



## *International Volunteers' Day Party*

*Please see the enclosed flyer*

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### **THE GST AND YOU!**

OWN is interested in finding out how the 10% GST, introduced on 1 July 2000, has influenced our members' spending patterns and lifestyle.

When you do your shopping with a fixed income, do you find that you can no longer buy all the things you did before the introduction of the GST?

Has it restricted your choices: where you go, what you buy, how much you can put by for replacement items and home repairs, where you can travel?

Do you think that supermarkets and other stores started increasing their prices months before the GST was introduced to cover the high compliance costs?

Do you think that some goods have gone up by more than 10%?

Please jot down your ideas, opinions and experiences and send them by mid-December to:  
**Older Women and the GST, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000**

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### **CONGRATULATIONS TO EDITH GILMOUR**

*Edith, who was born 6.1.1901, will be celebrating her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday at Vacluse House on Saturday, December 9, 2000. For more info, please phone Merle Hight 9569 3836*

*OWN is privileged to offer Honorary Membership to Edith, a long-time activist for women's rights and peace. A story of her life will appear in the February 2001 Newsletter.*

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# NSW Steering Committee Report

## **First, a brief update ...**

The NSW Steering Committee, convened at a State Conference in June this year, has been shaping a draft constitution for a peak body, which will be called OWN NSW Inc. The Steering Committee includes members from groups in Newcastle, Woy Woy, Northern Rivers, Penrith, Nowra and Sydney, and has been meeting regularly since July.

In November, a copy of the draft constitution was sent to all groups with an invitation to discuss the issues and provide feedback to the Steering Committee. If you would like to participate in this process, and don't have a copy of the draft constitution, please contact the office for a copy as soon as possible.

OWN Inc. members will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft at a special members' meeting on Friday, 8 December at 10am.

Comments on the OWN NSW draft Constitution must be returned to the Steering Committee by 12 December.

The Steering Committee will then meet to discuss and alter the draft on Monday, 23 January 2001.

## **Crunch time ...**

At the Quarterly meeting of NSW Groups on Wednesday, 21 February, NSW delegates will be asked to consider and ratify the new constitution. At the same meeting the formation of an Interim Management Team for OWN NSW Inc. will be discussed. (Depending on the particular steps or processes agreed to, the Interim Management Team might eventuate at this meeting or at a later date.) Among other tasks, the Interim Management Team will oversee the process of incorporation and plan a Conference and AGM to be held later in the year.

## **And into the future...**

The Draft Constitution identifies a proposed management structure for OWN NSW Inc. although it too is open to further discussion. The structure involves a Management Team of thirteen with five designated positions: Convenor and Deputy Convenor, Secretary and Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. The other eight positions have no title attached to them as yet, but it is expected that each elected member will take on a leadership role with one specific element of the work for which OWN NSW will be responsible, for example, resources, advocacy, membership support and development.

Nominees for positions on the Management Team will need skills that can be directed towards the identified activities and responsibilities of the Team. The involvement of members from rural and regional groups on the Management Team will be essential to the success of OWN NSW. However, because there are responsibilities attached to various positions, it will be necessary to take into account the availability of these members to attend meetings and carry out their duties from a distance.

It is proposed that the leaders of NSW projects will not be members of the Management Team but will be required to report to the Team on a quarterly basis and to approach the Management Team for direction and policy decisions when necessary.

It is hoped that the proposed structure of the Management Team (which is larger than the present OWN Inc.) will mean that the work-load is spread more thinly and will not consume the life of Team members!

Pam Ledden

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## ARE YOU FREE ON TUESDAYS?

Betty Johnson and Una Nicholl work every Tuesday in the OWN (A) office at Room 410, 147a King Street, City. They are looking for a volunteer to assist them in the office answering the phone, typing, filing etc. so they have more time for policy development and communicating with other OWN groups.

If you can help out, please contact Betty on 9817 1576 or Una on 9905 4807.

## CREATING A 'SYDNEY OWN'

**T**welve enthusiastic members of OWN Inc. came together on November 8<sup>th</sup> to share their hopes and ideas of what a Sydney OWN might offer us as it separates from the emerging OWN NSW peak body.

We affirmed the things about Sydney that we want to retain – the things that make it unique – its energy, difference and the level of debate and intimacy we enjoy. OWN events usually have purpose and edge, and are often a heady mix of women's politics and fun. Different events explore issues which affect older women, for example, how to deal with social isolation, discrimination and maintaining wellbeing. Other activities and events focus on 'networking' and strengthening friendships, for example, creative and international dancing, music and art groups and special lunches and parties.

Suggestions about how to create a Sydney OWN that will meet the needs of its diverse membership were wide ranging, but it's up to us all to make it happen! Members of Sydney OWN will be encouraged to offer their ideas and organisational skills for outings such as luncheons, picnics and films as well as activities such as a walking group and a book club. A series of workshops on living skills and social justice debates has been a success elsewhere and, with our own speakers, could generate a lot of interest amongst Sydney members. One suggestion was that our meetings should include music and gentle exercise to reduce the physical stress of sitting for long periods!

Sydney will need to remain supportive and inclusive and find ways to develop what older women have in common. An offer was made to be there for new members to come in for a chat, and there was even a suggestion that we call the new Sydney OWN – which will include all our current activities and much more – a wellness project and seek funding!

Above all, we agreed that Sydney OWN would be a lively and effective addition to the existing OWN groups in NSW – especially if members are encouraged to participate and are willing to play a role.

At a more fundamental level, Sydney OWN will need an infrastructure in order to take on the

responsibilities of being an affiliate to both OWN NSW and OWN (Australia). Perhaps a traditional committee or a more informal organising group? Do we need a coordinator? A 'home' – Windmill St? Funds? It was suggested that we design a new questionnaire to elicit members' needs, and we could use the newsletter to publicise activities.

**Next step:** Friday, December 8, 10am, Lower Fort Street is an opportunity for OWN Inc. members to respond to the NSW draft constitution. Comments must be in by December 12<sup>th</sup>. As the Constitution will be ratified in February, we urge members to give serious thought to how the constitution of OWN NSW could affect Sydney OWN. Please come along and have your say.

### **Events for your diary:**

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December, end-of-year party

Sunday, December 31: New Years Eve party

Friday January 15: A celebration of ... the millennium, federation, moving forward, everything ... A special welcome to our members from non-English speaking backgrounds, "Why did you come to Australia?"

Joy Ross

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## Letters to the Editor. . .

Dear Editor

I'd love to have written that poem attributed to me in the November Newsletter but I didn't – it came off the Internet!

Shannon Simons

Dear Editor

I'm mystified. I've read Josephine Conway's letter over and over regarding "Food for the Taking". How does she arrive at the conclusion that "pushing the button" would result in the use of slave labour...and the exploitation of many workers"? Try as I may, I can't make sense of this. Maybe it would result in a lot more people obtaining employment at a proper wage, as well as feeding a few desperately hungry people. To me, it seems like a very worthy project, and I, for one, have pushed the button many times.

Renee Simons

## Theatre Group Report

Ho! Ho! Ho! and all that jazz... Hard to believe that we are saying goodbye to the year 2000 – with the Olympic Games and all, the year has really flown.

This year, “WOW! 2000”, with its satirical focus on issues concerning older women, has been enthusiastically received wherever we’ve performed. A big thank you to Louise Anike for her scriptwriting and directing skills.

It’s been a mixed year with Peg Hewett, who took her three months LSL and then Janet Waters and Peg Hewett both being hospitalized for repairs and maintenance. With another stalwart Brigid Sen going to China to teach English, the cast has had some quick learning curves. The new, the old, have come through admirably on all occasions. Congratulations and a big thank you for your dedication, talent and energy.

All in all we will have done thirty shows during the year despite having an Olympic vacation during September. After the Olympic break we did seven shows in October. Our performance at the “Tune up for Spring” day for older people put on by Warringah and Manly Councils, was well received. This was followed by a performance at a fundraising dinner to give financial help to East Timor. We are convinced that we can’t compete with food being served to a noisy audience!

Three days later we were at Parliament House for the launch of the book “Older Women Speak Up – Violence in the Home” compiled by Jane Mears and Margaret Sargent. Our domestic violence segment, where cast members tell our stories was received with empathy and tears, but the performance ended with a change of pace as we presented a positive and uplifting celebration of ageing.

The next day we were at the Sydney Jewish Centre on Ageing at Woollahra, and the following day performed at Rockdale for South East Sydney Respite Care. We ended the week with a completely different venue, the open air “Reclaim the Night” Rally at Hyde Park and as usual got a rousing reception from the (mainly) younger women. I think we should get a gold medal, at least for endurance!

We still have five shows to go before our Xmas Break – this year we’re working right up to 20th December. How’s that for stamina! We reconvene on Tuesday, 23 January, 2001, so anyone wishing to take up the challenge of a theatrical career please come along and join us in the New Year. New cast members will be made very welcome and we promise you won’t have time to be bored.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Theatre Group, I wish to thank all our “Friends of the Theatre Group”, Margaret Bridger, the OWN Working Committee, Kris Ferguson, Dorothy Cora and Judy Hastings for their help and support throughout the year. It was much appreciated.

Lucy Porter



### ENHANCED PRIMARY CARE

Two new services have been added to the Medicare Benefits Schedule which affect older people.

They cover:

- \* Care planning and case conferencing for people of any age with chronic conditions and multidisciplinary care needs; and
- \* Health assessment for people aged 75 years and over (55 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people).

The first point means, that if you have problems with your health which involve providers from different areas of the health sector, it becomes possible, in fact desirable, to organise care planning and case conferencing with your GP and all other service providers involved to ensure a coordinated approach to your care. All of this now attracts a Medicare rebate.

The other new item in the Medicare Benefits Schedule covers annual health assessments for people over 75. These assessments will include medical, physical, psychological and social components. This is an important preventive measure, since it will enable people and their GPs to identify any problems and to map out ways to maintain and improve health and wellbeing. All I can say is: GO FOR IT.

Pamphlets explaining all this are available from the office. Also you can ring 132011 – the Medicare information line – for clarification.

Renate Watkinson

## TRANSPORT TRACKING ON...

The OWN transport group is continuing to work on a number of issues of concern to older women, mainly related to public transport. At our October and November meetings, we have:

- \* Prepared a position paper on concession fares, for consideration by the OWN working committee.
- \* Written to support forces within the NSW Australian Labor Party opposing the proposed sell-off, by the NSW Government, of FreightCorp (the government body which operates the freight haulage system on NSW railways).
- \* Responded to the newly released NSW Department of Transport discussion paper, Implementing the Performance Assessment Regime for Commercial Bus Contracts. We stressed the importance of a consistent, accessible bus transport service for older women living in regional and rural areas - especially as privately owned buses are usually their only means of public transport. In this context we welcomed the new emphasis that the document places on "best practice" for bus operators. We expressed regret, however, that the suggested timing for transport operators to comply with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport is twenty years!! We suggested the importance of involving local councils in planning services - and of adopting a policy of continual review to ensure services adjust to community change.
- \* Established a media clippings file of transport issues of relevance to older women.

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday 30 January, 10.30 am at 87 Lower Fort Street. As usual, all interested are welcome to come along and participate.

Ros Gordon

### Exposed!

Quoth an old woman called Mustard  
"I don't know what it is to be flustered,  
I'm always as cool  
As that limpid rock pool  
And liars like me can't be trusted".

Judith Mustard

## Modest Simplicity

Whence comes this very human delight in dressing up? Is it an atavistic desire for ornament lasting from childhood to old age? Or do we just delight in the opportunity to leave our pedestrian selves at home and face the world in carnival attire? Whatever!

These thoughts arise from a great party held by OWN members on Melbourne Cup day. In true Cup tradition we invited our members to wear HATS and HATS they wore. Unable to parade the enclosure at Flemington, they took the opportunity to circle Mott Hall. The parade, in all its variety, was an exciting and imaginative display of the Millinery Art and older women's invention.

Creations ranged from an organic, live display in straw decorated with delicate Rock Orchids whose blossoms trembled aloft and whose roots were twined bewitchingly about the cheeks and chin of its wearer, to a Mad Hatter's Topper in velvet straight out of Alice. There was a simple Quaker-like cloche; most becoming. There were concoctions of birds and flowers, feathers and tulle and examples of stylish and stunningly, modest simplicity. The circus was not forgotten. Once again our women came up tops.

As usual the food was lavish and varied. Tables groaned under the weight. There were raffles and sweeps and many a satisfied guest went home clutching loot to matronly bosoms or tucked into wallets. There was the opportunity to sit and talk with those women we see less often than we would wish and to consolidate the relations we have with those we see and work with often. It was a truly successful day.

Judith Mustard

### Haikus

Haikus are little poems that have 5 syllables in the first line, then 7 in the next and then 5 again. Haikus don't even have to rhyme. Have a go!

## Notions of Neighbourhoods

The Supportive Neighbourhoods Seminar, held on November 22, was an initiative of the Platform for Action, which was an outcome of International Year of Older Persons. The focus of the Seminar was on ways to create and maintain neighbourhoods and communities that enhance the lives of older people.

Over one hundred participants enjoyed provocative and inspiring contributions from a range of speakers. Noreen Hewett opened the seminar with a stimulating speech – Putting Heart into the Quest for Supportive Neighbourhoods. Before speaking about her personal experiences of establishing neighbourhood groups, Noreen referred to how terms such as ‘social capital’, ‘civil society’ and ‘strengthening communities’ can be used by governments to mask cost-cutting of services. “There is a political element”, she said, “to creating supportive neighbourhoods. We must refuse to be complicit in replacing paid workers and services by our volunteer effort; we must demand resources to establish new models of communities that foster equality in relationships by not categorising people as victims, and volunteers and service providers as benefactors.” Noreen went on to describe her own and others’ experience of how, starting relatively small, they slowly made connections with fifteen local organisations in the Sutherland area and, through their ever-widening associations, have been able to create groups around people’s particular interests.

Four panellists then shared perspectives on social isolation and wellness for older people (Renate Watkinson), participating in decision-making (Betty Scott), new initiatives by older men (Jack Zinn), new technologies and older people (Dick Manuell).

In workshops, participants energetically engaged in exploring actions related to the four panel topics. A full report of the Supportive Neighbourhoods Seminar will be available early next year. Please phone the OWN office on 92477046 for a copy.

*Special thanks to all the OWN volunteers (amongst others) who made this such a lively and successful day.*

Joy Ross

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PUBLIC PLACES

The Womensafe Forum, sponsored by the Department of Women, was held on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2000. Some good presentations informed us about the role of harassment in the fear of crime of women of all ages, and about successful safe women projects in Wollongong and Adelaide. We heard also an indigenous woman’s perspective on public violence.

Women are backward in reporting violent crimes. 62% failed to report it to police in Wollongong. It seems that women would rather lead a lifestyle where they take avoiding action as far as possible. The lack of reporting is just the same in research on violence in the home. Older Women Speak Up have reported in their booklet that a better technique is speaking up to older women. In this way, women who experience violence become empowered with greater understanding and knowledge, and are inspired to tackle the problem more directly.

It is also important for women to adopt methods of community engagement, partnership, and the achievement of understanding of the role of the environment in public violence. More awareness and education would contribute to crime prevention. We need to find ways of altering the behaviour of perpetrators. Neighbourhood committees such as those being organised by the Older Women’s Network could provide a good beginning to all these.

Margaret Sargent

### **International Year of Volunteers Forum THE OLYMPIC LEGACY**

**Tuesday 5 December, 2000  
Australian Technology Park, Redfern  
Bay 4, Locomotive Workshop.**

**Please phone 9228 3277 for more  
information**

## DISCUSSION GROUP

Our discussion topic for November 20 was 'What Helps an Older Woman to Survive in Times of Rapid Changes'. Even though the group was small we had an enthusiastic and rewarding discussion.

We began by examining the changes we have already experienced. These encompassed a wide variety – some, the result of the industrial revolution that produced helpful household machinery, others, the social consequence of how this brought about changes to family and community structure.

Next we explored what helped us to survive these changes. We concluded that this involved a combination of personal characteristics and strategies such as adaptability, flexibility, acceptance of difference, enthusiasm, a positive attitude, being adventurous and the essential – a healthy sense of humour.

We attempted to identify future changes and decided that these would relate to the speed of technological change and medical, surgical and scientific discovery and change. Some suggested that possibilities were: rocket excursions to the moon similar to those currently by plane or ship to the Atlantic; replacement of cash by credit cards and bank procedures; and more household use of computers as the major communication tool. This could result in language modification to 'info speak', and improved genetic engineering techniques could prolong life to possibly last forever! We decided that we wouldn't want this. Socially there could be a more mixed culture with different family structure and possibly marriage will be obsolete; globalisation more total and greater control and ownership of big business by the affluent few.

Regardless of the type and pace of future change we agreed that we can all call on our past survival abilities. The changes we've experienced and survived up to now have demonstrated that we have the resilience and adaptability to be a hardy resourceful bunch.

Jacqui Graham

Join us to discuss 'Wisdom, Its Importance and Acquisition' at our next meeting, 10.30 am, Monday January 15, 2001 and start the new millennium with wise insight.

## ODE TO A PILL

Little pill here in my hand,  
I wonder how you understand  
Just what to do or where to go  
To stop the ache that hurts me so.  
Within your covering lies relief,  
You work alone in great belief.  
You sink in regions there below  
As down my throat you quickly go,  
But what, I wonder, little pill,  
How do you know where I am ill?  
And just how do you really know  
Exactly where you have to go?  
I've got a headache, that is true,  
My broken ribs need attention too.  
So how can anything so small  
End my aches in no time at all?  
Do you work alone or hire a crew  
To do the good things that you do?  
I'm counting on you mighty strong  
To get in there where you belong  
Don't let me down and please don't shirk  
To do your undercover work.  
So down my throat be on your way  
And end my aches for another day.  
Don't take a wrong turn is my plea,  
I can't take another pill till after three.

(From the Western Australia Ostomy Association)

### TOILET HUMOUR

9 AM. Phone rings. Angry woman's voice says, "I rang you earlier, you haven't replied, I need someone to come and fix my toilet." I start to laugh uncontrollably. "What's wrong?" she says. "Have I got the wrong number?" "You certainly have," I said, "I'm in a retirement village and there's no way I can fix your toilet..." "Oh, well," she says, giggling. "I hope I've made your day."

Renee Simons

## Jonathan Who?

Next to John Howard and Co., the wax dolls I am sticking pins into at the moment, are Richard Alston, Minister for the Arts, and the ex-T.V. space salesman, Jonathan Shier. Appointed as managing director of the ABC by the ABC board (appointed by the Federal Government), J. Shier collects a salary of \$266,095 per annum which is more than the Federal Treasurer gets. After persistent questioning by Senator Bob Brown in Parliament, the Minister reluctantly admitted that Shiers' salary package also included super, a car and performance bonus that brought his salary closer to \$350,000.

Jonathan Shier, who has not lived in Australia for many years (until his appointment) and who has had, we are told, no recent experience of broadcasting, now sees himself as the big boss of the ABC with, he says, a "new vision". This new vision structure of little interest to the thousands of listeners who have received much sustenance from its diverse programs.

\$3.5 million has been cut from ABC's budget which will severely curtail news and current affairs. Over a hundred technical staff have been sacked and producers, presenters and many others are fearful of their jobs. The talented head of drama with many successful TV dramas (including "Sea-Change") was sacked. She was very quickly and eagerly gobbled up by a commercial station. It is unlikely, I believe that we will see any more independent, in-depth or critical (to government) documentaries such as the exposure of corruption in Queensland under Jo Bjelke Peterson, or Jenny Brockie's doco on the racism rife at Newtown police station.

These and other programs like them are likely to be replaced with more glorified soap operas and "infotainment" stuff to fulfil Shier's "vision" of making the ABC more "popular".

The latest obscenity of Mr. Shier's is his request to the Minister to merge the ABC with SBS, so there will be a bigger budget for the ABC. He should be lobbying John Howard for some of that \$8 million budget surplus instead.

He said we did not need two taxpayer-funded stations, especially when one only catered for a specific audience. In case he doesn't know, SBS's programs are enjoyed by a very wide cross section of Australians who want more than the usual populist fare. It is a fact SBS runs more good overseas programs than any other station.

This suggestion to amalgamate the two public stations has, to my mind, political overtones. It is no secret that John Howard has no love for the ABC and would like to see its influence curtailed. I am told that Jonathan Shier has worked for the Liberal Party and shares their views

Unless the decline in the ABC is halted the future looks very bleak. What would TV be like without the 7.30 Report and Kerry O'Brien? Without A.M and P.M? Without Foreign Correspondent? Without the fine music and arts programs, the non-commercial and practical gardening programs and not forgetting the good Australian and British drama!

The numerous letters to the Herald and Robert Manne's fine article in Spectrum, all attest to the depth of concern about the way the ABC is going. Make yours another voice to add to the chorus of protest.

Muriel Hortin.

## Me, Mud and Paradise.

'How about a stroll in my rainforest?' my great-nephew asked as he stood machete in hand beside Doug, who was equally evilly equipped. We were staying with him at Mission Beach, Queensland, and their garden edged the rainforest.

'It's great in there, but wear sturdy boots.' Why a machete for a stroll in the rainforest, I wondered? We hadn't gone far when I was ankle deep in mud, squelching my way through undergrowth, tottering insecurely.

'You O.K, Joan?' Tim asked.

'Fine, fine.' I trod on a slippery root and grabbed at a tree. 'Be careful of the waitawhiles' said Tim, as his machete cut through a nasty looking prickly vine.

'See how it clutches you?' The needle-sharp prickles are so designed that, if you move, they dig in from both directions and you have to 'wait a while'! Doug and Tim slashed and chopped, clearing the undergrowth and the vines.

'I'm going to make a rainforest walk through here.' My mind boggled! Well, he has patience and is not afraid of hard work.

I clambered over a huge dead tree stump. 'That will make a beautiful table leg,' he said, patting it lovingly. 'It will be ready in a couple of years.' Doug and he discussed various ways of hauling it out. 'They're mad!' I thought. The dogs leapt about excitedly splashing me with mud. Tim casually remarked that he had seen a python recently. I didn't know at the time that pythons are not venomous, however they can lovingly squeeze you to death!

Tim pointed out a cassowary footprint. 'There are a couple in here.' I remembered a sign that said 'Don't run away from a cassowary, hide behind a tree.' Evidently they can strike with their feet and disembowel you. 'Hide behind a tree!' By the time I had unsquelched myself from the mud, I would be deadibones! 'We have crocs in the river,' Tim remarked. 'Estuarines?' 'Man Eaters?' I asked. 'Yep'. Another hazard!

I was exhausted by this time and firmly said, 'I'm going back, Tim.' He was disappointed. 'We come to mangroves soon, You've got to see them!' 'Mangroves!' I squeaked. Oh, no. Sandflies. My bitter enemies!

'Tim, I'm definitely going back.' So we did, Tim advising me that you can easily get lost in the forest, so he wouldn't let me go alone.

'Examine yourself for ticks,' he cheerfully advised me, as I hauled off my sodden boots, heavy with mud.

So, if that is his idea of a pleasant little stroll in the rainforest, he can have it! We had delightful coral trout and barbecued prawns for dinner, caught by Tim They waved us goodbye, loading our Campervan with papayas from their trees, and eggs from their hens.

A tropical paradise – so long as you avoid a stroll in Tom's rainforest!

Joan Johns

## Beware 'Free' Directory Assistance

It seems that new hurdles have been erected between the information rich and information poor with the 013 directory assistance number no longer available.

It is now obligatory to use the 12455 number (or 1223 if you can't access 12455) for directory assistance.

When you ring 12455 you get a message advising that if you want to be connected you can "press 1" and that there's an 83 cent charge plus call costs, or you can wait for the operator to give you the number (which you then dial yourself).

If you can't access 12455 and have to ring the alternative number 1223, you are charged the cost of a local call, but you are not asked if you would like to be connected for 83 +cents – you are just given the number.

PS There is actually an exemption available to the call connect charge, but as always there are annoyingly specific criteria that need to be met and Doctor's signatures to be got. To get the information, you call 1800 068 424 and ask about the 'call connect exemption' form.

(From the Internet)

## Grave New World

GM foods have already been marketed for public consumption without proper research or discussion into their long term effects.

The food we eat is broken down into “food fractions” which are absorbed and used by the body. GM foods may possibly contain TOXIC fractions which could have a serious effect not only on the immediate health of some individuals but also on the health of future generations.

It is entirely possible that these toxic fractions could affect us in many ways, for example:

1. Ova and sperm may be affected.
2. Chromosomes, or telomeres, could be altered. Telomeres are on the ends of chromosomes and are full-length at birth, shortening throughout life. When the telomeres disappear completely, so does life.
3. Some GM foods could act as carcinogens and exacerbate or cause cancer.
4. They may act as mutagens or teratogens, causing mutations or congenital abnormalities.
5. They could cause auto-immune diseases such as collagen/connective tissue disorders, like Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), Rheumatoid Arthritis/Scleroderma, or Arthritis, etc.
6. Neurotoxins could cause or flare-up Multiple Sclerosis (MS) or Motor Neurone Disease (ALS) later in life. And -
7. Is it possible that they could act like prions, causing illnesses such as Mad Cow Disease (BSE/CJD) years later?

The frightening prospect is not that there will be an immediate epidemic or illness, but that we may have caused an irreversible reversal of human life in, say, fifty years' time. If, or when, we have damaged ourselves with a totally genetically modified food chain, there will be no time for recognition or reversal. It will already be too late. The damage will be done.

Extracted from SOMA NEWSLETTER, OCT 2000

## Weekend at Broken Bay Recreation Centre

Put twenty OWN women together, and what do you get – yes, of course – fun – talking – laughter. Theatre Group and a keyboard add lots of singing and performing.

The weather was great, the birds sang, the bush turkeys came around for scraps, and a large fat duck came and tried to take up residence on the verandah leaving its calling card.

We walked in the beautiful bush – swam – sunbaked – and some played an exciting (?) game of tennis.

The meals were good, the staff (the cook and Kelly, a young woman employee) was very helpful, and we all got along well once it was established that we were past being treated as school children.

Our programme was very flexible and the ‘ROSTER’ or ‘TEAMS’, as Kelly called them, settled into the routine at mealtimes

A Talent Quest on Saturday evening uncovered many surprising talents – especially to the Winner!. We farewelled those heading for Sydney with a ‘Doodlee – Doo – Doodlee – Doo’ then headed home to the Central Coast, tired – but all agreed it had been a terrific weekend!

What about making this a yearly event – including all NSW Groups? Is there enough for a group of forty for October 2001?

Nancy Brown

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### NEW DIRECTORY PUTS KOORI

#### WOMEN IN CONTACT

Aboriginal Elder Neita Scott recently launched the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Key Phone Book* for the NSW Department for Women saying indigenous women would now have better access to information including health, legal, education, housing and work services nearest to them – no matter where they live in NSW.

Phone the Women's Information and Referral Service on 1800 817227 for a copy.

## DEMENTIA - COULD THE ANSWER BE IN CHINESE?

Senile dementia is a scary thought, and Western medicine doesn't have any reassuring answers about it or methods of treatment apart from sedating medication. Traditional Chinese medicine, on the other hand, has some answers, and is currently doing scientific research into the matter with interesting results. But first of all, to explain...

Chinese medicine is an ancient, complex system of medicine, which requires five to six years full time university study to get the basics. Unlike Western medicine, Chinese medicine is primarily focused on energy flow in the body rather than concentration on the function of its separate parts. Nevertheless, Chinese medicine does have its own organ system, which is similar in **function** to that of Western medicine.

But, unlike Western medicine, the organs, and their parts, are lesser in importance than the **energy that drives them**. Each major organ has its own particular energy which flows throughout the body, very much the same as the arterial or nervous system. On each route, there are acupuncture points, which access the energy of a particular organ. Thus we hear practitioners of Chinese medicine discussing the heart, liver, or gall bladder meridian. They are referring to the *energy* state of the organ.

Broadly speaking, Chinese medicine treats *imbalances of energy*, such as *deficiencies* or *excesses*, or *stagnation of energy flow*. **Nothing in the body changes, moves or transforms without energy.** Muscles can't move without energy, blood doesn't move without energy, hormones can't be made without energy, nothing at all can happen in the body without energy. When the body's energies are flowing harmoniously, everything in the body will perform, macroscopically and microscopically, as nature intended, and the person feels calm, full of energy, and sleeps like a top. What Western medicine calls a disease (e.g., high blood pressure, arthritis or diabetes) Chinese medicine sees as a symptom of energy imbalance, and this is what it treats.

The aim of Chinese medicine is always to get to the *root* of a problem, to solve it, as opposed to Western medicine's inclination to just subdue the symptom. Sedating medicine, for instance, does

not remove the mental or physiological cause of agitation or inclination to violence. It merely suppresses the symptom for a time while the condition remains, even deepens.

Here is an actual Chinese case history. Mr Yi, aged 72, had progressive dementia for three years - memory loss, impaired speech, staggering gait, poor appetite, loose stools, excessive dribbling of saliva, hand tremor, and was incapable of caring for himself. Western medicine would consider these various symptoms as separate problems, and would be testing for a virus, or neurological explanations for the above symptoms. But in Chinese medicine, these diverse symptoms showed a connected *pattern* of energy disorder and imbalance.

**Diagnosis of Mr Yi:** Deficiency of energy affecting digestive function, aggravated by the accumulation of mucus, which further impeded energy flow. (It is worth while noting that the body's energy is dependent on the strength of its digestive energy.)

**Principle of treatment:** Strengthen digestive energy and that of the stomach, resolve mucus and turbidity. Appropriate herbs were prescribed.

After ten doses of herbal medicine (once a day), Mr. Yi's appetite improved. He salivated less, his speech cleared, and he was able to answer questions correctly. Another twelve doses, and the hand tremor and the dribbling stopped completely, and Mr Yi began to be able to look after himself again.

Treatment was continued with various alterations to the herbal prescription as required, over six months, at the end of which, Mr Yi appeared completely normal. A two-year follow up proved his recovery was stable.

There are many such case histories from China, which only now are being translated into English. Chinese medicine is worthy of a closer look and more discussion.

Samantha McKay

## My Marathon

**H**is name was Pasquale Papalia. He was a bus driver who answered the call for more drivers during the Olympics. His hometown was Goulburn. I met him at North Sydney where I was cooling my heels on the morning of the Men's Marathon, the last event of the mighty Olympic fortnight.

It was only noon, four hours before the start at St Leonards Park. How to fill the time? I had not seen any event in the flesh and I felt deprived; lots of intense TV viewing of course. How could anyone not get caught up in the magic hype?

I had found a place for my car in a side street, so there I was, with a thermos of cold apple juice and my car radio – and quite soon, my new friend Pasquale. He turned up as I was sitting on a street bench (bless all street furniture!) and he sat down next to me and started talking. Italians do not suffer from social phobia! He was short, plump, swarthy and cheerful, and wanted to share his life story. I really enjoy this kind of encounter.

He migrated to Australia at aged 13, no schooling here and probably precious little in Italy. He went to work immediately in a greengrocer's shop in Randwick. His English was sketchy and my hearing only so-so, but we managed. He was delighted with his new temporary job, with \$4.00 an hour extra pay. In Goulburn he took home \$400.00 a week and was married, with three children. He had been given a uniform, which he wouldn't wear because he wanted to preserve it in its pristine state for his grandchildren. He was supplied with two \$25.00 meal vouchers daily and his accommodation, with breakfast. He had never had it so good.

His job was transporting the media to the various venues and he was not at all fazed by the labyrinth that is Sydney. I was very impressed, indeed envious. I would like to have that sort of confidence. Maybe when I was forty-five I did. I can't remember! We sat for a while in my car eating Licorice Allsorts, and he invited me into his media bus if I wanted a change of scenery. He kissed my hand as bade me farewell.

The crowds were gathering with flags and fancy dress. The police, the CES, and the volunteers

were all busy putting up the barricades. The helicopters were above us. There was a buzz of excitement in the air. I talked to a support motor cyclist from Montana, USA, who thought we were indeed the lucky country (I pondered our dollar against his!) The press photographers intrigued me. They were mounted in tiered rows on the back of a vehicle, with long cone-shaped cameras, maybe thirty or so of them, facing the starting line. They always travelled ahead of the runners, which explained how we got those extraordinary full frontal pictures of the athletes, with all the agony and ecstasy of their efforts so visible in their faces.

I had a great day, even though I only had a fleeting glance of the pack of stalwart men, setting off on the 42 kilometre run to Homebush. I felt pleased that I had shaken a leg, and all the other reluctant parts of my body, and participated in an Olympic event. I've booked tickets for the closing ceremony of the Paralympics. This time I will have a son to lean on, figuratively, of course!

An interesting sidelight – I needed a loo. I was in familiar territory so I knew there were toilets in the park adjoining Stanton Library. I found a toilet for the disabled. It was locked, with a notice on the door saying a master key was needed after hours and to please ring such-and such a number! Nearby were ordinary toilets unlocked. I was OK, but what worrying discrimination!

Nina Walton

### Deeply Offensive Advertising

Have you seen the advertising poster plastered all over Sydney featuring a young, headless woman with large breasts and lots of bare leg getting out of a car? The caption says: "Yes, God is a man".

How dare advertising copywriters think that this kind of sexist advertising is still ok! The drink that is being promoted is Chivas Regal – so let's boycott it forever!

And if you want to make a formal complaint, write to the Advertising Standards Bureau (check the phone book) instead of just fuming.

## ***Don't Get Around Much Anymore***

The approach of one's ninth decade may bring anxieties, not unexpected, but capable of inducing 'late life crises'. You are aware of diminishing potential, taking twice as long to do half as much and needing twice as long to recover. There is the prospect of a second retirement, leaving work you have done for love rather than necessity. Time once used prodigally now has to be rationed. Sometimes you have to accept time given by others and this can be difficult but don't worry, think of the karma going to the givers.

You become acquainted with that tyrant 'distance'. Streets are longer, hills steeper. 'Shop till you drop' ceases to be a retailer's slogan and becomes a recurring experience. You fear you will drop before reaching the end of the queue, when there, you may drop your change. The exasperation behind you is palpable as you retrieve your coins.

A dignified departure leaving it behind would be nice, but small change is hard to come by and anyway you need it for the washing machine meter.

Progressing fast through my eightieth year towards increasing decrepitude I find myself using one of the few amenities our modest self-care retirement units affords, the lift. It is here that we sometimes encounter one or other of the five unattached elderly male residents, overwhelmed and shy, among seventy unattached females. A recent encounter went like this:

'Only going one floor?'  
'Yes thanks.'  
'Bad heart?'  
'Oh no'  
'Bad legs?'  
'Remarkably good ones in fact, but not on display any longer.'  
'Feet, then?''  
'Not that either.' My Rockports feel like lumps of hot lead. But I'm not admitting that.

Conditions above the waist are usually serious, often dramatic, and to some interesting. Below, they are embarrassing and/or ridiculous. 'Bad legs' suggests a dispirited Mrs Mop in a low budget British sit-com easing off her ill-fitting shoes with

'My Gawd, me feet!' Arthritis can be dignified anywhere but there.

The proposals in *The Best of Times, the Worst of Times* are commendable and I would gladly exchange my Seniors Card for that bonus for older women. Our ageing bodies become more and more expensive just keeping them comfortable.

Recently a GP sent me for a bone scan – that's where the health dollars go; Medicare paid. The kindly elderly nuclear specialist handed me the report with a smile and thanked me for coming. The envelope was unsealed so I was able to discover why I had lost half an inch in height. The GP when given the report by me with the comment 'Nothing exciting there', glared at it, flung it down growling 'Degenerative changes only!' How boring for him!

So that's us – the D-generation. Pity our young invented the term a generation ago, but with a different connotation.

Helen Monaghan

## **Brief Candle**

'Life is no Brief Candle but a splendid Torch'  
and

'A woman in advancing age is unstoppable by any earthly force'

These are quotes from 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' by Anita Roddick, founder of the 'BODY SHOP'.

She also says '35 years after the Women's Movement magazines are full of images of Passive Women – the message being 'SHUT UP, GET A FACE LIFT, AND STOP EATING'.

She states emphatically 'The only creams that work are moisturisers. If the Body Shop ever produced an anti-ageing cream I would take out a full-page advertisement in the newspapers telling the public not to buy it.'

Such honesty is surely the mark of a Feisty Older Woman!

Nancy Brown

## MEMOIRS OF A RELUCTANT COOK

I never did enjoy cooking. Not ever. But having four children, I was obliged to do it. That was the long and short of it. Literally. I didn't spend long on the cooking process, and the "recipes" were very short. I hardly ever made anything that took more than an hour to cook, including preparation. I was not born to cook.

My mother-in-law was very worried about her son (he was twenty-one when we married) - she used to go around moaning, "My poor baby, she can't cook, she can't cook, what will happen to him..." But he survived. Our marriage lasted forty-four years. After the first few months, he didn't complain.

My husband and my eldest daughter were very fast eaters, so fast that everything was swallowed before they got to taste it. The others just loved tomato sauce with everything, and that covered a multitude of sins. There were no complaints.

There were many disasters. The first one I can remember was soon after I was married. I decided to cook Frankfurts. It all went wrong. I boiled them and boiled them. The longer they cooked, the more they fell apart. I was almost in tears. I didn't know you only had to heat them up. There was the apple pie which slipped on to the floor as I took it out of the oven. I hastily scooped it back into the baking dish. My family said it was the best apple pie they'd ever tasted. They didn't know... I once spilt a pan full of roast meat and gravy onto the floor. I washed the meat, and hurriedly made a gravy somehow or other. It was well received.

Once, in the early days, I asked my mother for the recipe for her fabulous bread pudding. The list of ingredients seemed endless. I spent a whole afternoon putting it all together, and baked it for the recommended time. I served it to my husband for dessert. "Hey, Reen," he said, delighted, "This tastes a bit like bread pudding."

There was one occasion when, feeling guilty about serving up these mediocre meals, I decided to consult a cookery book. I can't remember what the recipe was, but it took me most of the afternoon to make it. The family were all seated at the table, waiting for me to bring in the dinner. I came in with this magnificent creation and placed it in the middle of the table. There was dead silence. They all stared at it, wordless. Then my eldest son spoke up. "Do we have to eat *that*?" he said.

Mind you, I was good at frying chips. Every Sunday lunch time, I used to make hundreds of them and serve them wrapped in newspaper to the waiting queue of children, tomato sauce at the ready. That was their favourite meal. Sausages, too, were no problem, though in later years they reprimanded me for serving them too often. I wasn't too bad at mashed potatoes, either.

I did improve over the years, but I don't think I would ever have been asked to host a weekly TV program to demonstrate my culinary skills.

Renee Simons

### DEEP CHANGE

While in Queensland, I attended an interesting five-day conference called Deep Change. Creative pathways into the future were explored by participants aged six to eighty. Our group included the Aboriginal community. The program was sponsored by the Heart Politics group. The Maleny Chapter were the hosts.

Many of the participants work as environmentalists, educators, healers, social workers, peace workers, community activists, etc. We were a group of seventy staying at the District Boy Scout Camp outside of Brisbane at Sanford.

Aside from the special program for those under twelve, the program catered for all to participate together or in workshop settings.

The Program moved dynamically, from 6am meditation or yoga periods, to creative warm-ups, to exercises, general creative activities which included issues such as Aboriginal problems, environment, youth, etc.

They were dealt with in discussions, participatory group work, participatory theatre, and panels. Three delicious vegetarian meals were catered daily.

Just before dinner each day we met in small support groups. My group included six women aged from 22 to 34 and me, yet my age was no barrier. One of the girls in the group asked me what I could learn from this conference knowing that I had participated in many before.

My answer was "Heaps - there isn't a day that passes that I don't learn something".

Frayda Myers Cooper

# IN MEMORIAM

## BARBARA CURTHOYS 1924-2000

Barbara Curthoys' life was devoted to the welfare of women and children. She served as a telegraphist and direction finder in the WAAF during the Second World War. Later, in Broken Hill, she worked on a committee to establish the Happy Days Kindergarten.

She joined the Union of Australian Women in 1954, and became Secretary of the Newcastle Branch from 1954 to 1960. She was a member of National Committee of UAW from 1960 to 1970. At the time, Barbara was an active member of Newcastle Equal Pay Committee and the Aboriginal Advancement Committee.

In 1973, Barbara completed a B.A. at Newcastle University and returned to the work force as a psychologist until 1982. She was an active member of the Newcastle Peace movement until 1993. Some of her articles were published in the Australian Journal of Politics and History. She was co-author of "The History of the Union of Australian Women".

Barbara and her lifeworks in the interest of women and the family are much appreciated. She was a joy to know. Our sincere condolences go to Geoff, her husband, and her two daughters. We farewell a wonderful woman

Sylvia Harding

## KATE ARNOLD

While recognising and accepting the inevitable approach of death, Kate held firmly to her feminist beliefs and in true OWN style demanded that her casket be purple, and that it be draped in the OWN (Action) banner. Her family and friends were supported during those last weeks by Kate's amazingly strong spirit.

Kate had a strong sense of justice and worked tirelessly to bring to the attention of politicians the many inequities in the delivery of services especially to older women.

She was my role model in the Older Women's Network and her inspiration will always be with me. We have all been so fortunate to have known and loved her.

Julia Biles.

## CHARLIE PERKINS

Dr. Charles (Kumantjayi) Nelson Perrule Perkins, A.O., an Arrente and Kalkadoon man, died on Wednesday, October 18, 2000. 'He lived an extraordinary life, and was an extraordinary man who achieved extraordinary things' said his niece at his State Funeral.

Charlie was born at Alice Springs in 1936, and was taken by Father Percy Smith, an Anglican priest, when he was nine years old, to further his education in Adelaide. Charlie described it as 'an offer my mother couldn't refuse'. It was in Adelaide that he began to understand the extent of discrimination against Aboriginal people

A controversial and outspoken man, Charlie was called by many names, not all of them complimentary. Some people likened him to Martin Luther King, while some of his own people called him a 'delicatessen kid' because he became wealthy and preferred a comfortable life.

Chief Justice James Spiegelman, who accompanied Charlie on the 1965 'Freedom Ride' to outback NSW, said that Charlie 'confronted issues such as apartheid and racism, which Australians preferred to ignore. Lowitja O'Donoghue, who had many altercations with him, stated that 'He has made a difference, and contributed to making Australia a better and more just nation, and for this he will not be forgotten'.

Irascible groundbreaker that he was, Charles Perkins was also the world's longest surviving kidney transplant patient. His last 'demonstration' was a police-escorted walk through the city's lunch-time crowds from the Sydney Town Hall to the Opera House, flags at half-mast, where his wake was held.

His family has established the Charlie Perkin's Children's Trust, GPO Box 4462, Sydney 1004 in memory of his concern for future generations of Aboriginal children.

Pat Zinn

Aboriginal Support Circle

# notice

## UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE CULTURE OF PEACE

The National Council of Jewish Women (NSW) and others invite you to a seminar:

### **“Women Against the Exploitation of Children in Conflict”**

Wednesday, 6 December  
7.30 pm  
at

Council House  
111-113 Queen Street  
Woollahra

Please RSVP 9363 0257

## VASEY HOUSING

The Vasey Housing Association NSW has been providing independent living for widows and single women 55 and over for almost forty years, offering privacy and security within a supportive environment. Our villages are situated in some of Sydney's most picturesque suburbs including Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Maroubra, Waitara and Epping. We currently have a limited number of units available and are happy to receive enquiries. Please contact Rosemary Vine on (02) 9299 3951 (Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm) for info.

## ELEGANT CHAIRS

***Barbara Burnham has three elegant blue dining chairs which she would like to swop for three chairs that she can donate to OWN's 'Chair Fund'.***

***Please phone Barbara on 9525 6198***

## Worth checking out

<http://www.openhere.com/life/cultures-and-groups/women/organizations/>

OpenHere is one of the ten largest index and search sites on the Internet and is specifically focused on creating resources of interest to women. They have masses of links to women's groups throughout the world including one to the OWN home page and also to 'About-Face' – a voluntary and self-supporting group which questions and satirizes negative and demeaning images of women in society. Have a look!

## PETITIONS

When members who bring a petition into the office in order to collect signatures, please attach your name to the board and also ensure that the petitions are sent back by their due date.

We often find that petitions sit here until they are way out of date and therefore useless.

## Attention Aspiring Writers

**If you can write a letter, your achievements are limitless! You are cordially invited to attend OWN Creative Writer's Group where congeniality, constructive criticism and encouragement are readily available. Please contact Judith Mustard, 9560 2668, with a view to attending Fortnightly beginning January 19, 2001 at 1pm at 87 Lower Fort Street.**

To Josie Jackson and her daughter:

Many thanks for your generous donation to OWN of a microwave and a computer printer.

# board

## **REPEAL THE GST**

*march and rally in Parramatta  
Saturday 9th December  
1.30 - 4 pm*

*Assemble in Alfred Park (cnr Victoria Rd and Church St) around 1.30 pm, and walk behind the Blacktown City Brass Band at 2pm, arriving at The Mall in front of the Town Hall at around 2:30 pm. Speakers and singers will tell people why the GST must be repealed. Bring a cushion.*

*More details: <http://www.killgst.com> or contact Joe Bryant on 9826-1337*

## **Dance, Social and Quiz -**

**A Get-together of City and Bankstown International Folk Dancers will be held on Sunday January 14, 2001 at 11.00 am till whatever (?) at Alita's place. For details phone 9564 2082 or collect a flyer from OWN.**

## **Beijing+5**

### **Women Wise Up!**

#### **A Symposium in Support of Women's Human Rights**

Five years after the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), a NSW Symposium will be held from 8 -11 February to provide further input into sub-regional, regional and international outcomes and identify strategies for future action on the Critical Areas of Concern. These issues affecting women are poverty, the economy, the environment, health, armed conflict and the Media.

*Jointly organised by the Australian National Committee for Refugee Women, the Centre for Refugee Research UNSW and Coalition of Australian Participating Organisations of Women.*

To find out more or to register, please contact:

**Amanda Garland, NSW Department of Women, Tel. 02 9334 1160 or Eileen Pittaway, UNSW 9385 1849.**

## **BEQUESTS**

*When making your will, you may wish to make a bequest to the Older Women's Network to assist us in continuing to promote the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women. Please phone 9247 7046 and we will send you suggestions for wording your bequest.*

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK IS OPEN TO ALL OLDER WOMEN.**

### **Annual fees:**

Membership, including Newsletter.....\$20.00

Newsletter only (for Gov't Depts. institutions and organisations) .....\$25.00

Send your cheque, name, address and phone number to:  
Older Women's Network, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000

Tel: (02) 9247 7046 Fax: (02) 9247 4202 email: [ownnsw@zip.com.au](mailto:ownnsw@zip.com.au)  
Web site: <http://www.zip.com.au/~ownnsw>