

OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc.
No.7 May 2002

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Forging our OWN future!

The July 2002 OWN NSW State Conference is definitely going ahead!

We have received a small financial contribution from the Department for Women and are hoping for a similar contribution from our funding body, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. With an allocation from our own budget, we can now plan for a two-day conference at Sydney University Women's College on Monday and Tuesday, 15 and 16 July 2002. Mark your diary, now!

To encourage a large turn out at the conference, we will pay overnight accommodation, all meals and public transport costs for two delegates from each group to attend. We are also offering to subsidise up to five members from each group to attend – please see details on the application form enclosed.

As 2002 is the *Year of the Outback*, we have invited Annette Turner, from White Cliffs in western NSW, to be our keynote speaker at the conference. Annette will talk about her experiences as a rural woman managing her life in a time of accelerated social change.

We are planning workshop sessions for the first day of the conference, so we need your ideas for workshop topics to give direction and to fire us up for the coming year. Please post or phone in your ideas as soon as possible.

The Annual General Meeting of OWN NSW will be held on the morning of the second day. All Management Team positions will be considered vacant from 30 June, although the Coordinators will continue to manage administrative tasks in the interim.

Enclosed with this issue of *OWN Matters* are nomination forms for membership of the Management Team. Our constitution states that at least six members of the Team must come from regional groups, so please give some serious thought to using your expertise and energy to keep the momentum going!

Pam Ledden

Point of View

OWN Matters

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

It is published 11 times a year.
Subscriptions are \$20.

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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That name!

"The highlight of my week is a class in Creative
Movement," I told my new acquaintance.

"That's just the sort of thing I would like to do. Where is
the class held?"

"At the Older Women's Network, in the Rocks area."

"Oh..." I could see her chin drop. "I don't think I'm ready
to join an organisation by that name."

I wasn't surprised by her remark. I'd had the same
reaction twelve years ago, when I was 65. I did not want to
categorise myself as an older person; that would be like
giving in to something undesirable at last.

It was only Ellin Krinsley's enthusiastic manner over the
phone when I inquired about the class which made me
give it a go. On my first occasion, I 'dressed down' from
my usual bright clothes, as I expected to find a dull, staid
assortment of women, and I didn't want to stand out.

What a surprise I was in for! A more lively, uninhibited
group I have not encountered before. I was welcomed
with great gusto, and was 'hooked' without any qualms. In
time, I found my own life-long inhibitions melting away,
while my stamina increased through the cleverly devised
program.

As I got acquainted with OWN in its various other aspects,
I developed even more admiration for this group of
women, ready and able to tackle any tasks for the
enhancement of older women's image in the community
and their quality of life.

Be it by way of entertainment, as the indomitable Theatre
Group have proved, or by reasoned persuasion to various
government departments by the Advocacy Group, older
women make sure they are heard.

We have not only become older, but also bolder. Maybe
we should re-name our organisation – add a 'B' in front of
its name!

Trudy Davis

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

The Management Team meeting has been rescheduled temporarily, so this month's meeting hasn't yet happened. Not very satisfactory, but we will be back on track in May.

Some goodish news. Our insurance broker has been negotiating on our behalf and OWN NSW is now buying public liability insurance as part of a large group of organisations that cover older people. It now seems as though we are looking at an increase this year of about 150%. This is a vast improvement on the 400% increase that we were expecting. Still not great but at least it seems manageable.

A group has formed to plan this year's OWN NSW Conference: Sam Smart, Mollie Smith, Dorothy Cora and Pam Ledden. See *Forging Our OWN Future* on the front page for more information.

The Department for Women is organising another *Women on Wheels* (WOW) tour, this time to North East NSW, taking in twenty or more towns from Taree to Byron Bay to Armidale and Condobolin. We are trying to have some representation from OWN on the tour, but it's not clear yet whether we'll be able to manage it, money of course being the main obstacle.

In the last month a young woman documentary film-maker, Samantha Montgomery, has approached us with a proposal to make a promotional video for OWN. Her grandmother passed on information to her about us, and Samantha was impressed with the organisation and our activities. She has already had some experience making this kind of film – the one she showed us was very polished and visually attractive. Over the next few weeks Samantha will be filming various groups and doing interviews with some spokeswomen who will put forward an overall picture of OWN.

We have again lodged an application with NSW Health for major funding to evaluate, consolidate and expand our successful and enjoyable wellness activities. With Sydney OWN expanding members' activities, we need to continue the ongoing challenge for recognition, support and adequate funding.

Pam Ledden, Sam Smart and Betty Murphy

MAKING MONEY!

Get your own OWN pen or buy one for a friend!

\$8.50 each

Each pen you buy boosts our coffers!

Available from 87 Lower Fort Street,

or we can mail them to you for an extra \$1 per pen.

Communication Flow

In an organisation like OWN, where members of groups throughout the state attend a variety of meetings, forums, conferences and consultations, a good system of communicating about the work we do is essential. However, we think it's also important to minimise administrative/bureaucratic processes!

With this in mind, we have designed a simple 'Report Back' form for members of groups in NSW who are involved in any consumer/advocacy activity of interest to older women. The form includes a couple of lines for key information about the activity, followed by space to make suggestions and/or recommendations about the issue.

We want you to fill in the form and return it to us for filing. At this stage the reports are filed in a ring folder above the coordinators' desk. If everyone fills in and returns the form to us on a regular basis, the Management Team of OWN NSW will be able to quickly access specific information about your consumer advocacy activities, and follow up where it's appropriate or relevant to the work others are doing. If you're not really sure whether the meeting, forum, etc. that you attend is relevant to older women, complete a form anyway!

If you would like some forms sent out to you or want more information, please contact the office on 9247 7046.

***Hedi Roggeveen and
Vonnie Russell***

OWN Sydney Highlights

It's now six months since the inaugural meeting of OWN Sydney! Members of the Working Group are continuing to explore the best way to use our energies to create what we hope will be a thriving and dynamic group which meets the diverse needs of its members, who come from all over the metropolitan area and even some regional areas.

So that we are all clear about how OWN Sydney functions, we have decided to create a 'constitution' to guide us into the future. The old OWN Inc. constitution worked quite well, so we are adapting it to fit our needs, even though, at this stage, we don't plan to become incorporated. We hope to present it for discussion at OWN Sydney's Annual General Meeting, possibly in August.

Members of the Working Group are a busy lot, both in OWN and in other organisations. We have divided ourselves into three 'A' teams: Advocacy, Administration and Activities. We would really welcome members with expertise or an interest in one or more of these areas, so if you're interested, please talk to us.

The Administration Team is looking at ways to expand our membership, fundraise, and promote OWN Sydney more broadly. Have you seen our beautiful post cards? Pick some up when you're next in the area or send us \$5 and we'll send you a pack of ten to post to friends, to put on notice boards in your local library, to take to women's meetings. The Advocacy Team is interested in how they can take up issues such as health, attitudes to older women, building local

communities and domestic violence at the local level, and the Activities Team is going full steam ahead with its monthly program of social events.

The first of our monthly coffee and chat mornings on Easter Saturday was well attended and a pleasant way to get to know each other. The drumming group is a runaway success and although planned originally for eight weeks, it looks as though it will be extended. Newcomers are always welcome, \$5 per session.

Several of us are involved in developing the OWN Australia project, *I would like to help...* with Meg Bishop, project coordinator. An OWN Sydney workshop will be held on Friday, May 24, so please come along. It should be very interesting.

Joy Ross

A Cuppa for Cancer Research

The Cancer Council NSW's fundraiser Australia's Biggest Morning Tea will be officially held on Thursday 23 May 2002, although hosts can hold their event any time during May. People from all over Australia, including a number of OWN groups in NSW, will be organising morning teas in their homes, workplaces, clubs, favourite cafes, anywhere.

Some of us plan to join the Millers Point Activity Centre Morning Tea, which will be held on Wednesday 22 May between 9am and 1pm. It will start as a sausage sizzle 'breakfast' and then move on to cakes, coffee and so on.

Guests make a donation for every beverage they consume. Whether there are two or two hundred, it's a simple and fun way to raise money to help defeat cancer.

The money raised will go to support patients and their families, the Cancer Helpline and many of the Cancer Council's research and education programs.

To register, call 1300 65 85 or register online on www.biggestmorningtea.com.au. Hosts will receive a special kit containing posters, donation box, guidelines, tea bags, recipes and much more.

June West

Unmentionables

A sizeable section of the Central Coast population is socially isolated. In the cities, they are possibly out of sight, out of mind, because of anonymity. On the Coast it is a recognised phenomenon – they even have a name, “the shut-ins”.

A friend of mine, since deceased, was such a case. Her predicament went unrecognised, except by a relative who commented on her behaviour in quite censorious ways. After her husband’s death, my friend just retired from life. She ate what she could buy from the mixed business on the corner and rarely ventured out (she had an expensive car) unless she was offered a lift. It was obvious to me that she was suffering from that unmentionable condition, agoraphobia, an evidently shameful state because sufferers are usually advised to “pull your socks up and get out more”.

The general public knows little of this condition beyond that it is a fear of being in a situation from which it is difficult to get away, such as in supermarkets and crowded places. A prominent media medico recently wrote that agoraphobia is a condition which is difficult to treat, but that there had been some success with hypnosis.

The lack of a good transport system in the Central Coast is a factor in maintaining social isolation. Women who have martyred themselves in the care of offspring are often badly affected when the kids leave home, and leave the Coast because of a lack of job opportunities. There are also women (like my friend) whose

husbands denied them social development by shielding them from anything to do with money – paying bills, doing tax returns and day-to-day financial chores. Some isolated women are divorced and still carrying the bitter anguish of the rejection they have suffered. Others have retired from work and find it hard to achieve a new identity, so retreat into themselves.

Social workers are well aware of the problems faced by socially isolated women, particularly older women, and the difficulties of helping them. I feel there is a need for greater recognition of this problem, to take it out of obscurity and into the daylight of recognition and public awareness.

Another unmentionable word is ‘dementia’. All too often it is used to demean older women. Like many of us, at 80, my memory is becoming less reliable, in my case for names and faces. Mathematics is a problem area for many, maybe because we were directed into jobs which did not need such skills. It is also a very easy label to stick on to that older woman who does accept the role that some would allot her, be invisible, quiet and passive, don’t rock the boat, etc.

Let us challenge all the unmentionables that hinder and demean us as older women; publicise and investigate problems like social isolation; seek remedies for those who are affected, and stop using the label ‘demented’ for those of us whose memories are not as effective as they used to be.

Enid Harrison

Wellness Worker Wanted

The Sutherland Older Women’s Wellness Centre has received a grant from Sutherland Council for a new project called *New Horizons*. The aim of the project is to provide access to appropriate Wellness activities for older women in the area who are experiencing isolation because of a disability and who are unable to access our current Wellness Program.

We want to employ a project consultant for approximately seven hours for around 40 weeks. The consultant should have skills in community development, group leadership, training and submission writing.

Contact Noreen Hewett on 9523 9158 for a job description and further

Edna Ryan Awards

The EDNAS are designed to celebrate Edna’s life and support the interests that she championed.

The OWN Aboriginal Support Circle has this year nominated Betty Little for an award. For over 30 years, Betty has been a powerful ‘bridge-builder’, a dedicated teacher, a gifted singer/songwriter and above all, an inspiration to all of us.

The awards are presented on Friday 3 May from 6-8.30 at the Transport Club, 19-25 Regent Street, Chippendale – close to the corner of Broadway and Regent Street. \$35 waged or \$25 concession. Phone 9212 4374 for details.

Dorothy Cora

A Sad Day in a Country Town

At no time is the decline of our small country towns more evident than on Anzac Day.

In the cities thousands line the streets to watch thousands march, bands play and children wave little flags. In the town where I am visiting my daughter, attendances diminish year by year.

The dawn service begins later this year in the hope that more will attend and by ending at sunrise add colour and drama to the close of the service. Today the Anglican minister is officiating; he and the Catholic priest, the only clergy left in town, will share the ceremonies. It's very cold and the congregation has difficulty singing the hymns unaccompanied. The senior schoolboy who will sound the Last Post must warm his instrument, a trumpet; the bugle is unplayable. A group of local cadets form a guard about the small cenotaph. One hopes that they will never be called to fire on an enemy. The address and hymns over, the little crowd turn, faces to the west, and the Last Post sounds. At the pause before the Reveille all turn to the east, two cadets raise the flag and the rising sun shines on the polished granite of the cenotaph, the minister's surplice and the cadets' gleaming rifles. Someone speaks the lines from Binyon's 'Ode', the cadets present arms and the most poignant moments of the day have passed.

Later there is the main march and service. Ten years ago this was an occasion for the

veterans, the cadets and the school children to be played along the main street by the Town Band. Now the band is no more, the bandsmen too old or ill to continue. The few marchers, some accompanied by grandchildren, and the cadets, are encouraged by a lone piper. There is a piano on the back of a truck. It helps the singing a little, but the sound is dispersed in the open air.

Next year the piper and the trumpeter will be gone. Their schooldays behind them, they must prepare for futures unlikely to bring them back to the district. How will these country towns manage the ceremonies without music? A teacher told me the school will lend its sound system.

It has been suggested that the marches and services take place in the larger towns, people from outlying districts travelling there to make the day more of a celebration. This must not happen. To leave those memorials, built in loving memory a lifetime ago, unattended on Anzac Day would be the beginning of forgetting.

Helen Monaghan

Happy Birthday!

Mid-Mountains OWN turned one on 5 April, and how they celebrated!

Special thanks to Sue Hardwick for organising a wonderful celebration, despite not feeling on top of the world, and to all who made me feel so welcome. I'll come again next year!

Dorothy Cora

Manana

*Song of the Sutherland Shire
Older Women's Centre*

We trip the light fantastic with no emphasis on 'trip'
As international dance we learn,
we're definitely hip
Sometimes we step more slowly
lest our energies subside
And gently swirl in unison as
round the hall we glide

Chorus

*We're sisters, resisters,
Won't be left on some ageist shelf,
Live longer, feel stronger,
In older women's citadels of health*

Older women's wellness is a joyous, bonding thing
If exercises aren't for you, then let ideas take wing
On topics controversial that stimulate the brain
Let knowledge grow through health info – it helps to keep us sane

Chorus

Now Tai Chi is so graceful and it strengthens older bones
While gentle exercise is bound to give our muscles tone
At Feldenkrais we learn to move in long forgotten ways
As we keep fit then we will step much lighter through our days

Chorus

We aren't the 'older biddies' that the media may depict
We're feisty older women and we still can take a trick
Or two or three or more – we start amazing families
We may become role models in ongoing family trees.

Noreen Hewett

Onya, Anne

Congratulations, Anne Warren on winning the Seniors' Award, which is presented annually by the Premier of NSW as part of the State's Seniors' Week celebrations. These awards acknowledge the contributions of groups and individuals who assist older people in the community.

OWN Nowra was pleased when one of our original and very committed members, Anne Warren, agreed to be our choice for the Premier's Award for 2002. The nomination was for Anne's long involvement in service to the local community and for her inspirational leadership of women.

After training in General Nursing and Midwifery and working in various fields in Sydney, Anne came to live in the Shoalhaven. She is involved in the Palliative Care Volunteers Association, Meals on Wheels, the Lupus Association and the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre.

Anne also supports the annual International Women's Day Observances, has led courses for U3A and in 1992 helped form a branch of the Older Women's Network in Nowra. With her usual enthusiasm and leadership this group has flourished - offering stimulation, friendship and a strong platform for advocacy on behalf of older women in our community.

She has been a representative for Nowra OWN, and is now a member of OWN NSW Management Team where her very special 'people skills', her commitment 'to the cause' and her strong belief in the worth of all women is an inspiration to all who know her.

Barbara Robertson

Another Step Forward

Four hundred strong women, many of them survivors of violence, met at Sydney University in February for a conference. They came from all around the world to discover how different cultures experience and deal with violence. Mainly they wanted to discuss domestic violence, which takes horrific forms overseas and usually gets even less attention from legal and other government institutions than in Australia. Yet many of these women were totally dedicated to reducing violence against women. With my colleague, Jane Mears, I presented a paper on the work we are doing in *Older Women Speak Up*.

The audience was very receptive and we felt pleased at having such a good opportunity - specially good because the other presenter did not turn up, so we had extra time! I was disappointed that little attention was given in the plenary meetings discussing other forms of violence perpetrated mainly by men but with mainly women experiencing the dire results: warfare, imprisonment of refugees, rape as a means of ethnic genocide, and street violence. It seems to me that all these have much in common though this is rarely recognised and hardly ever identified as a social problem

Meeting these wonderful women strengthened me and determined me to go on with the struggle.

Margaret Sargent

The Silent Walk

Palm Sunday. We walked, 15,000 people fifteen abreast, in a procession that stretched unbroken from Belmore Park to Victoria Park, and led by us, the elders, 'oldies,' 'senior citizens' and many members of the Older Women's Network. Then followed the thousands from all walks of life, community organisations, young people's organisations, from church groups, students and political groups. Party politics were forgotten and differences faded away.

Nobody chanted, nobody shouted slogans. We all just walked along thinking our own bitter thoughts about the cruelty of the mandatory sentencing of asylum seekers, of the locking up of children for months in inhuman conditions, of the lies we'd been told by the Howard Government about the

children being thrown overboard. Worst, the way resentment against refugees was being fanned and the lack of kindness and charity that has been encouraged since the Tampa crisis.

I felt a surge of hope and happiness on this beautiful Sydney day when I saw the alliance of religious faiths walking behind a large banner which said 'Compassion for the Refugees'. Holding one end of the banner was the Jewish Rabbi and holding the other end was Sheik Hilaly, Australia's most senior Muslim, who said, "This is the beautiful face of Australia, which we are seeing at last".

It was and this is the Australia I want.

Muriel Hortin

A Valued Volunteer

Lucy Porter embraces everything that she does, from performing, creating, supporting, networking, organising and administering to mothering and grandmothering, with enthusiasm, humour, a quick mind and a loving nature.

Lucy joined OWN in 1992, and was immediately recognised as a woman with much to offer. She became involved with the Theatre Group, initially intending to act in an administrative capacity, but very soon the 'ham' in her won through and she was singing, acting and tripping the light fantastic with the best of us. Lucy's script-writing skills and gregarious personality have been a great asset to the Theatre Group. She's diplomatic and humorous and her infectious belly laugh (usually after telling one of her own bawdy jokes) and clever puns seem to boost our spirits and calm our angst at just the right moment!

Over the years, in addition to her commitment to performing with the Theatre Group, Lucy's volunteer work has involved coordination and administration of the Theatre Group and being on the OWN Inc. Working Committee, where her networking skills and commitment were highly valued.

One of the great passions in Lucy's life is Aboriginal reconciliation. Living in La Perouse for seventy years has given Lucy a great understanding of the many difficult issues and situations, past and present, that Aboriginal people face.

In 1993, with Noreen Hewett and the late Ruth Layard, Lucy founded the OWN Aboriginal

Support Circle (ASC), where she was joint coordinator for many years.

The aim of the ASC is to increase our understanding and appreciation of past and present issues affecting indigenous people and to cultivate better relationships and friendship with Aboriginal women. Over the years, many of Lucy's Aboriginal friends have shared their stories of courage and survival with us, and many are currently involved in the ASC's oral history project.

Despite her incredibly busy life and quite serious health problems, Lucy always finds the time to stop and listen, explore ideas, have a laugh and get involved. What a woman!

Judith Mustard & Dorothy Cora

It Doesn't Happen Any More

Remember in the old days how the elastic in our knickers was threaded through a sort of little tube, and it stretched and/or broke as the garment grew older? I recall, and I'm sure many others do, walking along the street and suddenly feeling my knickers sliding down my legs. Nothing you could do, really. I used to let them slide right down on to the footpath, step out of them with aplomb and walk on as though nothing had happened. What did you do?

Replacing elastic was quite a task, too. If you didn't have a bodkin, you used a large safety pin, attached it to the elastic, and threaded it through the tube (quite a skilful task!). Often the elastic somehow

removed itself from the bodkin, and you had to start all over again, provided you could find the end of the elastic. If you couldn't, you had a problem....

Stockings were held up by your suspender belt. The knob was attached to a gadget which hooked on to the top of the stocking, and it showed through your dress when you sat down. But if you turned it inwards, the knob pressed into your thigh. And it hurt. Fortunately, some genius invented panty hose, and we don't have to go through that any more.

A new bra was torture. The straps weren't elastic, and it took time for them to wear a dent into your collarbone and be comfortable.

I recall repairing the ladders in my stockings (probably cotton (or maybe silk!) – no nylon then). And I had the unenviable task of darning my brother's and my dad's socks. Strangely, I quite enjoyed doing it, stretching the hole over the top of a wooden mushroom and threading the yarn in and out in a basket weave pattern.

Everything had to be washed by hand. The whites had to be boiled in soapy water. Everything had to be scrubbed on a washboard and rinsed afterwards. Everything had to be ironed. And for reasons unknown, Monday was always the designated day for this.

Life was hard...

Renee Simons

Letters to the Editor

Poets in Warm Corners

Your readers might be interested in a recent publication by Ginninderra Press, Canberra. *Warm Corners* is a poetry collection by four women: myself, writing under the name of May Morris, my two daughters, Fiona and Fran, and a friend, Deb Foskey. A photo taken by my granddaughter, Samara, which is reproduced on the cover, inspired the title. The photo, in black and white, shows a shaft of morning light parting the smoke from an old stove, and a steaming kettle for the eternal conversations over a cup of tea in a cosy corner.

There is also a Warm Corners Creek nearby, one of the many small creeks running into the Jinalalla River, whose waters eventually end up in the Snowy River, some forty miles away. These tablelands at the feet of the Monaro are where I once lived; at one time or other, the others also lived there. So there are family and other links between us. Writing is one connecting thread.

Cecily McIlroy

So Sad

My niece, Moya Simons, is a writer of children's books, and often travels around the country to give talks. She was in Northern NSW last week, and on meeting a 13 year old Aboriginal boy, asked him what he wanted to do when he grew up. He replied, "I'll go on the dole and then I'll die..."

Renee Simons

The Queen Mum's Teeth

I'm offended by the bitching by the young presenters on *The Glasshouse* on ABC TV. How dare they poke fun at the teeth of an old woman who had just died? Her teeth were her own, not 'plastic' like Hollywood 'queens'. They mocked her hats and her lifestyle without any respect for her age and her death, just for a cheap laugh. I squirmed in shame.

Joan Johns

Seeking Company

I am 74 years of age, an OWN member, cannot drive a car now, but am healthy and able, to a large degree. I lead a very busy life doing what I can in the home, as I live with my daughter, her husband and son. I go to the Rozelle Markets each week to have coffee and to chat to people.

However, I would like to make contact with older women who would play cards or scrabble with me in my own home, for preference, or go to a movie or have lunch, as I get quite lonely at times. I guess I need 'old timers', to talk to. If you know of anyone in this area who feels in need of companionship at regular intervals, I would be so pleased to have them contact me or I could contact them. I am also quite happy for anyone to email me at merriwa@idx.com.au or ring me on 9818 1816. I don't always hear the phone when it rings, as this is a large house, but I do have an answering machine.

Joan Young

Too good not to share

This poem is composed entirely of actual quotes from George W. Bush. The quotes have been arranged for aesthetic purposes by Washington Post writer, Richard Thompson. Enjoy!
The man unquestionably has a gift.

Make the Pie Higher

by George W. Bush

I think we all agree, the past is over.

This is still a dangerous world.

It's a world of madmen and uncertainty and potential mental losses.

Rarely is the question asked

Is our children learning?

Will the highways of the Internet become more few?

How many hands have I shaken?

They underestimate me.

I am a pitbull on the pantleg of opportunity.

I know that the human being and the fish can coexist.

Families is where our nation finds hope, where our wings take dream.

Put food on your family!

Knock down the tollbooth!

Vulcanize Society!

Make the pie higher! Make the pie higher!

Theatre Group Report

On Thursday March 21st we were invited to perform at the Anglican Retirement Home in Castle Hill, which is set on 100 acres of beautifully laid out gardens. There were about 100 people in the audience, and judging by the applause every one of them enjoyed our performance. After the show, we chatted to some of the women who lived at the village over lunch – we were amazed at what some of the women told us about their lives. They were all very complimentary about our performance. It was really a joy to talk to them and we were so pleased to have been able to entertain them. Let's hope that we get another invitation for a repeat performance.

Two days later we were off to the Ultimo Street Fair in Quarry Street. It was a beautiful day and the sun was shining. We were met by representatives from the Community Centre and made very welcome before being shown the big stage where we were appearing, with lots of microphones! The audience wasn't very big but they were enthusiastic, especially one man who danced along to all our songs and told us how good we were. We were the first entertainers on the program and the sound of our bright music and singing voices brought even more people to watch and listen. One of the Aboriginal dancers thanked us for our song to them, *White Hands, Black Hands*, which was really nice.

In mid-April, we were off to Sutherland Wellness Centre – well what can one say? They gave our new show *Older Women on Show* a wonderful reception – we think they liked it! The atmosphere was magic, “inspirational” was a word that was used to describe it. We not only entertained; we in turn were entertained. Thank you for a wonderful day and we look forward to our next visit – hope it will not be too long!

Now it's time to say a really big THANK YOU to cast member and dressmaker extraordinaire, Josephine Allon, for sewing the colourful jackets for our new show. Thanks also to Janet Waters' husband John, for decorating our hats; a very tedious task, we heard. We think you did a really great job, John.

Josie Jackson

Jan Malley

Congratulations, Muriel

Muriel Stewart, a member of the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre's Project Management Team, was recently presented with a NSW Seniors' Week Premier's Award by Bankstown City Councillor, Helen Westwood.

Muriel volunteers two days per week at the Centre, and has been a member of the Management Team for three years. She also participates in many Wellness Centre activities. She received the award “in recognition of outstanding service to the community and to New South Wales”.

In presenting Muriel with her award, Helen said she was very much aware of the great work being done by her and other volunteers in Bankstown.

With the other Management Team members, Muriel is a strong supporter of the rights of older women to access appropriate and enriching physical and mental activities in keeping with the OWN Model of Wellness.

Want to have an interesting, exciting and fun-filled morning?

Please join the Aboriginal Support Circle on Monday, 6th May, at the Mott Hall at 10.30 am. Margaret Simpson, teacher and pioneer in inter-cultural education, will help us explore kinship. Margaret explains: “A strange woman came up to me at a funeral recently and said I'm your husband's cousin's wife's sister, so I suppose we must be related...” But

are we? The thought crossed my mind that if we were Aboriginal, I would know exactly who she was in relation to me and how we should act towards each other. Please bring pencil, paper, and at least three generations of your family either on paper or in your head, plus food to share for lunch.

Margaret Simpson and Pat Zinn

Congratulations, Evi

Evropi (Evi) Dakanalis, one of the volunteer coordinators of the Greek Older Women's Network in Bankstown, was recently presented with a NSW Seniors' Week Premier's Award for "outstanding service to the Community and to New South Wales".

Evi has been a volunteer with the Greek OWN Group for the last five years. She is also a member of the Greek OWN dance group, which appears regularly at various community functions and festivals in Bankstown and beyond. In November last year, the Greek OWN Dancers performed at the Older Women's Network Open Day at Mott Hall in Millers Point to a large and appreciative gathering of older women.

Greek OWN meets every Monday at the Arts and Crafts Centre, Olympic Parade, Bankstown. Activities include discussion, speakers and gentle exercise. The gentle exercise activity is provided in partnership with the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre.

Greek OWN itself was also awarded a NSW Seniors' Week Premier's *Community* Award for providing opportunities for support and friendship for older Greek women living in the Bankstown area.

Well done, Evi and Greek OWN!

Jan Malley

Aboriginal Visual Arts Conference

At the Fourth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts Conference in Adelaide, which lasted for three days, indigenous artists from all around Australia shared their knowledge and visions for the future. The conference covered important issues in the art world, for example, education, copyright, protocols, ethics and appropriation, exhibitions, use of culture and language, international contacts, textile and design.

Many art forms were covered – painting, sculpture, film, design, song and dance, and many more. One very interesting speaker was Francine Kickett, a South Australian design artist, who talked about textiles in Aboriginal history. She told us about the clothes worn by indigenous people when they first encountered white people, showing slides of the large variety of cloaks made of kangaroo and other skins. They were worn in many different ways following the style of each clan. By the 1850s, people were removed from their traditional cultures and blankets replaced the cloaks. The use of traditional clothing then declined quickly. From the 1920s non-indigenous people borrowed indigenous designs and used them in their fashions. By the 1950s, indigenous people started to reclaim their rights, starting with the Ernabella people, and then the Tiwi Designs, Desert Design, Desert and many others. Francine also showed us a video of one of her fashion parades, featuring Aboriginal models.

Cheryl Moodai Robinson, a Murri woman, was part of a panel talking about public art and its importance for Aboriginal communities. She explained how public displays of indigenous art, their meaning and importance in educating the public, restore people's pride in their local history and further the reconciliation process. Some of Cheryl's public art is prominently displayed in Liverpool Library Plaza and at the Parramatta Ferry Wharf. Cheryl integrates local Aboriginal languages in her work, though not always in translation.

While in Adelaide, my friend and I went in search of a monument in memory of the stolen generation, which we had both heard about. We asked around at the conference with no success, but while visiting an indigenous art gallery in the Barossa Valley, we met an impressive figure, a large blackfella, who joined in our conversation with the gallery manager. We decided to inquire about the sculpture we were looking for, and the newcomer, Major Sumner, told us he not only knew where it was, but that he was one of the people represented on the Pool of Tears Fountain in Colebrook, a suburb of Adelaide. He told us exactly how to go there and even gave us his phone number in case we had some difficulty finding it. Needless to say, we headed off and found it. We spend quite a long time there, learning the history, feeling the site and taking photos, happy that our wish was fulfilled. It was the most remarkable happening.

Monique Reiher

Wagga Women going our OWN way

To break the mould that says too old is one of the many inspiring slogans behind our success in Wagga. OWN was formed in Wagga Wagga four years ago to promote a positive attitude towards ageing. We now have around about fifteen active members, including seven who perform in the Wagga Wagga OWN theatre group.

Our members use their expertise and experience in a variety of ways –writing stories, broadening our skills and paying attention to the needs of older women. We find it's a great way to make friends. Our aim is to eventually form an Older Women's Wellness Centre in Wagga, where we can hold regular activities. Lots of us have disabilities, and that makes us think we can't do things, but when we join together we gain strength. We really feel you're never too old to get involved in an OWN group.

This year we were fortunate to receive a small grant through the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. We set up an attractive display in the Wagga Wagga Market Place with two mannequins dressed as fairies surrounded by lots of enlarged, laminated photographs of our various activities – OWN Australia conference attendees in Canberra, our Movement to Music sessions and our Theatre Group. We also had enlarged notices with *Break the Mould That Says Too Old* and *Age is Not a Disease* printed on them. With the OWN promotional poster, "You're in Good Company", and this year's

Seniors Week poster, we were certainly visible! We also had pamphlets printed inviting older women to join us for a cuppa on the first and third Tuesday of April, and were delighted when several women came along, and said they'd come again!

Our Theatre Group performed at the closing of Seniors Week and was congratulated by our local parliamentarian, Federal member Kay Hull, who said she should send a copy of our Telstra song "thanks, Sydney Theatre Group" to John Howard. Our latest song is about Having our Grandkids, sung to the tune of *Aeroplane Jelly*. We are so grateful for the help given to us by the Sydney Theatre Group, especially for *The Fairies* and *Making Whoopee* which has become our theme song. We have been invited to perform soon at another Probus Club and for a Legacy Day. Being a small city where many women belong to a variety of clubs and organisations, we need to change our programs often – or maybe we should think about starting a travelling show?

Two of us recently attended a Women's Services Network workshop. We were invited to give them a sample of what our Theatre Group does, and after a spirited performance of *Making Whoopee* we received a standing ovation from this group of around thirty relatively young, professional women from local agencies. Good fun!

Muriel Waddell

Organising Advocacy: A New Project

The Advocacy Coordination Group was formed at the Advocacy Workshop on Monday April 15 at Lower Fort Street. We are Hedi Roggeveen, Billie Kirlew, Shirley Bevan, Anne Warren, Cate Turner, Ulla Christley, Ermes Solari, Joy Ross, Trudi Kallir, Mary Robertson and Pam Ledden.

The meeting was convened to discuss the way advocacy might be carried out within OWN NSW. One of the questions that came up was a very important one, "are we trying to do too much?" The answer is, yes!

So, we are asking members to prioritise the issues that have earlier been identified as being important (please see flyer this issue), and when we have this information, we will identify current issues within each area of concern and proceed from there.

We would like to know from all NSW groups the kind of advocacy issues that your members are already involved with, and we think that a workshop on advocacy might be appropriate at the State Conference in July. We would like to see advocacy issues reported more widely in OWN Matters, and we need to inform ourselves more about issues by inviting speakers to meetings and joining other groups in order to be effective, well-informed advocates on behalf of older women.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 4 June at 10.30am at 87 Lower Fort Street. If you think you'd like to join the group and become a part of the team organising advocacy, please come along.

Pam Ledden

Birdcages at the Cross

In the 1970's my friends and I rented 'birdcages' around Kings Cross. In these bed-sitters and studio flats we endured heartless landlords, devious agents, and loony neighbours.

But, we wanted Bohemia and despised dreary suburbia.

My friends were from the U.K, Europe, and rural Australia and we belonged to the bush-walking group of All Nations Club, Kings Cross.

Dolores, our most daring female, lived an edgy existence in Orwell Street. We loved visiting her at weekends with a carafe of wine. Her door had more bolts and chains than Alcatraz. It was rumoured that the ill-fated Juanita Nielsen was last sighted at a nearby shady nightclub. An underworld identity was shot in the street.

Jane lived above the *The Purple Parrot*, a tiny, trendy boutique in Bayswater Road. Up the hill were Harry and Maria in the grandly named *Des Jardins*, sadly lacking jardins. Betty, Tony and Rob had bedsitters in Brougham Street with a paranoid landlady, who, despite frenzied cleaning, was plagued with cockroaches as big as locusts. Other friends perched in 'birdcages' around the Cross jungle.

At one stage I rented an old flat in Bayswater Road, with a magnificent balcony. A group of transvestites lived below with two bejewelled poodles. They were friendly neighbours with stunning outfits which shamed my wardrobe.

My local hairdresser earned more as night cashier in a massage parlour than from hairdressing. The parlour's matronly manager, in an environmentally incorrect fur coat, walked her poodle most mornings. We'd exchange greetings as I rushed uphill to the bus-stop.

Later I rented a bed-sitting room in Royston Street, Darlinghurst Heights, with a tiny dressing room and trunk room. The kitchen overlooked a millionaire's view of Paddington.

After our group's Sunday bush-walks, we'd 'snack' at the *All Nations Club* or stroll around to *The Balkan*, Taylor Square, with our BYO. We also loved progressive dinner parties, with pre-dinner drinks, soup, entrée, main course, and dessert at different 'birdcages'.

Our initial progressive party had a shaky start. In Elizabeth Bay, our pre-dinner drinks host met us in his dressing gown, claiming illness. But he espied a shapely Swedish female visitor in our midst. Speedily he dressed and felt well enough to join us. He survived every course, every location. The cynics said it was the fastest recovery in medical history.

One memorable progressive party was on a stifling summer night at my 'Darlinghurst Heights' place. I provided a casserole cooked in liberal lashings of burgundy. Then, too heat affected to travel on for dessert, we adjourned to the roof of the three-storey

building, with Paddington glittering below.

A misguided guest had brought Swiss fondue, suited to snowier climes, but we gamely dipped into the goo. Then an exhibitionist from outer suburbia decided to cook pancakes, also inappropriate weather-wise. He turned my tiny kitchen into a nightmare of endless pancakes, for which nobody had an appetite. This cook from hell left numerous utensils for me to clean.

Perhaps it was the rich food, or liberal vino, but Harry from *Des Jardins* decided to display his building trade balancing skills. He climbed onto the rickety railing, and edged upright around three sides of the building, silhouetted against the Paddo skyline. We watched, silent, aghast, but the patron saint of building workers safely guided his feet.

By the early 1980's, *All Nations Club* began to fade away, as did my friends to suburbia. Royston Street buildings were gradually converted to home units. During my last week there, late at night, a man in orange robes confronted me on my landing with a very large knife. Hoping he sought a 'squat', I indicated an empty flat. He hacked at the glass panel in its door. Quaking, I locked myself in my 'birdcage'.

Many Cross 'birdcages' are now home units, but I'm glad I experienced their more humble ancestry. I loved being a citizen of the colourful Cross in the Swinging Seventies.

Helen McMaugh

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.

INVITATION from OWN NOWRA

Come and join us for a memorable weekend at beautiful Jervis Bay, the Jewel of the South Coast.

Friday 25 October to noon Sunday 27 October 2002.
Booderee National Park.

\$130 - Includes transport from Nowra, accommodation and all meals.

Numbers are limited so book early.

Further info. from Barbara - 4443 9317 or Jo - 4422 4431.

Over 75?

Free annual medical checkups are available for people over 75 from your local doctor. Even if you are a very healthy person, an annual checkup can help you maintain your health and wellbeing as you get older. Ask your doctor about National MEDIPLAN.

Strong Women and Men Beat Arthritis

Dr. Miriam Nelson will speak about the latest news on arthritis treatment

7.45 pm, Monday 17 June

Council on the Ageing,
4th Floor, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney.
Cost is \$15 for non-members,
\$10 for Arthritis Foundation or
APA NSW members.

For bookings and enquiries,
please phone Sylvia Shepherd by
12 June on 9683 1622.

NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Answers to commonly asked questions about:

Private, for-profit home help & other services *Education and computers for older people *Going to and coming home from hospital *Your legal rights *Self help groups and organisations *Safety and security in the home *Concessions for older people *Retirement villages *Travel tips for older people *Web sites for older people *Future decision making *Volunteering *Preparing for your funeral *Clubs and social activities.

<http://www.add.nsw.gov.au/sis.html>

Pelvic Floor Functions ...and the bowel

This book contains useful information about issues that are not often discussed but can cause a lot of concern.

Available for \$8 from Dr Robyn Nagel, St Vincent's Hospital, Scott Street Toowoomba 4350. Phone 07 4639 4124.

NOTICES

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE

to

members of OWN Sydney

and to

subscribers to *OWN Matters*.

From this year, membership fees and subscriptions fall due on 1 July.

Since August 2001, existing members and subscribers have been paying a pro rata rate to 30 June 2002.

Subscribers to *OWN Matters* in May will pay \$20 and will receive two free issues.

June subscribers will also pay \$20 but will only receive one free copy!

Talk to Ermes Solari on 9247 7046 if you have any queries.

OWN Matters in Audio

Yes, you can now receive the Older Women's Network newsletter, *OWN Matters*, on audio cassette, at no extra charge. Any paid-up subscriber who would like the monthly audio version should give Margaret Sargent a ring on 9523-9558 or 9660-5925.

Jervis Bay cross-cultural weekend

Join the Jerringa people at

Bundarwa, Jervis Bay.

May 18 and 19.

Living on the northern side of Jervis Bay, our community is at the mouth of the Crookhaven river at Orient Point but the weekend will be spent camping on traditional land, Bindijine, which has special cultural significance for women but is open to both men and women. Led by local elder Delia Lowe, walks will be conducted to visit sites and to learn about local history, bush tucker, hunting, and bush medicine.

Cost \$100 includes a seafood meal on Sat. night. Please pay in advance to secure a place. Bring your own camping gear. Arrive Friday evening and return Sunday.

For more details (map and written instructions) and bookings phone: Delia Lowe: phone 44 473 190 or Delia's son, Dallas. 02 9319 7654



New Subscriptions to *OWN Matters*

Annual subscriptions fall due on 1 July.

Subscribe to *OWN Matters* in May 2002 and receive two free issues!
(Organisations: rate on application)

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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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