final workshop of a series based on 'Social Justice for Older Women' organised by Woy Woy OWN attracted 44 participants.

The guest speaker for this workshop which focused on Social Isolation was Patricia Wynn from the Central Coast Area Health Service. Patricia is on the Mental Health Team and is professionally involved with depression and suicide in the elderly.

After a brief introduction, which included several definitions of 'social isolation', we were divided up into small groups, and asked to consider:

- \* Definition of social isolation
- \* contributing factors and the causes of social isolation
- \* dealing effectively with these issues

Definitions of social isolation included 'Social isolation is a sociologically based death by involuntary separation from an environment beyond our personal space'.

Some contributing factors and the causes of social isolation included low self esteem, involuntary separation from partners and/or family, illness and grief. Other factors that we have very little control over include inadequate and dangerous transport systems, many organisations are too expensive to consider membership and/or participation in their various activities, environmental problems (including crossing roads), dangerous footpaths and street crime.

However, other factors, way beyond our control, that dramatically contributed to social isolation, include the cutting of services and funding by local, state and federal governments to services that directly affected elderly women. For example, the funding cuts and reduced services of Health Departments, including Home Care services

Other factors considered influential are culturally based customs, the negative focus of the media, and the fact that in the decision making processes of governments, physical and mental issues are considered, but social isolation is not on their agenda.

We discussed how to deal effectively with these issues. On a personal level, individuals could reach out to people they were aware of as being socially isolated. A phone call or a visit to their home could do this if that was appropriate. Everyone agreed that often talking to someone has a very healing effect. As individuals, we could learn some self defence techniques, lobby our doctors, locally elected representatives, and become more aware and caring neighbours.

On an organisational level, we could work with organisations such as the Older Women's Network, which

effectively lobbies for social justice for older women through publicity, research projects and actively applying pressure on governments and organisations to implement change. Women who are members of such organisations are less likely to become socially isolated because of the creation of social networks, both within and outside their group. Also, by belonging to an organisation and participating in its activities, we can maintain our physical and mental wellbeing, thus decreasing the possibilities of incapacity which can lead to social isolation.

On a community level, it was suggested that representatives from community groups, organisations and interests groups could form partnerships with governing bodies. This sharing of information, and having a direct input into the community, could also assist in preventing social isolation.

The enthusiasm of the participation on this topic clearly indicated that it is a social issue that needs to be pursued in the future.

Maggie Leggett

## FILM REVIEWS

### CENTRAL STATION

The opening scene shows us the people streaming through Central Station in Brazil, where Dora, an out-of-work teacher, writes letters for the uneducated for a one dollar fee. By chance, a young orphan boy wanders into her life, and from there we follow the journey of these two, he looking for his father and she for her heart. Superb performances by Fernanda Montenegro and the young boy, who was shining shoes when found by the director, Walter Salles. A heart warming film of two unlikely people gradually learning to like each other.

### FILMS WORTH SEEING:

"HILARY AND JACKIE", with Rachel Griffiths and Emily Watson in a story about genius and family love.

"ANALYSE THIS" - Robert de Niro and Billy Crystal in an hilarious comedy.

"TANGO" - if you love to watch dancing.

Jean Smallwood

## ADDRESSING HEALTH GRADUATES

Noreen Hewett was invited to speak at a recent graduation ceremony at the University of Western Sydney. Here is what she said.

First, congratulations to you, the graduates, and to all who helped you to make it this far along the path to brilliant success – Uni staff, family, and friends. Having a network of supports really helps, as we in the Older Women's Network (OWN) find. Support for self discovery and growth, for times of stress and illness.

Negative attitudes do change to positive through the Older Women's Theatre Group. They use satire to expose the myth that over sixty is over the hill, that experts always know best and that growing old is equivalent to the 3 Ds - Debility, Depression, Dependence.

Songs and scripts tell how we're treated as invisible. Ms Cellophane's 'you can look right through me, walk right by me and never know I'm there' or ditties like 'I'm not an Elle McPherson'. Betty inspired it and I wrote it, and we'll both sing it! (We sang the whole song!) . And remember this, 'Ageism is the bias towards older people by the temporarily young!'

A University Professor I know (not from the University of Western Sydney) once spoke to a pensioner conference about what to expect in future years. Services such as domiciliary and medical care and preventative health would be virtually inaccessible to low income groups, he said. Someone remarked, 'It sounds like all gloom and doom; what about euthanasia?' His eyes lit up. Yes, he supported voluntary euthanasia. Well, many of us do. But it sounded at the time as though it was the only alternative to a dreary old age.

Some two or three years later he saw the Theatre Group, and afterwards told them, 'Well, you've certainly changed my attitude'. He was a positive ageing convert.

Some fifteen years ago, at 64, I spoke to third year medical students, and afterwards, in a workshop, asked whether ageism existed in the medical profession. 'No', they said emphatically, 'Or at least only among older doctors'. Other students laughed hilariously at this finding, reported to the plenary session.

Years ago, I began asking social work students about their preferred future work – with young people, with older people? Overwhelmingly they wanted to work with youth, so I was pleasantly surprised three weeks ago when I asked this year's students at Sydney University the same question. The balance fell the other way.

Are there career prospects in working with older women?

On many occasions, our work has created jobs. Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre, the unique creation of OWN, employs younger as well as older women. The model has spread to the Northern Suburbs and will continue to grow through a statewide Wellness conference in July, funded by NSW Health Department. The key to the wellness model's success is that older women define their needs, design the services and co-manage the Centres.

Older women have consistently joined younger people in saving existing services and setting up new ones, in research, getting legislative reforms, and in securing networks of advocacy for older people.

I'd hope that here, today, seeds can be sown for future partnerships, not only for job creation but for attitudinal change and innovative aids to healthy ageing.

Please don't lump all older people together as inevitable resisters to change. Baby boomers are not likely to be as self-sacrificing as previous generations have been. We of the current generation see ourselves as having vision, vigour and vitality, energy and creativity.

As well known writers have quoted, from an unknown source, "Who knows? The revolutionary leader of the future may well be Grandma!"

Noreen Hewett

## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS (IYOP)

Seniors Week in March'99 was one of high peaks of IYOP with OWN members playing a considerable role in bringing older women's issues to the notice of the community. Our thanks to Jetty Windt, Helen Walker, Pamela Sharpe, Lola Cummings, Pat Brogan, Val Brigden and Josie Clements who 'womaned' our stall at the Seniors' Expo at the Town Hall and to Joyce Henwood who provided information at the Sutherland Expo. Seniors Expos are an immediate and pleasant way of talking to older women about OWN and providing information (written and verbal) about the issues that we think are important.

During Seniors Week, Betty Johnson and Noreen Hewett informed and entertained a large gathering at a University of Western Sydney graduation ceremony on IYOP and ageism. Betty also spoke at the Benevolent Society's AGM on IYOP and aged care, and was also one of the designated Elders at the Hammondville Annual Photographic and IYOP Exhibition at Customs House.

Isobel MacCallum, OWN member and Shoalhaven Council worker, was instrumental in organising the very successful 3-day 'Ageing Conference and Expo', where Sam Smart appeared on a panel (see elsewhere in newsletter) and our OWN remarkable theatre group performed. They also performed again at the Queanbeyan conference 'Violence Against Older Women'.

Sam Smart participated in the 2SER FM 9-part 'New Age Radio Series' which was launched on April 23. Margaret Bridger was part of this series - her focus was on relationships and social contacts. Joy Ross spoke to the Sydney Public Tenants Council on supportive neighbourhoods, and also participated in the 40th Anniversary of the Millers Point Activity Centre.

To deliver lasting benefits for 1999 and beyond, representatives of older people's organisations are now working on a 'Platform for Action' to identify key policy issues for agreement with the NSW Government. Any OWN member interested in a working group might let us know. A discussion paper will be circulated in June.

Into the future.....

Our Winter Solstice event on Saturday June 19 will be a day of dance, fun, chatter and food\*. We will be launching our new publication 'Ripe for Repetition' - a selection of the best articles appearing over the past years in the Sydney OWN Newsletter. We will

also show 'Soaring Spirits', the video of OWN's creative movement group.

Then we are into July and our big event, the 'Older Women's Wellness Forum' on the 6 and 7.

**All are welcome to our next meeting of the OWN IYOP committee: Tuesday May 11, 2pm at 75 Windmill St.**

Joy Ross, OWN IYOP Coordinator

\* I would be very pleased to hear from members willing to provide an international soup for our Winter Solstice lunch. Please call me on 9247 7046 if you can help out.

### DISCUSSION GROUP

Monday morning, April 19, a bright sunny morning, twelve of us gathered to discuss 'Personal Space and Boundaries'.

We all agreed that personal space is important. For instance, the lack of space in hospitals and nursing homes can create tension while unsolicited phone calls, the inappropriate use of Christian names and the lack of space in 'unisex' toilets were considered to be an invasion of our space. Other issues mentioned were the need for intellectual space, the relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, finding physical space in the inner city, dealing with house guests who stay too long, and the 'oral' intrusion of our space when people won't stop talking. We also discussed families who invade our space and types of noise that are difficult to cope with.

In discussing 'Boundaries' the subject of 'touching' created the most interest. The group thought that there is now a different approach to touching, and that there is an instinctive feeling about whom we choose to touch and whom we wish to touch us.

The outcome of the discussion was general agreement that we need to feel confident in ourselves: to make decisions, to set limits, and to have our own space.

The next discussion group will be 10.30 am, Monday, May 17 "What Games People Play"?

Joan Hook

The speaker for the April Meeting of the Aboriginal Support Circle was Suzanne Martain, who is working to try to save 'The Block' for the long time residents of Redfern. This land was granted to the Aboriginal community in the 1970s, and Government money was provided to the Aboriginal Housing Company to buy and maintain housing in Louis, Caroline, Eveleigh and Vine Streets. Four hundred people lived in forty-three homes. Some of the population were permanent and some transitory, as Redfern became 'the Black Heart of Australia'.

'The community was stable and healthy until new management took over the running of the Aboriginal Housing Company', explained Ms Martain. 'Some people in the Aboriginal Community want The Block to be transformed into business and high rise apartment units. However, the plans have not been available to the long term residents nor the National Aboriginal History and Heritage Council (NAHHC)'.

In 1994, there were twenty-five houses on Eveleigh Street, today only two are left that do not have demolition orders. Many houses have been cleared but no given plans have been made to replace them. The original grant called for providing and maintaining them.

The Aboriginal Housing Company is a private company, and owns these houses. They have been ordering the demolition of them after officially relocating or evicting the tenants. The people whose homes have had demolition orders have been assigned to housing in many different suburbs of Sydney, destroying the support system that had been building up over the years. Furthermore, many of the newly assigned homes are too expensive for these people to rent. Some of the people are drifting back and staying in half destroyed homes which have become derelict.

They are also finding that the police protection for the area has been reduced. The community is aware that some police officers are drinking alcoholic beverages while on duty in Redfern. Much of the through-drug traffic in Redfern is White.

'It could be that there is a conspiracy to move out the Redfern Aboriginal Community who have made The Block their home over the last twenty-five years and that a more affluent group of Aboriginal people want to take over the area', said Ms Martain.

Some of our group have offered to help Ms Martain, who is part of the National Aboriginal History and Heritage Council with back up research. Those who might have information on The Block that could be helpful are asked to mail it to 'The Block Community Speakout', PO Box 1, Annandale, NSW, 2038

Frayda Myers Cooper

This is the title of the Report on our Questionnaire on Violence and Abuse Against Older Women, which has now been completed.

As the Report says, at one level this could have been titled 'Nobody Wanted to Know About it!' as some of the respondents mentioned earlier violence and not having laws and the resources now available for women who experience domestic violence. Those women had to rely on their own resilience and the little support they could find.

The aims of the questionnaire were to learn from older women's experiences how they survived and to find out what kind of resources they used or found were of value. We also wanted to know what their views were about what services/resources could be useful, and how older women could gain a better understanding of violence and abuse. Finally, we wanted to have information about older women's experience and opinions so that we can convey their views to others to assist services in devising and developing strategies on how to encourage older women to access available services.

Each of the ten questions is outlined and the numbers of responses are ranked, followed by some of the comments made by the respondents.

The Report finishes with Directions for Action, which is based on the remarks and preferences indicated by the respondents.

The Report will be distributed to various organizations and has already been the basis of a presentation at the NSW Women's Refuge Movement State Conference.

Thank you to all the women who responded. We believe your answers will help us towards achieving our aim of improving society's understanding of and responses to the violence and abuse experienced by older women.

Louise Anike

If you would like a copy of the Report, please send \$3 (cheque, money orders or stamps) to:

Older Women's Network  
87 Lower Fort Street  
Millers Point 2000

## REMEMBERING

White birds sweep the rain-sweet sky  
above the misted olive green of trees  
and I remembering  
appreciate  
but hurt at heart  
find it hard to be content  
as once I was  
in watching things.  
I wonder how he would have stood  
in this loneliness,  
my man who's gone.  
He had me bustling round  
and sat content.  
I'd walk across his watched banana bird  
in curl of leaf;  
I'd sew or type  
and spoil the sound  
of who was killing who  
on grassy field  
a hundred or a thousand miles away  
on Saturday -  
I seeking other joy -  
some thing I *would* get done  
and he, content.  
Would his content be just the same  
if I not he had gone?  
If he alone made tea and washed it up  
To sit?  
Would he be thinking as I do  
what might have been?  
Should we have treasured more  
the time we had?  
Would he be going over - justifying -  
how we'd lived?  
remembering the things we'd dreamed,  
remembering our fine intent  
the busy, busy years ago  
when we were green?

Norma Balzer

## MAY 'IYOP' EVENTS

5 May: 2nd Aust. Computer Seminar for Seniors:  
All Seasons Menzies Hotel, Carrington St., Sydney,  
ring Nan Bosler 9971 5981

12- 14 May: 'Empowering all women for the next  
millennium' - 3-day program women accessing the  
Law - Information Technology. ph. Joan Elliston  
9958 6610

17 May: Friends for Life Concert, featuring Helen  
Zerefos, \$15, Sydney Town Hall, Proceeds to  
Alzheimer's Research, phone Chris Shanley 9767  
7812.

18 May: Cruising with Seniors Card, Sydney  
Harbour Cruise with morning tea, Sydney Showboat,  
\$11, ph. 9552 2722.

21 May: Seminar: 'Are Hospitals a Health Hazard  
for the Frail Elderly' Westmead Hospital, phone  
Adelaide Bornmann, 9523 1715.

26-27 May: Nutrition and older people conference,  
phone COTA, 9299 4100

## SOCKS THAT DON'T STOP CIRCULATION

There are socks made without elastic, but I've had a very hard time finding them. Last week, I located socks that are manufactured to promote healthy foot circulation - socks without elastic. The brand is "Red Robin". Not only is there no elastic, but they have three size ranges, shoe size 3 - 8 in the women's department. Size ranges 6 - 10 and super-size range 10-12 are in the men's department of David Jones and Grace Bros. I also found these socks at Diabetes Australia at a discount price, if you are a member. For those of us who have been cutting the elastic in every new pair of socks we buy, this is a wonderful find.

Frayda Cooper

## This Is What May Happen When You Choose A Word And Write About It!

I really feel quite worn out these days. Tramping the streets of a city is no sinecure and one becomes covered in dust and grime. Then my present owner has no access to cleaning materials and often has to sleep in me or is it us? Poor man, I know that at times his feet are not quite clean and I have always been fastidious.

I, or should I say We? For the purpose of the story let it be the collective I. I was made by a master in the trade, he was Italian and used only the finest materials and, although he followed changing fashions, his sense of design was always such that his work was in great demand and always commanded a high price and was stocked in those emporiums which were patronised by people of taste and the means to indulge it.

I had not long left the workshop when I was purchased by a musician, a violinist who was both a man of taste and a magical exponent of his art. He was in great demand for concerts in many of the world's most famous concert halls. I was among his favoured possessions both for my appearance and the comfort I afforded him during long hours of standing on the stages of the world.

Perforce I had many companions since he needed frequent changes but I was often given priority and always cared for and I felt that I shared his fame and was always moved, sometimes to ecstasy by his playing. At times I was driven by an impulse to leap and dance in time to the music he played. Alas this was not to be, as he was anchored to a small space. However, he often moved in time to the music but with great restraint 'though always I felt the tempo and rhythms informing his whole being. Ah those were heady days! To share such fame and the love showered on him by his audiences, to be so cared for as though I were important to this genius. I can say no less.

In time he played less and devoted much of his time to teaching and his favoured pupils were young women who showed promise. He felt that often they had been much neglected and sought to remedy this. Alas, all men are mortal.

It was a sad day for me when I heard of his death. He was buried with great honour and fanfare and I wished that I might have accompanied him, but it was not to be.

In due course his possessions were dispersed and I found myself in a charitable institution and was soon claimed by a person of no fixed abode. Imagine the change, the shock to the system. My position had been one of privilege and I was now fated to walk the streets. Basically I am of a philosophical turn and am thankful for the small comfort I give my new owner. Because of the fine materials which went into my making, I keep his feet warm and dry and comfortable in the heat of summer. There is no change or respite for me as there is little for him.

Well we rub along together, he has few possessions and when the time comes for him to quit this world my hope is that I can accompany him to the next. My life has been exciting and varied and has left me with some compassion for the feet I house. A wonderful life for a pair of shoes!

Judith Mustard

### Centrelink Financial Information Service

Free consultations are available on the following topics:

- \* Selling and buying a new home
- \* Fee structure and accommodation charges in aged care facilities
- \* Making the most of your money
- \* Planning your future retirement
- \* Concerns about retrenchment and redundancy
- \* Making the best use of your resources
- \* How financial arrangements and investments affect pension payments
- \* Basic taxation issues
- \* General financial issues

To make an appointment, please phone Val Earing or Gary Brunner on 92446596 or 9244 6597

## 'Poet of the Season'



You are invited to the launch on May 5 at Glee Books, 49 Glebe Point Road, of 'Blinkers Off', a book of evocative, thoughtful and often wryly humorous poems by Jean Frances. Please RSVP on 9660 2333 by 30 April. If you can't get to the launch, 'Blinkers Off' is available for \$8.50 (posted) from Jean Francis, 51 Walter Street, Mortdale 2223.

## ANOTHER BOOK FOR BUDDING WRITERS



'Growing Old Disgracefully Down Under' will be published in August. They need funny family sayings and stories, inspirational stories, 'disgraceful' stories and poetry. Send your contribution to 'Growing Old Disgracefully Down Under', PO Box 5077, Murwillumbah South NSW 2484

## Literary contest for Seniors

Send in your sketches, short stories, life histories and poems by May 30 to Kings Cross Community & Information Centre, PO Box 155 Potts Point 1335. Phone 9357 2164 for more info.

# NOTICE

## ADMINISTERING AN ESTATE



The Probate Company Limited is an initiative of the Law Consumers Association. Its aim is to reduce costs and the time it takes to obtain the grant and administer the estate. A brochure comparing their costs with other organisations, and answering some commonly asked questions about probate, is available from the OWN office or from The Probate Company Limited, Level 1, 203 Castlereagh Street, Sydney 2000

## An Invitation To Talk about OWN

Elizabeth Pryce from Roden Cutler Village, 10 Edward Street, Gordon, recently heard of OWN through a visitor who read to their poetry group from 'Untold Stories'.

She was so interested she phoned us for a copy of the book and wondered if a member of OWN who lives on the North Shore could come and talk to them about OWN.

Please phone Elizabeth on 9498 1730 or 9498 5109 if you can do this.

# BOARD

## MEDITATION

10 week groups held every Thurs evening 6.30 pm - 8.30 pm. Day group, 12.30 pm - 2.30 pm, \$8 per session, concessions \$5 and \$3 available. Bookings: Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre, 9560 3011

## Eating Disorders

Tuesday, 25th May - An information evening for people experiencing eating disorders, their family and friends will cover recognising the signs, finding treatment and handling the issues. 7-9 pm, at Leichhardt Public School Hall, cnr Marion and Norton Streets, Leichhardt. Donations: Families, \$14, per person \$8, concessions \$5. Bookings: Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre, (02) 9560 3011.

## Volunteering and Ageing

The NSW Committee on Ageing is keen to hear the views of older people on issues related to volunteering. OWN members are invited to attend a consultation meeting in Gosford (10 am, Monday 3 May at Gosford Leagues Club) or in Ryde (9.30 Tuesday 11 May at the Civic Hall, Devlin Street, Ryde). Morning tea is provided. For more information, please phone 9367 6860.

## Music at Mosman

The Music Group has been meeting at Mosman once a month since 1993. The program is usually chosen by one of the members and whoever gives the program supplies information about the music and the composer.

The music can be of any type: baroque, ethnic, modern, various instruments, dance music, whatever. After the pleasant hour and a half or so listening to music we adjourn for a midday snack and have a lovely talkfest before we all go our separate ways. If you would like to join us on the third Friday of each month, you will be very welcome.

Please see the Diary Page for more details.

Don't miss  
"The New Age"  
2SER's 9-part series of radio  
programmes about older  
people  
Fridays at 9 a.m.  
on 107.3 on the dial  
(Starting 30th April)







