



OWN MATTERS

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

No. 24 November 2003

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Are we or aren't we?

We are often asked at OWN if the Older Women's Network is a 'feminist' organisation. It's an interesting question and is usually answered with something like, "Well, there are lots of us here, but no, it's not officially a feminist organisation."

I'm intrigued about the reasons why we don't identify OWN as feminist. What would it mean if we did? Would we, as members, feel that we had to think and behave in the same way? Would we be worried that we would be seen as a bunch of angry women trying to put women in positions of power by grabbing power from men? Would people think that we were lesbians?

Looking back, one thing that feminists had in the 1970s was a common cause. Of course we disagreed and split off into various factions – liberal, socialist and radical – and we didn't all march for abortion rights and we didn't all campaign for equal pay and better childcare. Yet enough of us were able to unite for it to be possible to talk about achieving feminist victories, for example, legislation against sex discrimination, and for domestic violence and child sexual abuse to be taken seriously.

As the feminist movement lost momentum in the late seventies and eighties, so too did most women's support networks.

Going against the grain, the Older Women's Network emerged in the mid-eighties to celebrate older women's courage, inventiveness and tenacity and to challenge traditional social attitudes and prejudices towards older women. Which it has been doing ever since in one form or another!

The only reason feminism, in its various manifestations, achieved what it did is because women have been willing to put their shared interests first.

So what shared interests do OWN members have? I think we care about and challenge injustice; take each other's opinions seriously; value our female friendships and accept our different life experiences – which all looks suspiciously like a form of feminism in action to me.

What do *you* think?

Dorothy Cora

OWN Matters

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Who Are We?

OWN NSW is the peak body for nineteen OWN groups in NSW.

OWN promotes the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women through a range of activities and resources, and advocates on issues of concern to older women.

Contributions

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

They can be sent by mail or email marked 'Attention – Editorial Team.' Please include contact details. Contributions must be received by the second Monday of each month.

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Point of View

A Capital Weekend

I was up at crack of dawn last Sunday and on the 7am XPT to Canberra, lucky enough to be able to change seats with an obliging passenger and sit next to Joy Ross, both of us bound for the OWN Australia Conference. This comfortable first class travel on the XPT to Canberra is destined for the chop, we are told. Why? Because it is occupied largely by pensioners with their four free passes each year! And we can't have that, can we? Pensioners going first class? What will they want next?

It was a good weekend meeting old friends from other states. Our hosts from Canberra had worked hard and made us all welcome, providing accommodation at Burgmann College, seeing we were all well looked after and taking us on a sightseeing trip to Floriade and the Art Gallery after the Conference.

I do not know why the Conference had to be opened officially by the Hon. Jackie Kelly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, representing the Hon. Amanda Vanstone. I thought we were independent of Party politics?

However, the other speakers were very interesting, especially Dr Lenore Coulthardt who spoke about social capital, civil society and the contributions women make, and Dr Helen Wiles who spoke at a lively workshop on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Lenore, well-known author, historian and academic, had us enthralled. She said that the Older Women's Network has emerged as an organisation unique in Australia and that its members are directly in line with the great women of the past who fought courageously for justice and challenged the dominant patriarchal paradigm that has condemned women to an inferior role for centuries. Her brief history of OWN and her admiration for our achievements, especially the development of the Theatre Group with its powerful messages, and our quietly growing strength, was very gratifying. It made me proud to belong to this long line of strong, fine women.

Helen Wiles talked about the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and its imminent demise if it falls victim to Australia's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the USA, which will be concluded in November. This issue was of great concern to the Conference and is now included in the OWN A revised Policies Statement. While this is all very well, who gets to know about it before November, when the negotiations conclude? I was very disappointed that the Conference didn't send a sharp letter to Minister Vaile asking him for reassurance that he will completely rule out trading away our pharmaceutical price referencing and government subsidies during the USA FTA negotiations.

At next year's Conference in Sydney, we will try to match the wonderful hospitality shown to us by the Canberra women.

Muriel Hortin

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

Another month has slipped by and here we are rushing headlong to Christmas! Have you started buying cards and presents? Some people hate the card-sending process but some of us look forward to it with great pleasure – it's a wonderful way of keeping in touch with old friends and catching up on news.

October has been a usual busy time for members of the Management Team. Each of us is involved with, and attends, various activities which OWN groups offer and which are separate from our roles on the NSW Management Team. Sometimes it's hard to tell what hat we are wearing. Four members of the Team travel between one and a half and three hours to attend meetings. Members of OWN represent OWN NSW on such committees as the Save Medicare Alliance, the Photo ID Alliance and the Aged Care Alliance

A number of us attended a function in the Seymour Centre held by the Department of Ageing and Home Care to celebrate International Day of the Older Person. Following a 75 year-old Brazilian man's soft-shoe shuffle, a speech by Carmel Tebbutt, Minister for Ageing, and some comments by Lorrae Desmond, we moved to the foyer for morning tea, which was a great opportunity for networking.

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) Seniors Week Reference Group has reconvened and is preparing for Seniors Week 2004. Grant applications must be completed by 21 November.

Our mature age TAFE student, Carol Barr, has commenced her placement surveying activities of OWN groups. Please give her your utmost cooperation if she comes to you for interviews or contacts you for information.

The Aboriginal Support Circle's book, *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up*, is now a reality. This has been more than two years of hard work and they are to be congratulated on this fine publication skilfully designed by Jacqueline Schofer. An invitation to attend the launch is on page 5.

The Theatre Group will be reporting on their latest trip around Southern New South Wales, in collaboration with the Department for Women, once they have had a chance to draw breath. These "Women on Wheels" trips, which last for a fortnight, are real marathons for our Theatre Group members, as they usually perform twice per day as well as travelling to the next venue. They are wonderful ambassadors for OWN.

To our delight, we have been approached by a community worker in Blacktown to help set up an OWN group in the area. This is wonderful news – the word must be getting around!

Cate Turner, Lucy Porter, Anne Warren and Peg Warren

Have you ever used

Home and Community Care services?

Representatives from the NSW Audit Office would like to talk to OWN members about the efficiency and effectiveness of HACC services. Please join a discussion at 10.30am, Tuesday 18 November at 87 Lower Fort Street. RSVP 9247 7046.

A great opportunity

Members coming to '87' on a Thursday or Friday until Christmas will see a new face. Let me introduce myself. My name's Carol Barr and I'm here on a student placement. I'm studying Community Welfare part-time at St George TAFE and this year's study requires that I work 120 hours in an agency. OWN happily agreed to take me on with Dorothy Cora as my supervisor.

My aim is to find out what kinds of activities are offered in NSW groups and why they are of interest (or otherwise) to members. My plan is write up a questionnaire and send copies to OWN groups asking individual members to fill it out. I will then evaluate the responses.

I decided to study community services because I'm a public housing tenant and very involved with my community. I am chair of my local Tenant Association and also of the St George Area Tenant Council. One of the rewarding parts of my role is advocating on behalf of residents. I have written to Council and our Federal and State Members of Parliament on a few issues and have achieved some very positive results.

In the four weeks that I've been here, I've learned about what OWN does and tried to meet and talk to various members who are working here to get an idea of why OWN is important in their lives. I am enjoying the friendly chit-chat that goes on even when they are loudly complaining about being overworked! I am amazed at the amount of knowledge and experience that the volunteers bring to their roles, and the respect they show to each other in acknowledging each other's skills.

My time here looks like it will be very rewarding!

Carol Barr

Theatre Group Report

Well, the WOW tour is over and what a triumph it was! Ten of us went on tour, including two 'newies', whom we worried might not want to be part of the group after such a demanding effort. We need not have worried. It was a gruelling timetable and a tremendous effort, but after the amazing reception we had wherever we performed, we all felt fabulous.

Preparations for the WOW 2003 tour were exhausting. We had rehearsed two days a week for two months, put together a massive amount of information about OWN, and filled around 200 paper carry bags with information on violence and abuse, from the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women to take with us. Just as well we had a trailer attached to our 27-seater bus! Tina and Danni, two workers from the Department for Women who travelled with us on the tour, were most unpopular when they told us we were leaving Millers Point at 7am on the Sunday! What did we do to deserve that?

We had all worked so hard to learn new songs (and we know that we had driven our director, Louise Anike, to distraction – sorry Louise, we really love you), but the effort paid off. We were clapped and cheered back on stage for encores nearly everywhere we went. Thanks to everyone who wished us well on our tour – we really tried our best to hold the flag high for the Older Women's Network!

As we've just arrived home, and the newsletter is due out any day, I don't have time to write any more now. We'll tell you all about it next issue.

On 18 September, we performed before an audience of carers at the War Memorial Hospital at Waverley. Katrina Beaumont, who organised the show, was so keen to have us there that she had to change the date three times in order for us to be available. We used our brand new sound system and gave them a whiz of a show – really blew their socks off! We received a letter from them later on and I quote, "Music and humour is such a great way of raising awareness of issues faced by older women. Judging from the audience's reaction they definitely enjoyed the humour and I'm sure the messages gave them food for thought." Wasn't that a nice thing to do?

Josie Jackson

Stout Hearted Women

In September, Joy Ross was invited by two workers, Jan and Sarah, from Dolores Women's Refuge at South Coogee, to meet with a group of women who have formed themselves into a support group. Joy invited me to accompany her.

Well, what we found was a group of strong women who are meeting each week to talk about their problems and how to overcome some of the things that have happened to them. Some of the women have suffered domestic violence, including mental abuse.

Joy explained what the Older Women's Network was about and the women showed a great deal of interest. We all talked about what had happened in our lives and, would you believe, we finished up having a good laugh.

Most of the women agreed that, without a sense of humour, most of us would find it difficult to have been able to overcome some of the things that happened to us over the years. This was a group of truly "stout hearted women".

Josie Jackson

Favourite Interview!

Dear Josie and Louise – Thank you again for appearing on *Enough Rope* this year. Your contribution was one of those that really made a difference for us, one that helped the program to fulfil its potential. I now have some excellent news to pass on.

We've decided to put together a book of our favourite interviews, and yours has been chosen for inclusion.

The book will feature about 20 interviews, and will be in the stores in December. We hope you like it, and we'll be sure to mail you a copy as soon as the box arrives.

Andrew Denton

Vale Lola Ryan

(1925 - 2003)

Greatly respected and much loved Aboriginal elder, Lola Ryan, was sadly farewelled by a large gathering of her family and friends at a very moving service, held at St. Andrews Church Malabar on Friday 10 October. With the haunting sounds of a didgeridoo leading the way, Lola's family entered the church where her favourite songs and hymns were played.

Lola's kindness and generosity were extended to all. She was a well known and admired visitor to schools, hospitals and jails. Her infectious chuckle and down-to-earth approach was greatly appreciated by everyone she associated with. Lola was also a very creative shellwork artist who held several major exhibitions.

Lola's story, which will be published in our book *Steppin' Up and Speakin' Out*, provides a wonderful overview of the life of an outstanding woman.

Lucy Porter

OWN Australia Conference

Four NSW groups, Wagga Wagga, Illawarra, Sydney and Newcastle, were represented at the September OWN Australia conference in Canberra.

On the first day Ngunnawal elder, Matilda House, welcomed us to Aboriginal Country. The Hon. Jackie Kelly, MP, who officially opened the conference, spoke about the mentoring role of older women. Dr Elizabeth MacKinlay talked about 'Living in an ageing society and ageing well,' and Dr Leone Coalhart stole the show (for me) with a talk about why we shouldn't celebrate the anniversary of women voting in Australia. There have been some big steps forward, she said, but our democracy doesn't work very well – it doesn't include sex, race and the poor. What is needed, she said, is to do more of what OWN does, to participate and lobby for reforms locally and in the UN, and to challenge ourselves to be

honest, principled women as pathmakers.

A panel of older women from Aboriginal, Italian, Filipino and Vietnamese backgrounds related how they were so busy just surviving that they have very little time to participate in the wider community. They often feel shut off and isolated. Matilda House spoke of the older Indigenous women's supervisory role in their extended families – older women are the backbone of their communities and were always there at the end of the day. However many do not have networks, and need encouragement and support.

Several workshops were held. In one of the workshops, we looked at the resolutions put forward by the constitutional sub-committee and all, when put to delegates, were accepted. These included the role of State peak bodies, however, the

clause, "To elect two delegates with voting right", was defeated. Among them was a discussion on the role of OWN State peak bodies. The resolution, "That State peak bodies (of which OWN NSW is one) have a right to elect two delegates with voting rights", was defeated.

National councillors elected were: Barbara Silverstone and Julia Biles (ACT), Cate Turner (NSW), Moira McGuinness (Queensland), Margaret Jones (WA) and Nornie Bean (Victoria).

Joy Ross

Art... and more

Stop worrying about the sorry state of the nation and cheer yourself up with some personal creativity by enrolling in our continuing art classes in December.

The workshops which we ran with the help of a government grant have now concluded, but so happy were we with all our new skills in printmaking, design and painting and the things we produced in the way of printed shopping bags, cards and bookmarks, that we have engaged our artist, Jane Caveney, for a further three weeks in December – 3rd, 8th and 15th. We will learn sketching, drawing, painting and any other skills that appeal to us. With Jane on hand to instruct and encourage, we are sure you will find the classes great fun and very rewarding.

Muriel Hortin

You are invited...

At last the big day has arrived! Our book, *Steppin' Up and Speakin' Out*, is now a reality and will be launched by Linda Burney MP in the Stranger's Lounge at Parliament House, Sydney, on Friday 21 November 2003 at 9.30 am.

Steppin' Up and Speakin' Out consists of life stories of Aboriginal women and community workers compiled from oral histories recorded by members of the Older Women's Network Aboriginal Support Circle over a period of two and a half years.

Courage, fortitude, grief, sadness, humour and pain are interwoven in these true stories. These remarkable, but mostly unknown women, are survivors who have surmounted great odds in the struggle for recognition of Aboriginal rights and a better life for people in their communities.

The books are \$15, plus \$2 postage, with a special price of \$13.00 at the launch.

OWN members are invited to the book launch, so please phone 9247 7046 before Friday 14 November if you'd like to come.

Lucy Porter

Unearthed: a copperplate clue to staying young

Why some elderly people retain their mental sharpness as others lose their edge, or slide into senility, is a mystery scientists are keen to unravel.

But they have always lacked reliable data to measure how smart elderly people were in their youth. The clever 80-year-olds might always have been clever, or perhaps not. To know why people's faculties differed as they aged, it was essential to understand the way they were.

That is why Professor Ian Deary's discovery seven years ago has resonated around the world. The University of Edinburgh psychologist, visiting Australia for an international conference on ageing, unearthed a batch of tests taken in 1932 by every 11-year-old in Scotland. The test papers, written in copperplate and tied up with string, had been forgotten for 60 years before Professor Deary came along. Those tested were tracked down and asked to attend a mass re-sit.

On June 1, 1998, in Aberdeen, they sat looking at the same questions 66 years on. Since then 600 people in their late 70s and 80s have sat for the same test of cognitive abilities and verbal reasoning they sweated over aged eleven.

And the results? The elderly test candidates scored quite a bit better than they did at age 11. And the people who scored well at 11 in general were the high scorers at age 80, while the modest scorers

remained so. How well people scored at 11 was a good predictor of how well they scored at 80.

But it was not the whole story. For 50 per cent of the candidates, their ranking was about the same as the first time they took the test. Professor Deary, however, is fascinated by the 50 per cent whose relative ranking had changed.

"The message is that there are factors that are changing people's relative ability across time," he said. "And finding them can give clues to healthy ageing."

At the moment those factors, which determine changes in thinking skills as people age, are still a mystery. But the research revealed that people who were still smoking in old age did slightly less well on the cognitive tests at 80 than the non-smokers. Those who scored lowest in the tests at age 11 had a slightly elevated chance of dementia later but the effect was small, he said.

The brown paper packages tied up with string have been the basis of the longest follow-up study of mental ability differences in scientific literature. And the data has been linked to other studies of health and mortality.

Professor Deary said: "It's been a privilege working with these healthy and dynamic people."

Adele Horin

Reprinted from SMH 29.9.03

Did they get a research grant for *this*?

Accodrning to a rscheearch at an Elingsh uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the only iprmoetnt tihng is taht frist and lsat ltteer is at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a toatl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae we do not raed ervey lteter by it slef but the wrod as a wlohe.

ceehiro

Partner Allowance

Did you know that from 20 September 2003 the Partner Allowance has been abolished for anyone making a new claim?

Previously, when the older partner reached retirement age the younger partner would be put on the Partner Allowance, provided that the younger partner was born before 1954. Now you have to wait until the younger person reaches 65 before claiming a couple pension.

The new system means the younger partner has to go on unemployment benefits and be subject to the full work activity test. If you go away for a week's holiday together, then that person is not available for work and will be breached. Don't take my word for it – check with Centrelink.

It is not uncommon for a woman to be in her fifties by the time the last child has left home, and in the real world her chances of obtaining employment are somewhere between Buckley's and zero, as the unemployment statistics for women over fifty clearly show. A couple has a choice of subjecting the female partner to the humiliation of applying for jobs and being rejected eight times a fortnight, as required by Centrelink (with all the psychological pressure that this involves), or trying to survive on one income until the younger partner reaches pension age.

Centrelink staff are unsure of the ramifications of the changes and the politicians, from the comfort of their well padded super, raised themselves to a frenzy of indifference and total ignorance of what they have voted for. If you decided to investigate this issue, you will have to wade through a maze of bureau-speak. For clarity, call me on 08 95746865.

John Harold

Women in Black – Striving for Peace

The Women in Black Conference at Massa on the Italian coast, near Pisa, was a very impressive and intense experience. It's impossible to summarise what went on or to capture the atmosphere... It was so amazing to see how the ideas of Women in Black, which began with the actions of Israeli women in 1988, have spread across so many countries.

Over 400 women from many countries attended including Israel, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Turkey, Uganda, South Africa, Japan, Colombia. Many European countries, and North America also attended. There was a strong representation of women from all countries of the former Yugoslavia, who now refer to themselves as Balkans women. Collectively they'd hired a coach which started in Macedonia, travelling through Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia to bring them to Italy. There were also women from many Italian groups, working hard to make the conference work smoothly for everyone. A group of interpreters from Italy provided their services for free.

What did we have in common? Besides opposition to war, militarism and militarisation there is also opposition to nationalism, and the vigils for peace. And practices have developed of women, even in war torn areas, making connections across national and ethnic divisions – as Women in Black did in Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo and in Bosnia through the 1990s – and of women from more

privileged places going to 'difficult' places – Israeli women standing at check points in Palestine; Italian women going into conflict areas during the wars in former Yugoslavia and so on. We are all striving to think and act for future possibilities – to dare to make peace.

I heard women from many places of conflict talk about their experiences. Of these, the most poignant were from women from the Congo who had borrowed money to get to the conference. Their situation is totally desperate – war, disruption of life, kidnapping of women as well as children. A majority of women have been raped and horribly abused and have experienced generalised trauma. There are no resources to respond and there was a sense that no one anywhere else in the world knows or cares about what is happening.

On the Saturday afternoon, we held demonstrations at a US base nearby and in the Town Square in Viareggio.

There was a strong and evident lesbian presence at the conference which 'came out' in the closing session with a fine chant, a sort of lesbian equivalent of 'make love not war' and very much led by women from the Balkans.

Meg Coulson

Gender and heart failure

Although men get cardiovascular disease earlier and more often than women, the number of heart failure deaths in Australia is 1.7 times higher in women than men.

In an article by Lucy Beaumont in *The Age* (Saturday 20/9/03, p 10), a 10 year longitudinal study of 5700 women from Chicago's Bush University was reported as showing that the least fit were three times more likely to die from heart disease. It seems from this study, that fitness is a stronger factor in cardiovascular disease deaths than smoking, cholesterol levels or hypertension. And moreover, it seems that exercise capacity may be more important for women than previously thought, according to Baker Heart researcher, Bronwyn Kingwell.

June West

A sign of growing awareness and change

An appeals court in Katsina, Nigeria, has freed a 31 year old Nigerian mother sentenced to death by stoning for adultery. The panel of five appeal judges, although split, recognised the inherent 'wrongness' of the original sentence and freed her unconditionally.

Amina Lawal, a Muslim, was convicted and sentenced in March 2002 after giving birth to a baby girl more than nine months after divorcing. Under the strict Shariah law, which is based on the teachings in the Quran and practised in 12 of Nigeria's 36 states, pregnancy outside marriage constitutes sufficient evidence for a woman to be convicted of adultery.

People throughout the world were outraged at the sentence that Amina should be buried up to her neck and then have stones thrown at her head until she died.

Amnesty International, in particular, and women's and social justice groups throughout the world, campaigned vigorously for her rights using internet petitions and direct representation to the Nigerian Government. Their arguments were based on the fact that punishment by death for crimes such as adultery; and cruel inhuman and degrading punishments such as flogging and amputation are in breach of international human rights, which have been signed by the Nigerian Government.

Carolyn Hastie

Letters to the Editor

Next stop gaol?

I'm having my house painted at the moment and because the fumes are a health hazard, I've moved into a local hotel – at great stress to myself, I must say.

I have to eat gluten-free bread and, so it's edible, I make it into toast. Consequently I take my bread and toaster wherever I go. On the first morning in the hotel I was making my toast when suddenly an alarm began to scream. With horror, I realised that the sound was coming from above the toaster. I rang reception and asked why the alarm was ringing in my room. When they came up and saw the cooked toast they were horrified, but also pleased that they could cancel the mass evacuation of the hotel.

Apparently only the Fire Brigade can stop fire alarms, so for ten minutes, with my head bowed low in shame and wondering what my punishment would be, I had to wait under the screaming alarm. One fireman kindly told me (a poor little old lady needing advice), "Did you know that you can get the best breakfast in Sydney downstairs in the dining room?" With embarrassment, I told him I had a medical problem.

Yetty Windt

Unruly interjections

I thought OWN members might be interested in a paper that I have written, which engages with a feminist politics of women's later-life realities (60 years plus).

In it I argue that we grow old under constraints of sexism embedded in ageism, enveloped in a social climate flooded with malestream rulings such as sex-role fixations for 'normal' femininity. An amalgam of

gerontology, the medical model, professionalism, social experts and aged-care service providers determine our 'needs' and produce inequalities of power. We are dehumanised as a 'disability group,' a 'disease,' and a 'social problem,' despite our realities.

Most of us go it alone, struggling with shrinking options for recognition and meaning as social beings. Where is our social world? I contend that placing centre stage our passion for women in later-life, challenges family 'norms' and our 'granny' status in the wings.

I write as an old lesbian-feminist to stir up hope and personal/political discussion as we experience and understand later-life.

My full paper is available free in hard copy by telephone (02) 9692 0103.

Lyn Ariel

Activism on many fronts

Re the Hearing Article in October *Own Matters*. Yes, I have been hard of hearing for over forty years, and the terrible trouble it incurs – I have been abused and discriminated against time after time.

Sadly I have had a bad turn and have been practically bedridden since 1 September. I also have macular degeneration, loss of sight.

You may be interested to know that I am against Medicare and, hopefully, very shortly I will be sending OWN a letter about why!

I am currently going through my filing cabinet, which contains 32 years of women's history, to give to

Allissa Malden who is writing my life history.

I am very interested in health issues and wondered if anyone would like to have my copies of *Informed Choice – Your rights, Your options, Your health*. It is a wonderful magazine.

Own Matters is a wonderful newsletter.

Josephine Conway

If you would like to take up Josephine's offer of *Informed Choice*, contact the office and we'll put you in touch (Eds).

Age is not a burden

You know how older people are always being told that we are the biggest consumers of the health care dollar and that we will be a BIG burden in the future?

Well, a report in the *Weekend Australian* of 4-5 October, by Misha Schubert, revealed that new research shows that only one-fifth of the huge jump in health costs, expected over the next decade, will come from a growing band of sick, older people.

The research team predicted that public hospital costs would grow by 53% over the decade to July 2010, with three-quarters of the future price hikes *coming from the cost of new high-technology treatment*.

"While population ageing is often regarded by the public as the main culprit in rising health costs, this analysis suggested it would play a relatively minor role in the overall 'rising future costs' equation," the researchers said.

So, we can all hold our heads up high and say, "So, there!"

Lucy Porter

Letters to the Editor

Renewal...

A number of OWN members and other older women who are public tenants meet regularly in South Sydney to discuss local issues.

We are currently watching with interest the various plans that the NSW Department of Housing has for 'estate renewal'. One plan involves having a greater 'social mix' (public tenants and private owners) in housing estates.

The NSW Government recently announced the redevelopment of two or three estates in metropolitan Sydney, with 25-30% to be set aside for public housing and the rest sold to the private sector (*Daily Telegraph 15.9.03*). We hope that public housing tenants are going to be consulted.

I wonder if any of these plans will go any way towards housing the 91,000 on the public housing waiting list!

Joy Ross

It's happening

The following is part of a letter from a very dear friend, talking about the death of her son-in-law.

"...it was a very sad time, we were there for his funeral, in fact Joe and Joseph helped make his coffin and I lacquered it with two coats of Estapol. It was indeed a very unusual funeral. Kathy picked lots of wattle, wild flowers and gum leaves to put on the coffin and composed a most beautiful song, which she sang herself, with her guitar."

Barbara Malcolm

Supporting women

For serious stories on Revolutionary Association of Afghanistan Women (RAWA),

read *Veiled Courage* by Cheryl Benard 2002 and *Zoya's Story* as told to John Follain and Rita Cristofari 2002.

I wonder if any OWN women might consider transferring their 'Christmas money' to donations for Medecins Sans Frontieres, whose courageous work eases the critical suffering of women and children in all areas of horrific poverty and man-made wars. MSF telephone 1300 136061 or www.msf.org.au

Lyn Ariel

State funeral

Not being a fan of Country and Western music, and not really enjoying or appreciating the music performed and written by the late Slim Dusty, I was quite amazed that he had been given a State funeral on 26 September. I didn't know what he had done to deserve it.

We had a family get together that evening. Present were my eldest son, his two thirty-year old sons, my younger son and his two teenage sons.

I asked each one in turn if they thought Slim's death warranted a State funeral. The adults said fervently that they thought it did, and that he had done a great service to promote Australia's culture.

I asked Robert, the seventeen-year old what he thought. He said, "Who's Slim Dusty?" I didn't ask his thirteen-year old brother. I felt I knew what he would say.

Today I heard that the Government is considering putting Slim Dusty's image on the new fifty cent pieces.

This is ridiculous!

Renee Simons

Appendicks?

I was watching *Enough Rope* the other night and Andrew Denton was interviewing Toni Collette. She giggled all the way through the interview, and at one stage, when talking about her childhood, she recalled her mother having her "appendicks" out when she was eleven, and said that she had expected she would have to have *them* (!!!) out too when she reached eleven.

She obviously wasn't aware that it's spelt "appendix," and that we only have one. Andrew was polite enough not to correct her, though I'm sure he must have been jolted by it. I wonder how many "appendicks" Toni Collette thinks we have? Maybe thirty-two, like teeth? (Is the singular "appendick"?)

She also said "y'know" a thousand times during the interview. But so does everyone these days. Andrew was interviewing Anthony Mundine some weeks ago – I swear Mundine said "y'know" at least six times in one sentence. It's become an obsession with me. I notice that practically every celebrity (and non-celebrity) does it – and we don't notice it most of the time. Worst of all, I've discovered that I say it too...

It's almost as bad as "basically", I think. That's been the 'in' word for a long time.

Renee Simons

Being older means that you become more reflective...

You start pondering the 'big' questions.

What is life? Why am I here? How much Healthy Choice Ice Cream can I eat before it's no longer a healthy choice?

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney

Six members of OWN Sydney attended the National Conference in Canberra and, as we've come to expect, it was an interesting agenda with guest speakers, reports, workshops and elections.

Carol Barr, a student on placement with OWN NSW, sat in on our last Working Group meeting and said she found it very informative.

The lunch at the Hero of Waterloo Hotel was enjoyed by the twelve women who dined before visiting the cellar of this old hotel, where once a passageway led down to the water's edge. The occasion was so successful, another lunch will be arranged.

On a more serious note, the older Women's Right to Safety at Home Committee appreciates OWN NSW lodging a funding application with the Department of Women, for a project to map services available to older women in NSW who experience or who are escaping from domestic violence. Anyone interested in becoming a member of this committee, please contact Joy Ross on 9251 9333.

As a result of the Andrew Denton show, the Delores Single Women's Refuge asked us to come and talk about OWN. After hearing Josie Jackson speak, the women became very moved and shared their stories of violence and abuse. You can read more about the meeting in Josie's report, *Stout Hearted Women* (see page 4). We have copies available in the office of a recent report, *Adolescents' Violence Against Parents*, by Natasha Bobic.

Members of the newly formed Film Discussion Group met for the first time to compare their opinions about the films *Japanese Story* and *American Splendour*. They found it stimulating to exchange different points of view and analyse the effects the films had on them. *Perfect Strangers* and *Calendar Girls* have been chosen for their next discussion in November – please see Notices page 19.

With only a few weeks to December, we are planning our Summer Solstice end-of-year event for 19 December. As well as our usual festive lunch, we will have a mini-fair. If you have contributions – cakes, jewellery, bric-a-brac, etc. (no clothing, please), they will be gladly accepted. Screen printed calico bags are being produced by the Creative Ageing group, and the Working Group has suggested that they be available for sale as we try to cut down the use of those ubiquitous plastic bags.

At the quarterly meeting in November, we hope to have Tanya Plibersek, the Federal member for Sydney, as our guest speaker, so we hope many of our members will be present. The quarterly meeting is a good opportunity to catch up on the activities of OWN Sydney and to put forward suggestions or comments.

Thanks to the generosity of some of our members, plus our membership fees, our finances are in good shape. All financial contributions are much appreciated, as are the efforts of all our good-hearted volunteers for the valuable work they do.

Louise Anike and Joy Ross

Macarthur

Time flies when you're having fun!

Our trip organiser, Lee Walters, a new recruit to the Committee, has set an interesting and hectic pace with our monthly bus trips. We had trips to Minamurra Falls and Kiama, followed by a visit to Tulip Time in Bowral, taking in *A Little Piece of Scotland* at Sutton's Forest and flashing the plastic at Berrima en route home. October's trip was to Berry and a visit to the Treat Factory with members of Nowra OWN – it was so hard to be good!

In August, a guest speaker from Ambulatory Care at Campbelltown Hospital visited our group to discuss being 'heartwise'. She terrified us so much we all declared our best intentions to turn over a new leaf! Our September guest speaker, Lyn Smith, from the Guide Dogs Association, was accompanied by Barbara Bonfield and her dog, Ellie. This was an informative and entertaining session. Members collected a sizeable donation for the Association and we look forward to visiting their training centre next year.

Margaret Dunford, Nursing Unit Manager in the Medical Ward at Campbelltown Hospital was our October guest. She was presented with a cheque for \$500. This particular ward has been a pet project of Macarthur OWN since we began. Members of the Benevolent Society's Drumarama Group also join us for a BBQ in October.

We have enjoyed another visit from Frances Bodkin, who is a tour guide at Mt Annan Botanical Gardens. Her Dreamtime Stories are riveting. One story she told was about her childhood and how

At and Beyond the Rocks

she coped with separation from her family. Her stories encourage us all to look deep within ourselves.

We continue to have fun in-house, revisiting our youth playing a mad game called Lifesaver (ask me if you want to know the details!) and playing tunnel ball using a Jaffa. We do this in the courtyard in full view of people attending the Medi-Clinic – they are mesmerised by these older women behaving crazily and having so much fun!

Our November bus trip will be closer to home visiting the Heritage Centre at the Oaks and Wirrumbirra Sanctuary between Tahmoor and Bargo, about 80km south of Sydney. The Sanctuary is designed as an educational project for nature conservation and nature trails have been constructed throughout the property. A well-stocked nursery provides a good range of native species including many not readily available elsewhere.

We are pleased to see some past members rejoining our group, and we are also experiencing a surge of new members, which is been very pleasing. A big welcome to you all, and remember, *“If you’re a member of OWN, you’re never alone”*.

Helen Standing

Illawarra

In the last few months many of our members have been busy participating in some of the many opportunities provided in the Illawarra, for older people to enrich their lives. Joan Hilton, one of our long-standing members, was recently awarded third prize in the Health Cities Illawarra photo-graphic competition “The Time of our

Lives”. Competitors were asked to submit photographs of older citizens in our area enjoying life to the full. Joan’s award-winning photograph showed Illawarra OWN Silvert-OWNs in full sartorial splendour performing their hearts out. It was a great photograph and up against some very stiff competition. All photographs were on exhibition in Wollongong over the holiday weekend.

Our coordinator, Jacque Skinner, and member, Norah Alexander, have been taking part in local theatre group productions and rumour has it that Norah made a very fetching vestal virgin in a recent performance of *Hilarious Maximus* by the Black Diamond Players. Several of our members have been attending Weight Training for Over 60s, a course highly recommended to build strong bones and improve balance. It has been rather discouragingly referred to as “our weekly hour of torture” but we are beginning to see some results for our efforts.

On the social scene, our group recently enjoyed a ‘mystery tour’ of Bowral and Robertson in which lavender, tulips and cheese played an important part. Our outdoor lunch at the famous Robertson Pie Shop was enlivened by the fact that, in the teeth of a howling gale, tea emerged from the tea pot horizontally instead of vertically, which presented quite a challenge.

A cinema visit to the film *Calendar Girls* is on the program, although we are not yet seriously considering such a calendar as a way to boost group funds.

OWN Illawarra is keen to participate in training workshops, organised by OWN NSW, next year. We are also concerned to do our best to help maintain our Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

and have organised a letter-writing campaign accordingly.

At our last business meeting *OWN Matters* came under discussion and support for Josie Jackson’s stand with 2GB was very strong. It was also unanimously agreed that *OWN Matters* is a very interesting and informative publication and that the production team are to be heartily congratulated on their efforts.

Peggy Rodden

Parramatta

Three of us from Parramatta visited Newcastle mid-September to help celebrate their 10th anniversary. What a lovely day. We were entertained after lunch by our much loved Theatre Group. I was so glad they sang a couple of their older songs as well as some new ones. Congratulations to Newcastle OWN for providing such a stimulating day.

Visiting like this gives us great insight into OWN in general and the power of friendship in particular. Members from our group who attended were really interested in the varied activities, and now feel inspired to think creatively about our own program.

Speaking about creativity, local artist Elsie McEwen demonstrated painting a landscape at our September meeting. She kindly donated the painting as a raffle prize.

A group of us sailed on the Rivercat to Abbotsford for lunch at Sydney Rowing Club last month. We had a good old laugh and lots of chat – a great way to get to know each other better.

Mollie Smith

At and Beyond the Rocks

Southern Highlands

In September, our group held a Women's Health Forum, run in conjunction with Southwest Sydney Area Health and Breast Screen Greater Western Sydney. The Forum, attended by more than 70 women, was a great success, reflecting the work put into its organisation by the Planning Committee. There was a good blend of information, entertainment and socialising, which created a relaxed atmosphere for some very important health messages to be discussed.

First up, the Mammias and the Pappas led us through an informative session on the need for breast and cervical screening for older women. (Do you get it? Mammias and Pappas – Mammograms and Pap smears!) Next a local doctor spoke about the menopause and the misconceptions and issues involved. The Southern Highlands OWN Wenches then entertained with very funny songs focusing on health – sugar hidden in processed food, and a bracket of three about solving incontinence with pelvic floor exercises. This led right into a discussion on dealing with, or avoiding, continence problems – the humour of the Wenches' songs meant that a potentially embarrassing topic was addressed in a light-hearted but informative session. Exercise continued as a theme, with the audience participating in some gentle exercises that can be done at home, even in a chair, and that are essential to maintain muscle tone and avoid falls. Afternoon tea provided time for people to have a chat and to look at health material on tables set out around the room. The program finished with a panel discussion, where the audience was able to ask questions of any member of the team.

The day was such a success and was so warmly received by members that we are now looking into having a forum next year devoted to positive ageing.

So far the emphasis for our group has been on monthly meetings with a guest speaker. We have had some excellent speakers recently, including a local blind woman who spoke about coping with blindness for both the blind person and the carer. Her information was very good and her guide dog helped enormously to enhance people's understanding of a blind person's need for mobility.

Members also enjoyed an interesting talk given by a representative of Women Who Welcome Women Worldwide. By the end of her talk our members with itchy feet were ready to sign up with 5W and pack their bags.

Planning is now underway for our Christmas Get-together. We will be having an afternoon of song, dance and laughter with our OWN Wenches and, we hope, members of other OWN groups. To get into the party spirit we will start with a light luncheon of finger food then the entertainment will begin. If last year is any indication, we can anticipate a fun end to the year.

By the way, *OWN Matters* is a great magazine. Thanks a lot for it!

Robyn Smith

Wagga Wagga

"Negotiating" is the buzz word in Wagga at present and wellness activities are our goal. We have already achieved one goal – we are now in our eighth week of Gentle Exercises in Water at the recently completed Oasis Swimming Centre. Among the various pools

under cover, the hydro-therapy pool is the right place for the eight older women who are attending regularly. We have an excellent leader who has been teaching swimming for many years – she's a talented, patient, enthusiastic person and a great encourager.

In the grounds of Wagga Base Hospital is a building which is used for meetings. The Hospital Board has agreed to our meetings being held there on the first and third Tuesday mornings of each month. We are outgrowing the pleasant but small meeting room at the Women's Health Centre, where we have been since 1998. We are now negotiating for the use of The Schofield Centre for other Wellness activities including Gentle Exercises and Movement to Music.

On a recent Tuesday we held a special event – a talk and demonstration, by our member Dorothy Flint, on spinning and weaving. Dorothy (whom we skite about being 90 years old) has made very large and very beautiful woven pieces which have been shown in many art venues in Australia. In the past year or so Dorothy has developed her ability to sing and is a member of our seven strong Theatre Group.

Our Theatre Group is appreciated wherever we answer the call to perform. Our last presentation was to 18 women over 50 taking part in a program called *Wisemoves* (named after their discussion group on Self Image.) We're expecting some new OWN members from this group!

We are delighted that the Women on Wheels Tour, which includes the OWN NSW Theatre Group, is making some time for us on its lightning trip through Wagga Wagga.

Muriel Waddell

At and Beyond the Rocks

Shellharbour

We've had a very stimulating list of guest speakers who have provided valuable information in this second half of the year. They have included a consultant in alternative medicine who talked about common complaints and remedies, a solicitor who explained Enduring Guardianship, and a community development worker with our City Council who invited us to be part of an art project stemming from Women for a Safer Community committee meetings. We welcomed a speaker on Community Health who talked about Home Hazards and Falls Prevention, and at our last meeting a naturopath gave a talk on Naturopathy: a way of treating illness using proper food, exercise and massage to aid natural healing. She also talked about herbal remedies.

A very interesting discussion, which became quite heated, followed a talk by the Shellharbour Council's Coordinator of Community Transport. The Coordinator provided information on the various community transport services available. We discussed problems associated with both public and private transport. Of special concern was the lack of coordination between buses and trains, and the effects of this on the elderly.

Coming up this month we have a promotional session on Fun with Festive Treats, to get us in the Christmas mood. In November we'll have a speaker on *Dealing with Conflict*.

When we don't have a guest speaker we draw a topic out of our 'Topic Box' and each participant then has the opportunity to speak for five minutes on that topic. On our last 'free' day we discussed, "At

what age should senior drivers surrender their licences and what defines age?"

Our group has representation on the local Seniors Week Committee and on the Women for a Safer Community Committee. The latter is organising a special art exhibition, Creating Safe Space, which will be launched in Shellharbour on 25 November to coincide with International Day Against Violence Against Women. A variety of artwork – knitting, collage, painting, sculpture, poetry, computer generated, and even cake decorating – will be in the exhibition. The art works will be transferred to the Illawarra Women's Health Centre in time for International Women's week in March 2004. The Illawarra SilverTOWNs will be performing at the launch.

Our annual Christmas lunch will also be a celebration of our third birthday, which could be a good time for women who are thinking of joining to come and meet us – we have been very pleased to welcome three new members in the last couple of months. Christmas can be a lonely time for some, and our friendly group is a wonderful support.

Nan Pitt

Sutherland

OWN is a vital heartbeat in the Sutherland Shire. Go to a TAFE graduation and the OWN Theatre Group is there to open proceedings and I'm invited to introduce them. Go to a Forum on Suicide Prevention and they're part of that program so I'm invited to talk about OWN's activities. Attend a local Domestic Violence Steering Committee and there's talk of the Andrew Denton show and OWN's feisty images on it.

The Older Women's Network Wellness Centre at Sutherland grows almost beyond capacity. The Sutherland Trade Union Club's \$5000 and Shire Council's \$2100 donations helped us to continue our Wellness program over two days even after Area Health funding stopped. Venues have contracted slightly while attendances have increased.

An OWN-TAFE computer mentoring course (imagine an older woman sitting with you to help you practise instructions!) has been a first. Then, under Pat Donaghy's leadership, a series of supportive neighbourhood luncheons/discussions are held, where older women with a disability and/or who are socially isolated come together with our volunteers for an enjoyable food and talkfest.

Then there's the Sutherland OWN group of which Nan Unwin is coordinator. We have monthly meetings and monthly luncheons at Cronulla RSL. Our group is currently negotiating with a local Women's Health service, in which OWN members are among their volunteers, to co-host an IWD function in 2004.

Meantime, we hope to have an opportunity to discuss OWN's achievements in healthy ageing with the NSW Minister for Health, The Hon. Morrie Iemma, and to seek ongoing funding for Wellness at Sutherland. Our local MP, Barry Collier, has made representations on our behalf for a meeting with the Minister.

And hey, we're having fun! The OWN group is off on a Sydney Harbour luncheon cruise on November 21. Currently we have 32 members, but I'm sure there will be more before long.

Noreen Hewett

At and Beyond the Rocks

Nowra

Since our AGM in July, our new coordinators, Norma Bastock (who also kicks up her heels with the Theatre Group), and Jo Krelle (our past Secretary), are making a formidable team with Everald Garner, our Treasurer, who keeps a tight hold of the purse strings, and meticulous minute-taker Nell Sixsmith. Barbara Robertson, our past Coordinator, is currently travelling in Japan, a just reward for keeping us in order for some considerable time!

We have recently submitted two applications for funding to promote the formation of a Wellness Centre in the Shoalhaven, in partnership with Community Health, Women's Health and Shoalhaven City Council. We are all waiting with bated breath to hear of our success from the Area Assistance Scheme and the Department for Women.

At our meetings, after welcoming members, it is the coordinator's choice to read or recite a few words of joy or wisdom. Jo recently gave us this gem – it's an old Chinese saying: "Marry me and be happy for a day, kill a pig and be happy

for a week, plant a garden and be happy for a lifetime."

Over the last few months we have enjoyed a day at Norma's 'Country Estate' in Kangaroo Valley, where we held a gold-coin lunch and raised \$31 to support the Breast Cancer Research Network. A visit to Norma's place is a bit like being in Heaven – read Jo's account of the day above.

We have also attended the annual Women's Art Exhibition held at Meroogal House, the House of Women, in Nowra. The theme this year was Nature. We were thrilled to see so many exhibits – there were depictions of Meroogal House through the glory of its garden, in art, pottery, embroidery, patchwork, hook-rugs, tapestry, glass and woodwork. Many other media were there to delight us.

At one of our meetings, Isabel MacCallum, intrepid traveller recently returned from New Zealand and the Kingdom of Tonga, gave us her news and views of Maori and Tongan craft culture and cuisine, interspersed with escapades of daring and danger!

Along with these special events we discuss books, films, poetry and local issues. We wrote our Medicare protests individually and as a group to our Federal Member, Joanna Gash, and were surprised to receive a phone call saying she could not 'do' anything, but would personally come to talk to us! The Hon. M. Iemma, Minister for Health, wrote that he would pass on our information about doctors who bulk bill in the Shoalhaven to Senator Kay Patterson, who of course has now changed hats, so no reply has been forthcoming.

Two delegates from Nowra attended the OWN (Australia) Conference and enjoyed the interaction between the States and other groups, and the good work done on Constitutional Amendments and Policy updates. Floriade was beautiful, too.

Some of the jokes were a bit wild. From a Wagga Wagga delegate: "SARS is quite prevalent among older women". We looked with concern. "Severe Absence of Romance and Sex," she laughingly explained.

Anne Warren

A bit like being in heaven

It's early springtime –
A day of blue skies and light breezes unfolds
As our Nowra OWN convoy climbs the mountain road.
Up, around the tree fern lined curves and bends,
Into the picturesque, tourist-sought valley.
Then, after the turn off, a brief moment of uncertainty.
Lost? No! Press on!
Past the shaky suspension bridge, beyond the old hall
That has danced to a thousand tunes.
There it is! The last gate before the dirt.
Into lowest gear Nell goes so our tyres
Can ascend the steep dusty track
To our meeting place.
Norma's and Don's Retreat.
Gathering...

We welcomed our friend and guest Ceri from Thirroul,
Enjoyed cream-enriched scones for morning tea,
(and raised a donation to the Breast Cancer Appeal).
Then, armed with trusty walking sticks
We wandered up the hill
And down into the rain forest encased creek
Disturbing the quietly grazing cattle
As we chattered along.
Later, a meeting and delicious shared lunch.
Seated on the verandah gazing up
To magnificent, ancient, awesome mountain cliffs.
We marvelled at the beauty.
Friendships and memories created on a special
September Meeting Day.

Jo Krelle

Designer drugs for oldies

Pharmacies are among the busiest businesses in shopping centres – which means people must be buying more and more drugs. Our local chemist prints the real cost of the drug on his label, evidently to show us pesky pensioners who get it for 00.00 (you don't pay anything after you've had 52 prescriptions filled) that we are privileged and well-served by the government.

Being well-served by the government also seems to be a part of the campaign by media personality, Dr James Wright, to persuade pensioners to be careful with how many drugs we use. It does sound suspiciously like the government wants to save money. (Pity the politicians don't apply cost-cutting methods to their travel rorts!)

Well, youth has its recreational drugs to destroy their health and maybe we have them to do the same, but ours are supposed to improve ours. Recently a local Area Health professional, who talked to our group in Woy Woy about threats to our wellbeing, said that going to the GP for each and every ill could be a problem, because the first thing the doctor will do is grab for the prescription pad. Was he really only joking?

I am intrigued when I'm asked, "What medicines are you on?" Most are unpronounceable. My fave is Clopidogrel. I ponder on the genesis of this strange name. Was it discovered by a Dr. Clopi or by a waggish (or mongrel) dog of a medical scientist? I'm further confused by trade names being applied, generally short, with an 'ex' or an 'ic' at the end, Plavix, in this case. One wonders if these practices are to add to the mystique of the medical profession?

The godlike stance of the GPs seems to be eroded somewhat

lately, but this does not seem to be the case for specialists. Few in numbers, they are so busy-busy that they arrive at all hours in hospital to see public patients and are generally very terse. It seems that the numbers of entrants to specialist ranks are limited, perhaps because the fewer there are the more money they make?

To the laywoman, there appears to be much in the medical profession that is puzzling. Maybe there needs to be a total reorganisation of the profession. Bring back the witches and midwives in obstetrics or at the very least, establish layperson-friendly procedures and break down the ridiculous divisions between GPs, nurses and specialists. My GP told me that women medical graduates outnumber men, so perhaps there is hope yet.

(Written in blood on my new computer!)

Enid Harrison

Iraq War

In Iraq vaporised people leave no mark.

*The burnt car? People were here
It is empty now.*

Come and view not a bone or a shoe

Only the Iraq people say

They were vaporised away.

How many dead? No count was made

There is no trace of vaporised people,

Today.

A politician's voice is heard

War was right, justice done

The dictator is gone.

Rebuilding takes time.

In Iraq vaporised people leave no mark.

Molly Kennealy

Creative Writers on The Rocks and Elsewhere

For our October 3 luncheon, the venue was the Harbour View Hotel in The Rocks. Sadly, your usual Bon Vivant reporter could not attend because of an unwelcome 'bug.' However, that intrepid observer of the social scene, Jean Wurlod, filed a report. It was a very pleasant occasion with congenial staff and an appealing menu. One attendee (Anon.) was moved to verse:

*We loved to go to the Harbour View
Where the atmosphere was great
Enjoying congenial companionship
And to be with our mates.*

As we return to the Bowlers' Club next time, we hope the Muse will give us some rhymes, such as "Munching Molars at the Bowlers"

We Creative Writers don't spend all our time lunching together and discussing deathless prose. We also enjoy the theatre. On October 17, five of us saw *Stepping Out* at the Seymour Centre. This sparkling modern piece was written by Richard Harris and set in North London. The actors, from the Wesley Institute Drama Department gave us a "feel good tap dancing show". The majority of them had never attended a tap dancing class before rehearsals.

While they endured the frustration and fun, of learning to tap dance for a concert, they revealed their human frailties and strengths and overcame petty squabbles. We glimpsed often stressful home lives, with partners who were either loving, or neglectful, or violent or on the dole, but all actors were united to give a marvellous concert.

The Wesley Institute is to be congratulated for only charging Seniors \$5 for such a fine performance. Our thanks to Jean Wurlod for getting us there.

Bon Vivant

Eating Out

Pleasure in eating out is found in the company of friends. To eat out alone is, for most females in my age group at least, a way of feeling conspicuously miserable.

After my recent much publicised bout of pneumonia I felt the need of a good meal, prepared by an expert chef, so took myself to the nearest restaurant, an Asian one, an up market one too. Pale green upholstery, pale polished wood, pale yellow tablecloths on free-standing tables, polished glass and silver. The need to be inconspicuous would mean trying to hide in one of the pale green

Take Time to Listen

You are not listening to me when:

- you say you understand,
- you have an answer to my problem before I have finished telling you my problem,
- you cut me off before I have finished speaking,
- you finish my sentences for me,
- you tell me about your experience, making mine seem unimportant.

You are listening when:

- you grasp my point of view, even when it's against your own sincere convictions,
- you allow me the dignity of making my own decisions, even though you think I may be wrong,
- you do not take my problem from me, but allow me to deal with it in my own way,
- you do not offer me religious solace.

From The Country Web

upholstered lounges against the walls. Not possible, this furniture was not designed to accommodate oversized Caucasians, it must be a table.

It's midday and I hope to finish my meal before the influx of business people for their working lunches. The menu itself is as big as a tablecloth, but helpful with pictures. From habit I look for the cheapest dish, a habit acquired long ago in the 1930s when even a trip to Repin's with an aunt was a rare treat. Later, spending a working life in an economy when women's salaries were calculated for single women of simple tastes, to keep them perpetually in the manner to which they were accustomed, the habit became ingrained. So this lunch had to be a dish of noodles, elaborately garnished. A spoon and fork is supplied along with the silver chopsticks.

By now the place is full. The Asian population in our suburb is very convivial, even at working lunches. They chat and they laugh and this large elderly Australian female hopes that she and her forkful of noodles are not the subject. The noodles, unlike Italian pasta, do not cling easily to the fork. I hope to be unseen by these young people, then feel the resentment of the invisible. By the minute I am growing bigger. Like Alice when eating the augmenting side of the mushroom, I give up, take my plate of noodles to the serving hatch and ask for a doggy bag.

Helen Monaghan

Adding Memory

The other day, a friend of mine was explaining to me how she had to move these pixels around her computer and to handle the operation she had to add twenty megabytes of memory. I had a disquieting thought that all this

memory she was adding had to come from somewhere. Maybe it was coming from me, because I couldn't remember a thing that day. And then it became blindingly obvious that all the memory that people keep adding to their computers comes from people. Every time someone adds some memory to their machine thousands of people forget everything they ever knew.

People are singularly devoid of memory these days. We don't remember where we came from, who raised us, when our wars used to be, what happened last year, last month, or even last week. School children remember practically nothing. I take a bus every week and I swear half the people on it don't know where they got on or where they're supposed to get off. The explanation is simple. The computer companies are stealing human memory to stuff their hard drives. The bus company has some kind of contract with IBM to steal memory off everybody riding on the bus. They are probably connected by cable or something, and every few miles, poof, five hundred megabytes get sucked out of passengers' brains.

The computer's search for memory is bottomless, because the more they suck, the more they need. Eventually we will all be walking around with glazed looks in our eyes, trying to figure out who we live with. Then we will forget our names and addresses and just be milling around trying to remember them. The only visible sign about us will be those long cables sticking out of our behinds, feeding the scraps of our memory to Computer Central somewhere in oblivion. I think it's time for all these money-sucking companies to start some kind of system to feed and shelter us when we forget how to eat, walk and sleep. Computers suck.

Audrie Codrescu

Snake's Alive

We were camped in a shady spot in the bush one hot night eating prawns that we had bought earlier at the Darwin Markets. Doug went to bury the prawn shells under a log. It moved! A healthy beautiful specimen of snake lazily slithered into the bushes. "He was a biggie," Doug reported to me, as we sat down to our sticky rice pudding. A movement outside caught my eye. "Look!" I whispered, "The snake has followed you back to the camper." There it was, all slender smooth 31/2 metres, slim tongue flicking inquisitively, as comfortable and settled as we were nervous. We shooed and clapped and shouted. No response. Finally Doug got out (dressed only in underpants and heavy boots) and stamped – a sure way of sending them scuttling – threw light sticks and dirt, but not a movement. I took a few shots on the camera – my sarong slipped off. I was starkers, Doug in underpants, snake looking affectionately at us in the torchlight just a metre away. Eventually there was a slight slither of movement. I urged Doug to get in the picture at the right angle. Heavens! What was I doing? But enough was enough. We had to move out, after all, it was there first.

Why are most of us so scared of snakes? My theory is that it goes back to the Bible. What did God say to the snake in the Garden of Eden? "Thou shalt go on thy belly and be forever more cursed." Something like that. I don't have my Bible handy here out in the Never Never. Adam and Eve were chucked out too, and the snake is cursed for evermore. Poor innocent creature.

Joan Johns

Lost in Space

Anne Warren and I decided to travel together by car to Newcastle for the 10th birthday celebrations of Newcastle OWN. Anne came up by train from Nowra and I met her at the station. I won't say who trod in dog poo soon after that, but one of us sees better than the other.

After a quick cuppa, we set off in my trusty Toyota. I know the way, says I. And to my credit I didn't get lost once till we left the freeway outside Newcastle. I had promised Anne we would have lunch at the roadhouse I always stop at when visiting my grandchildren, but somehow we missed it. I could not believe it! It has signs I swear can be seen from the moon. I told Anne to stop complaining about being hungry (even if her breakfast was at 5.30am), but she wasn't convinced so I stopped at a place that said Hot Food – which turned

out to be one sausage roll, one pie or three hot dogs.

Anyway, the next day's celebration party was wonderful. As it was reported on last month, I'll just say it got better and better, from the time I entered the hall till I reluctantly left at 3.45pm

Ceri Ritchie had had a fall on her way to the party and, since she lives in Thirroul, I said I would drive her home too. As I get lost on the way to the bathroom, I asked Ceri to navigate – Anne's eyesight isn't good enough for map reading. Ceri did a wonderful job getting us back to the expressway and then she somehow managed to lose her glasses down behind the seat, where no amount of searching could locate them. It's okay, says I, I know the way.

By the time we left the expressway it was very dark and the peak hour traffic was amazing. To my credit,

OWN's Health Charter

Older women have the right of control over their health and wellbeing.

Health is a state of physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing that facilitates personal fulfilment and enjoyment of life.

Older women insist on measures which both maintain good health whenever possible and provide us with the best of care when in poor health.

The maintenance of fitness is an important goal for most older women, and most of us have, or can acquire, the skills and experience to do this for ourselves.

If fitness is maintained, the onset of illness is delayed and recovery from illness is quicker and easier.

Older women believe that all medical jargon can, and must, be explained in plain language.

Older women see themselves as partners with professionals in health care.

The Older Women's Network seeks the establishment of Wellness Centres to be run by and for older women in partnership with professional workers.

UN Principle for Older Persons

Older people should have access to health care to help them to maintain or to regain the optimum level of physical, mental and emotional well-being and to prevent or delay the onset of illness.

we saw a lot of places we have never seen before; we even saw the house of one of Ceri's friends, who just happened to live nowhere near our route home. My two passengers went hysterical with laughter (at least I think it was laughter) every time I said, "Okay. I know where I am now." Any way, I did eventually find my way my way back to the Illawarra, but what a day!

Barbara Malcolm

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:

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
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
purpose or the specific
purpose of
...% of my estate (or ...% of
the rest of my estate).

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

NOTICES

Homeshare NSW

The Homeshare program brings older and younger people together to support each other.

The *Householder* (older person) provides free accommodation to the *Homesharer* (younger person) in exchange for companionship and help around the home. Homeshare is currently providing services for interested *Householders* and *Homesharers* in the Sydney Metropolitan Area.

If you are interested please contact Kate Bannon, Project Officer, Ph: 9599 2273 or

Email: homesharensw@bensoc.asn.au
Website: www.homesharensw.com.au



NSW NURSES' ASSOCIATION

**Picnic in Centennial Park,
Sydney
'A Fair Share for Aged Care'**

Support Aged Care Nurses in their claim for pay equity with Hospital Nurses.

11.00 am to 1.00 pm
Friday, 21 November 2003

Aged Care Nurses, Residents of Nursing Homes, Carers, Family and General Public are invited to attend
Entertainment!
Wear something PINK and gorgeous!

Bring some lunch - we will provide the cake and pink bubbly

Authorised by Brett Holmes,
Gen Sec.NSWNA

Challenging Racism

Join a simulation game, led by Action for World Development accredited facilitators, and learn about other cultural perspectives to promote more effective relationships within your workplace and community.

Alexandria Town Hall
73 Garden St, Alexandria

9.30 am Wednesday 26 November

Bring a basket lunch to share.

Cost: \$15, concession \$10

Bookings essential by Friday 14 November. Contact Sally Fitzpatrick 02 9564 2935 or

Email: sfjw@iprimus.com.au



Penrith OWN Health Forum

This year's forum is on Wednesday 26 November from 9am to 12.30pm and includes lunch.

Penrith Community Health Centre, Soper Place, Penrith. RSVP to Thelma Anderson on 4721 5600.



"SEA SCRIPT"

A photographic exhibition by Digby Duncan

Thursday 4 December to Sunday 14 December

Gallery East, 21 Burnie Street, Clovelly

Gallery hours 11am to 6pm
Thursday to Sunday

Gallery East 9665 5414 or Digby 0409446482

NOTICES

Jessie Street National Women's Library

Lunch-hour Talk

Thursday, 20 November 2003

Lady Mayoress' Rooms, Town Hall, George Street,
12 noon to 1.30 pm Entry \$20 (non-members) \$15 (members).
Sandwich lunch included.

Speaker: Ruth Wilson
In Another Person's Skin

Ruth has been training teachers and students to undertake oral history projects in the classroom.

A group of students interviewed child survivors of the Holocaust. Ruth shows a video demonstrating the impact of these interviews on the students involved.

Contact Shirley on (02) 9876 3927 or the Library (02) 9265 9486

shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au



Sydney Peace Prize Lecture

by Dr Hanan Aswari, Founder & Sec Gen of the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue & Democracy (MIFTAH)

Seymour Theatre 6.30pm. Cost \$30 ph: 9351 7940. Enquiries 9351 4468 or spf@arts.usyd.edu.au

What's resilience got to do with it?

NSW Elderly Suicide Prevention Network Conference

6 and 7 November 2003
Carlton Hotel, Parramatta

\$125 concession

Phone the OWN office for a registration form.



The Diabetes Prevention Program

The Federal Department of Health and Ageing has \$600,000 to fund a small number of projects which aim to increase physical activity, improve diet and achieve a healthy weight for people at risk of developing diabetes.

Contact Emma Rooney 02 62898391 or get information from www.health.gov.au/pq/diabetes/dpp.htm



Each week

Women in Black weekly vigil every Thursday. 5.30-6.30 on Town Hall steps.

OWN SYDNEY NOTICEBOARD

Film discussion Group

1 pm, Monday 10 November
75 Windmill Street Millers Point

We will be discussing two films *Perfect Strangers* and *Calendar Girls* and maybe a third film if there's time, *Gettin' Square*.

* * *

Quarterly Members Meeting

10am, Monday 17 November
87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point

A chat over a cuppa with Tanya Plibersek, MHR, Member for Sydney on social and federal issues of concern to older women.

* * *

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAPPINESS
Speaker: **Robin Murray (PhD)**

11am Devonshire Morning tea
11.30am: discussion with Robin
When: Thursday, November 13,
Where: 87 Lower Fort Street

Robin has a PhD in clinical psychology and neuropsychology; she also works in the management of chronic pain. Robin works part-time and has a small private practice, she also teaches a course with Sydney University Continuing Education.

Papers available

What Every Old Girl Should Know by Margaret Small,
Women's Legal Resource Centre.
Wills, Advance Directives etc.

Adolescent Abuse of Parents
by Natasha Bobic.

Call Joy on 9251 9333

Seniors Week Grants 2004

Applications for Seniors Week grants close on 21 November 2003.

**For an application form phone the Seniors Week Project Officer at 02 8270 2228
Or email seniorsweekgrants@dadhc.nsw.gov.au**

DISCLAIMER

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

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Judith Mustard, Ermes Solari, Joan Johns, June West, Polly Gow, Renee Simons, Mary McCusker, Jacqueline Schofer, Dorothy Cora, Phyllis Gorman, Caro Davis and Wilhelmina Van Dorp.

**SURFACE
MAIL**

**POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA**