

OWN MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc
No. 6 April 2002

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Vision! Vigour! Vitality!

How often are these words used to describe qualities in older women? The Older Women's Network uses them to describe women's creativity, and the OWN Theatre Group acts out its relevance in every performance. This faith in the potential of older women underlies OWN's philosophy and perpetually innovative activities which can transform older women's lives.

I'm talking about vision not as eyesight but as insight! Vigour not just in physical agility but as in the mental energy and spiritedness we possess! Vitality is a life force which drives meaningful activities in older age.

It's the philosophy of OWN that older women are the experts in our own lives, including our own health needs. These needs include reducing social isolation and gaining more control over our lives.

Living alone is not necessarily being socially isolated – some women find it gives greater freedom. But living alone with a disability, being remote from family and friends, suffering grief and loss, finding that a different language and cultural background restricts contact with neighbours – such situations can indeed trigger feelings of social isolation.

Social isolation within communities requires social action by communities. Older age groups are not the only ones experiencing this condition. It is just that we older women believe we can develop possible solutions – test out our community anti-depressants as it were.

The Sutherland Wellness Centre is holding another Open Day on April 10, to showcase Wellness Centre activities for older women. A cheeky, satirical preview of *Older Women on Show*, the OWN Theatre Group's 2002 show, will be a feature, so come along if you can and experience the laughter therapy that is so much a part of wellness activities!

Noreen Hewett

Point of View

OWN Matters

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Older Women's Network
New South Wales Inc.
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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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What's Happening to Us?

The coffee was ready, somebody had brought a cake and around the table in the dining room at Windmill Street animated discussion had already begun. This was the first meeting of the Current Affairs discussion group for the year, and there was so much to talk about.

The state of our nation for a start: the continuing appalling treatment of asylum seekers at Woomera and other detention centres, and anger at the Governor General's seeming indifference to allegations of child abuse by his priests. There didn't appear to be much any of us could do about that except register our disgust.

What concerned our group most at this meeting was the threat of the proposed anti-terrorist legislation, which is to be introduced into Parliament, we believe, on March 11. This legislation poses an immediate threat to our democratic freedom. If passed it would allow ASIO to arrest and hold anyone who might have information regarding politically motivated violence for 48 hours with no access to lawyers or family. Such powers would not be restricted to those suspected of terrorism. Anyone arrested (including lawyers and journalists, according to the Attorney General) could face up to five years for refusing to answer questions.

The new legislation is similar to the UK Terrorism Act 2000 which allows the government to ban organisations and makes it an offence to be a member, provide support, or even wear a T-shirt with a logo. As one critic said, support for Mandela's ANC would have been banned if these laws had been in place then.

The Law Society of Australia is opposed to the legislation on the grounds that our present laws are adequate to deal with offences that fall within the commonsense definition of terrorism. Murder, serious injury, aiding and abetting conspiracy, all carry serious penalties, all the way up to life imprisonment. We need security, certainly, but not at the expense of our democratic rights.

Our discussion group decided to add its voice to the growing number in the community who are concerned about the proposed legislation, so we sent e-mails to all members of the Senate, urging them to oppose it. Within twelve hours, we had received replies from a number of senators. The answers of course are, in the main, along party lines, but hopefully there may be enough members with enough courage and integrity to throw the bill out.

If you agree with us, we suggest you make your voice heard. Write to or email senators from all parties – phone OWN for a list of addresses – because if the bill goes through, heaven help us!

Please join us for another Current Affairs discussion on Wednesday April 24.

Muriel Hortin

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

Here we are again, having been through another interesting and dynamic month.

The issues we're dealing with keep recurring and the latest one is the Public Liability Insurance fiasco. We have nothing definite yet about our costs but the broker we consult on this issue is very sure we will face a higher premium this year, maybe an increase of 400%. He is at the moment looking for less pricey options and we have heard that the New South Wales Council of Social Service is looking at ways that community groups might minimise their payments by buying in bulk. No doubt you'll be pleased to hear that there's more on this later.

We've also been looking at ways to facilitate better communication with NSW groups, particularly those who do not have members who happen to be on the Management Team.

We think we'll be able to afford a State Conference again this year. It seems important that a year into the existence of OWN NSW we should hear what everyone thinks so far, and seek direction for the future.

We have a new OWN NSW brochure and postcard that we would like to see distributed as widely as possible as a way of drawing attention to ourselves. We have also distributed free copies of *OWN MATTERS* to libraries in a local government area of Sydney to see whether we get any response from women who may read it in those locations. We hope to try this in a country area as well.

We have asked the NRMA for money to employ a project worker to devise a risk management policy for OWN NSW. They've said no. We asked Seniors Week organisers for money to run our forum *Getting Involved* and, thanks to them, we had an informative and pleasant day (see report on p. 5).

One of our number, Ruth Kearney, has resigned from Woy Woy OWN and therefore is no longer eligible to sit on our Management Team. We wish Ruth well for the future and success in any activity she chooses to direct her considerable energy to.

The Management Team itself has identified some internal problems that need to be worked through so we have arranged a special meeting of problem solving strategies for later this month.

OWN NSW was represented at the launch of the Department for Fair Trading's free booklet, *A Seniors' Guide: Consumer Information for Older Australians*, phone 9895 0111.

Pam Ledden, Sam Smart and Betty Murphy

Congratulations, OWN Australia

The Older Women's Network Australia has been awarded a grant from the Office of the Status of Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, for a \$25,000 project called *I'd Like to Help...*

The idea for *I'd Like to Help...* came from comments sometimes made by older women to our Project Officer, Meg Bishop, during discussions held for our project last year. It appears that older women are willing to be involved, but believe that they lack skills, knowledge or experience!

Workshops and discussions will be held which we hope OWN members and other older women will attend. Your presence at the workshops doesn't mean you are committed to anything except to enjoy yourself and, hopefully, learn something through the contributions of others.

One of our aims for the project is to encourage and assist older women to recognise and develop their skills in networking, meeting procedures, advocacy, lobbying and research.

Meg Bishop, our popular and experienced project leader from last year, will conduct consultations, workshops and discussions from March to May 2002.

Please contact Meg Bishop and/or Betty Johnson at OWN, 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point 2000, phone 9251 9333.

OWN Sydney Highlights

Sydney OWNers have been out and about this month, raising our profile and having a good time!

The Premier's launch of International Women's Day on March 7, in the lovely old grounds of Government House, began a busy week of activities. A particular issue for Premier Carr and Carmel Tebbutt, Acting Minister for Aged, Community Services and Women, was the need for young women to take an active interest in politics. Jenny Macklin, Deputy Leader of the Federal Opposition, spoke about the declining Australian birthrate and the type of supports that women need to remain in the workforce.

On the Saturday, a number of Sydney members attended (with 600 others!) the International Women's Development Breakfast, with its focus, 'East Timor Triumph and Tenderness'. At the Sydney IWD march which followed, we proudly held our banner aloft and handed out Sydney brochures as we marched (walked, really) through the streets of Sydney with more than 1000 other women (and some men). The Theatre Group sang some rousing feminist songs at the rally which followed in Hyde Park, though to a smaller audience than they prefer – they were last on the program!

Some of us played a role in the very successful multicultural IWD festival in South Sydney, where the Theatre Group also performed. NSW Governor, Marie Bashir, opened the Festival, and won us all with her warm remarks about

women and the vote, the importance of addressing domestic violence issues, and women getting together to look after their health and wellbeing.

On Sunday 10 March, we were represented at the launch of Seniors Week and the new Ageing, Disability and Home Care's Office For Ageing (OFA) at Hyde Park Barracks.

Girls' Day Out

I use the word 'girls' in joke-mode. Not PC, I know – but just this once?

A word of regret for those who couldn't make it to Harbord Diggers Club for our Fun Day Outing because of the bus strike. Four of us met at the Quay, and agreed that Watsons Bay would make a good substitute. Perfect day, sun glittering on the harbour, great fish lunch in beautiful surroundings, rolling conversation with friends. What more could anyone want? Thank you, Ermes.

If someone out there has a favourite eatery, not too far, not too dear, not too noisy (!), please do let us know.

Dorothy Cox

Ringed by a group of ageing bikies and with the bells of St. Mary's ringing, we listened to Carmel Tebbutt's opening address. Carmel said that in the past, ageing was seen in terms of its costs, but now the debate has moved to recognise the contributions of older people to society. However, we still need to rethink ageing.

The OFA is a resource, with expertise, and will work with business and community to

change attitudes to older people and their organisations.

In response, Betty Johnson, a member of the OWN Australia National Council, spoke on behalf of older people. She said that the OFA, with its whole of government involvement – health, housing, transport and so on – was timely in an ageing society. Betty said that old age was not a negative time of life, although, as Bette Davis once said, 'ageing is not for sissies'. Most older people do enjoy their lives; they contribute substantially to their communities and tend to be givers rather than takers. She concluded by urging government, bureaucrats and the community to work with older people for a better quality of life and the best of care.

Congratulations to OWN (A) for its \$25,000 grant from the Office of Status of Women. OWN Sydney will have the opportunity to participate in the planned workshops and consultations.

We would like to say a big 'thank you' to a number of women who have made financial donations to OWN Sydney. Your gifts have created a much greater sense of financial security within our 'new' group, and while we honour your desire for anonymity, we want you to know how much we appreciate your generosity.

Joy Ross

Getting Involved

A small but very dynamic forum was held at OWN on Saturday 16 March to mark Seniors Week. The fact that it was so good was due in no small part to our guest speaker, Ros Bragg, who is currently Deputy Director of Policy at the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS). Ros gave an informative, thought-provoking talk which we all enjoyed and which provoked much comment and questioning. More importantly, she talked to us as co-workers and experts in the field already, so the level of talk and sharing was particularly productive.

Ros defined the kind of advocacy that we're particularly interested in as *systemic advocacy* where we set out to influence legislation, policy and practice and to participate in consultative panels as consumers.

The importance of advocacy in the kind of pluralistic democracy that we live in is multiple. Firstly, it means that the stakeholders connected to any particular issue take the opportunities available to express their point of view and influence outcomes of legislation and policy.

Secondly, advocacy is an aspect of citizenship beyond voting and keeping within the law, and by its

involvement, the community tends to be better informed and livelier. Thirdly, by engaging in advocacy activities the whole community tends to achieve better decisions through necessary research and the dissemination of ideas and points of view. Those involved also get a far more knowledgeable view of how all processes to do with legislation and policy-making are achieved.

Ros also gave us three examples of successful advocacy programs that NCOSS has run recently.

One involved finding the body responsible for a particular service that was problematic – community transport and the increasing pressure on it for health related trips. No agency would claim responsibility until NCOSS wrote a long discussion paper about the issues and the difficulties, and circulated it. The publication generated much discussion and eventually the Department of Transport was told to deal with it.

Another example had to do with early discharge from hospital, and again NCOSS wrote a paper that it was about to distribute when the Deputy Director General of the Health Department clapped his

eyes on the cartoon displayed on the cover. NCOSS was carpeted and raged at, and the subsequent publicity meant that the issue also got talked about.

The last one was around the proposed cuts the Department of Health was going to make to administrative staff numbers and the frontline Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), in order to fund more emergency services and intensive care beds in hospitals. NCOSS alerted all those likely to be affected and received a massive response by way of letters and letters to Ministers.

To finish, Ros gave us some good ideas about ways and means that slotted nicely into the workshop activity. We were given several scenarios for the intervention of advocates, and an hour to come up with an analysis of the problem and ways of approaching it to achieve our outcomes. The plans for action that we produced will be published as a booklet of blueprints for people to refer to.

Then there was lunch! Lovely!

Thanks to Seniors Week for funding this really inspiring forum!

Pam Ledden

The Australian Health Consumer, Summer 2002, No.1

- *Consumer's story: Exploding the litigation myth*, by Beth Wilson
- *Developing health complaints services for Indigenous people*, by Peter Boyce & Vic Feldman
- *Medical negligence – going Dutch*, by Michael Kirby
- *Complaints, consumer concerns and quality improvements*, by Beth Wilson
- *National Dental Health Alliance*, by Cathy Moore
- *New privacy law safeguards health rights*, by Malcolm Crompton
- *Worse health outcomes for people who sue*, by Kay Barney

These articles can be read at OWN.

Theatre Group Report

Rehearsals are now in full swing. We are meeting twice a week. Our main concentration is on our new show, *Older Women on Show*, which we hope to launch mid April. Meantime we are rehearsing the 2001 show and some composite shows, just to keep us on our toes.

From the last week in February to March 17, we have performed at seven venues. Thursday February 21 our venue was the University of Sydney at the International Domestic Violence Seminar attended by delegates from twenty-four countries. A lively, enthusiastic audience welcomed our show.

On 27 March, five of our group presented a Theatre Skills Workshop to happy and eager-to-learn women. With help and hints from us we divided into groups for a practice run and, boy, did we get a shock! Forty minutes to write a song - if they had had any longer we would have finished with a full show. It was a most enjoyable afternoon, they were a marvellous group, and we had a good time singing the songs they had written. At the end of the day we sang a couple of our songs with our audience clapping and singing along. Thank you, Sutherland, for a most enjoyable time.

On 6 March we were at the Chatswood Wellness Day. It was a huge success, good speakers and demonstrations, and our performance was well received. On Saturday 9, International Women's Day, we had two bookings, the first in the morning at the South Sydney IWD Festival and the school in the afternoon at Hyde Park.

The South Sydney Festival was a truly multicultural event with an enthusiastic audience of over 100 people. The Governor of NSW, Marie Bashir, opened the Festival. It was a pleasure to be part of that event.

Sunday 17 we were treading the boards again at the Willoughby Civic Centre, sharing the bill with the Sydney Welsh Choir. We were undaunted and performed with our usual gusto, and enjoyed listening to the choir. In the intermission we mingled with the choir and the audience, where we overheard a passing remark that we were "confident, tuneful and pretty 'girls', and performed without a conductor!" Well, how about that!

We performed two more shows for Seniors Week – at the Anglican Village, Castle Hill and at the Ultimo-Pyrmont Festival.

We are delighted to welcome back Brigid Sen to our group after an absence of fifteen months in China and to welcome our new Admin/Singing Teacher, Elizabeth Swain.

Merle Hight.

WHY IS IT CALLED *LADY LUCK?*

It's a tough world out there.

One lovely November day in the city, while walking up George Street, I wobbled a bit – as you do. I put out a hand to steady myself, and accidentally touched a young woman. She spun round in a second, quick as a flash, and tried to smack me in the face! She just missed, striking me instead on the shoulder. Judging by the rage on her face, she really meant it.

Next thing, I was happily digging away in the garden minding my own business and down comes a magpie to dive-bomb my head! Luckily I was wearing my favourite old tattered straw hat. Perfect building material, obviously.

THEN... While strolling down the Esplanade, I was almost run over by a wild, careering out of control *tricycle!* Plastic, it was, with a three year old driver!

And there I was, thinking I was on a winning streak, having just drawn the best horse in the Melbourne Cup! Just goes to show that luck is fickle. Or is it that pride goes before a fall?

(Thanks anyway, OWN – the win helped me pay for my new sandals. Great Cup Party, too.)

Dorothy Cox

A Valued Volunteer

The focus for this month's volunteer profile is Judith Mustard: artist, poet, editor, performer and, in the words of her granddaughter, "a naturally-naughty-nana".

Judith became a member of OWN in 1988 while she was still in the paid workforce. On her retirement in 1991, she immediately joined the Theatre Group to fulfil a dream she'd had since her university days when she belonged to the Sydney University Dramatic Society and discovered how pleasurable acting could be.

In the early days, alongside her commitment to weekly rehearsals and performances with the Theatre Group, Judith helped out wherever there was a need – especially in the office and catering for social events. A number of members say that wherever there was a gap, Judith would step in to fill it!

By the mid-nineties, Judith was elected to the OWN Inc. Working

Committee. Around this time she also became involved in writing and illustrating for the Sydney Newsletter during Muriel Hortin's editorship.

Judith took over as editor of the Newsletter in early 1998, and despite the formidable standard established by Muriel, tackled her new role with consummate skill and dedication. Today she is a highly valued member of the OWN Matters Team, writing, editing and illustrating in her own unique style.

While most people experience her as a 'gentle soul', in a Judith-sort of way she can be quite outrageous at times, for example, entertaining us with ribald jokes over lunch! Witty and erudite, a gifted poet and a divine cook who delights in sharing her recipes, Judith is also living proof of OWN's theory that despite chronic illness, we can live rich, creative, varied, and socially valuable lives.

Dorothy Cora

Against Boredom

At our Wellness meeting in Chatswood we were talking about our OPEN DAY (held on Wednesday 6 March) and it was suggested that remarks on the day should be kept brief. I once read, "In order to give an immortal speech, there's no need to make it eternal." I'm sure we've all sat through meetings where speakers drone on and on.

Another thing I choose to avoid is the word 'bore.' Looking it up in the dictionary I found that it means: "To weary or annoy with tediousness – not known before 18th century". Even children fall victim to using it. My ten year old great-grandson recently remarked to me, "I was so bored on Wednesday." Of course I pounced, telling him it was a word not to get into the habit of using. With a sudden look of comprehension, he leaned closer, confiding, "The boys in school use the "F" word!"

Nowadays, I use 'tedious' – it hasn't got the mindlessness of 'bored'.

Eilie Dimse

You won't be able to put this one down!

IRIS, by John Bailey. A moving memoir of Dame Iris Murdoch, philosopher and novelist, written lovingly by her husband. A love story, a celebration of life, their "made in heaven" marriage and how they coped when she developed the dreaded Alzheimer's disease. It was a tragedy of great proportion for a thinker and writer of

such creative distinction. The film is currently showing: Judi Dench and Kate Winslet (young Iris) are absolutely fabulous.

Read the book! See the film!

P.S. There are lots of great photos in the book.

Jean Jacobs

Encounter with my Father

On my desk, near my left hand, lie two little worn books. They are the diaries kept by my father during his service in France in World War One. I am about to deliver them to a library for safekeeping; they need preservation.

I speculate on the conditions, in which they were written, probably under canvas near a dressing station or hospital, for father was a stretcher-bearer, he would not handle a gun. Training at Liverpool seems to have been endlessly dull, but father did, as soldiers must, find two mates, Tony and Bob. This trio remained friends for the rest of father's life. Their troopship arrived at Marseilles in April 1916; by July they were in action on the Somme. In the intervening three months, the trio enjoyed their first experience of life in a foreign country. I'm surprised to learn of my Presbyterian father's interest in Sundays in France; in his appreciation of the solemnity of a young priest carrying the Host in a Corpus Christi procession and the

sight of the children, the girls' white dresses and veils, the boys with white sashes.

There are no accounts of visits to *estaminets*; stretcher-bearers were idealistic young men, not given to drinking parties. There were visits to tailors; father was not satisfied with the cut of his private's tunic. An attempted visit to a 'Soldiers' Christian Tent' resulted in a 'gratuitous snub' from an Englishwoman, the tent was 'not for colonials, same old story'. Father's repeated expletive is, 'Ye Gods!' (his capitals, not the infantry's justifiable profanity). The trio develops a taste for rum and coffee.

June 1916 and 'the heavens fall'; Tony and Bob are sent to other units. There are few reflections on the war, but in July after two most terrible days, father invokes the psalmist and Samuel Wesley. They are not referred to again until 1920, when, in a letter to his fiancée, father tells of an emotional meeting with Tony in the horror of No Man's

Land. The letter ends with, 'is it any wonder I love the old boy?'

1917 and father has 'come a gutser'; after an illness, he is detailed for duty in the officers' mess. He is highly indignant; 'Behold me a waiter upon officers. I spill the soup, I knock over the teapot, I drop spoons. I must get out of here.' It takes four days before the WO, 'the drunken cad', returns him to general duties.

The diary ends in October 1917. A few times father has asked himself, 'When will this appalling waste be finished?' There was ten days leave in London and Edinburgh with operas, theatres, galleries, bookshops, even a variety show, which was 'not at all bad'. Then no more. Was he too exhausted to keep on writing? I do not know.

Goodbye, dad, it's seventy years since your death. I'm old, as you'll never be. I've looked for you in those pages, but they were not written for an elderly daughter, were they?

Helen Monaghan

Sorry ... up to a point!

Oh Renee, I do love you! Whenever I think of you, I remember your wonderful story of flirty skirts and flashing feet as whirled your way into the Jitterbug Championships at the London Trocadero – or was it the Palais? How I envied you! Jitterbugging was strictly verboten in the Cowra Presbyterian Church where I danced all those years ago.

The poet of *When I'm Old I'll Wear Purple* was a young girl seeing herself, when old, as sweetly eccentric. I love its quirky innocence ... but now that *I'm* old, I think "to hell with *that* ... here's the nasty reality". Losing one's vital faculties *is* a nasty reality for many people, though *I'm* not actually into spitting... or wetting myself ... yet! I'm sorry to have offended you ... but we're all different

and we all age differently. I speak for those of us who want to be as we *are*, not as someone else's idea of what's 'right for our age'.

I'm offended by the 'never too old' and 'look at me aren't I marvellous' syndrome, and I'm angry for those who've been dealt a rough deal in the ageing game. I wanted to say so in a forceful and, hopefully, funny way. (It got a good laugh at OWN's Poetry Reading last year – or were they laughing with shock? Oh dear!

Perhaps familiarity with the original poem is necessary to latch onto my intentions... if so, my apologies to the mother of all writers for such appalling obscurity. But apologies for the sentiments ...and the choice of language, NEVER!

Dorothy Cox

Letters to the Editor

Retirement – at a Price!

I have just received my March issue Newsletter and eagerly read it, as I always do. As a consumer advocate with particular interest in matters relating to the rights of consumers residing in retirement villages, an article headed 'Retirement Villages' immediately caught my eye.

On ringing the number and checking the website, I found this to be a commercial enterprise - advertising disguised as advice - though of course the advertised publication could possibly have some valuable information, at a price!

Independent and commercial free sources of advice and information are the most accurate and reliable for the consumer. Advice on retirement villages is readily available from a number of sources, none of which are commercial.

Firstly, the State Government Department of Fair Trading publishes a free information booklet called 'Retirement Village Living' and also has available a number of 'Fact Sheets'. Phone 9895 0111.

The Aged-care Rights Service (TARS), established around sixteen years ago, and funded by several Government departments and legal organisations, also offers free advice and education and represents residents in supported accommodation including hostels, nursing homes and boarding houses. Much of their work is for retirement village residents. TARS publications can be obtained by phoning 9281 3600.

Information and advice from residents living in villages, is also

freely available through the Retirement Village Residents Association Inc., phone 9524 8862. Members are happy to share their experiences with anyone interested in exploring what retirement villages have to offer.

Barbara Burnham

Catheterisation in Nursing Homes

Having read Samantha Mackay's story about her friend's death, I find myself seriously concerned for two different reasons. Firstly on my own account, because although there's no apparent likelihood of my being in a nursing home in the near future, one never knows what may happen, does one?

Secondly, though – and by far the most important - what a cruel and outrageous infringement of basic human rights!

I have been enquiring among ex-nursing-sister friends and also following up the subject on the Net. It's apparently not at all uncommon for elderly, not necessarily incontinent, people to have catheters inserted not for medical reasons, but simply to lighten the workload for staff who would otherwise have to change the bedsheets more often. Now, inserting a catheter is usually painful, uncomfortable when in place, and very likely to cause infections which in turn can result in higher blood pressure and an increased likelihood of strokes. Must the most helpless among us be subjected to this?

Those of us who have friends or

relatives in nursing homes should question the proprietors closely, and demand a clear assurance in writing that catheterisation will not be used except when clearly required for medical reasons.

Josephine Mouonwinter

To Die in Peace

I am very sorry that Samantha McKay's friend was not allowed to die in peace. Had she, or one of her friends, spoken up, she may have been given that privilege. I helped my Mother write a simple request – "I would like to receive any treatment that will relieve suffering – but none to prolong life."

My mother just managed to sign the paper, but we forgot to date or witness it. Nevertheless, the doctors kindly respected her wishes.

As Samantha may know, this question is a legal minefield – each doctor is entitled to follow his or her own beliefs.

A local solicitor or the Law Society will recommend a speaker for your group on that subject if you would like to know more about it. This can be particularly helpful for those who have little or no family to act on their behalf.

Vera Corak
OWN WOY WOY

If you would like information about dying with dignity and other decisions for later life, OWN has large amounts of information available for you to photocopy.

Celebrating IWD in Nowra

Events celebrating International Women's Day in Nowra were coordinated by the Older Women's Network, Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre and Nowra Community Health Centre. Over three days, from March 8 to 10, we held a very special luncheon at the Aboriginal Cultural Centre, a Women's Music Night and an awards presentation honouring local women.

At the Aboriginal Cultural Centre luncheon, one hundred women enjoyed a wonderful program of singing, fitness demonstration, a photographic competition and inspirational speakers.

Before lunch, Jean Turner, our Aboriginal liaison officer at the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital, shared aspects of her life and achievements – a triumph over a hard childhood as both parents died in their thirties leaving the family to make their own way. With great toughness and determination, Jean made something of her life through a good education.

During the luncheon break, the *Wandering Menstruals* – a local choir, entertained us with harmony singing. Our talented singer/performer, Norma Bastock, is a member of this wonderful a cappella group. Included in their repertoire was a song written by a local poet about the GST on tampons. It caused a few giggles!

Immediately after lunch, winners of the photographic competition were awarded prizes. Nowra OWN received a 'highly commended'

award for an early group photo in black and white of OWN Nowra carrying its banner during an IWD walk.

Jackie Gilmore, the first high achiever to speak, told us that when she retired from nursing she felt she still had much to offer and joined the SES. It was surprising to learn how many women there are in the SES these days driving

As an older woman, it was heartening to hear all these younger women coming up through the 'sisterhood', making their mark, achieving their potential and carrying the torch for the future generations.

huge fire trucks and doing jobs that don't need the physical strength of men. They were all much tested by the recent large fire outbreaks in the Shoalhaven area.

Lieutenant Natalee McDougall, a young helicopter pilot from nearby HMAS Albatross, spoke about the experiences and achievements she has crammed into her young life. She joined the ADF Helicopter School in Canberra in 1998 and after achieving her wings later that same year has been on active service with the RAN, both in Australia and overseas.

As a break from the 'inspirational' speakers, Donna Freeman – a local humourist - took centre stage with the theme 'Make it Happen'. And she certainly did – we were in stitches!

Faye Stockwell, another local achiever, told us how she began her ambulance career some years ago and had to prove herself to her fellow male workers. Despite the horrors that she has witnessed, Faye obviously loves her job, and believes that women have a special place in the service, especially dealing with sexual assault cases.

Our final speaker was the editor of our local newspaper, *the South Coast Register*, Kathy Sharpe, a successful young woman in what was once a male dominated area. She pulled the whole meeting together by telling us how she relies on her women staff members – who are in the majority in Nowra – to help her in running the paper as a team. And it works; the paper has won several awards in the regional newspaper area.

This spirit really summed up the feeling at the luncheon, women being together, supporting each other, laughing together and showing what we have to offer.

As an older woman, it was heartening to hear all these younger women coming up through the 'sisterhood', making their mark, achieving their potential and carrying the torch for the future generations.

Enydd Williams

B/older Women, Far from Retiring

Illawarra OWN, in partnership with other women's groups in our area, organised a breakfast to celebrate International Women's Day and invited Jennie George, Member for Throsby, to be our guest speaker. More than 60 women were inspired by Jennie's passion and commitment as she described her early activism and signalled age discrimination in the workplace and retirement as current and future issues for women.

She told us how, when she was young and excessively optimistic, she and her baby-boomer mates marched for women's rights yelling chants like: "Where's the greatest brain drain? Down the Kitchen sink!" They thought they could change the world overnight! Jennie said that the women's movement had given her courage and daring when she young, and given her the education she needed to succeed in the trade union movement. From her experiences as a former ACTU president, Jennie believes that the women's movement had been a very important force on public policy in Australia, and will continue to be in the future, especially in areas like superannuation and health and community services.

Prior to 'singing for our breakfast' (they loved us!), the Silvert-OWNS, Illawarra OWN's singing group, had also performed at a morning tea arranged by the Illawarra IWD Committee. This inaugural event launched a packed calendar for the week.

The Silvert-OWNS also exercised their vocal chords at a *Maiden*,

Mother, Crone Forum on Wednesday 6 March. It was at the Forum that we were confronted with the alienation of older women through the use of language, for example, the use of words like witch, hag and crone as terms of denigration. Actually, the meaning of 'crone' is 'to crown'. Therefore, we can say that members of OWN are at the crowning age of our lives, a time to pass on our knowledge and experience.

Our final performance for this amazing week was at a wonderful Women's Festival at Shellharbour. Here, the rain finally caught up with us but not before we had sung our signature tunes, *Women's Wisdom* and *The Witches of OWN*.

Pam Wilson, a member of Illawarra OWN, played an integral part in putting together the IWD Breakfast and a diverse range of festival events that included an art exhibition and a pool party, plus the activities described above. It was an entertaining and exhausting week!

At a Silvert-OWNS meeting and rehearsal last week, we reflected upon our first year's performances and recognised how much we had developed: our tones are definitely improving, we are much more courageous in singing with verve and vigour, and our repertoire covers a broader range of issues.

Beginnings of our Silvert-OWNS

After hearing the Sydney Theatre Group, Arlene Little and Joan Hilton were determined to start a singing group in Illawarra. A

group of fifteen women responded to the call.

Our first 'gig' was a booking for OWN Illawarra's Christmas party in 2000. In preparation, we rehearsed, workshopped songs and developed programs. Our gear consisted of a colourful T-shirt and black pants.

Some of our members (rather unkindly, we thought) described us as the 'Wiggles'. We joked that we were more like the 'Wobbles'! Then Arlene came up with the *Silvert-OWNS*, which was much more dignified!

Our writing workshops have produced at least twenty songs. Their subject matter ranges from dispelling stereotypes of older women to topical issues such as globalisation, gene modification (a rap song) and refugees. In 2001, we sang at seven venues. In 2002, we have seven gigs booked. We think this is not bad at all for a group of women whose ages range from 58 to 80. Accompanying us on guitar, mandolin and ukulele is the clear-voiced Marjorie, who plays and sings with much skill and gusto. She is our treasure.

Thanks to a small grant from the Federal Government's International Year of Volunteers program, we now have a microphone and speakers. Also, we are adding to our T-shirts and black pants with a rather shimmery silver jerkin. You could say that it matches our hair. Or our Silvert-OWNS. We strive for physical health, and enjoy singing to the fullest as we deliver our songs.

Pat Simpson

NOWRA OWN, Growing Stronger

Members of Nowra OWN got off to a meaningful start at our first meeting of the year. We had circulated a questionnaire to members before the meeting so that we could evaluate who we are and where we're going. The questionnaire used was in the OWN NSW publication "Getting Started: Growing Stronger", which was published last year. Our idea was to improve the smooth running of meetings and to cater for all members as much as possible. We also wanted to encourage more members to join us.

The question – 'Are you satisfied with the way meetings have been conducted?' – raised some comments about taking "a firmer approach to order" which could result in getting through the "business" items on our fortnightly agenda more quickly. I'm sure we're not the only people guilty of getting our ten cents' worth in when a business item interests us!

Another suggestion was that more outspoken members can sometimes dominate a discussion, and that a change of chairperson each meeting might give all members some experience in conducting meetings, though it was appreciated that continuity on certain matters could be affected. This latter point is to be reviewed.

There was no dissent at all on the program of events that we eventually decided on, for the beginning of the year until our AGM in May. Suggestions not included were put on the "back burner" for the next half of the year.

As for the way our members work together, that particular question got a big tick. We agreed that to ensure a good balance between attending to relationships and getting things done, we need to be tolerant and respect the individuality of members. It was suggested that a good way of affirming and appreciating each other was to provide opportunities for "five minutes of fame" to round out our knowledge of the capabilities, worth and hidden talents of our members. To increase the enjoyment of belonging to the group, we decided that members could be made to feel more at ease to express their opinions and to have them valued. The non-interruption of speakers when they had the floor and the distraction of "off-side" conversations was also mentioned, something else, which I am sure, is familiar to other groups. Some of us are inclined to get carried away without realising that we're diverting attention from a speaker.

When it came to the question about being more effective as a group, there were some very good ideas, for example, get-it-off-your-chest sessions, group building outreach to follow up new and current members, and putting together a "new members' pack" containing information about OWN Australia, OWN NSW and OWN Nowra.

The fact that the questionnaire was circulated and discussed at our first meeting resulted in views being openly aired, which can only bode well for the future. The questions gave us all a voice to

make suggestions in the spirit of improving the workings of the group and attracting new members. The conclusion was perhaps that we have a few things to attend to, but overall we aren't doing too badly. It was a good exercise to do some soul-searching, and hopefully our future meetings will be all the better for it.

Enydd Williams

I Slept with a Cockroach

Good title for an Oprah Winfrey show!!

I had been in bed for about an hour, but didn't feel sleepy, having dined at my eldest grandson's place. Somehow it's always difficult to fall asleep if you don't go to bed at your usual time. I felt an almost imperceptible touch around my knee. I ignored it. Imagination. Then another, a bit higher up. *Another, even higher up...*

What could it be? A twitchy nerve? I turned on the lamp and threw back the covers to investigate. Ugh! A huge, black cockroach was in bed with me, about to caress my leg again. I fought back hysteria. I expect the cockroach did, too. A momentary stillness, then the thing started to make its way towards the edge of the bed. I fumbled around for something to edge it off the bed (didn't want to squash it on the sheets), but it crawled down onto the carpet and made its way towards the back of the bed.

An Evening to Remember

I hobbled into the kitchen to find the insect spray. Of course, the thing was no longer to be seen when I got back. I sprayed all around the bed, on the carpet, towards the ends of the bed, and climbed back in, shaking, nauseated, wide awake, afraid, unable to relax.

I got out of bed again, determined to find my repulsive bedfellow. I managed to move the bed away from the wall, and there he was! He was moving rather slowly down the bedhead. He fell on to the floor, and crawled with difficulty towards the bathroom. I stood there with the spray can at the ready, but he turned on his back in surrender. (Unrequited passion? Pleading?) I hobbled back into the kitchen, got the brush and dustpan, scooped him into it, and tossed him into the toilet. And flushed it. He disappeared under the torrent.

I changed the sheets, but I hardly slept after that, and I was a wreck the next morning. But I was in better shape than he was!

Renee Simons

A Woman of Initiative!

Thelma Anderson, from Penrith OWN, was recently awarded Woman of Initiative by the Nepean Zonta Club. At a presentation dinner, she was presented with a beautiful gold pendant, a Zonta pen and a framed certificate. In her acceptance speech to an audience of young and older men and women, Thelma made sure to remind them that older women should not be ignored as a spent force but seen for their worth in all areas of life.

Penrith OWN Newsletter

I listened, shocked and appalled, at the stories about Afghanistan told by three journalists who had recently returned from this unhappy country. They were Eric Campbell from the ABC, their China correspondent, Kim Traill from SBS and Christopher Kremmer from AAP and the SMH.

Life in Afghanistan is bleak and cruel, sheer human misery caused by the drought, the devastation of war and the armed Big Men at every level. The Afghan police endeavour at every turn to thwart the efforts of the peacekeeping force. The warlords intercept food and medical supplies and unless any donations to the people are actually monitored all the way between the donors and the recipients, these desperately needed supplies are lost.

While in the country, the question these journalists continually asked themselves was, where has the money come from to equip so many men with these expensive state of the art weapons and the ammunition that they use so extravagantly? From Iran perhaps? It would probably be an advantage for Iran to have a certain number of warlords retaining power on its shared borders. This is probably so for other countries bordering Afghanistan: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and China.

In short, nothing has changed in this sad, sad country, except the window dressing. The woman announcer who appears on our TV screens from Kabul wears a burkha to work. She is always

accompanied by her son or her husband, who sit in the studio with her while she broadcasts. The few liberal changes are limited to Kabul. In the rural areas women still have no hope of an education, a job, or the husband of their choice.

The Minister for Women in the interim government is an expatriate, returned from the USA. She lives surrounded by armed guards, thugs, who have the customary reactionary ideas about women's role. She suffers daily from intimidation and cannot speak on women's issues without being denigrated a western stooge.

The journalists all believed it would take ten years for any significant change to happen and then only if the USA sustained an interest in helping with the process.

"If the USA charges off to fight the so-called *Axis of Evil*", said Eric Campbell, "with the rest of the world acting as foot soldiers, then the outlook for Afghanistan is more turmoil for much, much longer."

All the speakers were asked, "What, in your opinion, would the people of Afghanistan want to say if they could speak directly to us? The answers: "Don't forget us!" "Don't give up on us!" "Send peacekeeping forces with real power, and not only in Kabul!" "Don't demonise us!"

A sobering evening, but very important to keep people aware, talking and acting.

Pam Ledden.

Mother's Advice

When, in my teens, I started getting interested in boys, my mother gave me this advice: "Never give in to their approaches at the first go, or you will be considered cheap."

It was in the days when teenagers still heeded their parents' words. As my mother didn't go into any further details, I was waiting to see just what those approaches would turn out to be.

My first date was an invitation to the movies. When the lights went out, I felt the excitement of an explorer on the verge of a new discovery. And indeed, soon I felt a hand tentatively groping for mine. What a tingle it sent right throughout my body! Discovery made, mother's words sprang into action, and I withdrew my hand – just a bit. Having proved myself not to be cheap, I could now look forward to the second approach, which it was OK to accept. I sat through the whole picture, unable to concentrate on it, awaiting his next move. It never came, nor did that same boy ask me out again.

Some years later, with more experience behind me, I was at a students' holiday camp. There I fell madly in love with a boy from another town. He felt the same about me, so we kept company all the time, holding hands, even kissing in secret – it still wasn't done in front of everyone else.

On the way back in the train, we promised each other to keep in touch and meet again soon. As we sat there close to each other, his hand somehow landed on my knee. This was a new experience for me and felt somewhat embarrassing. However, remembering my first

fiasco with mother's advice, I wasn't going to spoil my chances again.

After a while, my boyfriend got up without a word, and walked away. I thought he went to the toilet and expected him to return soon. This never happened. As we were nearing the station where he was due to get off, I went in search of him. I found him grim-faced near the exit.

"What's the matter?" I inquired. "Why did you disappear and didn't even say goodbye to me?"

"Well, if you must know", he said with a scornful look, "my mother told me that any girl who will allow her knees to be held, is cheap."

Trudy Davis

The Prince Who Never Came

In my youth, the author, Georgette Heyer, led many of us into idle dreams of finding the perfect romantic partner. Many girls in earlier eras met their matches within the Younger Sets of all kinds of organisations, and all knew that some day the Prince would come.

Now, when he doesn't, newspaper advertising seems to offer some hope. I've known good and attractive people, who, on finding themselves living lonely lives, have been inspired to sell their wares in the relationships section of the media market place. I wonder if this practice offers an alternative to loneliness? The results I know of did not lead to satisfactory relationships.

The popularity of media columns under 'Personals' seems to point to the tragic alienation in our society.

Even when we are surrounded by family, friends and acquaintances, we can all be afflicted by a loneliness of spirit in a world where youth, beauty, wealth, ambition, acquisitiveness are valued. Enter that market place of lurve, where you can state your needs and outline in a few words the desirable qualities you require in a partner.

In a cursory study of advertisements selling sexual wares, I have noticed that certain qualities are strongly featured. 'Slim' is desirable; 'cuddly' is favoured. For women, 'blonde' and 'blue-eyes' seem to be saleable – does this spell 'compliant' as well? Some women profess a keen interest in cooking as a come-on (perhaps the mod-cuisine in cafes palls for solo men?). It is wise to list 'financially secure' as an attribute, and NS and SD (non-smoker and social drinker) are definitely favoured. Sometimes NG (non-gambler) is also listed – could this be a sociological trend?

As there are so many contributors, these columns must serve a definite need in our society. If they had been around in my day, I suspect I would have given them a go too!

I have compiled a 'recipe' for an older woman – no responsibility will be taken!

Bubbly, slim lady, WLTM (would like to meet) genuine healthy man fin. sec (what does this mean?), GSOH (good sense of humour) 70-80 SNAG (sensitive new age guy), NS/SD/NG, m.o. (mail only).

This will entail a small outlay for an older Prince who, hopefully, will come. Anyone like to try? I wish you the best of luck.

Enid Harrison

Northside Open Day

What a winner!

In spite of the bus strike on March 6th, more than 80 women gathered at the Dougherty Centre in Chatswood for an open day with the Northside Older Women's Wellness Centre. The event was sponsored by Northern Sydney Area Women's Health Service, and gave this large gathering of older women the opportunity to see and experience the enjoyment and benefits of OWN's wellness activities.

Robyn Hatley, Women's Health Coordinator for the Area and a strong supporter of OWN activities spoke briefly about women's health services and then acted as MC to introduce speakers and activity leaders who all together made up an interesting and informative program of events.

Keynote speaker Dr. Kendra Sundquist from the NSW Cancer Council talked about wellness from several angles, covering personal responsibility, personal experience, how to be 'cancer smart' – all from a woman's perspective that everyone in the audience related to. Jill King led a hands-on demonstration of Feldenkrais, including her famous 'dead bird' movement, that always leaves the audience amazed at how simple guided movements can produce increased flexibility and range of movement in just a few minutes.

John K Saw, popular Qi Gong leader at Turramurra on Fridays demonstrated self-massage techniques for the face and head, and members from his Northside group went through a short set of

the Shibashi form of Tai Chi, leaving the audience wanting more, please!

Women who have been regulars at Northside spoke enthusiastically about how much they get out of attending. We presented information about Sydney OWN and the benefits of becoming a member, as well as inviting those present to consider coming along to any of the wellness activities on offer at several Northside venues.

And then the OWN Theatre Group presented excerpts from their program, to round off a lively and enjoyable morning. The Theatre Group was in top form, and as usual everyone enjoyed their individual and group numbers.

We were treated with an excellent morning tea and lunch, thanks to Northern Sydney Health, and a big thank you goes to Cara MacDougall for helping the women of Northside to organise, advertise and stage such a successful promotional event.

Sam Smart

Putting Public Toilets on the Map

The National Public Toilet Map is an online database showing the location of more than 13,000 toilets around Australia, as well as opening hours and information about disability access.

Councils, other government agencies, service stations and takeaway food outlets on major highways, provide information about publicly available toilets.

People can use the website to print maps showing locations of public toilets in specific suburbs, towns, streets, parks and on common travel routes. The website at www.toiletmap.gov.au has already proved to be enormously popular, with large numbers of Australians requesting maps in the first week of the site's operation.

For those without access to the internet, the maps are also available by calling the National Continence Helpline on Freecall™ 1800 33 00 66. Operators at the Helpline are equipped to print maps of specific areas and mail them to you.

From News for Seniors

A Vegetarian

Diet

Lots of people follow a vegetarian diet to improve their health or for ethical, religious or cultural reasons. Research shows that vegetarians are less likely to die from heart disease and certain cancers compared to non-vegetarians.

Vegetarian diets are usually lower in saturated fats and cholesterol content, and are usually high in dietary fibre and antioxidants as a result of the many fruits, grains, cereals and breads consumed.

A book of easy vegetarian recipes can obtain free of charge from the Senior's Information Service. All the recipes in the booklet contain dairy products and some contain eggs as calcium is an essential mineral for building strong healthy bones and teeth and for assisting in the prevention of osteoporosis.

From Seniors Information Service

Phone: 13 12 44

Tweed Heads Does it for Gloria

Very regretfully, I shall have to resign from OWN Sydney. It has proven quite unsatisfactory being a long-distance member. Even the few times that I was in Sydney seeing the eye specialist, I couldn't get down to say "Hello", which was very disappointing. I feel a bit of a traitor, leaving my friends whose company I had enjoyed so much, so please forgive me.

I'm afraid I've succumbed to the manana life totally. I have joined the Gold Coast OWN, which is quite social and lots of fun, although, being only a small group, there isn't any volunteer work that I could do, so I'm just enjoying the group and the outings. There was also a craft class at U3A, so I joined that too, and that has been fun. There is a computer class available to Seniors at Seagulls Club, which I have also joined, together with Dorothy Christie, mainly to learn Internet and email.

At first when I arrived here, I was flat out organising my little house and its even littler gardens in between doctor's visits to Sydney, but have settled down now, I think! With the aid – and labour – of a wonderful handyman, most of my little garden is elevated and reachable. As a *piece de resistance*, I put in a *small* waterfall, in the form of a slender, elegant lady pouring water from a pitcher into three shells of varying sizes. As I sit here, I can hear the gently falling water and a glance to the left shows me that she is still there! Heaven! Having a pool only behind one row of houses across the narrow road, and the beach a

level ten minute walk straight out the front (security) gate and this unbelievable weather – who could ask for more?

Last July, I was able to realise a long-held dream – a three week bus trip to the Centre for the bargain price of \$2,500! Whilst there, I flew over Kakadu/Arnhem Land and Uluru/Kata Tjuta at dawn, an inspiring and wonderful journey. Unforgettable!

Another lifelong ambition, I am about to realise is a trip to London en route to a 21 day tour of Great Britain and a 31 day tour of Southern Europe.

My love to you all, and hoping that I will get in to see you again some time in the future.

Gloria MacLennan

In My Sequestered Garden

*Yesterday I found a honeycomb.
For reasons unknown
The bees had fled.
Yet bees have their ways.
It hung from a tree
Whose silver bark twined in curls.
Its dripping sweetness
Ran in sun-spun drops
And gathered in an amber pool
On the marled ground,
As if to perfume the rich soil.
Ants gathered in crowds to reap
This honeyed harvest
And took their pleasure.
The emptied comb
Swung in the breeze
Its labyrinthine chambers
Inviting the invasion of its walls.*

Judith Mustard

Nothing like being there

My great passion is classical music. For me there is nothing better than attending a concert at the Opera House to hear the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

Our first concert for this year fell on Saturday 2 March, with a program containing two works – the first item, Mozart's Jupiter Symphony.

After interval and just prior to the Conductor, Italian Gelmetti, raising his baton, a male seated just above the stage gave forth with the loudest sneeze I've ever heard. The Conductor turned to him and clapped him and was then joined by the audience amid great laughter.

As usual the orchestra played beautifully. At the conclusion, as has become the practice, the Conductor points to various players who played predominant roles to stand and take a bow. First came the oboist, then the flautist, the horns and so on.

By this time I was fairly jumping out of my skin. 'What about the double basses?' I asked myself, whereupon Gelmetti pointed to the eight players and pandemonium broke out.

There were claps, cheers, bravos, and many stood to show their appreciation. I smiled all the way home.

Ermes Solari

Book Review

With My Heart on my Sleeve: The Weroona Life Stories Project

Longtime OWN member, Monika Law, co-edited these lovingly recorded oral histories of women and men living in the Weroona Nursing Home at Leichhardt. Alzheimer's and dementia affect some of the storytellers and so their stories have been told with the assistance of nursing home staff or family and friends.

The stories cover a century of events both personal and historic in England, Germany, Austria, Malta, Romania, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Australia. The eldest storyteller, Kay, was born in 1904 in England, then moved with her family to India in the days of the Raj, and finally settled in Leichhardt in 1992. Florida married in a displaced persons camp in Romania and Maggie, whose philosophy is, "Laugh and the world laughs with you," says she is lucky to be at Weroona. "Lucky we are not in the park under a sheet of paper." Mildred tells about travelling with Sorlies Circus as a lady wrestler and dancer! The book is colourfully illustrated with collages depicting their different lives.

Congratulations to all those people who made this book possible.

With My Heart on my Sleeve is available from the publishers LUCAN CARE, Wetherill Street, Leichhardt 2040, phone 9568 8000, for \$24.95 ; and also from Monika Law, 9810 5087.

Joan Johns

Bread and Other Stories

The stories in ***Bread and other Stories*** have been written by a group of women in Bankstown and surrounding suburbs. They may be from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, but they have suffered and are suffering from the effects of decades of war brought about not by themselves, but by the powerful rulers of their countries. War is cruel, whether it is physical, psychological or biological.

Extract from:

A Chronology of War

My family decided to leave the place of my birth, place of my soul, to leave to leave the happy experiences of my childhood, the place of my joyful youth, Afghanistan, my country that was home to so many different cultures, peoples and customs. I was to leave my forgotten brothers and sisters who remained there to continue the struggle for peace. We left Afghanistan for Pakistan.

In the silence of midnight, close to the river, I carried a hopeful heart. After a long journey the harshness is mostly what I remember. We arrived in the Babo camps in Peshawar and settled for a time there. Being in a camp with people you don't know was awful. Nights and days of hunger and thirst, the miserable heat of Peshawar in summer felt like death was preparing for us. Waiting for the United Nations rations to feed the children and women was confronting. We all had to step over our pride and dignity as we stood in a queue like beggars for long hours and sometimes days. I felt depressed.

Soon after being a camp resident,

my daughter, who was in Australia, learned from distant family of our situation. They sent us money to leave the camp and rent a house in one of the districts of Peshawar. We were supported by their kindness. We applied to the UN High Commission in Islamabad for resettlement as refugees, and were rejected seven times until finally accepted. We could leave for Australia.

When we arrived, I expected time and assistance to be given to us to help us settle in. Unfortunately it turned out to be very different. The atmosphere was very cold. The lifestyle was absolutely busy. It seemed that no one was even committed to their mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers.

The whole cultural value system and attitudes were so completely alien to me. I felt I was lost in a play. My dreams were never realised to this day.

Being a refugee made me feel that I was not treated as an equal citizen. The lack of language and the cultural difference weighed heavily on me. I felt the burden was great. The injustices happening around me, the discrimination, the low self-esteem and lack of confidence transforms you into another human being. I am convinced I truly lost my own country long ago and that the new country can't be my country as I once desired.

Latifa Ahmadzai

Bread and Other Stories: A Collection of Writings, published by the Bankstown Area Multicultural Network, phone 9796 3717, is available at OWN.

NOTICES

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.

Beating Arthritis

Exercise Beats Arthritis A video endorsed by the Arthritis Foundation with a specially designed system of 9 exercises, all set to inviting music and suitable for people with mild-to-moderate arthritis.

More Exercise Beats Arthritis A sequel video to Exercise Beats Arthritis which features gentle and more active versions of most exercise routines for all parts of the body.

The Arthritis Foundation also sells *Exercises Beats Arthritis Book*. To order a video send \$39 including postage (the book is \$22.50 inc. postage) Arthritis Foundation of NSW Locked Bag 16, PO North Parramatta 2151. Phone 9683 1622.

Let's Busk

It's now or never!

Fun-loving ladies wanted to form a comedy busking group.
You too can be a star!
Pam 0415 558 526

Homeshare

Homeshare NSW, an initiative of the Benevolent Society, brings together older and younger people to support each other. The older person provides free accommodation in exchange for companionship and help around the home. Please phone Project Coordinator 9599 2273 or visit their website www.homesharensw.com.au

Open Captioned Films

A Beautiful Mind is a captioned film showing at the George Street film complex on April 5, 7, 10, 12, 14 and 17. A schedule for captioned films can be obtained via email from allayne.woodford@auscap.com.au

HealthLinks Directories

A Consumer Health Information database service is available on floppy disk for \$22. Contact HealthLink Directories, AB Block, Level 4 Westmead Hospital, Westmead 2145. Phone 9845 7307.



Forest Laughter Club

9 am
every Saturday
at the Frenchs Forest Showground, Belrose.
Discover the healing power of laughter. It can help relieve depression.

Laughter Club is free! Just bring along an open heart and a hearty smile.

Judy Wong 9972 7139 or
Honore Troy 9451 8080.

NOTICES

Lunch Hour Talk

Jessie Street National
Women's Library

Thursday 18 April, 2002,
in the Marconi Room, Level 4,
Town Hall House, 456 Kent St.
(cnr Kent and Druitt Sts.)

12 noon to 1.30 pm,
Entry \$15 (non-members),
\$13 (members).
Light lunch included.

Speaker: Kate Grenville
Where Do You Get your Ideas?
Kate talks about her latest novel
for which she was awarded the
prestigious 2001 Orange Prize for
the best novel in English by a
woman writer.

To book contact Shirley on 9876 3927
or the Library on 9265 9486, or email
shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

Cushions Cushions

Our new chairs are wonderful, but
for some of us, they're too low!
We are hoping members have one
or more surplus cushions at home
and would be willing to donate
them to keep the shorties
amongst us happy.

Older Women's Network Australia

CONFERENCE

Our 2002 conference and AGM will be held in Canberra
this year on Monday 30 September and Tuesday 1 October
at the Burgmann College ANU.

The concession rate for one night's accommodation and all
meals is \$44 (the non- concession rate is \$57.20). There
will be a small surcharge for the conference dinner.

If you would like more information, please contact Barbara
Silverstone, 32/1 Wilkins Street, Mawson ACT 2607,
telephone 6286 3356.

SERENITY NSW Incorporated

A voluntary organisation
helping people with Anxiety Disorders.

Volunteers are needed to assist with the running of our existing
Self-help Support Groups or to start new ones in their local area.
We are particularly interested in volunteers for the Campsie,
Caringbah, Ryde, Penrith and Windsor areas, as well as rural and
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Call Mr. Ray Brookes for more information on 9740 9539.

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