

OWN MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc
No. 5 March 2002

Towards a Better World for Women

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The history of International Women's Day (IWD) dates back to 1910 internationally and to 1928 in Australia. Socialist women in the United States organised the first national Women's Day in 1908 and helped to inspire the international event. In keeping with its early radical traditions, Lena Lewis, US socialist, declared in 1910 that it was not a time for celebrating anything, but rather a day for anticipating all the struggles to come.

Over the years, International Women's Day has taken to the streets, sparked off a revolution, met cosily at luncheons and concerts, rubbed shoulders with Premiers, Prime Ministers and Mayors, demonstrated at the doors of newspapers and welfare institutions, occupied empty houses intent on gaining shelter for homeless women and has ushered in reform legislation.

IWD is an occasion for women and men to join together and call for a better world for women and girls, put women's issues on the agenda and celebrate their contribution to society.

March 8 is International Women's Day every year, although most activities are held on the Saturday closest to this date. In Sydney, activities include meetings, marches, campaigns, debates, speeches, picnics, breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Please see notices on page fifteen.

Joyce Stevens

OWN Matters

is the Newsletter of the
Older Women's Network
New South Wales Inc.

It is published 11 times a year.
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Who Are We?

OWN NSW is the peak body for
sixteen OWN groups in NSW.
OWN promotes the rights, dignity
and wellbeing of older women
through a range of activities and
resources, and advocates to
government and non-government
agencies on issues of concern
to older women.

Contributions

All members of OWN groups in
NSW are encouraged to
contribute to **OWN Matters** with
items of interest to older women
and letters to the Editor.

They can be sent by mail or email
marked 'Attention – Editorial
Team'. Please include contact
details.

Contributions must be received by
the second Monday of each
month.

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Point of view

If I were about to take a trip overseas, which of course I'm not, I would be too embarrassed to proclaim my nationality. This government has made us a pariah nation, like South Africa was during apartheid.

Impeccable eye witnesses to the conditions in Woomera and other detention centres tell almost unbelievable stories of extreme abuse of human rights.

Apart from the physical misery of the extreme desert temperatures, the long queues for food, often poor and sometimes inedible, people seeking medical attention have to queue in the open for one and a half hours. Nails may only be cut by the nurse who will only do one person per day. It is women, of course, who suffer the misery and embarrassment of having to queue each day for their ration of tampons and disposable nappies. There is no baby food or formula and one woman, having trouble maintaining breast-feeding, was told to feed the baby with powdered chicken stock mixed with water.

An Iraqi woman told in an affidavit how, when she was taken to Port Hedland, she had to ask to have her handcuffs removed so she could hold her two-year-old son. She was searched in a humiliating way, her child screaming all the time. The guard actually tried to leg-cuff the child but was prevented by another guard. When they arrived they were given nothing to eat or drink until the following morning. For 32 hours the children had no food. She asked to take her child to the toilet but had to wait for an hour before being escorted.

These centres are maintained by a commercial operation called Australian Correctional Management Pty Ltd. They are supposed to meet the needs of the detainees in a culturally appropriate way while at the same time providing safe and secure detention.

It is estimated that it costs DIMA \$117 per day to house each detainee. Assuming an average of 3,000 people, this comes to \$150 million a year!

Muriel Hortin

Material for this article came from an article by Naomi Edwards published in the Sydney Morning Herald. The Fairfax press should be congratulated for being one of the few sources of objective information on Asylum seeker issues.

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

We've had a very productive start to the year – the Planning Session on 29 January was of great benefit in getting us all focussed on the coming year. It was a chance to revisit our earlier planning session and look at what we had done and what we hadn't (about equal amounts of both), and confirm that we were still on course. We are giving particular emphasis to expanding the membership of OWN statewide and to this end we made a few decisions:

To distribute twenty-five free copies of *OWN Matters* to libraries in selected areas for three months to see whether the newsletter prompts people to contact us. The two areas chosen are Lake Macquarie and South Sydney. All women taking calls for those three months from women inquiring about OWN will be asked to find out where the caller got our contact details from and we'll see if this strategy is successful.

To have 2000 new brochures printed for distribution statewide with contact details for all groups.

To make postcards of the poster graphic for OWN groups to use for short communications and for members to buy for their own use. These will be advertised in *OWN Matters* when they are available.

Recently the Industrial Commission awarded salary increases to all workers covered by the SACs award. This includes Dorothy Cora and Kris Ferguson who work at Millers Point, and Jan Malley at Bankstown.

This raise is not before time; the award had been at a very low level for a very long time. The award covers areas where the majority of employees are women working in jobs that include the last areas of work to leave the domestic sphere: child care, care of the disabled, chronically ill, and the aged. So, for our workers, we're very pleased about the increase.

However there's a problem. The government has promised to increase our grant to cover a percentage of the award increase, but not all of it. Potentially we have a shortfall in the salary component of our budget. The state government thinks the federal government should pay a bit and the federal government doesn't want to. So there's going to be a hassle about it. We are going to join in and support the NSW Council of Social Services in their efforts to have the shortfall covered.

Which leads neatly into the next aspect of our planning – fundraising. We are now on the search for possible sources of funding, corporate or other, and gathering information about who gives what and under what circumstances. Any help we can get would be much appreciated. We are also looking for ideas about ways of going about fundraising. Submission writing is obviously one way but are there others? Any ideas? Anyone?

General community concern about public liability and other insurance is reflected within OWN. We are fine as far as our general insurance is concerned: Workcover, public liability, property and assets. However, some aspects of the Wellness Centres' cover is a bit more complicated, with some Centres employing activity leaders who do not have their own professional indemnity. Currently, the Wellness Centres are working together to come up with ways of ensuring that all OWN activities are as safe and secure as possible, and that insurance cover is adequate.

Pam Ledden, Sam Smart. Betty Murphy

Share your knowledge.
It's the only way to achieve
immortality!

Sydney OWN Highlights

In the February Newsletter, we briefly mentioned the January discussion on 'Feminism and its impact on older women' led by Bronwyn Winter. This topic was obviously of great interest to our members, judging by the large turnout. From talking with women who stayed on for a chat after the session, it seems that more discussion groups of this kind would be welcomed. Consequently, the Working Group, at our February meeting, has decided to hold two more discussions later in the year. If anyone knows a good speaker, passionate and informed, we would like to hear from you.

At our February 15 quarterly meeting, members looked at OWN Sydney goals and explored how they will be achieved. Just to remind you, our goals are to promote enrichment, mutual support and companionship/friendship amongst older women; to challenge negative attitudes about ageing; to promote healthy ageing, which includes social, intellectual, physical and emotional factors and to influence the outcomes of policy decisions affecting our lives.

At the February meeting, we reaffirmed our commitment to build on the high energy of Sydney members to create a friendly and dynamic group for older women in the metropolitan area. Our past successes – guest speakers, the a capella group and fish lunches – will continue, as will longer standing activities such as Creative Movement and Creative Writing. Some of us would also like a follow up computer skills class, but this time on Apple Macs! As a way of connecting with members from other groups, we are planning to hold a fish lunch in Wollongong later in the year and invite other OWNs to join us.

New! Members who don't get the chance to attend activities and events during the week and newcomers to OWN will be pleased to see that we are holding a

'Getting to Know You' coffee morning on Easter Saturday. 'Old' members are also welcome!

The would-be writers amongst us will also be pleased to see that Pearlie McNeill, who is such good value, has offered a two-day *Life Writing* course, and it's free! Thanks, Pearlie.

And, for those of you with an abundance of energy, an 8-week drumming course will start in late March at Mott Hall.

As usual, we're in for a big month this month with International Women's Day marches and rallies and also NSW Seniors Week, March 17-24.

Please see flyers, diary page and notices for details of OWN Sydney events.

Joy Ross and Louise Anike

No holding me back now!

I was one of fourteen Sydney OWN members who attended six sessions of a TAFE Outreach course on computer skills during January and February.

It was a very friendly, energetic and informative class conducted by Della Geelan, herself an older woman, who was not only skilful, but encouraged us to ask questions and explore. I found the class very useful in that it helped break down some of the attitudes I have held which have been holding me back from developing computer skills. It could be called 'fear of making mistakes' or 'uncertainty of how to proceed', but I now feel more confident to explore and be more adventurous with the computer.

I thank Sydney OWN for giving me the opportunity to participate in this course; it has whetted my appetite for further computer study and I certainly would like to be considered for any future courses.

Merle Hight

Aboriginal Support Circle

Monique Reiher chaired our first meeting for the year. She and Sandy Chandler have stepped down as coordinators, and have been replaced by Betty Little, Pat Zinn and Frayda Cooper. Billy Kirlew is secretary, and Margaret Walker and Monique will continue to be our librarians.

The main focus for this year will be completion of the book on the Aboriginal women who have shared their experiences with the OWN Aboriginal Support Circle. Meg Coulson has agreed to coordinate this project with close support from Lucy Porter and Betty Little.

At the meeting, we caught up with some of the happenings we'd been involved in over the summer break.

I recently attended a Brandon Bays 'Intensive Journey' on alternative healing. Prior to the workshop, Brandon Bays made available two scholarships (worth \$495 each) to two Aboriginal women to attend the workshop. Maisie Cavanagh and I were able to arrange for the two scholarships to be taken up by two Aboriginal women from Penrith. They both found the weekend worthwhile attending.

Betty Little attended the thirtieth birthday of the Tent Embassy and was in Canberra when the Coat of Arms was 'removed' by Aboriginal people from Old Parliament Building. Betty asked each of us at the meeting to express our honest reaction to the episode, which we did. Betty explained that the Aboriginal community wants the kangaroo and emu to be removed from the Australian Coat of Arms as these sacred animals have been used without the permission of indigenous people. The animals are connected to Aboriginal people through religion and law. This was a most enlightening exercise. Most of us were not sensitive to the Aboriginal point of view, and felt that we also owned the emu and the kangaroo.

After Betty carefully explained the religious meaning to us – in fact, the emu is Betty's totem – we realised that those who removed the Coat of Arms should be reprimanded, but not severely punished. (It was returned soon after it went 'missing'.)

Frayda Cooper

Fed up to the teeth with dental services?

The NSW Department of Health, Oral Health Branch, has identified the issue of oral health in older people as a priority for 2002/03. To assist in the development of a state-wide framework leading to strategies and policies aimed at improving oral health outcomes for older people, the Department is holding a workshop on 26 and 27 March 2002. The *Older People's Oral Health Needs* workshops will be held at a venue close to Sydney Airport, and the first day will commence at 1pm. The Oral Health Branch will reimburse travel expenses to the workshop.

If anyone is interested in attending the workshop and contributing to these initial discussions on oral health, please contact me at the OWN office for further information.

There is also an Oral Health Alliance group which meets monthly at the Council of Social Services of NSW, in Surry Hills. This group advocates for improved public dental health services and generates publicity on oral health issues generally. If you are interested in representing OWN NSW on this important health issue, please phone me for minutes of their last meeting and details of future meetings.

Dorothy Cora

Theatre

Group

We are back and raring to go!

I know it's a bit late, but I'd like to wish you all a happy and healthy New Year.

A big welcome to our brand new members, Marjorie Moffat and Ruth Patterson. Josie Jackson is also back with us after a short break; she just couldn't keep away. That brings us to a grand total of fourteen. It's wonderful! It means understudies galore. The burning question is, will we all fit on stage? Never mind, sometimes there is no stage. It will mean now that there are more people to share in the routine weekly tasks and the ever-demanding job of setting up for shows and managing the props. Many hands make light work – that's the theory, anyway.

We started back on January 22 and have been rehearsing on Tuesday and Friday afternoons ever since. Dedication is the word. Our brand new show was written, in the main, by our Director, Louise Anike. It is provocative, funny, thought provoking, topical, and just marvellous. She's done it again!

Our musician, Ann Cunnyngname, has written several pieces of music, and Josie Jackson has a new song for us. Someone called Joyce Grenfell has also made a contribution. She's not a member of the group, is she?

After a long summer break, it's difficult to get back into the swing of things. Let's face it – learning new words, new tunes, new stage moves, new this and new that, is not an easy task at OUR AGE!

A lovely young woman, Sophie Kennedy-White, with her offsider, Michael, visited us on 5 February. She wants to make a documentary about older women which she plans to call "Groovy Grannies Growing Old Disgracefully!" We wish her well, and hope she manages to get the funding she needs. She filmed unobtrusively throughout the day while we were performing. Sometimes it was really hard not to play to the camera – some of us really want to be in the movies! It was the first time in her life that she had spent a

whole day with a bunch of rowdy oldies, and she loved it.

We kick off with our first show of the year on 21 February at Sydney University. Needless to say, it's the old 2001 show. No one in their right mind would expect a brand new show so early in the piece, would they? Give us a break! March looks like being hectic as usual, with six shows in the pipeline already.

Peggy Hewitt celebrated her birthday this month – rumour has it that she's over 40... We all enjoyed a yummy cake oozing cream, with an undisclosed calorie count.

Jean Jacobs

Do you have a story to tell?

I'm seeking contributions for a book about chronic illness, to be published early 2003. I'm looking for personal reflections written by people who are living with a long-term illness. The emphasis should be on the emotional, social, psychological and financial impacts that illness can have on a person's life, not just the physical impact.

You could reflect on a number of things such as:

the impact illness has had on your self-identity and personal relationships,

whether your experience of illness has changed your perceptions of life,

the strategies you use to cope with your illness or condition,

your experience with the medical system,

the attitude of the broader community towards illness,

how illness affects your working life.

Stories should be no longer than 1200 words.

If you are interested in writing your story, please contact Emma Corcoran for further information (02) 66 841194 or e-mail emmacorcoran@bigpond.com.

Me and the Bureaucrats

The queue was long at the Hornsby Council Administration desk, but eventually I heard, "Can I help you?" My request was simple, I thought.

"I need to know the home owners' insurance policy number for the units where I live in Hornsby." I gave my address. "What is the number of the policy?" "That is what I want you to find out for me, please."

"If you give me the number, I can organise a search." (Ye Gods!) "The Council issued a Home Owners Insurance Policy two years ago. Our Strata Manager needs to know the number of the policy." "Do you live in Hornsby?" (Deep breath!) I gave my address again. "Let's look at the microfiche. Come with me." I gazed at the little machine as she shoved slides into its innards.

"There is no building on that block of land."
"But I live there, I've just come from there."
"We have no record of a building on that site in Muriel Street. Are you sure you don't live in Muriel Lane, dear?" (Ah, the little old lady treatment.) "Positively no!"

She ambled off and came back, triumphantly announcing, "Yes, you do live in Muriel Street. Now what is it that you want?" God give me patience, but hurry! I told her again.

"Ah, that would be in the archives." She looked at her watch. "Come back next week and fill in a form, and we'll get the documents!"

"Can I fill in a form now? It's an urgent matter." She hurriedly pushed a form towards me, which I signed. "See you next week."

I made my arthritic way downstairs and – I was locked in! They get out of this building quick smart! I was about to press an interesting button, when a loud yell stopped me in my tracks. "Don't press that button! It's the alarm system."

It was the cleaner, who, to my relief, sent me on my way.

The queue was equally long next week. Same woman produced a pile of documents that the proverbial dog couldn't jump over. Phew!

I began my search. No insurance policy that I could see. "Can you help me, please?" She wandered off and came back with an efficient looking woman in black. I went through the hoops again.

"I don't think you'll find the Policy in there. If you pay \$120, we will conduct a further search." "But this is the Administration Department, and this is an administrative matter?" "Yes." "Then why should I have to pay \$120?"

"Come back next week. There is a form you can fill in. We are out of them at the moment."

At home, I rang our conveyancer. "Ah, this document would have been caught up in the confusion of 1997. A new Act was passed. Some people weren't informed, and acted on the old system, some on the new, very confusing."

Next week, both women on duty. I fixed a steely eye on the black-suited one.

"Did the new Act of 1997 confuse the issue regarding the matter of the Insurance Policy?"... (Oh! Not such a scatty little old lady.) "Oh yes, it did. Just wait a moment, please." She marched off and came back with Stephen, grey-suited, with a sombre tie, the documents under his arm. He ushered me into a smart office. "What is your problem?"

I gave him the lot – the builder who had scarppered off leaving work undone, open Government, \$120, administrating the 1997 Act, the Insurance Policy.

"I understand why your Strata Manager needs this Policy. Leave it to me. I will personally see to it. Tell your Strata Manager to fax me – and by the way, there is no need to pay \$120." He stood up. I consulted my watch and sat tight.

"Why are there matters in this document that have not been checked by the Council?" I gave examples. His evasive tactics were extraordinarily good.

"Mrs Johns, you bought this unit and were satisfied with it?" "Yes, but..."

"We are not policemen. We check that the building is habitable. We check for safety, e.g., are the carpets fireproof?" I had him. "We replaced one of the stairwell carpets after a water pipe burst. It was not fire proof, and lacked some underlay. People would not have been able to come down those stairs." Not a flicker of emotion or concern above that neat tie.

"Leave it with me, Mrs Johns."

Joan Johns

Letters to the Editor

Another lament

I have always enjoyed Dorothy Cox's articles in the Newsletter, and love the way she writes. But this latest one, "Lament", really bothers me. In fact, I wonder why you published it.

Really! Does being 80 years old entitle you to behave that way? I've never felt like that, though I had my 80th birthday some time ago. I feel just as I always did, no desire to do anything strange, like wearing my clothes inside out, or spitting, or whatever. Why would anyone want to do their pelvic floor exercises at a bus stop? Or take their teeth out in public places? Onlookers would be very worried, might call the police and have you carted away, or vomit, or both.

Also, I don't agree that ageing is terrible. It's natural, and preferable to the alternative.

I don't see what's so special about saying the F-word (not that I ever want to say it myself). The only place it seems to be forbidden is in the daily papers, and we all know what's meant by f***ing, don't we? There are millions of other words in the English language. No need to use that one, and, really, it's not so daring as it used to be. You hear it on television all the time, especially on SBS. Policemen, apparently, use it very frequently indeed.

Sincerely

Renee Simons

Retirement Villages

I am the author and publisher of a new book called *The Retirement Village Handbook*. I also operate a website www.itsyourlife.com.au. I can also be contacted on (02) 8230 2424.

Retirement villages are particularly relevant to older women as about 60% of retirement village residents are women. The decision to move to a retirement village is not an easy one and it is complicated by the range of different legal structures and departure fee structures that are available in the market today. *The Retirement Village Handbook* addresses these issues.

Randall Olgers

*I took my friend to a party
and someone asked her
to drum!*

The Wellness Showcase last year can only be described as a RIOT!

But first, the dignified preliminaries. Pat Zinn welcomed the large gathering at Abraham Mott Hall on behalf of the traditional owners of the land. Betty Murphy gave us a neat overview of what Wellness means – a state of mind embracing mind, body and spirit. Our dear original OWN person, Noreen Hewitt, told us how it all came together; then moving to music began, as Bankstown Gentle Exercises hit the floor. Who could resist their marching/syncopating/let-'er-go-Edith fun of it? Soon all available floor space was taken over by madly exercising bodies. One of them said to me, "I love being with these mad women, don't you?" That's how it felt, all being mad together.

Ellin's Creative Dance was next – a different approach to body movement. No rules, just follow your own feeling. Watch that Ellin – two hip replacements, and she's still in there groovin' like crazy. Take it as far as you can, and dance your tits off! Or choose a slower pace – in a chair, if you like, and imagine you're young again – and free – and sexy – and beautiful.

Then we rolled into Alita's International Dancing. Different again, involving other cultures, all with their own flavour, and the beautifully costumed Greek dancers. Perfect expressions of other places, other times. All three different, exciting, gracious ways of staying active and healthy.

And then the drumming began. Oh, the power of those drums! And the cymbals, and other clashing, tinkling things! We were all caught up in the incredible spontaneity and joyousness of it! A hall full of mad women, dancing to the beat of the drums, and having the time of our lives!

A luscious lunch, and a performance by our stellar Theatre Group, compered by Peggy. What a party... What a day to remember!

Dorothy Cox

Valuing Volunteers

'Joy Ross' is probably a very familiar name to newsletter readers, having been around in various volunteer roles at OWN for more than thirteen years.

Joy's first experience as a volunteer was in 1980 when she helped form the Surry Hills Northcott Residents' Group, on the public housing estate where she still lives. Nine years of full-on activity saw the development of a community centre, a remodelled park, a community transport scheme, tenancy advice services and an improved tenant liaison with the NSW Department of Housing. Joy has had connections with her local Neighbourhood Centre for twenty years and three years ago, feeling she had time to spare (!), decided to rejoin its management committee.

Joy says that in 1987, her life took on new meaning and direction when OWN got going as a Combined Pensioners project. As a feminist and social justice activist, Joy was looking for some action on issues around being a woman and being older. Joy felt that OWN was the place for her energies. Once OWN moved to premises in Lower Fort Street, Joy focused on the need to build it into a stronger organisation, often working up to five days a week in her role as coordinator/secretary. In the early years, Joy was also a member of the Theatre Group, and an active member of the Sing Talk groups which provided 'lectures with a difference' to university students. This, despite public speaking being definitely not one of Joy's favourite pastimes!

In late 1998, Joy resigned as coordinator/secretary of OWN Inc., and took on the ambitious task of coordinating OWN'S International Year of Older Persons (IYOP) events. OWN's IYOP program of projects and events was a great success, largely thanks to Joy's energy and vision. Joy also played a key role in Coalition '99, a broad collective of older people's organisations in NSW, before and during IYOP. Joy has been passionately involved in the Platform for Action group, an outcome of IYOP, for the past two years.

Last year, with the development of OWN NSW, our peak body, Joy agreed to take on the shared coordination of OWN Sydney. She acknowledges that creating a strong and effective OWN group is a challenge in the current political environment, but is committed

to using the knowledge, skills and capacities she has developed over the years to making it happen.

Over the years, Joy has variously been described as self-effacing, warm, private, approachable, driven and vulnerable.

Joy modestly refers to herself as, 'just one small cog in the volunteer wheel that keeps OWN keeping on'. Mmm.

Dorothy Cora

Thank You, Joan

For four years, Joan Hook has taken responsibility for facilitating our monthly Discussion Group. Topics covered areas of interest to OWN women, both serious and humorous. Personally, I found the group very interesting, and had lots of laughs and fun. Joan has now decided that she no longer wishes to facilitate the group. OWN Sydney wishes to thank Joan, and pay tribute to her for the role she played in the Discussion Group.

Ermes Solari

Take Note!

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

Early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.

If at first you don't succeed, then skydiving definitely isn't for you.

Congratulations

In the Australia Day, Certificate of Recognition Awards, the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre Management Team was 'Highly Commended' in the Community Services Award category, nominated for the award by the Bankstown Area Multicultural Network. The Team was described as "a hard-working group of local older women dedicated to the overall aim of the Centre, which is to increase the participation of older women in the design, management and maintenance of their health and wellbeing, using principles of peer education and support."

Betty Murphy

Community Links

In November, our Mid Mountains Older Women's Network held a Christmas Party for the local Young Parenting Group. The idea for the get-together came from one of our members, Sue Hardwick, who is a tireless worker in the local community.

The young sole parents (yes, there is one male) are in the Mountains for cheaper rent. They are isolated from their families and some are geographically isolated. Being on very limited incomes, they have nothing for extras, so we decided to hold a Christmas Party with Santa, and presents for the adults and the children.

The day began very awkwardly, as the mums were very shy. It took some time and a lot of coaxing by MMOWN women to get the two groups to mix, but once the ice was broken, a fun time was enjoyed by all. Santa really played the part, and the group loved their gifts and the food. There was so much food that both groups were able to take lots home.

As a result of this link, some MMOWN women will be helping some of the young mums to learn to sew, on a regular basis.

Mentoring is such an important aspect of growing older. The value of being there to encourage the younger and less experienced women, passing on skills and knowledge, being a friend and sounding board, cannot be underestimated.

Vonnie Russell

Women in Black

Women in Black (Sydney) now holds a monthly, silent vigil for peace by the Town Hall steps on the first Thursday of each month from 5.30 till 6.30pm. Members of OWN are warmly invited to join the vigils.

The March vigil will probably be on International Women's Day, March 8th (therefore this will be Friday instead of Thursday) to link up with other women's vigils for peace, against violence around the world.

On the 4th April the vigil will be in support of women in Afghanistan and will be attended by Tahmeena Faryal from the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) who will be visiting Australia to raise support and funds for the work of RAWA in Afghanistan.

Women in Black demonstrations are always women only, and usually take the form of women wearing black, standing in a public place in silent, non-violent vigils at regular times and intervals. Standing together can give us a sense of solidarity and purpose as women. We can encourage and lend support to other women around the world who are often closer to the violence. And we can educate, inform and influence public opinion to try and make war an unthinkable option. More information on *Women in Black* is available at www.womeninblackoz.com

Meg Coulson

Read Any Good Books Lately?

You might enjoy *The Circle* by Helen Townsend. I borrowed it in a paperback edition, published in 2000, from my local library. It has good size print for easy reading. It's a story about Libby Chung, who is half Chinese and illiterate. Libby's journey takes her from country town to the city of Sydney, from childhood to womanhood. The most significant people in her life are women – grandmother, mother, school friend, employer, and the lovely woman, Marjorie Green, who teaches her how to read and write at 28 years of age. It is an exhibition of cultural diversity, longing, uncertainty and hope. A good companion for a rainy day.

Jean Jacobs

Mayor Backs

Older Women's Wellness!

Fifty two women came to our opening meeting on 30 January. As promised, Mayor Tracy Sonda hosted the luncheon on the opening day, and invited local members of Parliament. Two MPs came, the Hon. Allyson McGarrity and the Hon. Malcolm Kerr. Sam Smart, one of the coordinators of OWN NSW and Vianney Hatton, a member of the Wellness Reference Group, also attended.

The purpose of the meeting was to raise MPs awareness of our need for ongoing state and federal funding so that we can continue to offer this wonderful service to women in Sutherland. It was also the first day of the fourth term, which marks the end of Council funding. All the women were eager to come back and start getting fit again with our exercise program.

Mayor Tracy was very impressed with the attendance of so many women and with our accomplishments so far, as were the visitors. The Hon. Allyson McGarrity asked for our projected budget and will add it to her wish-list for the State budget.

On 1 February, Pat Mead and I accompanied Noreen Hewett to a meeting at Lower Fort Street on wellness issues, including insurance. We discussed the variety of activities at OWN Wellness Centres, and were privileged to meet women from all over Sydney, as well as from Penrith and Woy Woy. It was quite illuminating to listen to such women and hear what they are doing in their own areas.

For information about our program, please phone 9523 9158 or 9525 6198.

Anne Lang
Sutherland Older Women's Wellness Centre
Committee Member

Beyond Tolerance

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission will hold a national conference on racism at the Sydney Opera House on 12 - 13 March 2002. Beyond Tolerance: A National Conference on Racism will mark the start of consultations to develop a National Action Plan that will direct anti-racism efforts in Australia over the next decade.

The conference will explore three themes:

The fragility and strengths of Australia's commitment to diversity, reconciliation and equality of opportunity.

The exclusion, denial and failure of human rights protection experienced by indigenous people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including experiences of multiple discriminations.

The priorities for reforms to eliminate racial discrimination from all sectors of Australian society.

The conference will be held in the Studio at the Sydney Opera House, Bennelong Point, Sydney. Cost for unwaged people and students is \$20 for one day and \$40 for two days.

For information www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/index or phone Janine MacDonald 9284 9880 or 0408 469 347.

Surfing Free

A national directory has been developed by the Commonwealth Government to help you find your local internet facility. Many are free of charge and offer assistance to new users and people with disabilities, eg, libraries. Call 1800 222 797 and ask for an Internet facility near you.

From News for Seniors

The Courage to Refuse

Two hundred and twenty nine officers and soldiers of the Israeli Defence Forces declared that they would take no part in Israel's continuing mission to control the Occupied Territories but would continue to serve in any mission that served Israel's defence.

To continue ruling over 3 million antagonistic Palestinians, stripping them of their rights, killing innocent men, women and children, requires them, as soldiers, they say, to violate the most basic moral, legal and religious norms of Jewish Law. These courageous men and women believe that continued occupation of these Territories will serve no purpose.

The Courage to Refuse—Combatant Letter 2002, appeared on www.seruv.org.il/YahadutENG.asp urging support from Israeli soldiers and also the civilian population. The letter lists the name, rank and unit of soldiers, from senior officers and every other rank, who now refuse to serve.

Contributed by Muriel Hortin

Early Stage Dementia

Lorraine West, has written a book, *Early Stage Dementia: Reassurance for Sufferers and Carers*, which seeks to support and guide individuals, families and professionals as they begin a journey with dementia.

Send \$29.95 (inc. GST), plus \$10.00 postage per item to Alzheimer's Association, PO Box 6042 North Ryde NSW 1670. If ordering by credit card, please ring (02) 9805 0100. For more information, contact the NSW Alzheimer's Association 9805 0100 or check the website www.alznsw.asn.au.

A Crash Course in Spirituality?

Recently, I thought I had better find out a bit more about the finer details of euthanasia. At the same time I am interested in the subject of spirituality, as it's roughly in the same area, isn't it? I need to know – have I got any spirituality? If not, how do I get some? Do I need any? Can I do a crash course?

So I have read a couple of books that sort of cover both these topics. *Denial of the Soul: Spiritual and Medical Perspectives on Euthanasia and Mortality* by M. Scott Peck and *An Authentic Life: Finding Meaning and Spirituality in Everyday Life* by Caroline Jones.

Euthanasia seems to be DIY death as opposed to letting nature take its course, and how you view spirituality seems to affect your decision. Peck seems to think that DIY death isn't always euthanasia. He suggests that some euthanasia deaths are closer to suicide.

Philip Adams, noted speaker and author, writing in *The Weekend Australian*, January 5-6, says Heaven is described in the Bible as "a land of milk and honey" but wouldn't this type of diet give you a bad case of diarrhoea? He goes on to ask (typical man) is there sex in heaven and does it create babies? Why would babies be needed with all those cherubs around? Maybe sex is limited to hell?

Philip finishes his article discussing "physical resurrection", which poses some problems about how you wish your body disposed of. Do you come back, as you were when you died, which is not always at your best? What if you were incomplete with 'bits' missing; will you be issued with new 'bits'? If you are cremated will you come back as a cloud of dust? If we all come back at the same age and stage how will we recognise anyone? Philip asks, will we be "issued with name tags", because if not, how will we recognise parents and grandparents?

It's all very worrying isn't it? Who was it said that ignorance is bliss?

Gwenda Fulford, OWN Newcastle

Age Activated Attention Deficit Disorder

It never ceases to amaze me that many of behaviours that we see and observe and assume to be natural progressions of our state of being are now being medically diagnosed and labelled. Here's a new 'disability' to add to the growing list.

I have recently been diagnosed with AAADD - Age Activated Attention Deficit Disorder.

This is how it goes...

I decide to wash the car, start toward the garage and notice the mail on the table. OK, I'm going to wash the car...

But FIRST, I'm going to go through the mail. Lay car keys down on desk. After discarding the junk mail, I notice the garbage can is full. OK, I'll just put the bills on my desk...

But FIRST, I'll take the garbage out, but since I'm going to be near the mailbox, I'll address a few bills.... Yes, now where is the chequebook? Oops... there's only one cheque left. Where did I put the extra cheques? Oh, there's my empty plastic cup from last night on my desk. I'm going to look for those cheques...

But FIRST, I need to put the cup back in the kitchen. I head for the kitchen, look out the window, notice the flowers need a drink of water, I put the cup on the counter and there's my extra pair of glasses on the kitchen counter. What are they doing here? I'll just put them away...

But FIRST, I need to water those plants. I head for the door and... Aaaagh! Someone left the TV remote in the wrong spot. Okay, I'll put the remote away and water the plants...

But FIRST, I need to find those cheques.

END OF DAY: car not washed, bills still unpaid, cup still in the sink, chequebook still has only one cheque left, lost my car

keys, and, when I try to figure out why nothing got done today, I'm baffled because... I KNOW I WAS BUSY ALL DAY!

I realise this condition is serious... I'll get help...

But FIRST, I think I'll check my email.

Shannon Simons, from the Internet

Confessions

A Frisco cabby picks up a nun. She gets into the cab and the cab driver won't stop staring at her. She asks him why he is staring and he replies, "I have a question to ask, but I don't want to offend you."

She answers, "My dear son, you cannot offend me. When you're as old as I am and have been a nun as long as I have, you get a chance to see and hear just about everything. I'm sure that there's nothing you could say or ask that I would find offensive."

"Well," says the cabbie, "I've always had a fantasy to have a nun kiss me."

She responds, "Well, let's see what we can do about that; first, you have to be single, and second, you must be Catholic."

The cab driver is very excited and says, "Yes, I am single and I'm Catholic too!"

"OK," the nun says. "Pull into the next alley." He does and the nun fulfills his fantasy with a kiss that would make a hooker blush. But when they get back on the road, the cab driver starts crying.

"My dear child," says the nun, "why are you crying?"

"Forgive me sister for I have sinned... I lied, I must confess, I'm married and I'm Jewish."

The nun says, "That's OK, my name is Kevin and I'm on my way to a Halloween party..."

Helen McMaugh, from the Internet

NOTICES

Palm Sunday March

**Compassion for Refugees,
Peace and Justice**

**Sunday 24 March
12 noon**

Meet Belmore Park.

**Older people will lead
the march**

to Tumbalong Park for a Festival.
Phone Pat Toms 9358 4834

Free portable word-processor
Canon Starwriter 80/85 plus disc
and manual. Ring 9949 2431

Women's Health Groups

Leichhardt Women's Health Centre runs various groups throughout the year on, for example, Tai Qi, Self-esteem and Breathe for Better Health. For more information, phone 9560 3011

Corks

Thank you to people who have brought their corks in to OWN. All Body Shops will accept them so would you please take them to a Body Shop rather than bringing them into OWN? Joyce Chapman

NSW Seniors Week

March 17-24

"Imagine, Interact, and Inspire"

March 18: Garvan Institute of Medical Research. Two seminars ph. 9295 8110

March 20-21: Expo 50 Darling Harbour

March 20-21: TechnoSeniors, Wesley Centre

March 23: Ballroom Dancing, Town Hall

March 24: SongFest, City Recital Hall

Hypothetical: *Positive Ageing: "Is it all in your mind?"* with Robyn Williams. Bookings 8256 2222.

(See March edition of *Australian Senior* for rundown of major city and rural events.)

Lunch-hour Talk

**Jessie Street National Women's Library
Thursday, 21 March**

Lady Mayoress' Rooms, 2nd floor, Town Hall.
12 noon to 1.30 pm

Entry \$15 members; non-members \$13.

Light lunch included.

Audrey Marshall and Margaret McDonald will discuss their recently published book, *The many-sided Triangle: Adoption in Australia*.

Bookings – Shirley 9876 3927 or the

Library 9265 9486

or email: shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

Bequests to the Older Women's Network

If you would like to include a bequest to OWN in your will, the following options will guide you in its wording. Please specify which Older Women's Network you wish to be the recipient of your gift: the Older Women's Network NSW or the Older Women's Network Sydney

Option No. 1 I devise the sum of \$to the Older Women Network for the general purpose of the Older Women's Network OR for the specific purpose of

such purpose being consistent with the aims and objectives of the Older Women's Network, to be administered by the Older Women's Network.

Option No 2 (for a proportional bequest) I give to the Older Women's Network for its general purposes or the specific purpose of % of my estate (or% of the rest of my estate).

The gift you make to the Older Women's Network will be an enduring record of your generosity.

NOTICES

International Women's Day Events

IWDA Breakfast

**Saturday 9 March
8.30-10.30am**

Sydney Convention
Centre, Darling Harbour
"East Timor: Triumphs
and Tenderness"
\$39/\$35

Funds go to women's
projects in developing
countries.

An OWN table has been
booked

Please register on 92477046.

Mothers, Daughters, Mentors and Friends Lunch

YWCA in partnership with
Australian National Committee on Refugee Women.

Friday 8 March, 12.30

Lunch is 2 courses and wine for \$18

Level 4, 5-11 Wentworth Ave, Sydney
RSVP 9285 6211

Sydney IWD Rally

Sydney Town Hall

Saturday 9 March at 11am

Walk behind the OWN banner at to Hyde Park, for the
Rally. OWN Theatre Group will perform.

Nowra

Members of Nowra OWN, in partnership
with Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre
and Nowra Community Health Centre are
holding a 'Shoalhaven Women Making it
Happen' lunch at the Aboriginal Cultural
Centre on

Friday 8 March at 12 noon.

\$20/\$16 Tickets can be obtained from
Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre. Anne
Warren 44229353

South Sydney

88 Renwick St. Redfern

Saturday 9 March at 11am-4pm

Aboriginal Dance Theatre, film screenings,
stalls and OWN Theatre Group will perform.

Illawarra OWN

Light breakfast at the Anchorage Motel,
Wollongong with guest, Jenny George, MP.

8am, Friday, 8 March

Tickets from 42281499



Subscribe to OWN Matters

Individual subscriptions are \$20 per year, due on 1 July each year.
(pro-rata until 1 July 2002 is \$9)

Name _____ **Organisation** _____

Address _____

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Please send your cheque/money order to OWN Matters Subscription, Older Women's Network
NSW, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000.

DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in ***OWN Matters*** are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Older Women's Network.

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