

OWN MATTERS

*Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc.
No. 10 August 2002*

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Back to the future!

There are seventeen OWN groups in NSW – Sydney, Penrith, Mid-Mountains, Woy Woy, Wyong, Newcastle, Macarthur, Nowra, Bankstown (Greek OWN), Wagga Wagga, Bellingen, Southern Highlands, Kiama, Shellharbour, Wollondilly, Sutherland and Illawarra.

For seven years, between 1995 and 2001, one of the ways in which NSW groups communicated with each other was through a quarterly newsheet called *Beyond the Rocks*.

The aim of *Beyond the Rocks* was to provide groups with an opportunity to have a say about local issues which concern them and to share ideas about the different approaches they use to promote the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women. In each issue, groups contributed information about their past activities, future events and local issues that have significance for older women.

At a workshop on 'Communications' at the recent State Conference, a suggestion to revive *Beyond the Rocks* was received with great enthusiasm.

The Editorial Team of *OWN Matters* is also very enthusiastic about the suggestion, but feel we can't add another publication to the workload we already carry.

We believe that *Beyond the Rocks* must have its own Production Team and wonder if there are members out there willing to become part of such a team. Ideally, you will have access to email, have writing and editing skills, an interest in layout and design and some spare time once every three months! If you don't have these skills, but want to learn, it's still possible to get involved.

Please contact Judith Mustard or me, at the office, to talk about what's involved. And remember, it's great fun if you like production deadlines!

Dorothy Cora
Coordinator, *OWN Matters*

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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In Praise of Public Hospitals

It was good to read in our May Newsletter of people's positive experiences in public hospitals. I, too, have good memories of the care and support I received in Gosford and Hornsby hospitals.

My doctor daughter, Glynis, works in the public health system and has nothing but praise for the doctors, nurses and staff who work so hard and are paid so little. Do you know how much doctors working in public hospitals are paid? Glynis has thirty years of experience as an M.D. and has other qualifications in the medical field. She works in Emergency at Canterbury, Casualty at Balmain, Sexual Assault at North Shore and Prince Alfred, and gets paid \$90 an hour. There are two scales of salary beneath her. No overtime. No punching the Bundy at 5 o'clock when you are stitching up a gaping wound.

Cleaners can earn as much as a doctor, and plumbers and electricians three times as much. Where are our priorities in this society when we value the cleaning of a drain above saving a life?

Doctors pay enormous insurance, when they can get it, and are at great risk in this direction. Do we care? We sue each other at the slightest provocation.

We've gone mad with retribution, as has the world, egged on by our macho leaders.

Recently, my doctor was sewing up a child's finger that had been jammed in a door, and the child's father, in an abusive manner, threatened her with litigation, "I'll sue the balls off you if you make a mess of this job," he said. The fact that she didn't have any balls was no comfort!

Many OWN members will remember Glynis when she was in private practice. Fear of being sued, the tremendous responsibility, the lack of remuneration (she bulk-billed) drove her out of solo practice. In the public health system, she works very hard for very little, but enjoys being part of a team in a caring environment.

Joan Johns

An audio cassette version of
OWN Matters is available at no extra cost.
Please phone Margaret Sargent 02 9660-5925.

Forging our OWN Future

Congratulations to over 100 members who were involved in shaping the first OWN NSW conference into an extremely stimulating and productive two days.

We accomplished everything we set out to achieve, and more. The atmosphere was warm and friendly with women speaking freely on controversial and non-controversial issues with a confidence that comes from knowing that their thoughts, ideas, and feeling will be listened to with respect and thoughtfulness.

Special thanks to the women who agreed to facilitate and chair the various segments. Cate Turner, with skill, humour and great aplomb chaired the first day. Her time-keeping was particularly impressive (never aggressive!), creating a cordial and efficient atmosphere that was reflected throughout the whole conference. Anne Warren also did a fine job on the second day.

The conference opened with Cate welcoming us to Aboriginal land. She then gave an overview of the conference program and introduced Annette Turner, our very special guest speaker from Back o' Bourke.

Annette inspired – and exhausted some of us! – with her life story of courage, achievement, battling against the odds and, big cheer, winning a fight with Westpac!

The next item was *The Right to Safety Quilt* – a women and violence project. Louise Anike invited everyone to write or draw on calico squares their thoughts and feelings about violence against women. These squares which will be made into a quilt, which will be forever a reminder of the cooperation and cohesion that characterised this conference.

Following a stunning performance of *Older Women on Show!* by our multi-talented Theatre Group, we adjourned for lunch and the usual noisy networking.

Reports from the five workshops held concurrently after lunch indicated an enthusiastic vision for OWN's future wellbeing. The workshops topics were the future of OWN, communications, OWN history, membership and discussion groups. A report of the workshops will be made in a full Conference Report which will be available before long.

The only disappointment during the conference was the venue for our Mood Adjustment Session (cocktail party) which was originally going to be held in a

warm comfortable sitting room rather than our rather cavernous conference room. However, while it was less than intimate, it didn't altogether dampen that wonderful spirit of friendship at which OWN members excel whenever they get together en masse.

The program for the second day, with the exception of a delightful a cappella performance by three OWN Sydney women, was focused on 'business' and feedback from individual members of NSW groups. Speakers, some self-identified as 'first-time' ones, talked with warmth and humour about their groups: what they enjoy, what they achieve and where they are going. Representatives of various NSW projects also spoke about their activities. The Theatre Group's account of doing nineteen shows in ten days over 3,500 kilometres with the *Women on Wheels* Tour left us mightily impressed!

Business included tabling of the OWN NSW interim Annual Report, discussion and voting on changes to the constitution and the election of the 2002-2003 Management Team of OWN NSW.

Nine women were appointed to the Management Team, six of them from OWN groups outside Sydney. Five women were re-appointed: Anne Warren, Pat Simpson, Cate Turner, Hedi Roggeveen and Dorothy Buckland Fuller. New members are Louise Anike, Digby Duncan, Barbara Malcolm and Isobel MacCallum.

On behalf of the outgoing Management Team, we would like to congratulate the new Team. We wish you well and hope that your experience managing OWN NSW in its second year will create positive outcomes for yourselves and for OWN NSW.

Finally, special thanks to the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the Department for Women for funding the conference.

Betty Murphy, Pam Ledden and Sam Smart
Coordinators of OWN NSW, 2001-2002.

Well done ...

Thanks to all members of the 2001-2002 Management Team for their work during the past year. Managing a newly restructured organisation requires high levels of energy, commitment and creativity – characteristics that members of the team had in abundance.

OWN Sydney Highlights

Coordinators' Report

Congratulations to OWN NSW on a very successful first conference and AGM.

The program was designed to provide a range of opportunities for us to learn more about what older women want from their organisation, and to imagine what our future might hold. We're looking forward with great interest to working with and supporting the new management team.

The conference was also a wonderful time to catch up with lots of interesting and thoughtful women from other OWN groups. There is never enough time to do all the networking and chatting that we so enjoy!

OWN Sydney was pleased to have the opportunity to introduce our *Right to Safety Quilt*, which arose out of our concern about violence against older women. The idea was based on one of the quilts in the booklet, *Sewing Our Stories*, produced by the NSW Attorney General's and other Departments as an initiative to reduce violence against women. Fifty two conference participants wrote and drew moving and supportive messages on pieces of calico and then pinned them onto a sheet. Other women have offered to help to put the quilt together. These quilts are a very effective way to raise awareness of the issue – thank you to all those who contributed.

And what an overwhelming response there was to the four not-so-old favourites presented by some members of OWN Sydney's a cappella group to round off the conference. Many of us were thrilled to hear John Lennon's *Imagine*.

On a less formal note, thirty four members from five OWNs responded to Woy Woy OWN's invitation to a fish lunch in June, almost taking over the Fisherman's Wharf. An article about the lunch appeared in the local press. Thanks, Woy Woy.

Back to serious business...

OWN Sydney is holding its first Annual General Meeting on 23 August. We invite our members to consider nominating others or themselves to stand for election to the Working Group. There are ten positions and we can co-opt up to five more. We have enclosed an agenda and a nomination form, so if you have energy, ideas or skills, do think about nominating.

Louise Anike and Joy Ross

Fish Lunch at Bronte

Nine members of OWN attended our July Fish Lunch at Bronte by the Sea with its little huts in the park and sparkling ocean views. It was a great setting to sit and talk; so relaxing. Because it was a take away lunch, I provided a blue checked table cloth, some cutlery, and wet wipes.

No, no wine! The whiting was cooked well and enjoyed by all. See you at Cronulla in August.

Peg Hewett

Coffee and Chat Report

At our last Coffee and Chat we shared personal experiences on a wide range of subjects, including events of which we felt ashamed, and the consequences.

Stories of our past lives are fascinating and listening to them strengthens the bonds we have with each other.

Yetty Windt

Lift your spirits!

Our a cappella performance, under the guidance of the multi-talented Jackie Loeb, was received with great enthusiasm by our audience on the second day of the State Conference. The applause lifted our spirits and has encouraged us to believe that we can attract new members.

There are multiple pleasures singing a cappella, and multiple benefits too.

It's particularly good for our bodies – we learn to breathe properly, we exercise muscles we hardly ever use, our lungs are expanded and our posture improved.

Pleasure also comes from creating music with our voices (did you know that a cappella is never accompanied by musical instruments?), and having a drink at the local pub enjoying each others' company and the old-time band they have on Saturdays.

If you've never sung before, joining our group is not a problem. It doesn't matter what sort of voice you've got, it only matters that you are enthusiastic about learning something new and love music and song.

Our meetings in August are on 3, 17 and 31 from 1.30 to 3.30 at 75 Windmill Street, so come along!

Beryl Winter

Something Personal

Generally I don't go to meetings, being hopelessly incompetent at keeping my mind on formal proceedings and never remembering at the end of the day what motions have been moved or what amendment has been passed or who said what or why.

However I was asked to be on the registration desk at the NSW OWN Conference. I was delighted to do this because I was able to meet all the new members and see old friends again.

And I had a lovely day! I enjoyed the workshop I went to; I was quite fascinated by the guest speaker's account of her extraordinary life at White Cliffs, in the Great Australian Outback and, of course, the Theatre Group's brilliant, funny and always professional, performance made the whole day worthwhile.

The Conference was well attended, well organised and apparently met all the requirements of such meetings. What a bunch of women we are, OWN women, so much collective wisdom, such dry wit and humour, and above all such kindness.

Sitting at my table at the Conference I was musing on my good fortune to know so many like-minded women of compassion, devoted to social justice, who are prepared to do what they can to help.

The response by OWN members to appeals for a cause is heeded quickly and with great generosity. There have been two good examples of this very recently.

A video was shown at Windmill Street about the devastating life for women in a refugee camp, where the biggest single barrier for girls to access the education offered in the camp was lack of sanitary towels. Wisely realising that small things are often overlooked in favour of big projects, our women immediately donated \$250 to send these basic necessities to Kakuma Camp. The National Committee on Refugee Women accepted, telling us that the money will enable women to use available resources to produce these products for use in the camps and generate a small business for the women involved. The money can then be used to make more. How sensible and how valuable!

The second example involves OWN members who attended the big Refugee Day rally at First Fleet Park on 23 June. We were enormously affected by a young Afghan girl who addressed the huge crowd, telling the story of her family's flight from an unbelievable life under the Taliban and their horrific journey to get here by boat.

This 16 year old girl and her family, after six months in Curtin Detention Camp in WA, were classed as refugees and sent to Sydney with one of those infamous Three Year Protection Visas. Noorya was enrolled at Holroyd High School in Sydney's West and is proving to be a very clever and hard-working student. She has learnt English in the year she has been there. The meagre Social Security benefits she receives will cease when she is 18. Her very enlightened Principal and dedicated teachers are desperate for her to have enough money to enable her to stay at school until she completes the HSC, which will be of inestimable benefit to her community when she has to return home in three years time.

The Principal has set up a Trust Fund to give her enough money to stay on at school until the HSC. Again, generous support has come from individual OWN women and we have sent a cheque for \$70 to add to the fund. If you would like to contribute to Noorya's education, you can send your donation to The Principal, Holroyd High School, 7 Cumberland Road, Greystanes 2145.

Muriel Hortin

With Deep Sadness...

With deep sadness we learned of the death of our friend and Theatre Group member, Jean Jacobs, who was killed in a car accident on the 24 July.

Jean was a lovely, vibrant, warm-hearted, intelligent woman with a great sense of humour and human social values. She had a great sense of fun and was cheerful, uncomplaining, with a positive attitude towards people and life. She was always generous in her appreciation of others, and her active and willing contribution to the Theatre Group will be greatly missed.

While we treasure our memories of Jean, we will miss her smiling, thoughtful presence. Our sincere sympathy goes to her family, and we grieve with them

Louise Anike

Perspectives

I got into the lift at the second floor in David Jones. There were two women in it, both in their fifties, one with a mobile phone to her ear, shouting, "I can't hear you, I'll talk to you later." The doors closed, and I stood back against the wall, having noticed from the indicator that they were going to the same parking level as I needed to. She turned her attention to me. In a very loud, clear voice, she enunciated slowly, "Where do you want to go?" "Parking," I said. "What floor?" she said, louder, almost derisively. "Same as you," I replied meekly. Pretty obvious that she thought I was too old to think clearly.

Later in the day, a young man from Telstra called to fix a fault on my phone. We chatted pleasantly for quite a while, and he said something technical which I didn't understand. "Sorry," I said, "I'm a bit old, I really can't grasp that." "You're not old," he said, "You think young, and that's the important thing."

An hour or so later, I was playing scrabble on the Internet, something which I love doing. My opponent said, "I hope you're over 15?" "Oh," I replied, "Well over 15..." (Remember that we're typing this, can't see each other.) "That's good," she said. "I was playing with a 15 year old yesterday, and when I said I was 52, she said she was surprised I could still play at my age! I told her I was able to drag my wheelchair over to the computer sometimes..." (You can find scrabble on www.playsite.com)

So everyone has a different perspective of old age!

Renee Simons

My Skin

Tender, tactile touch as I was delivered and placed in my mother's loving arms, later father, family and friends holding me, and my skin tells me I am loved.

As we grow, we are more aware of our skin, it surrounds and supports us, tells us if it is hot, or cold and pale if we are ill. We adorn it with clothes and jewellery, we sunbake to change the colour, so why can people be stigmatized for their skin colour?

The sensual, sexual stimulation of an intimate relationship or withdrawal of touch when relationship sours. The way our skin stretches in pregnancy and the joy when our skin touches that of our baby.

My work was with women who had negative, abusive touch. My skin developed psoriasis, it told me to leave the work I loved, to heal with massage, rest, barefoot walking on the beach, nurture self, and I healed.

As I age, my skin has lines, wrinkles, sagging, thinning skin, changing shape, but I am still me within, I tell my skin.

Rita Walker

Vale, Shannon

Shannon Simons, who had been very ill with cancer, died on 25 June. We have lost a wonderful teacher, feminist, friend and supporter of the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre. She will be deeply missed by Jan Malley, Project Worker, and members of Project Management Team.

A special tribute ... Pupil, friend, colleague, facilitator and member of the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre Project Management Team, Shannon wore many hats. She was always present when there was work to be done or help needed.

At first I met a dignified and sedate woman when she came to the craft class at BOWWC. This impression was soon changed when I noticed the twinkle in her eye and discovered her very wry sense of humour.

Shannon was a woman who did so much good for others, but would brush aside any attempt at thanks. She was a woman with a great heart and a sense of humility – except when she was pounding the drums; then those skins fairly bounced as Shannon threw herself into the rhythm and excitement of sound!

When I was incapacitated, Shannon took over the craft class in her usual capable manner. She endeared herself to the class with her kindness, wit and caring attitude to all.

We will miss her down-to-earth view of the world, complemented by a genuine respect for older women and their problems.

Lyn Komber

A celebration of Shannon's life will be held in September at Liverpool Women's Health Centre. See September *OWN Matters* for details.

Theatre Group Report

Well, here we are back in good old downtown Sydney after fourteen days on the road with the Women on Wheels tour. The tour was initiated by the Department of Women to enable women in country towns to have access to information not readily available to them.

This was the second tour for them, but the first for us. We visited approximately eighteen towns, travelled 3,900 kilometres and did fourteen performances. It was exhausting, exhilarating, happy, and, at times, sad. We met some wonderful people and made lots of new friends. I wish I could convey the feeling that you get when you meet women from other areas who make you feel as if you were family.

On occasions, the Department for Women's presenters, and our group, turned up to a venue to discover that nobody knew we were coming. It improved toward the end of the tour and we had some wonderful audiences.

We were driven around in a twelve-seater bus by a young person from the Department for Women who had no idea what she was in for, but we behaved like the polite people we are and she had as good a time as we did.

Our Domestic Violence segment caused some tears among our audiences and we heard some horrific stories from members of the audience. What a pity that violence is getting worse!

At Kyogle we had high school girls from the local area in our audience. We didn't know what they would think of us but before we left they called us "sexy ladies" – what do you think of that, then?

The country people are having a bad time with the drought and have to take cattle to different

areas to share the water around. Next time you turn on your tap spare a thought for those people or, if you are a churchgoer, a little prayer would not go amiss.

We were asked to entertain patients in a nursing home, which was not on our agenda, but we were happy to do it. The smiles on their faces was its own reward. They clapped and sang along. We made their day just that little bit better, and we all had a warm glow inside when we left.

We met some really strong-minded Aboriginal women who still have to fight for their rights. We really do tend to take everything for granted, don't we?

People representing lots of different agencies were also on the tour, for example, Legal Aid, Fire Brigade, Girl Guides, State Transit Authority and Sisters of Charity Outreach Project.

Sister Enid from the Sisters of Charity was mistaken on a few occasions as a member of the Theatre Group. She didn't seem to mind, saying that she thought it was because of her white hair. The young woman who was travelling with Sister Enid put her name down to join the Theatre Group (she sang our songs in the shower!) so we put her on our waiting list.

The tour was tiring and at times frustrating. But all of us returned feeling that it was worthwhile and we would do it again. The people we met were left feeling that there is life after menopause – we don't get old, we just learn more...

Robin Henderson, who is the Director General of the Department for Women, said that we were the most popular people on the tour. Well, we knew that, didn't we?



We're on Tour -
to the tune of Okey Pokey

*We put the luggage in,
We take the luggage out,
We have a little break
And we do it all again.
We arrive at the venue
And there's nobody there,
And we do it all again.*

*Oh! The joys of touring,
Oh yes! The joys of touring.
We are Older Women
And you can't keep us Women
down.*

*We've been six days on the road,
Already half way there.
It's been bloody hard work
But we don't really care.
We've got Tina as our driver
And Luce to guide us there,
Though our singing's driving
Peggy to despair.*

*Oh! The joys of touring,
Oh yes! The joys of touring
We're the Theatre Women
And we do it all again*

*We're driving in the dark
All the way to Inverell,
We are looking out for truckies
And kangaroos as well.
Tina's driving is fantastic,
Though she's scared out of her
wits,
And the thought of killing Roos
is giving her the SHITS*

*Oh! The joys of touring,
Oh yes! The joys of touring
We are Older Women
And you can't keep us Women
down.*

Courtesy of **Josie Jackson &
Brigid Sen**

Josie Jackson

Letters to the Editor

A 'no-frills' coffin

In response to Pamela Sharpe's letter, "The Way to Go" and her request to know of any 'El Cheapo' coffins, a cardboard one being illegal in NSW, I write of my experience.

My husband, Frank, who died last year, had requested the cheapest possible coffin. I had chosen one of the few remaining Australian-owned Funeral Directors and a representative visited me at home. With kindness and courtesy, she asked many questions relating to the family's wishes. This included the type of coffin. There was an imposing range in style, timber and price. At the bottom of the list was a pine-board one, the cheapest, which I chose. It cost \$499.

At the Chapel on the day of the funeral, I wondered just how 'El Cheapo' this would be. Perhaps raw timber, a real 'no frills' version? I took a length of beautiful sky-blue silk material to drape the coffin, in case it was too bare and the family came with armfuls of native flowers from their gardens.

Much to our surprise, the coffin was varnished and resembled highly polished red cedar. There were chrome handles and a splendid plaque engraved with Frank's details mounted on the lid.

We remembered Frank's full life and 'farewell' with gratitude and quiet joy.

Dulcie Lindsay

Calcium for our bones

In a recent OWN Matters there was a short article advising us older women to drink milk to obtain sufficient calcium to keep our bones strong. However, what about those of us who can't, or choose not to, drink dairy milk?

Well, according to two articles I read recently, we have no need to worry if we maintain a good vegan diet, featuring lots of leafy greens.

The articles are in the current issue of Vegan Voice (June-July 2002), and the web reference:

www.vegansociety.com/briefings/dietandbone/dietandbone.doc

According to these articles, the two considerations are (i) how much calcium a food contains and (ii) how much calcium loss it induces. For example, acidic and salty foods cause calcium loss. Caffeine also reduces calcium absorption.

Taking this into account, the very best foods for calcium (much better even than dairy milk) are the dark green leaves of such plants as cabbage and kale. (Spinach and silver beet are not as good.) Also helpful are almonds, bananas, oranges, peppers and soymilk.

The web article is quite long and also includes information about the part played in bone health by physical activity and various vitamins, minerals and fatty acids.

Janet Grevillea

A Good Read

Various articles claimed my interest in our July issue of *OWN Matters*. The television article by Helen McMaugh was entertaining, also the *Remember When* article by Joan Hilton. The story was almost totally identical to my childhood life, the one exception being that my childhood was spent on a dry area farm, miles from anywhere. The

mailman delivered 20lbs of flour and other staples to our mailbox, twice a week. The mailbox was situated a mile down hill on the so-called main road.

I am wondering if there are more glaucoma sufferers among our readers. I would be interested to know if their problem is inherited, so far as they know. My mother was found to have glaucoma in her old age, probably inherited from her father, who went blind also. My brother was also afflicted. I had been led to believe that it mainly followed the female line.

Joan Young

The right to decide

I heartily concur with Pam Ledden's Point of View column in the July OWN Matters about Nancy Crick's right to decide that she had "had enough of whatever it was that was hurting her". I read a report written after her death that said that she had suffered from a twisted bowel, what was left of it after the operation for bowel cancer, which is excruciatingly painful and causes nausea and vomiting.

On July 16, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that Shirley Nolan, aged 60, was incapacitated with a degenerating disease, and found herself fighting not for life, but for death and the right to achieve it peacefully and on her own terms. But without euthanasia legislation she had to kill herself. She was hopelessly, rather than terminally ill. She died when she did because, she said, she wanted to kill herself while she was able to.

Please do let us have a discussion about Voluntary Euthanasia. How do we know what's around the corner for us, and what we would do in a similar situation?

Pat Zinn

The El Cheapo Funeral - A Reply

I am writing in response to the interest shown in funerals in the last two issues of *OWN Matters*. In June, Enid Harrison, in her usual delightfully maverick style, wrote about her birthday wake. In July, Monika Law shared anticipation of her mother's funeral. Also Pamela Sharpe enquired about the possibility of achieving "an el cheapo cardboard coffin funeral in NSW", reporting a dearth of information on the subject, underlined by what she had been led to believe was its illegality in NSW.

Here is some information I have gleaned over the past few years about how to plan a funeral in NSW.

The eco-coffin (essentially a flatpack biodegradable cardboard coffin) is legal in NSW despite what some funeral directors say. The cardboard coffin, available from Final Indulgence, 1425 Forrester Road, Scottsdale, Tasmania, 7261, has been designed to conform to stringent European requirements, and there is actually a man within the Health Department (Environmental Health (02) 9816 0264) who can confirm that the coffin is legal. Cost starts around \$200 for a coffin you can decorate yourself. Get together with like-minded friends, workshop your decorating themes, and purchase several flatpacks. I'm sure you'd receive a bulk discount, if only on freight. Lots more Internet information on www.tascraft.com.au/FI/pages/celt/index.html

The big problem with cardboard funerals at present is that if you want to be cremated, the private crematoria (that is, most of them), run by overseas companies, won't accept cardboard coffins. They encourage "their" funeral directors to sell the more expensive particle board/wooden caskets. This is a Fair Trading issue, so raise it with that department (or whatever it is called this year). Cremation fees start around \$500 at private crematoria. Public crematoria, such as the one at Lismore, accept cardboard and alternative coffins. Check with Eco-coffins for "friendly" crematoria. You can ask your local crematorium for their written management policy on the "minimum standard for an acceptable casket" and raise any dicey issues with Fair Trading.

There is nothing illegal about burying a cardboard coffin manufactured to standard in a public graveyard. Ring around for an independent, thoughtful, flexible funeral director who will help with your requirements. Apparently the Australian Funeral Directors' Association does not encourage the

use of cardboard coffins by its members. You can guess the reasons for this.

If you own land exceeding 5 hectares and there is a suitable area away from water sources or courses, approved for burial by a local authority (eg Council), you can bury as you like. (See Public Health regulation 1991 – Section 34.1 (c)).

You can organise a Do It Yourself Funeral now. Purchase your eco-coffin. Find a friendly funeral director (who will itemise costs including removal of the body, preparing the body, accommodating the body in the mortuary, transporting to place of disposal, paying the crematorium/grave opening-closing fees, paying 2 medical referees for two cremation certificates, and paying for the preparation of a Death Certificate). Locate a public crematorium with suitable policies or purchase a "right of burial" (in perpetuity, if you don't want your body to be disturbed in 20 years' time) in a public burial ground. The cost of a plot will vary with the location of the burial ground. City prices can be as high as \$2000 due to heavy demand.

In sum, an "el cheapo funeral" can be had for much less than \$2000. Whilst a funeral provided free by the "commonwealth" would be preferable, we can still go some way towards arranging our own funerals, refusing to be brow beaten into paying huge costs, often to monopolistic foreign companies, for stuff we don't want.

I've acquired this information in recent times as a result of making enquiries for myself and friends. There are occasions when I've met with obfuscation and untruths told by ignorant or unscrupulous members of the funeral industry. Whilst these days it would be very difficult to arrange a DIY funeral without the assistance of a funeral director, there are people in the industry who realise that for many of us, "el cheapo" is the best way to go. It is worth shopping around to find a funeral business that will honour your preferences or at least keep our issues on the agenda.

Carol Rose

PS Those of you who decide to decorate "el cheapo" coffins might be interested in reading the classic documentary by Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death*. Although written in 1963, it will give you a good idea why the "el cheapo funeral" is still anathema to business people.

A Birthday Bash to Remember

We chose the Fisherman's Club Restaurant at Geroa, just north of Nowra, to celebrate Nowra OWN's 10th birthday. The Club sits on the heights above Geroa with a million dollar view of the south coast. The sun shone down from a clear blue sky and there was a light breeze to ruffle the waves below. Perfect.

It was very special to welcome to the lunch members from Illawarra, Shellharbour and Southern Highlands OWN groups, as well as past members of our group. Forty-nine of us filled four long tables: new friendships were made and old acquaintances renewed in a constant buzz of animated conversations.

Following a warm welcome from Nowra OWN Coordinator, Barbara Robertson, we got down to the serious 'entertainment'. Norma Bastock, one of Nowra's OWN and a member of the Sydney Theatre Group and our local Wand'ring Menstruals, sang a song about a vexed subject, The Menopause, which was composed by another Menstrual, Bev Stewart. I'm sure other patrons were more than startled to hear the raised voices of a crowd of older women singing choruses in honour of the menopause!

Anne Warren, who founded Nowra OWN with Gitta Rind, gave a potted history of the group's original inception in 1990, its fall by the wayside when both she and Gitta went overseas soon afterwards, and its start-up again in 1992. Anne mentioned our promotion of women's issues and our current profile in the area, which has resulted in invitations to become involved in various issues by local bodies. We all agreed that our group has succeeded in furthering the aims of OWN in addition to supporting and cherishing each other.

Following desert and more chatting, the champagne and orange juice arrived for a rowdy toast to Nowra's achievements. Anne and Gitta cut the birthday cake to the joyful refrain of Happy Birthday and For We are Jolly Good Women! And as a finale, we lustily performed what appears to be our signature tune, *Side by Side*. We parted feeling happy with each others' company and the aims of our organisation.

Future plans include a Happy Heart weekend in October in Jervis Bay National Park, to which all present were invited and some accepted. Please consider joining us – we'll have a wonderful time in a beautiful place with the very best people!

Enydd Williams

Happy Heart Weekend

Members of Nowra OWN warmly invite members of other OWN groups to a Happy Heart Weekend at Booderee National Park on October 25/26/27 2002.

The full cost is \$130 and includes transport from the station, accommodation and all meals from Friday night to Sunday lunch. Accommodation is twin share rooms with bunk beds or a single room for \$34 extra.

Please send your deposit of \$30 (make cheque/money order payable to OWN NOWRA) to OWN NOWRA, PO Box 468, Nowra 2541 by 10 August. Full payment is due by 27 September.

For more information, please phone Barbara, 4443 9317 or Anne, 4422 9353 or Jo, 4422 4431.

A Good laugh

Feeling down in the dumps with that cold? They tell us antibiotics are useless and that commonsense is the way to go! What about adding a good dose of escapist laughter? We all know that laughter is good for us. Well, there's plenty in this deliciously funny book.

Seducing Mr Maclean by Loubna Haika (Picador Paperback 2000) is a story in the great tradition of migrant satire.

Loubna, a young Lebanese woman, leaves war-torn Beirut for the dark heart of Melbourne's Western Suburbs with her parents, five sisters, and twin brothers. All their hopes are pinned on Loubna becoming a doctor. First she must impress the Dean of the Medical School, Professor MacLean.

Mum spends her life in a state of perpetual anxiety trying to control the family's behaviour, and more importantly, their honour. Dad runs a restaurant and keeps company with some influential and unsavoury characters.

Lovely to read in bed, and available from libraries.

Jean Jacobs

Aboriginal Support Circle

Betty Little, a member of the Yorta Yorta nation and one of the coordinators of our Aboriginal Support Circle, presented her Invasion Wheel. She told us how she came to develop the Invasion Wheel and the ideas behind it. Although many of us had heard Betty give this talk before, we came away with new insights.

It's so easy to make negative generalisations about the Aboriginal people. But the underlying questions related to problems are rarely asked and the answers are often not understood. Indigenous people are not one people. In Australia, before white people arrived, there were many nations, each with their own language and customs. They did not record their traditions or languages, as they were handed down orally.

The invaders' rules were alien. When Aboriginal people lost their land, they lost the focus of their lives, since all the traditions and spiritual being revolved around Mother Earth in the Nation, the 'homeland'.

Indigenous people were weakened by the introduction of diseases of the invaders and by indiscriminate killing of Aboriginal people. Talking in today's language, "the killing of civilians". This led to the breakdown of the kinship system. Added to this was the forceful pushing of Aboriginal people from different nations together into one reservation.

Ask yourself what it would have been like to push a crowd of Europeans speaking many different languages into a closed compound. (In fact, that is what is happening in the migrant detention centres here in Australia.)

On top of these difficulties, alcohol was introduced and Aboriginal women were raped. White man's education was not made available beyond primary grades. Betty herself had only four years of formal education.

Add to these problems, the taking of light-skinned children from their parents, which further destroyed the cultures of the individual nations.

Betty personalised the issues by telling her own story. She still recalls with pain, the first time a teacher demanded that she look into the eyes of a teacher. She felt extreme fear and her stomach became upset, as it was against her Aboriginal teaching to have eye contact – it was bad manners.

Not only did Betty narrowly escape being stolen from her family, but she almost lost her son to the Government authority. She had a lot of bad times,

but she's a battler. She said, "I'm fifty-eight, but I feel like I'm seventy. I don't know how much longer I'll live. You know our life span is twenty years less than yours."

I was sad that we only had one guest at the talk who was not a member of our Aboriginal Support Circle. We hold these special talks with guest speakers for all OWN members to give them the opportunity to meet members of the Aboriginal community and to gain a direct understanding of their histories and their lives.

Frayda Cooper

Glaucoma

The last week in July was Glaucoma Awareness Week. People with a higher risk of glaucoma are those with a family history of glaucoma, diabetes, migraine, short sightedness, eye injuries, high blood pressure, past or present use of cortisone. Glaucoma destroys vision slowly, starting with loss of side vision. It is important to detect the problem as early as possible and to start treatment to minimise further loss of vision.

Seniors Information Service

The Step Down Project

The Advocacy Coordination Group has decided to focus on issues related to older women's discharge from hospital after a period of acute illness. In keeping with the already established name for the move from acute to convalescent care we are calling this project The Step Down Project.

Several of our members have had recent experiences of discharge plans going awry and some have found themselves either inappropriately occupying an acute care bed or inappropriately being sent to a nursing home. Others have found themselves entirely dependent on friends and relatives for convalescent care.

There is no statistical evidence currently available to indicate how widespread this problem is, so we would like to hear from our members (and others) about your experiences. Please contact us by letter, describing how well or poorly your discharge from hospital, within the last three years, was managed.

Please write as soon as possible to The Step Down Project, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000, as we want to keep our momentum up!

Pam Ledden

DIY Law

Now that there is a law handbook for older people, we can find out for ourselves how our particular concerns are viewed and governed by the law.

The third edition of *Older People and the Law in NSW* has been compiled by Young Lawyers working in their own time with the support of the Law Society. Free copies are available from the Attorney General's Department which provided generous funding for the project.

Domestic violence and the law. There are many aspects of domestic violence: physical, sexual, emotional, financial and social violence or abuse. Physical and sexual violence are crimes which are prosecuted under NSW law, so it is certainly worth reporting them to the police.

But the law takes little interest in emotional violence, which includes intimidation by verbal abuse or threats of physical violence or threats to remove the children. The only exception is where 'cruelty' is involved.

Financial violence can be prosecuted when it concerns property such as a house or a sum of money. In theory there is also some protection provided for a partner denied an appropriate share of the income of a family unit. But in practice the legal procedures involved are both difficult and expensive, and so they are rarely undertaken by older women. Yet according to the Women's Legal Resources Unit (phone 02-9749-5533), this type of financial abuse is especially common in older women. *Older Women Speak Up* has found that numbers of women are denied for years any money whatever for household expenses, for children's needs, or for their own pocket money. Only in the case of divorce or separation does the law provide for recompense as part of the property settlement. The law handbook does not mention this.

If this kind of rip-off has been your lot, please let us know so as to support the *Older Women Speak Up* campaign (02-9523-9558) for the introduction of new legislation to cover such financial abuse.

Margaret Sargent

Beauty Treatment

I look in the mirror, and what do I see? BEETLE BROWS, THAT'S WHAT! John Howard, God help me, has taken over my face! Daily, I've struggled with tweezers, but those pesky eyebrows just keep on growing blacker and stronger...and even worse, some of them are white! And they grow up as well! Everything else goes down – why not eyebrows? Something must be done!

So I present myself at the Manly Peninsula College of Beauty. In the change room, I dispense with all clothing bar underpants. A fetching pale pink elasticized gown now hangs modestly from just above my drooping boobs. Into the long public-hospital-type room I go, to hoist myself on one of the beds lining both sides of the room. A blanket is tucked gently around my willing body...sweet young faces (they can't be more than 16!) peer anxiously down. "Only eyebrows?" they ask. Well, it does seem a bit extreme, all this for just eyebrows, however unruly, so I say tentatively, "The chin, perhaps?" They're delighted. "Electrolysis?" they ask. By this time I could accede to anything. "How about doing nails as well?" I suggest, to universal acclaim.

Visions of the New Me grow forever brighter as lipsticked angels confer on the right colour for the nail job. There are soft, sweet touchings of hands, feet and faces. Deep Pink is chosen. The anticipating twitter of many birds slowly subsides under the weight of this important enterprise. I am lulled into delicious reverie... But what's this? I'm being chided for smudging... Oh, dear. I'm chastened to the bootstraps; humbled by my lack of beauty treatment cred. I lie quietly and let them get on with it, not daring to move a muscle.

Hours later I emerge into the sunset, minus facial growth, and dazzling of feet and hands... fingers still flapping in the air lest I should smudge again. I am forever improved...especially with the ceramic nail polish that's now a month old and still there!

Dorothy Cox

For Book Lovers

A new book store opened in Sydney on 4 July – the *KINOKUNIYA*, Level 2, The Galleries Victoria, 500 George Street (opposite the QVB). With almost 300,000 titles, it's heaven for readers, and while there, treat yourself to some wonderful coffee. A visit to the children's section gives a spectacular view of the QVB and the Town Hall – probably lost on the kids. For me, it has a supermarket feel. I prefer Collins on Broadway for atmosphere and being customer and reader friendly.

Jean Jacobs

Mother Day 2002

The instructions were short and sharp. "Be in the Crescent," she says. "At 11am. Ken will be waiting." "Ken who?" I ask. "You don't know him," she says, "Just be there."

"Where am I going? What'll I wear?" But questions are useless. My Mothers' Day present is to be a surprise.

Mothers' Day comes, as it always does. So did 11am. I look out the window towards The Crescent, and catch a glimpse of leather...fringed! Then I know that another of my ambitions is about to be realised.

Panic! Where am I going? What'll I wear? But there's no time to dilly-dally. Ken is waiting. And so is his gleaming black Harley-Davidson...with side-car! "Happy Mothers' Day, darlin'," says Ken...and gives me a kiss. "Hop in," he says. So in I hop. In the side-car. "Hop on," he says to my

daughter, Melissa, standing by, not expecting a ride. "Room for all," says Ken, so five-year-old Lillie hops in with me.

Leather helmets are produced for all. Lillie's and my helmet are so big they fall over our faces. "Not to worry," says Ken, "We'll get smaller ones at my place." And off we zoom.

At the helmet changeover, I seize the day. "Can't I sit up with you?" I ask. "Sure," says Ken...and that's when my joyride takes on a whole new meaning! Oh, what you can see from the back of Ken's Harley! He took us to every beach and inlet and bay, from Manly to Avalon and back...some I'd never even heard of; all glinting and gleaming under the cloudless blue autumn sky.

And what you can feel! The humming, vibrating thrill of it! We speed on, leaving everything in

our wake; poor slow old SAAB sports cars left slumbering. We bend and twist and swoop, air kissing the bitumen with our knees, double yellow lines a mere scribble to be ignored. Oh, the lawlessness of it!

We stop at the lights and chat with a waiting pedestrian, who lovingly pats our steed as tho' it's a horse. "Oh yes," I say, "My Ken's a good boy to his old Mum...takes me out for a ride every Sunday." Then we're off again! By now, the weekend breakfast/coffee crowd is milling around the beach fronts. At up-market Avalon, they smile as we go by, but by the time we get to DeeWhy, they are waving back to us; perfect strangers are giving us answering yells of "Happy Mothers' Day". And Lillie's eyes behind her helmet are bigger and bluer than ever!

What a day to remember...best Mothers' Day I ever had. Thank you, Lissa!

Dorothy Cox

An OWN member? Surely not!

Dear OWN

I am sending you a cutting from The Advertiser of 26 June 2002. I believe the woman mentioned has some involvement with OWN. I thought you may be interested in hearing about her unfortunate behaviour.

Sincere wishes from Rainer Doran (A well-wisher)

The Advertiser

PARRAMATTA COURT – 16 JUNE 2002

Reporter – Jennifer Glossip

Mrs Mollie Smith, an elderly pensioner, appeared before the Parramatta Court today, charged with hooliganism. It seemed after the soccer match with Brazil resulting in England's loss, Mollie Smith became totally out of control.

A close neighbour reported seeing her running along Arcadian Circuit, Carlingford, shouting, "We wuz robbed! Beckham for ever! Land of Hope and Glory!" She was at the same time throwing fire-crackers, kicking cars and abusing people who were trying to calm her down. A witness said later that "it was hard to believe that a

neighbour and a grandmother could use such dreadful language". It was so out of character that the witness felt Mollie must have been watching too much television, or had discovered the wrong sites on the Internet, which had influenced and corrupted her.

Smith was finally apprehended attempting to overturn a car, a late model BMW. The distressed owner, who was celebrating Brazil's win, called the police, who at the time seemed to be possessed with superhuman strength and needed three police officers to subdue her. She was taken to Parramatta Police Station, sedated and charged. Smith had no previous criminal record.

It was hard to believe that the demure little old lady in the dock was the same woman who had run amok in Carlingford. Because of her unblemished record, the magistrate let her off with a caution and an order to compensate the owner of the BMW for any damage done to the vehicle. Smith then shouted, "I'll never pay a Brazilian supporter anything!" She then seized and threw the bible used in the Court at the magistrate. Luckily it missed.

Pandemonium broke out. Smith was rearrested for attempted grievous bodily harm, and is now pending trial awaiting a psychiatric report.

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.

Coffee and a Chat

Share your passions and discoveries about the words that have made a difference in your life. We will be exploring the issues, topics and opinions that have touched us in poetry, essays and sayings.

We will meet at **10.30, Saturday, 17 August at 75 Windmill Street** where we can enjoy a sunny break in the courtyard or a cosy corner in the meeting room.

Exhibition

Margo Lewers Restrospective from 27 July to 15 September at the S H Ervin Gallery
Watson Rd, Observatory Hill.

Things

An exhibition of THINGS by Jan Blake at the Side-On Gallery
125 Parramatta Road, Annandale
29 August - 7 September

Computer Support

Rosemary Smith can analyse, instal, upgrade, train, troubleshoot, tweak and more... for a very reasonable hourly rate at your place. PC compatible computers only. Contact her on 9518 8322 or www.smallbics.com.au.

More Computer Support

Specially designed computer support for older people: setting up, tuition, upgrades and repairs, email and phone support and more. PC compatible computers only. Neil Watkinson 9958 0104 or neil@wwtech.com.au.

Diabetes:

The Hidden Disease

Come along to an interesting, informative day on awareness and prevention of diabetes.

Your questions will be answered and you can have your finger pricked to check blood glucose index.

There will be photos, charts etc., to explain the condition of diabetes.

10 am Wednesday 7 August

87 Lower Fort Street

Guest Speaker

Charmaine de Blieck, Diabetes Nurse Consultant, Prince of Wales Hospital Diabetes Unit.

Bring food to share and stay on for lunch and a chat.

If possible, please RSVP by Monday 5 August on 9247 7046 or just turn up.

Computer Manuals

An Australian owned company, PC Simplicity, publishes easy to follow manuals for the most popular computer programs.

The manuals are written in a simple, easy to read, step by step format that especially appeals to older people and first time users.

Older people can purchase manuals (seconds, slight cover damage only) at \$7.70 each – the normal retail price is \$14.95.

For more information visit their website www.pcsimplicity.com.au or phone (03) 9754 6959.

NOTICES

Join us for another Fish Lunch

Our August Fish Lunch is at the RSL Club at Cronulla on Friday 16 August. It's close to the station, so we hope members from other groups will join us for a happy get-together over a feed of fish and chips.

When you get off the train, walk through the park opposite the station to the RSL Club at 38 Gerrale Street. We will meet in the Bistro.

If we can tell them how many will be coming, the Bistro has agreed to set up a special table for us, so please RSVP to the office 9247 7046 by Wednesday 14 August.

Trains leave from Town Hall Station at 10.28 or 10.59 and from Central at 10.31 or 11.01.

Beryl Winter

Jessie Street Library Lunch Hour Talk

At the next Jessie Street National Women's Library Lunch Hour Talk, guest speaker, Jennifer Sanders, Deputy Director of the Powerhouse Museum, will talk about ***The Clothing Collection***. **Thursday 15 August 2002 from 12 noon to 1.30 pm.**

Lady Mayoress' Rooms, 2nd floor, Town Hall, George Street. \$15 non-members and \$13 members. A sandwich lunch is included.

To book, contact Shirley on (02) 9876 3927 or the Library (02) 9265 9486 or email .aushirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

Sutherland Wellness Centre

Activities include:

Tai chi
Gentle Exercise
International Dancing
Feldenkrais

Discussion topics in August

Aug 7 Vianney and Our Psyche
Aug 14 Barbara Lorback and Legal Issues
Aug 21 Immigration Issues with Ann Lang
Aug 28 Noreen and Eunice help us write poetry

For further information phone 9523 9158 or 9526 5746

Northside Wellness Centre

Activities include:

Yoga at Crows Nest
Feldenkrais at Crows Nest and Lindfield
Qi Gong at Turramurra

Discussion topics at Chatswood in August

Aug 7 Coping with Depression
Aug 14 Strength Training
Aug 21 Community Safety
Aug 28 Naturopathic Nutrition Information

For further information phone 9247 7046



New Subscriptions to OWN Matters

Individual subscription is \$20 per year – organisational rate on application

OWN Matters is also available on audio tape.

Name _____ Organisation _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

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Older Women's Network NSW Inc.**

**Print Post Approved
No. PP239 337**

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