

## OWN NSW – FROM THE IDEA TO THE REALITY!

The main focus of the Working Committee's Review and Planning Session (RAPS) in early March was the long-standing desire for the formation of an OWN NSW.

In 1994, NSW OWN Groups officially designated OWN Inc. as the "acting caretaker of OWN NSW" and OWN Inc. has since operated in many ways as a de facto peak body, providing support, information and resources to groups throughout the state. Over the years, discussions have identified the ways in which a peak body could strengthen our Network whilst encouraging the diversity that is the hallmark of OWN.

At the 1996 NSW Think Tank, members unanimously agreed that a peak organisation be formed to enable individual and collective advocacy, skill development and innovation more efficiently than could be achieved by groups acting alone. A peak body would act as a 'clearing house' for ideas and information both to and from NSW OWN groups. It would also promote the establishment of new groups, and offer support and encouragement not only to these groups as they grow but also to existing groups.

At the recent RAPS meeting, the Working Committee agreed that as a peak body, OWN NSW would undertake responsibility for the development and support of NSW groups; advocacy and lobbying at the State level; policy development; peak body financial management and administration; and the maintenance of links with OWN (Australia). State-wide projects such as the Aboriginal Support Circle, Wellness projects, newsletters and the Theatre Group would also come under the umbrella of OWN NSW. In the first instance, members of OWN Inc. will remain members of OWN NSW.

As a peak body, OWN will be in a stronger position to seek additional funding to undertake research and development, to extend promotional activities, to promote the establishment of new groups and to support local programs (including wellness practices) in new and existing groups.

A further recommendation from the 1996 NSW Think Tank (which was reaffirmed at RAPS) was that Sydney activities such as international dance, discussion groups, creative movement, writing, painting, and so on might more appropriately become the responsibility of a 'Sydney' group, and that interested members would undertake discussions to determine how such a group might be set up.

Representatives from NSW groups, at their first quarterly meeting in February this year, agreed that the formation of OWN as a peak organisation would be the focus for the NSW Conference scheduled for 27 and 28 June 2000. A NSW Groups Working Party will meet on Wednesday, 5 April at 10.30 am to discuss relevant issues and draft resolutions for the Conference. The Working Party will report to the Quarterly Meeting on 3 May of NSW Groups where resolutions will be finalised.

Similarly, members of OWN Inc. are invited to attend a general meeting at 10am on 19 April to discuss implications arising from the decision to formalise OWN Inc. as OWN (NSW) Inc. These implications might include the pros and cons of developing a separate Sydney group. Recommendations arising from these discussions need to be prepared to take to the Quarterly Members' Meeting on May 10. At this meeting resolutions will be prepared for the June Conference.

In the meantime, OWN Inc. Working Committee is exploring the legal issues involved in establishing ourselves as the Older Women's Network (NSW) Inc.

The Working Committee hopes that all members of NSW groups will take the opportunity to become involved in the consultation process as we translate our idea into reality.

Margaret Bridger

## TRANSPORTS OF TRANSPORT

*We had a GREAT meeting!! Twelve women with lots of information and opinions met on 15th March to discuss the possibility of establishing a transport advocacy group in OWN.*

*Terry Lee-Williams from the Ageing and Disabilities Department gave very generously of his time and spoke for an hour and a half about various aspects of transport that he has become involved in over his working life and they are a few! All of it was interesting and stimulated some very vigorous discussion.*

*Some of the aspects touched on included concession fares, local bus services, the likely discontinuation of country train services especially as cheap air travel enters the market, the continued primacy of roads over all other kinds of transport, the role of Regional Transport Development Workers, readable timetables and others.*

*After some discussion the Transport group decided to focus on three issues,*

*a) The establishment of more Regional Transport Development Worker positions. There are currently only three in the state*

*b) Concession Fares and integrated ticketing*

*c) Performance Assessment Regime which is due to be issued by the Department of Transport in the middle of the year and will contain the criteria against which transport providers performance will be assessed.*

*The next meeting is on 26 April at 11 a.m. at 87 Lower Fort Street. BYO sandwich and stay on for a chat.*

*All are welcome who enjoy lively discussion and who wish to work towards a strong voice for OWN on these issues.*

Pam Ledden

# ***International Women's Day March and Rally***

## ***A view from the crowd***

*With its theme of "Women and Peace" it is perhaps as well that the threat of conflict with the constabulary was averted (with one minor exception) and the Sydney IWD rally and march successfully completed its splendidly colourful and noisy city circuit on Saturday, 11 March.*

*The usual size of the annual gathering in Hyde Park was diminished by the rain, but the resourceful were undeterred under their green, purple and white umbrellas and raincoats, waving purple balloons, beating drums, thumping lagerphones and tooting whistles. There was also a good sprinkling of red, yellow and black.*

*Banners and handouts displayed the wide range of organisations we represented - including a range of aboriginal and migrant groups, Emily's List, politicians NSW Greens MP Lee Rhiannon and (I think she was there - at least she had lots of handouts) ALP MP for Sydney, Tanya Plibersek. Fluro orange labels from the NSW Rape Crisis Centre proclaimed "Sex Without Consent IT'S A CRIME". Our OWN beautiful banner was proudly held aloft by Joy Ross, Wilhelmina Van Dorp, Lurline Simpson and others.*

*After speeches we were anxious to get marching. Reaching Parliament House we set up our banners along the railings and had some more speeches - Fairwear Campaign, Beauty Myth and Sexism in the Media, Abortion Rights, Cuts to Women's Services, Cuts to Rape Crisis Centre, Cuts to Education. Those who weren't up the front wished they could understand the signing interpreter, as the amplification was unfortunately inadequate.*

*By this stage we'd learned that Parliament House was as far as the Police were prepared to let us go, despite a previously agreed march route through the city streets. A member of the organising committee told us later, the reason given was the rain and the smaller than*

*expected numbers. Everyone felt disappointed. Many felt militantly determined to proceed. I think we all felt we'd been arbitrarily denied a traditional democratic right to take our message to the city streets. And couldn't they even see the rain had stopped?*

*The organisers must have done some good persuasive talking, as in the end we proceeded (in a surreal cloud rising from the steamy footpath) down Martin Place, along George Street and back to Hyde Park with Police protection - though there was one scuffle in George Street where we were briefly diverted and a banner confiscated. Most pedestrians and motorists looked on good-humouredly. Quite a few took photos and videos.*

*Safely back in Hyde Park, the highlight for me was yet to come. It was a tremendously uplifting and professional performance by the OWN Theatre Group, on the back of a flat top truck. Everyone loved it. What a high to finish on!*

*Ros Gordon*

### ***...and a very nice time was had by all***

*In spite of sheeting rain outside we had the best time on International Women's Day. We decided to celebrate on our own at "87", so at lunch time we all gathered round the big table for drinks, friendship and conviviality.*

*We toasted each other and said, "Happy International Women's Day" with pink champagne, and sipped good red wine while we ate our sandwiches. The conversation ranged widely over many subjects as it is wont to do when we have time to relax together*

*The Theatre Group, dripping wet, arrived shortly after and on a "high" after the rapturous reception they had just received at the Leichhardt Council Chambers where the Mayoress had invited them to perform at her private celebration of I.W.D. My invitation*

*had obviously "got lost in the mail", but I went anyway and squeezed myself into a spot along the wall of the packed chamber. I really wanted to see the new show.*

*Well what a show it is, this new one is called "Wow! 2000". There were nine performers, plus guitarist, Bernice, and writer and director, Louise. They had to perform in a space you couldn't swing a cat in, so packed in was the audience, but they came on with great eclat, inviting everyone to, "Hey, Look us Over!"...women ready to try anything once, (except be a politician.)*

*Then followed rapid fire sketches and songs for the next half hour much to everyone's delight, especially when they took swipes at those things that cause us so much distress and annoyance.*

*"Can you believe this?" said a very indignant Jean. "I've been charged \$2.50. for taking out my own money!" They broke into song which expressed all their frustration with the outrageous and unfair bank charges.*

*They've got fees for putting in,  
they've got fees for taking out*

*They've got fees to keep our money  
and for opening an account*

*They've got fees for having fees,  
our credit's all wiped out*

*And what aint we got? A fair go  
bank.*

*More verses followed, each one detailing iniquitous charges levied by the increasingly greedy banks, pilloried in the next sketch as St. Scrooge Bank, the Greed-R-Us Bank and the Screw-U Bank. Anne had the last word by declaring she planned to use the "old withdrawal method" (much laughter) and put her money into a credit union..*

*Four glamorous singers came on in 20s gowns to sing about the GST to the tune of "As time Goes By". It was very funny. (You have to laugh or you'd cry when you think of the GST.)*

*We must remember this,  
Please don't be remiss,  
On this you can rely,  
GST will be in July,  
As time goes by.*

and verse after verse, "chardonnay and roses/building tools and hoses.." "on tampons or meatpie, the stultifying rules apply.." and so on.

Their next Aunt Sally was Hospitals. To the tune of Polly Wolly-Doodle, the chorus went.....

Its a shame,  
A crying shame,  
That we're made to play the  
waiting game.  
It really isn't funny.  
That they're short of staff and  
money.  
It's the government who's to  
blame.

The following verses brought rueful laughter as the barbs went home about Bronwyn Bishop and the nursing homes fiasco.

Then a complete change of mood and the narrator quietly spoke about what goes to make up peace in our neighbourhoods. the human principles of love, tolerance and mutual respect. The cast sang, quite beautifully, the song of the International Year of the Culture of Peace and Non Violence, "Dona Nobis Pacem".

Finally, ending with their rousing celebratory song, the cast and gradually the audience, sang and clapped ...

Celebrate your age..  
Getting older, getting bolder,  
Celebrate your age.

Smart observations were interspersed causing much amusement. "Getting older isn't such a bad thing when you consider the alternative", and "I like all those candles on my cake because I love playing with fire", and on and on. More clapping and smiles from everyone as they danced off.

The lunch at OWN, after their successful concert, concluded a happy day for them.. and for us.

**Muriel Hortin**

## Coordinators Report

Many big issues have surfaced this month and most of them are written about in other parts of this huge newsletter, so I'm not going to repeat the material here. Look for comments on aged care, a report on International Women's Day, the launch of the World March of Women, and the formation of the Transport Group.

The BIG issue is the decision to form OWN New South Wales and much thought is going into how this might be done and what shape it might take. There is a fuller report of where that's up to in another part of the newsletter.

Please keep in mind the NSW OWN Conference in June, 28th and 29th. It would be great to have a large attendance to discuss the current issues.

Many thanks to all those who have returned the latest membership questionnaire. The number responding has been remarkable and we are very appreciative of your time and effort.

OWN members throughout the state have been active during senior's week, in some cases taking the initiative to make something happen at the local level. An example of this is Barbara Malcolm's efforts in Picton. Realising that nothing at all had been organised, she set about contacting key people, arranging events and publicity and producing a program of events including, Tai Chi, Line Dancing, Scottish Country Dancing, Net Surfing, a book discussion group, chess games at the library...and much more. Congratulations Barbara! A thoroughly wonderful effort.

Closer to home our generous and thoroughly reliable Sydney members staffed the OWN stall for two days at the Over 50s Expo at the Town Hall.

Meanwhile, over 150 OWN members and friends enjoyed OWN's Seniors Week entertainment provided by the Theatre Group, Greek and International Dancers, Betty Little, Anne Cunynghame and Bernice Lynch at the Older Women Centre Stage Concert. Five lucky women won raffle prizes which included a lovely water colour painting of

Australian wildflowers donated by artist, Joan Hilton.

Sabina Erica will speak on the "Culture of Peace" at the Mott Hall on 12 April from 11am to 1 pm.

Following on from a very successful discussion of Volunteer Work as an issue last year in preparation for some activity in 2001, International Year of Volunteering, Marie Fox from Volunteering NSW has agreed to give a talk in July.

**Pam Ledden &  
Margaret Bridger**

### TRIBUTE TO RUTH LAYARD who died 15.3.2000

Her love, her kindness  
Profoundly touched OWN.  
Sparkling ideas created  
Aboriginal  
Study/Support Circle and  
"WHAT'S ON?" HAPPENINGS  
For RECONCILIATION.

Days with Music friends  
Remembered fondly.  
Exercise classes  
In Liang-gong.

Energetically  
Helping promote OWN.  
Drawing People in  
Enthusiastically.

Ruth, spiritual,  
Healed many people.  
We all hold lasting  
Fond memories.

May we continue  
In her footsteps  
Seeking Keys to  
Harmony for all -  
Aboriginal folks,  
Minorities, migrants,  
With mainstream  
Australians.

**Frayda Cooper & Pat Zinn**

## ***Because We Did Not Ask ...***

*"If any man tries to escape guilt in responsibility, he detaches himself from the ultimate reality of human existence ... he sets his own personal innocence above his responsibility for men." Deitrich Bonhoeffer, Lutheran pastor executed by the Nazi's during WW2.*

Our family were among the first to be granted land south of the Shoalhaven River in the late 1820s. They became farmers. In the early days it is said that atrocities were perpetrated but by the end of the century our grandfather and great uncle were considered progressive and public spirited. Grandfather seems to have been a benign user of Aboriginal labour. One of these was the leader of the local Aborigines who, when presented to visitors, would introduce himself as 'Me King Billy, mister my boss.' Did anyone perceive the irony?

Our father did not use Aboriginal labour; by this time they were out of sight on reserves. One of father's many honorary offices was a secretary of the Roseby Park Trust, Roseby Park being a reserve at Crookhaven Heads. In his honorary capacity he would not have been directly involved in the removal of Aboriginal children, but he probably condoned it, belonging to a generation influenced by the English custom of sending their children to others to be educated. The separation of children from families seemed normal to those men. Their culpability lies in their deliberate ignorance and failure to observe the close family ties of the indigenous people.

We children were told – if we asked – that the Bomaderry Children's Home was an orphanage. We accepted that 'the blacks' would 'die out' and that the White Australia policy was right because it was good to be British. This notwithstanding the fact that our Irish forebears had been transported by the British overlords for 'sedition'. Sunday School taught us to accept 'the place where it pleased God to call us'. That it pleased God to make us white and well fed while others were black and underfed did not enter our young heads.

So we flourished in indifference till 1967 when at last Aborigines and their condition were a matter for consideration by governments and certain individuals. For my part it has only been since retirement that there has been time to learn and unlearn, an undertaking helped by the writing of the historians David Day and Henry Reynolds.

This reading, and encountering groups like ours at OWN, has brought us into contact with Aboriginal female elders whose gifts of communicating through the printed word, music art, and humour has brought us together. It has opened a way for us to admit that our existence is linked to the past as the future will be linked to us. This could prove a way for us to say, 'We are sorry for the hurt inflicted on your people'.

**Helen Monahan**

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## **WHITE PRIVILEGE**

Do those of us who are fair-skinned ever stop to think about the privileges that 'white' people are born to? A recent Sydney Morning Herald article examined how these privileges include a "better chance than non-whites of getting academic letters after your name (or even being able to read in the first place), of being more likely to live to a grand old age, have your babies survive, to escape poverty and entanglement in the criminal justice system and to acquire political power. The further away from whiteness people are, the worse they are treated."

A friend who works as a volunteer at a school at Prince Henry Hospital told me about an adolescent Aboriginal pupil who lives in Woolloomooloo and who is fetched each weekday by taxi, by arrangement with the school. Recently, due to a misunderstanding, the taxi failed to arrive. The boy and his uncle waited in the street for twenty minutes while taxis, which had their lights on farther up the street, switched their lights off and passed by empty. Eventually the school was contacted and a taxi ordered by telephone. My friend also related another incident. She was waiting for a taxi with a group of friends, all together at in Macquarie Street after the annual Tranby fundraising dinner, as one after another taxi passed by. Apparently this is a common everyday experience for Kooris. Eventually a white passer-by, at risk to himself, ran into the road and commandeered a taxi.

We hear of taxi drivers who have been beaten, robbed and even murdered by passengers. Does the failure to stop for a dark-skinned passenger indicate fear or prejudice or both? Those of us who are aware of injustices and prejudice, and our privileges as 'whites', need to challenge ignorance and fear when we come across it.

**Pat Zinn**

### **SUPPORT**

#### **FOR WOMEN'S GROUPS**

A registered charity, Women's Aid to Former Yugoslavia, continues to help fund the work of the Kosova Centre for the Protection of Women and Children, and other women's groups who work with displaced people and returnees in Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia and Kosova.

To continue its work, the Women's Aid to Former Yugoslavia, needs financial support. To make a donation, please send your cheque or postal orders to WATFY, 20 Tennyson Road, Southampton SO17 2GW Britain.

## WHERE DOES THE BUCK STOP?

Shock! Horror! Nursing Home patients bathed in kerosene? It's too Dickensian to be true. It's just a sensational media story that would be denied tomorrow. But no, this story was true.

As February turned into March more stories of patient abuse began to surface. When I thought it couldn't get any worse it was revealed that three elderly patients from a Queensland Home had died in hospital from gangrenous wounds and dehydration. It was unbelievable. The newspapers, radio and TV ran stories of relatives' anger and despair. Anger because many said they had made complaints that no one had listened to, and despair because they felt so helpless in the face of complete indifference.

How could this have happened in Australia in the year of the Millennium? Who was responsible? The Minister in charge of the Aged Care portfolio is Senator Bronwyn Bishop and it is with her that the buck stops.

The whole disastrous situation has arisen since more privatisation of Nursing Homes was allowed under the 1997 Aged Care Bill. So with \$3.5 billion dollars of tax payers' money now at their disposal the private owners of 65 per cent of Australia's Nursing Homes are having a field day. With Government cuts to its Aged and Community Care Department which handles complaints it could well be years before the Registration and Accreditation Unit can get around and weed out all the shonky operators. In the meantime they are making hay while the sun shines.

I watched with a certain horrified fascination as the Minister faced her critics during the Senate Question Time as this litany of horrors unfolded. I was shocked by her angry, aggressive attitude. She blamed her Department, in fact, everyone but herself. She claimed she had not been informed of complaints, which, in the case of the Riverside Home turned out to be untrue. She frequently had to read her briefing notes when she was unable to answer questions directly. Some of these questions caused her to look completely blank. She said she would "follow them up".

A Minister who has so little understanding and so little knowledge of her job should certainly not be in that position.

I believe that Nursing Homes run for private profit are inimical to each other. It stands to reason. Private owners are business people. They are in the business to make money, and they can do this either by charging enormous fees, which some do, or they make their profit by cost cutting, and this must be to the detriment of the patients.

Muriel Hortin

## RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE

*The recent nursing homes scandal has alerted OWN to the need for additional strategies to prevent any further erosion of the rights and freedoms of older Australians.*

**OWN (Australia) has highlighted its concerns in the following demands:**

Heavy penalties be imposed on proprietors/owners who do not provide care as set down by the Standards and the Aged Care Act. Where proprietors/owners have failed in their duty of care as prescribed in the Act, residents' families/carers should be encouraged to sue.

**Aged care must be seen in a context of 'health' rather than 'accommodation'. With this focus it is expected that 'aged care packages', which include physiotherapists and specialist nurses, are available to older people in residential aged care facilities.**

Government must be accountable for the supervision of quality care and financial issues. The safety of residents and nurses must be secured by the provision of adequate and appropriate equipment, infection control and occupational health and safety measure.

Immediate and unannounced spot checks must be made on facilities to ensure quality of care.

There needs to be an immediate review of the employment of registered nurses to ensure that the care needs of residents of residential aged care facilities are met. The image of nurses in aged care must be changed to recognise their key role in the provision of care of residents. Registered nurses' skills must be recognised and regularly updated, and only suitably trained nurses should administer medications.

State and Federal Governments and service providers must cooperate if residents have to be relocated in other facilities and/or hospitals.

Current complaints mechanism must be reviewed to ensure that complaints involving care needs are addressed and investigated immediately.

To make a complaint, phone 1800 550 552 (free call).

### Story Writing

Lynda Stoner is compiling a book to inspire and give courage to women who have reached a major crossroads in their life. If you have faced a major confrontation with illness, divorce or job loss, write a story about how you got through your trial. Did you find that in fighting back your life changed in positive ways that you may not have considered before your adversity? You may wish to write only 2 or 3 pages or up to 8 pages to share your story. A publisher is very interested in this book with the working title, "Life Changes". Contributions should reach me by mid April.

Linda Stoner, Morrissey Management, 77 Glebe Point Road, GLEBE, NSW 2037. Fax: 02 9460 1656 Email: lynda@animal-lib.org.au

# What's Bugging You?

## MANDATORY SENTENCING

With many other people I felt grief and anger when John Howard refused to overturn the mandatory sentencing laws in the Northern Territory after the suicide of the distressed 15 year old Aboriginal boy, jailed for stealing coloured pencils. When another Aboriginal boy stole a packet of biscuits, "because he was hungry" and copped a mandatory sentence of a year, Howard said, "Stealing biscuits is not really the sort of thing you intervene in." ( But this did not stop him intervening in Territory laws when he overturned the euthanasia bill that allowed dying people to end their suffering.)

John Howard has always been profoundly indifferent to Aborigines and has never been concerned about their welfare. He has divided Australia more deeply than any other Prime Minister we have ever had. Those of us who mourn the cruelty of our past towards the Aborigines and would like to show contrition, at least by way of an apology, are called "black armbanders" by Howard and he steadfastly refuses to do this one thing, make a national apology.

Little wonder, then, that a recent poll declared the majority of Australians were opposed to reconciliation and an apology because they did not feel responsible for what had happened. This is the way that Howard has influenced public opinion. In terms of economics it also, horror of horrors, may lead to compensation claims!

I do not know how pollsters arrive at the conclusions they do. I simply do not want to believe these results are accurate. I do not know a single person who was asked for their opinion. If they are true then pity help us. What sort of a society have we become?

Perhaps the pollsters stayed overnight in a Northern Territory motel and found a number of Pauline Hanson supporters to answer their questions. Who commissioned this poll, anyway?

**Muriel Hortin**

## DON'T WOMEN OVER 70 GET

### BREAST CANCER?

The NSW Health Department's Breastscreen Program policy is to no longer send letters to women over 70 reminding them to have a breast screen. Does the Health Department consider that women over 70 are not worth the price of a postage stamp?

Breastscreen's advertisements advise women aged 50 to 69 to have a screening mammogram. Does this mean that women over 70 don't get breast cancer? Why are women over 70 excluded?

In mid-February, members of the OWN Health Group wrote to Ann Brassil, Director of Breastscreen NSW asking these questions. Stay tuned for her reply.

**Renate Watkinson**

### SEXUAL ASSAULT

The cover photo of Good Weekend on March 4 showed a woman standing in front of a mirror saying, "Do I look fat in this?". An uninterested man, presumably her partner, sits nearby reading a paper. He sees no reason to comment; his attitude indicating mild contempt.

Now, read a letter in the same Good Weekend in "Your Turn". A woman (name withheld) writes that she is a single mum with an AVO against her ex-husband. She is managing on a pension with others in a similar position in her neighbourhood. Her letter is somewhat ironic - will she settle down with a caring man in a nice suburb?

The mild contempt of the man in the cover photo is now seen at the other end of the scale. It has turned to violence.

It is bugging me that in spite of new legislation, there were 11,642 cases of sexual assaults against females in 1998. This is an outrageous number, especially as it obviously does not include unreported cases, of which, as we all know, there are many.

**Cecily McIlroy**

## MEET ...

### **Gloria MacLennan**

**Volunteer worker: data entry, word processing, clerical work**

Where is your favourite place to go?

*The Beach*

What do you like to do the most?

*Learn new stuff*

What is the one thing you never want to have to do again?

*Get married*

What gives you your greatest sense of satisfaction?

*To see a job through knowing I've given it my best shot*

What is the best thing you get from the Network?

*Support and companionship from my peer group*

What is your greatest contribution to the Network?

*Sense of humour, beautiful earrings, outrageous fingernails*

What do you think is the single most important issue for older women?

*Recognition of us as individuals*

What are you most passionate about?

*Honour*

What causes you most distress?

*Bigotry*

What do you wish you had done that you haven't done yet?

*Stayed single*

## THEATRE GROUP

Well we did it! The WOW 2000, we knew we would. New show, new script, new music. Blood, sweat, tears and sacrifices went into the ten rehearsals in five weeks. Two members cut short a three day Hunter Valley (missed the wine) holiday, endured a five hours early morning bus and train trip to get back to a dress rehearsal on time. How's that for commitment!

Merle was an uplifting influence, through her grief, weeks of sadness and anguish, long hours by her daughter's hospital bed until the end. She never missed a rehearsal. A truly admirable person.

Endless, fruitless visits to opp. shops seeking out costumes for various acts in the show. Finally, Jo's sewing machine was feeding out Pure Gold jackets for three members. Material donated by Bernice was transformed into shimmering evening gowns by other cast members.

Five shows in two weeks, three down, two to go. Shows performed were well received by receptive audiences. First show at Leichhardt Town Hall. Year 12 girl students were in attendance, their looks of bewilderment were soon dispelled. Said they had never seen anything like us before! However, enjoyed and understood what we were saying. Wished their Mums could see us.

Next stop, the Opera House - what can I say, all this splendour. Performed for the female staff of Royal Botanical Gardens and Opera House, they were enthralled by what Older Women can do - can't wait to be Older Women. We were soon brought back to the real world by having to use the goods lift to get out!

Last but not least, Glebe Community Hall, Senior citizens audience were delighted, one woman said she could watch show all over again - right away. We were invited to share their scrumptious afternoon tea, an offer we didn't refuse.

Our cast members, director and musician are to be commended. Regardless of weather and Glebe was a hot sticky day, trains and buses running late or not at all, we all fronted up with smiles (I think) on our faces.

Janet Waters

## ABORIGINAL SUPPORT CIRCLE

On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> March we were privileged to hear feisty fighter for social justice, Kaye Bellear, speak about her life as an activist. Kaye was born in Ballarat in 1944 the daughter of politically aware working class parents who were very involved in union affairs. After leaving school, Kaye trained as a nurse. She came to Sydney in 1965 and married a young Aboriginal named Bob Bellear. Kaye was appalled at the racism, discrimination, homelessness, lack of children's services and legal services, poor hospital service, harassment and police provocation and bullying which Aboriginal people were encountering on a daily basis.

Kaye and Bob, and other young activists, tried to change some of these conditions. In 1972, they joined busloads of Aboriginal people, trade unionists and activists for social justice from all over Australia and converged on Canberra to set up the Black Embassy on Parliament House lawns. Police attempted to close the Embassy and violence followed but the protesters endured and the attempt failed.

After a few years of marriage, Bob decided that one of the ways to combat injustice was to study law. He has since worked as counsel assisting the enquiry into Black Deaths in Custody, a Public Defender and in 1996 was appointed the first Black judge in the country.

Kaye's role in organisations was often to take the extreme view so that eventually a compromise could be reached. Frequently arrested in the past for her political activities in the past, Kaye thinks she must be getting a bit soft now, as she hasn't been arrested for eight years!

Kaye believes that a national apology must be given not only for the Stolen Generation but also for all Aboriginal peoples who have suffered since 1788. To combat racism and prejudice, she feels that the true history of Australia must be a vital part of all school curriculums. Kaye now works with Aboriginal students at Vacluse High School. Thank you, Kaye, your talk was truly inspiring.

Lucy Porter

### THEN AND NOW

Then...my years numbered only a few

Then...I didn't ask questions - I did as I was told

Then...I thought everything was black or white

Then...I thought life was never going to be any different

Then...I was innocent and ignorant

*Now...my years number a lot more*

*Now...I question everything*

*Now...I am not sure of anything any more*

*Now...I know that change is the essence of life*

*Now...I feel a bit wiser and mainly more tolerant.*

Trudy Davis

## ACCEPTANCE OF AGEING

At some stage in our lives we take a last glance in the mirror, dressed to kill for an outing, and suddenly notice the wisps of facial hair, the sag beneath the chin-line and the wobbly upper arms in a sleeveless dress. We vow to start using Vitamin E, special pills and expensive creams. But can these undo the years of tanning every summer, smoke curling from those cigs as we indulged in white wine flagons, thickly buttered crumpets and Devonshire teas?

Our stiff gait, dowager's apron fat, squinting in the sun, the experienced scepticism, reveal that the bloom of youth with its quick reflexes, strong muscles and firm flesh has lost its petals. In the year 2000, what are we facing is a society which values youth and good looks as a commodity; saleable for a short and shorter period?

It takes a determined effort to change your mindset about ageing. (Ageing must be particularly cruel to those who have enjoyed the gift of beauty.) The beauty fascists whose trade is in cosmetics are there to deter you, and sexist comments like "mutton dressed as lamb" dwell alive and well in our subconscious. It is at our peril if we choose to ignore reality, or descend into agoraphobia.

It seems sensible to look at what has shaped our personalities. Our view of ourselves in older age is shaped not only by current ideas but also by our conditioning in earlier eras, especially family relationships and attitudes towards women. To explore cause and effect in older age is to reach an understanding of what the compensations and losses are.

We can learn that it is wiser for us to try to stay 'in life', to keep our minds open to change and, to stretch our brains. Go for the tinted glasses, the supportive shoes, the health checks, good nutrition, exercise and rest. Most of all, decide to live to please yourself, to not deny your own needs. You owe it to yourself to stand up for your own dignity, take responsibility for yourself and accept yourself, whatever age. All hail to us the older women!

**Enid Harrison**

## POST PEARLIE PEARLS

Sixteen enthusiastic OWN members completed the recent Life Writing Course with Pearlle McNeill. Different members found the course "funny", "exciting", "stimulating", "empowering", "therapeutic", "challenging", "liberating"....

Pearlie is an exceptional teacher of writing skills. She shared her own life experiences with such openness, that we were encouraged to do likewise. A skilled group leader, Pearlle succeeded in building confidence in members to a point where we felt safe to explore ourselves, and, more importantly, were encouraged to begin to write it down!

Participants appreciated the prompt and constructive feedback to their writing by Pearlle, as she had such a wonderful grasp of literary style. She was able to make suggestions for improving the text, while appreciating the uniqueness of each person's experience.

**"HIGHLY RECOMMENDED"** was the final verdict, an opportunity not to be missed. "The Post Pearlle Pearls" are eagerly awaiting a Writing Skills Course, Stage 2!

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## THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN IN THE YEAR 2000

On March 8, women everywhere launched the World March of Women in the Year 2000 and publicised the demands for concrete change to combat poverty and violence against women. This dream of women the world over is now becoming a reality.

So far, 3,500 participating groups in 146 countries are currently involved in this unprecedented project. Already, 75 national coordinating bodies have been set up to develop and adopt women's national demands, plan actions and facilitate coordination of the many groups that continue to join forces.

Peru, Brazil, Morocco, Bolivia, Switzerland, Panama Romania, France, Haiti, Nepal, Mozambique, the Philippines, Pakistan, Thailand, Fiji, Zambia and Australia are just a few of the countries who are demonstrating their commitment through a rich array of activities.

A signature is also a commitment. Starting on March 8, millions of women and men around the world will sign their names in support of the demands of the World March of Women in the Year 2000. These signatures signify individual and collective commitments to end poverty and violence against women.

Signature cards addressed to the Secretary of the United Nations are included in your Newsletter and more are available from OWN.

On October 17, 2000, a group of women will be delivering the millions of signatures and support cards in front of the United Nations headquarters in New York.

For further information on the project contact: World March of Women 2000, Australian Organising Committee c/o GPO Box 2094 Adelaide SA 5001 email: [cathpete@camtech.net.au](mailto:cathpete@camtech.net.au)

Phone: 08 8296 4357 website: <http://www.uq.net.au/march2000>

## PAINTING FOR BEGINNERS

OWN's Art Group is held every Thursday at 1 pm at 75 Windmill Street - just around the corner from the OWN office. The atmosphere is relaxed, even therapeutic, someone said. We usually draw with soft pastels on coloured paper, although sometimes we also try water colours.

We sometimes sketch each other - holding a pose for five minutes can be achieved without becoming too stiff - or have a model. Quite a few landscapes and portraits have been completed, although we like the change of a still-life fruit and vegetables drawing or painting.

I'll show you a sample of the program for this month:

- April 6 Sketch each other, making one drawing of either hands/feet/head. Butchers' paper to be used.
- April 13 Artist's model, Kelly, will pose for sketches. Bring your charcoal and enthusiasm!
- April 20 Bring pastels for landscapes.
- April 27 Still life - arranged articles/bags/glasses/shoes or ornaments from home. Oil pastels suggested. Bring a rubber if an abstract finish is wanted.

Marcia Angelo

## ABOUT MY DRYER

Is anyone interested in hearing about what happened with my clothes dryer few weeks ago? As usual, things didn't go quite the way they should.

Some months ago, just before my daughter left for Atlanta, my old dryer broke down. I found that the only way I could make it work was by hitting the spindle with a hammer. I'd had new elements put in, to no avail. I was told the timer wasn't working and that the dryer was too old (it was only ten) to spend any more money on. I enquired about a new dryer, and was told it would cost me about \$500. So I decided to soldier on and hope for the best.

I was telling my daughter about this. "Mum", she said, "You can have my dryer, I've hardly used it, it's like new." So a couple of weeks later, just before she left, it was transported to my unit and installed.

To my disappointment, this one didn't work much better. I told Bobby about it, and she replied haughtily, "Mum, there is **nothing wrong with that dryer, it works perfectly.**" So I kept quiet about it. **Sometimes it took as long as two hours to dry just a small load, but I suffered in silence.**

After Bobby left, I called in the service man. He said the thermostat wasn't working. That cost me \$103. It still didn't work properly. I called him in again. He said a new timer was needed. Another \$103. No better. The repair was still under warranty, and I called the service man back again. Of course, it worked when he tried it. After he left, I switched it on again, to no effect. In a fury, I gave the door a thump. And, lo! It worked!

Seems the whole trouble was that the door wasn't closing properly. My furious thump had done the trick. So now I know what to do, and it works perfectly.

Renee Simons

## ATTITUDES OF PSYCHOLOGISTS & COUNSELLORS

### "Older clients not appropriate?"

By 2051, a quarter of Australians will be aged 65 and over. As a result, increasing numbers of older adults are expected to require mental health services. A study was conducted to determine the amount of contact psychologists and counsellors have with the older population, their attitudinal responses towards the older client, and whether any diagnostic or treatment biases exist.

Results revealed no treatment or diagnostic biases, however psychologists and counsellors rated older clients as significantly less appropriate for their services than younger clients. Psychologists perceived themselves significantly less competent in treating the older client and were less willing to accept the older client.

Both psychologists and counsellors reported much lower contact rates with older populations (65+) than other adult age groups.

Submitted by researcher  
Joanna Rico

## TIDE IN TIDE OUT

Amongst small mindsets  
Why did she drift to a distant  
shore

With no feverish whirlpools?  
Is she a failure on this islet?

Can she swim with wild torrents  
Or be forever marooned in  
stagnant pools?

Is she a success  
Able to crash on shores in  
foaming peaks?

Can she whomp! into the hard  
sand

Indenting impressions, to be  
dragged back

To where her ripples ranged  
wider

Tossed here, diverted there?

...

As the blood in arterial veins  
surges

With the beat of her brave heart  
She forever questions

What fervour could enrage a  
bloody ocean?

Enid Harrison

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In May 1999 I decided to rejoin the Older Women's Network, which I did, and Peggy Hewett invited me to join the Theatre Group. I was given scripts and songs to learn, and, somehow I soaked up all the words, music and movements.

As you may or may not know, at certain venues the Theatre Group have a group of women who stand and talk about the violence they have suffered in their lives, be it emotional, sexual or just plain old fashioned violence, it's called, appropriately, "The Violence Segment".

Because of my history I was invited to write a few lines about my past. As I read what I had written I started to shake, cry, and I had screams inside me which would not come out.

The first rehearsal was a nightmare with many tears. I had not spoken or even thought about what happened to me since the age of fourteen. I was then sixtyfour.

Although I had to have sessions with a psychiatrist, what got me to where I am today was a group of women, very special women, women to whom this letter is dedicated.

Without these women in the Theatre Group I don't think I would have survived emotionally. They were there every step of my, sometimes, very painful recovery. These women held my hands on stage, they gave me hugs and kisses when I needed them. They listened to me, they understood what I was going through, they supported me when I really needed support.

I can talk about my past now. I look back on it and treat it as some crap that happened to me. But I also know that without my friends, true friends in the Theatre Group I would probably have had an emotional break down. These women cared for me, worried about me and helped me heal.

How do you repay people who have saved your sanity, because that's

what this group of wonderful women did.

I can only think of two words, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU. No matter what happens in the future, I will hold these women of the Theatre Group close to my heart.

**Josie Jackson**

*After our wonderful concert on Saturday 18 March Josie, a star performer, collapsed with heat exhaustion and low blood sugar. A salute to our Ambulance Service which responded so promptly and so caringly to the crisis. Thank you.*

*The NSW President and Executive Director of COTA (NSW) write in reply to the letter of Barbara Burnham in the March issue.*

We were saddened and surprised to read the letter published without reference to COTA (NSW) in the March issue. It is not our intent in this reply to conduct a public debate with Mrs Burnham. We have written to her, we have sent her a copy of this reply prior to its publication, and we will continue privately to try to resolve the concerns that prompted her to write. We will not write again publicly on this matter.

There are however some factual errors and implications in Mrs Burnham's letter we wish to take this opportunity to address.

COTA (NSW), like all State and Territory COTA's, exists to "promote and protect the interests and wellbeing of all older Australians". We do not represent one voice. We aim to hear all relevant older consumer voices, and provide

carefully considered views that take into account both present needs and long term consideration. COTA does not offer an adversarial approach. It often mediates contrary views. It has built its considerable reputation by providing strong advocacy for balanced and thorough policy development.

All consumer policy development contains conflicts of interest. That is partly why COTA exists - to assist in their resolution on behalf of the interests of older Australians. In relation to the Retirement Villages legislation, in its current form - notwithstanding the considerable gains for residents, COTA still has some concerns on behalf of residents that are not addressed by the legislation as it stands.

COTA was not throughout 1999 approached by Mrs Burnham to assist in preparing the residents' case. COTA was approached by a working party, consisting mostly of providers to provide a consumer view. This, a COTA officer with background in the industry, was able to do. We believe such input was very useful in influencing provider opinion on behalf of the long-term interests of residents.

COTA rejects absolutely the implications in Mrs Burnham's letter that in any way COTA is beholden to, listens more to, or is paid in any way by business or providers. Would that we had such income to assist our policy and advocacy efforts. If more, individuals, including members of the RVRA, joined COTA, we would be better able to continue our policy and community project work on behalf of older people in NSW.

We regret sincerely that Mrs Burnham does not understand the structure of membership and governance of COTA (NSW) and how this serves to ensure COTA's opinions and policies are comprehensive, responsible and independent.

The problems that arose and prompted Mrs Burnham's letter were, and as her letter clearly shows, problems of communication, consultation, and approach. They are not, as her letter suggests, problems of consumer interest and loyalty. COTA's mission is unequivocally to serve the interests of older Australians.

Neil Tucker Executive President  
Kath Brewster Director

.....

**Barbara's response:**

I have received from COTA a copy of their reply to my letter to you published in last month's Newsletter.

Anticipating your publication of this I submit my response.

I believe COTA's letter states their position as they see it. As to facts, implications and intentions, these are matters which serve no purpose to debate through these pages.

Any reader may take up the subject if they have such concerns. I herewith assure readers of my willingness and capacity to substantiate my remarks should they wish to pursue them.

Barbara Burnham

***"Never doubt  
that a small  
group  
of thoughtful  
citizens can change  
the world.***

***Indeed, it's the only  
thing that  
ever has".***

***Margaret Mead***

## **BRAS AND BREAST CANCER**

In response to postings on the internet about a link between wearing bras (especially tight ones and wearing them over long periods of time) and breast cancer, Dorothy Broom, from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, challenges discourses which offer easy solutions and promote self-blame.

There MAY be a link between bras and breast cancer, but much as I would love to be told of such a simple preventive, I'm not confident that a link has been shown. And even if there is a link, it would be unique and astonishing if it were 'the' cause of breast cancer which, as I understand it, actually occurs in several forms and almost certainly has multiple causes.

I am uneasy about the thirst that many women have for finding something (bras, diet) or someone ('society', 'patriarchy', 'men') to blame for breast cancer. I believe that this has several very harmful effects, one of which is that we may fixate on what are irrelevant or comparatively unimportant factors and as a consequence neglect much more complex and difficult areas.

We are encouraged to believe that if only our individual behaviour can be modified enough and in the right ways, we can cancer-proof (or even completely disease-proof) ourselves. (Become immortal?) The brutal fact is that although there is suggestive evidence that a number of factors contribute to breast cancer, there is no singular cause of this or probably almost any other cancer.

The causes of lung cancer appear to be comparatively few and relatively readily identified, but even that can strike people with none of the known 'risk factors', and my understanding is that most other cancers almost certainly result from a number of causes perhaps in sequence or perhaps simultaneously.

In breast cancer, the language of individual risk factors (including genetic predisposition) is a central element in the temptation toward blaming people for their diseases and focusing our energies on 'lifestyle' and 'risk taking' rather than on the structural dimensions of social systems that expose people to occupational hazards, social exclusion, environmental contamination and other dangers that affect health in many ways.

'Lifestyle' (including wearing bras) is politically easy; changing the big stuff is neither simple nor politically popular. Calling bra burning 'a matter of life and death' and saying that 'the solution to breast cancer' is to not wear a bra, however inspiring, oversimplifies what is almost certainly a much more subtle and complicated question. And I would hate for women to imagine that they can be confident they won't get breast cancer if they don't wear bras, or for those women who have had breast cancer to imagine that they caused it by what they wore (or ate or....). By all means, leave your bra in the wardrobe, but don't rely on that as a cure for cancer.

## *Australian Recumbent Tricycle Wins in the Comfort Stakes*

She was looking at the heads. I was looking at the feet. I said I'd be wearing a navy hat. She, of course, would be wearing her cycling sandals. It didn't take long for us to recognise each other that day at Circular Quay.

Jean Seay is secretary/treasurer of the International Human Powered Vehicle Association (IHPVA). She lives in a small town in California. She's seventy-one. And she's keen to talk about comfortable cycling for older people, especially women.

I spoke to Jean while she was here to collect her purpose-built, lightweight Greenspeed tricycle from the Melbourne manufacturer. She said she would have had to pay to freight her trike anyway, so she decided to collect it in person and meet all the Australian HPV enthusiasts she has been corresponding with for so long. Her new trike has been specially designed to be light and manoeuvrable enough for her to lift into a small hatchback car, or to carry up and down at least a small flight of steps.

"The thing that's different with recumbents is that you're sitting in a comfortable, chair-like seat instead of up on a narrow saddle that can be very uncomfortable, especially for older women," Jean says.

"If people are really concerned about comfort and not about how they look to others, they will try them. I decided a long time ago that my priority was to be comfortable because I have a little osteo-arthritis and sciatica and I was in great pain on an upright bicycle."

During her three week trip to Australia, Jean cycled in four Australian States and has cycled to and from airports in three capital cities, including Sydney. The recumbent trike has flown with her as an item of luggage. "I just put bubblewrap around the chain. It was handled very, very carefully," she says.

Noting the lack of ramps at railway stations and cycleways in Sydney, Jean has strong views about the need for consultation with cyclists when planning city transport routes. She believes traffic planners need to take advice not just from the young cyclists, but older people, too.

To develop the skills for riding in traffic, Jean took an "effective cycling" course in California. While she's courteous to motorists, she doesn't feel she has to apologise for being on the road and will take a full lane if she has to. Police here seem perfectly accepting of this approach, she says.

Good stability is important in choosing your recumbent trike, Jean feels - and the opportunity to try them out away from traffic in a supportive environment. Around 80 people tried her Bike E at a Cyclefest in Lancaster, England in 1998. It's a good beginner's semi-recumbent and as it's mass produced it's less expensive.

Jean bought her first recumbent in 1984 after cycle touring in Europe on an upright left her sore in the large joints and wrists. At that time most bicycle design didn't take account of women's measurements. She used it to commute to work in Silicon Valley. Since then she has become deeply interested in all the extraordinary variety of HPVs - designed for travel on water, earth and through air; on wings, wheels and rail - amongst other things.

Jean's advice to older people on recumbent cycling? "Try it, you might like it."

Footnote: The IHPVA is an association of national associations and organisations dedicated to promoting improvement, innovation and creativity in the design and development of human-powered transportation. Its website ([www.ihpva.org](http://www.ihpva.org)), is "dedicated to visionaries and dreamers. Some dream of human-powered flight. Others have a vision of a world free from noisy, petro-burning cars. A world where humans can be maybe just a little more in tune with the Earth."

Ros Gordon

## GROWING OLD DISGRACEFULLY NETWORK

Growing Old Disgracefully Network is an international organisation for older women. We seem to have much in common with the Older Women's Network in Australia and yet to be very different.

Your 'raison d'être' - outlined in your homepage - is very much like ours, but our focus is more on the side of fun, personal development, companionship and support, and less on social action and campaigning - although I think some of our members would like to see more of that too. And we have no outside funding.

Our origins are also different in that we developed out of a residential course of the same name at a women's conference and holiday centre. A group who had done the course together kept in touch and later formed the Network. We grew after appearing on TV in 1989.

We have only about 660 members, mostly in the UK, but some in Europe, US, NZ and Australia. We are really a network of individuals and autonomous local groups, loosely held together on a voluntary basis by the original group, who published a newsletter and run occasional national events. In fact we have only in the last three months created a formally elected central body to run the Network as we set great store by informal unstructured cooperative approach. I have become the first Network Secretary and try hard to be efficient but not bureaucratic!

We don't have a website at present but some of us think it would be good to have one and we shall be discussing it soon. I have printed your website to show them when we meet in the new year. I sensed a terrific energy emanating from your pages!

Judith Taylor

## Women Working Together: Networks 4 Networks

Drummoyne Community Centre is looking for more women interested in learning how to use the Internet to expand their social contacts. This is particularly designed for women living in the Inner West area of Sydney (ie. Drummoyne, Burwood, Concord, Strathfield and Ashfield Local Government Areas), who are isolated in some way. This might be due to a disability or medical condition, being a carer, after losing a partner, or because you are from a different cultural background etc. You would need to have an interest in the Internet and the capacity to learn electronic networking within the parameters of the project. It would also be necessary to have a computer and modem so you can be connected to the Internet!

Volunteer tutors are being trained so they can teach you on a one to one basis in your own home on how to use the various aspects of the Internet. Drummoyne Community Centre is also having a number of events at the centre for people involved in the project. Opportunities for increasing social contact will therefore be provided both electronically and through events at the Centre.

This project only has funding for the year 2000 so if you are interested it is important that you contact Drummoyne Community Centre as soon as possible. The project is being funded by the NSW Department for Women.

See **Noticeboard** for contact details. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

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**For Vavara 11.02.43 – 27.02.00**

Death is nothing at all.  
It does not count.  
I have only slipped away into the next room.  
Nothing has happened.  
Everything remains exactly as it was.  
I am I, and you are you,  
And the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.  
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.  
Call me by the old familiar name.  
Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.  
Put no difference into your tone.  
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.  
Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together.  
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.  
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.  
Let me be spoken without an effort, without a ghost of a shadow upon it.  
Life meant all that it ever meant.  
It is the same as it ever was.  
There is absolute and unbroken continuity.  
What is this death but a negligible accident?  
Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?  
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,  
Some where very near, just around the corner.  
All is well.

*(These are the words of an unknown writer)*

**With thanks to OWN members from Merle Highett and family.**

MEET ...

**Kris Ferguson**  
**Office Manager**  
**par excellence**

Where is your favourite place to go?

*Outdoors: the beach, the mountains...*

What do you like to do the most?

*Walking and reading*

What is the one thing you never want to have to do again?

*See a close friend die*

What gives you your greatest sense of satisfaction?

*A day when I feel I have completed tasks*

What is the best thing you get from the Network?

*Humour and friendship*

What is your greatest contribution to the Network?

*Working with the members and helping them to get involved*

What do you think is the single most important issue for older women?

*Income security*

What are you most passionate about?

*My children and grandchildren*

What causes you most distress?

*Intolerance and bigotry*

What do you wish you had done that you haven't done yet?

*Have adventures*

# From The Net

## THE COST OF KEEPING DRY

Some time ago, I attended a Breast Cancer Awareness seminar and during the Q&A period, I asked why the most common area for breast cancer was near the armpit. My question could not be answered at that time, but since then I have found out that one of the leading causes of breast cancer is the use of anti-perspirant. Yes, ANTI-PERSPIRANT. A concentration of toxins and leads to cell mutations: a.k.a. CANCER.

Most of the products out there are an anti-perspirant/deodorant combination, so go home and check. Deodorant is fine, anti-perspirant is not.

The human body has a few areas that it uses to purge toxins: behind the knees, behind the ears, groin area, and armpits. The toxins are purged in the form of perspiration. Anti-perspirant, as the name clearly indicates, prevents you from perspiring, thereby inhibiting the body from purging toxins from below the armpits. These toxins do not just magically disappear. Instead, the body deposits them in the lymph nodes below the arms since it cannot sweat them out. Nearly all breast cancer tumours occur in the upper outside quadrant of the breast area. This is precisely where the lymph nodes are located.

Additionally, men are less likely (but not completely exempt) to develop breast cancer prompted by anti-perspirant usage because most of the anti-perspirant product is caught in their hair and is not directly applied to the skin. Women who apply anti-perspirant right after shaving increase the risk further because shaving causes almost imperceptible nicks in the skin which give the chemicals entrance into the body from the armpit area.

Breast cancer is becoming frighteningly common. This awareness may save lives. If you are sceptical about these findings, I urge you to do some research for yourself. You will arrive at the same conclusions, I assure you.

Katrina Scott, Asst. Director of Sports Marketing, University of Maryland  
P.O. Box 295 Cole Field House, Campus Drive College Park, MD 20741-0295

## “HAVE YOUR SAY”

### WOMEN ON THE ROAD TO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION!

The *Women Consumers - Motor Vehicle Industry Project*, launched this week - sees the NSW Departments for Woman and Fair trading working closely with the motor vehicle industry, to get a better deal for women consumers.

The Department for Women's "Have your Say" campaign aims to gather stories about women's experiences for the project. Women, consumer groups and people working with the industry, are invited to share their opinions about women's experiences with the motor vehicle industry, particularly in rural and regional NSW.

These results will be discussed at a workshop with key industry representatives and women's and consumer groups in May.

"This is not about industry bashing," the Director-General of the Department for Women, Robyn Henderson, said. "We want to hear women's stories and work with the industry to find solutions to the problems. With the support and enthusiasm of the industry, I am confident this project will produce real results for women," she said.

If you would like to "have your say", please contact the Women's Information and Referral Service, FREECALL 1 800 817 227, or Email the Department at [have\\_yoursay@women.nsw.gov.au](mailto:have_yoursay@women.nsw.gov.au)

## When it's Just Too Hard

Attention on Jennie George's decision to stand down as ACTU President on International Women's Day has raised some pertinent issues about the role of women in the broader labour movement.

Through the round of farewells, there was unsavoury undercurrent. Here was the first ACTU President in living memory who was not being moved into a safe political seat to build on her contribution to labour.

While Jennie remains philosophical about this, it should jar us all that, for once, the factional chiefs have decided it's just too hard.

The same justification can be used to explain many of the issues that still enshrine women as something less than equal in both the labour market and the broader society.

It's just too hard to put meaning into gender pay equity, to get down and nut out a way to properly value the contribution women make in the work place. It's just too hard to get out and organise lowly paid female workers, leaving government funded organisations like the Working Women's centre to pick up the slack. It's just too hard for individual families to reorganise the domestic arrangements so that partners can more fully share in both family and working lives.

That's the thing about big changes in society, they often sound good but are invariably just too hard.

**Extracted from:** Peter Lewis, Editor, WORKERS ONLINE, ISSUE NO 45, 10 MARCH 2000

## Tune in ...

Since retirement, I have worked as a volunteer on several committees in charitable organisations. Some years ago the Manly Daily reported that the Manly Warringah Community Radio station was asking for volunteers to become Cooperative members at a small fee and, if interested, to gain experience in broadcasting. "There you go, Helen," my husband said, "Here is the ideal way to get publicity for your charities." Off I went like a rocket. I knew what Chris meant. I was continually chasing up local newspapers to publicise the fund-raising functions that I was involved in, and this turned out to be one of the best decisions I had ever made.

Broadcasting served a dual purpose: it was entertainment for me and I was contributing to my community in a quite different way – unlike visiting nursing homes or serving meals on wheels. I was given half an hour air-time each Sunday. Between 12 noon and 2 pm I produced my own program, appropriately titled 'Community Organisations'. After opening my segment with, "Good Morning, you are tuned in to Community Radio Manly Warringah on 92.1 and 93.7 FM on your dial and I'm Helen Sider", I would introduce my guest and the organisation she represented, and then allow her to talk about it. On one occasion I had the pleasure of interviewing Margaret Bridger from the Older Women's Network, and from the information Margaret provided, I realised that joining OWN might be an interesting thing to do for myself!

I simply cannot explain in words the fun, enjoyment and the sense of giving and receiving all at the same time that community broadcasting added to my life and to others. It was especially worthwhile when listeners rang in to say how much they enjoyed the program, which always included music.

As I am bilingual, I received permission to start another half-hour program in the Greek language, and since then several other ethnic groups have acquired their own air time. For health reasons I eventually had to retire from broadcasting, but I shall always remember the pleasant hours I spent on Radio Northern Beaches (the station's new name), and the voluntary service it continues to give to the community. Go on, have a go and become a broadcaster. It's truly easy. If I did it, anyone can.

**Helen Sider**

## FEMALE ORGASM INTERVIEW STUDY

I am conducting interviews with women about their experiences with orgasm, and particularly with their experiences of not having orgasms.

This research is part of a PhD project on female orgasm in the twentieth century and the different ways in which women not having orgasms has been understood.

If you are a woman who either does or does not have orgasms and you would like to participate in these interviews please contact Kirsty McKenzie either by email ([kirsteen22@hotmail.com](mailto:kirsteen22@hotmail.com)) or by leaving a message with the Department of Gender Studies (9351 6828).

Interviews will either be by email or face to face. Face to face interviews will be approximately half an hour to an hour long.

All interviews will be strictly confidential and anonymous.

Kirsty McKenzie, Department of Gender Studies, University of Sydney NSW 2006 phone: 9519 7768 or 9351 6828

## Joan's Knickers

It was the time of the year when Doug and I set off in our campervan to go north, escaping the winter's chill and mooching around outback.

While packing I decided to go through my underwear drawer and chuck out the has-beens. What a tatty lot of nickers I had. Mostly saggy, with limp elastic and threadbare bottoms. I made two neat piles, one for the duster bag, and one to pack.

We set off gaily avoiding the highways, travelling on the country roads through small towns, and camping among the trees in quiet spots.

Second night out is shower night and clean undies. Out came a limp specimen from my locker. I must have packed one of the throwouts, I reached for another. Ye gods, I had packed the dusters! So, urgent stop at the next town with me pinning and hitching.

The one clothing store had not heard of my favourite brand 'No Knickers' nor had anything suitable for my 76 year old bottom. Same experience in town number two. Substitutes were suggested. High cut things with frills and bows mostly in pink or mauve. I was getting desperate and approached the next town eagerly. It had a big Supermarket and a Department Store.

We decided to each do a bit of shopping and then meet in the underwear department. Later when I came to the bras and pants I was surprised to see Doug purposefully approaching a young shop assistant. He has various voices for various occasions and I heard him say loudly and emphatically (his telephone voice) 'Excuse me, have you No Knickers?'. I burst out laughing and Doug turned around and said 'Ah, there you are dear. Sorry, she says she hasn't got No Knickers!'

**Joan Johns**

# NOTICE

## ACCOMMODATION DURING OLYMPICS ....

Margaux Crook, an older woman from Queensland, desperately needs a bed for the two weeks of the Olympic Games. She is a volunteer during the Games and will not need meals – just a bed. She would like accommodation close to public transport and is happy to pay her way. Margaux needs to know immediately if anyone can help.

Please phone her on 07 3376 1447.

## CONTACT TODAY

### ARE YOU

*Interested in learning the Internet?*

*&*

*Increasing your social networks too?*

*&*

*Living in the Inner West area of Sydney?*

### CONTACT TODAY

*Drummoyne Community Centre*

*About Women Working Together:*

*Networks4Networks*

*Phone: 9719-8102. Fax: 9819-6116*

*Email: [dccinc@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dccinc@ozemail.com.au)*

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED

**OWN( Australia) need voluntary workers in the office at 147A King Street, Sydney, to answer the phone, take messages and generally help out. Please call Betty on 9221-4618 if you have some hours to spare.**

## MOUNT ANNAN BOTANIC GARDENS

### THE NATIVE PLANT GARDEN OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS

Mount Annan is between Campbelltown and Camden and offers free guided tours, picnic facilities and a café.

If you would like to be part of a tour group from OWN, please ring 924 77046 to indicate your interest. It will probably be during August, which is wattle month. We'll decide on the date and the type of transport when we know how many want to go.

## Jessie Street National Women's Library

### Lunch hour talk:

**“Four funerals and a wedding: the sad plight of Australian Women Modernist Painters**  
by  
**Camille Scaysbrook.**

**12 noon, Lady Mayoress' Rooms, Sydney Town Hall.  
Entry \$10  
Sandwich lunch provided.  
Booking 9876 3927 or  
9265 9486**

# BOARD

## NAUGHTY BUT NICE

The Rylstone & District Women's Institute in the UK dropped everything to pose in a naughty but nice nude calendar for 2000.

The eldest of the group is 65 and youngest 44. They expected to sell 400 and so far have sold 50,000! You can see their calendar, which is on a notice board at '87'.

*Anyone interested in a similar fundraiser for OWN?*

## SUPPORT MEDICARE

### AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

In recent years our public health system has been under significant strain, and yet at the same time billions of taxpayers' dollars per year are being diverted to the Howard government into incentives for private health insurance that only benefit around 30% of the population.

**Write** to Senator Rosemary Crowley, Chair, Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, Parliament House, Canberra by Friday 7 April, 2000 asking her to defend Medicare and public health services at the Inquiry into Public Hospital Funding.

## Royal Easter Show

**Discounted tickets for people with disabilities and their carers.**

**30% discount on regular concession entry. Discount rates for carers. Special facilities for people with disabilities.**

**Book before April 13 on a special form available from Ticketek 9266 4831. Bus, train and Ferry info – phone 131 500**

## *Interested in a Computer Club?*

**The Australian Senior Computer Clubs Association Inc. has clubs in many areas of Sydney. Their web site is [www.interweb.com.au/snug](http://www.interweb.com.au/snug) or you can phone Nan Bosler on 9971 5981 for more info.**

## BOOK FAIR

**The University of NSW Book Fair will run from Easter Monday 24 April until Saturday 29 April in Unisearch House, Anzac Parade opposite the University. Always great bargains to be had!**

## 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>