



# OWN MATTERS

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

*No.16 March 2003*

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## **Creative ideas rewarded!**

Congratulations to the groups that have been funded for such interesting and diverse events during Seniors Week 2003.

OWN NSW received funding for two projects: *Fostering Wellness* and *Listen Up to Older Women*, both of which are briefly outlined in the Coordinators' Report on p.3.

Wagga Wagga OWN have been inspired to debate students from Koorringal High School on the topic, *Maturity Matters*. The students are speaking for the affirmative, which offers a nice twist in thinking for both teams. Students at other high schools in the area will also have more enlightened minds after talks by Wagga Wagga OWN members on what it's like to grow older today.

*Living Longer and Loving it!* is the focus for Newcastle OWN's wellness info morning on 20 March. An information stall will feature handouts on OWN's model of wellness plus info on local activities. Participants can sample a number of wellness practices such as Laughter as Medicine, Tai Chi and drumming. Newcastle's second event, *Listen Up to Older Women*, will also be held on 20 March following lunch.

Illawarra OWN's aim is to break down the stereotypes with a project called *Re:Generations*. On 17 March, thirty members of Illawarra OWN will meet with forty five Year 11 girls studying Society and Culture at three local High Schools. Forty two nationalities will be represented! Three women, in their 60s, 70s and 80s, will talk about their lives and then three girls from three different schools will talk about *their* lives. The SilvertOWNs will entertain after lunch.

Members of Penrith OWN are also planning a multicultural, intergenerational event called *Getting Together* which involves fifteen older women and forty primary school children learning International Dancing together, with an instructor. The children's ethnic dress will create an international flavour and set the mood for a fun and inspiring morning.

Sutherland OWN's *Listen Up to Older Women* event will be held on 19 March. The Illawarra SilvertOWNs will be there to entertain and a delicious afternoon tea will be served.

**Dorothy Cora**

## **OWN Matters**

is the Newsletter of the  
Older Women's Network NSW  
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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# Point of View

## **The Day Sydney Stood Still**

Never before have I been in the centre of a mass of 300,000 people. I was desperate to get little more breathing space. There was none. As far as the eye could see Hyde Park North and every street leading into Hyde Park was packed with people and one loud, clear message, "No War, No War"!

Banners waved everywhere, from the marchers, from people on the parapets of St. James station, standing on the statues of the Archibald Fountain, where, in the stone hand of Eros, a young man had placed a white dove. Drums were beating, people were shouting slogans, chanting, singing. Some, like me, stood silently, thinking angry thoughts about our country's present state of anguish and foreboding brought about by John Howard's decision to commit us to Bush's war policy.

I wondered why we were committed to this war anyway. Why we were being whipped into paranoia with threats of terrorism at every turn, why we are the only country in the world willing and even eager to join the Bush/Blair assault on Iraq when we have no quarrel with this far-away country that buys Australia's primary produce?

This massive demonstration was Sydney citizens exercising our democratic right to protest. Australia does not want to be committed to war, and judging by the world-wide protests, neither does the rest of the world.

The strength and passion of the messages on Sunday, to keep the world at peace, transcended every political party, every ethnic and religious difference. In that massive crowd we were all one. I felt a surge of elation, even a glimmer of hope that Bush and his warmongers may yet be stopped.

Of course, being Australians, there was much humour, often black. A wonderful papier-maché Bush was striding along followed by an obedient little dog, sniffing his master's tail. The inarticulate Bush was a great target for clever witticisms: "There's a little place in Texas that's missing its village idiot." and "Cool it, Cowboy!" and "Stop Mad Cowboy Disease."

Oil, the main cause of Bush's call for war, saw grim comments. "How many lives per gallon?" and "Peace at Oil Costs". John Howard, with his subservience to Bush, was the butt of much hilarity, "Howard lost in the Bush", "JH bonsai Bush!" as well as many other unflattering references.

Climbing off the bus, I said to myself, "Please, please let the world come to its senses."

**Muriel Hortin**

# OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

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All four Coordinators attended the quarterly meeting of NSW Groups last month. Representatives from eight groups plus Management Team representatives enacted what is the essence of OWN in a stimulating, lively and supportive exchange of views. Members from experienced groups and from new groups exchanged information about their proposed activities for the coming year. Different methods of attacking similar problems were shared. One group described its year in the doldrums and how it is pulling itself out of the mire while still conducting positive social programs which dispel the stereotypes of a frail, sick, aged population that is a costly burden on society. Some groups have long-term plans that involve wellness activities; others have intergenerational projects underway that may be short term in practice but are long term in application. In one way or another, all programs and activities seek to dispel stereotypes about ageing and women's roles in our society.

The atmosphere of trust, tolerance for different opinions and support for those who wanted advice, reflected the politics of women in action doing things for themselves in their own particular setting, for their own particular membership, using the structure of OWN. By 'politics' we mean the workings of the people, not party politics as enacted through local, state and federal politicians. The more that we accept that we are all different, with different views and experiences, that tolerance is a desirable personal and community trait, and that we can actively age with dignity, the richer, more thoughtful communities we can build. There is much to be done, but the health of OWN seems to be as active as the programs that we seek to put into place for the benefit of both our members and their communities.

OWN NSW has received \$5000 from Seniors Week for a *Fostering Wellness* project. Because of OWN's success in establishing Wellness Centres for older women in the Sydney area, our objective now is to extend the model throughout NSW. *Fostering Wellness* involves two women from OWN groups in Nowra, Macarthur, Newcastle and Wagga Wagga spending three days in Sydney to see wellness in action. They will visit Wellness Centres at Sutherland and Bankstown to see how they function, meet with women who have experiences to share, and explore issues related to funding and to forming partnerships. We hope that all eight women will return to their respective groups brimming with knowledge about wellness OWN-style and eager to engage group members in developing wellness programs that meet their needs.

OWN NSW has also received \$1000 to hold a two-part project on storytelling, *Listen Up to Older Women*. The first part of this project will involve two storytelling workshops, facilitated by Pearlie McNeill, being held prior to Seniors Week in Newcastle and Sutherland. The second part will be storytelling events, held during Seniors Week, where workshop participants from the two OWN groups will tell their stories to members of the community (please see details on the Diary Page).

We are pleased to hear that the Aboriginal Support Circle's storytelling project is progressing well and that they are currently choosing a design for the book. *OWN Matters* designer, Jacqui Schofer, has generously agreed to assist in the book's layout and design.

**Pat Simpson, Mollie Smith, Cate Turner  
and Anne Warren, Coordinators**

## International Women's Day

**Saturday 8 March 2003**

### ***What is International Women's Day?***

The history of International Women's Day (IWD) dates back to the year 1911. Socialist women in the United States organised the first National Women's Day in 1908 and helped inspire this international event.

Australia first celebrated IWD in 1928.

IWD is an occasion for all women around the world to assert women's political and social rights, review the progress women have made and celebrate our achievements.

### ***IWD themes for 2003***

The Department for Women's theme for this year's International Women's Day is *Celebrate the Extraordinary Diversity of Women*

The theme chosen by the Sydney IWD collective is *Peace, Justice, Diversity, Solidarity - Women Against War and Racism*.

### ***Celebrations will include:***

- Saturday 8 March, International Women's Day Breakfast, 8.30 am – 10.30, Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour. \$35 concession. Contact Daisy Varughese 9287 1961.
- Saturday, 8 March, brunch at OWN from 9.30 to 11am (please see flyer).

Join the IWD march at Sydney Town Hall under the OWN banner then march to Belmore Park, near Central Station.

**Joy Ross**

# Give peace a chance!

## **The Choice Before Us – Say ‘NO’ to WAR!**

John Howard said that those who gathered on the weekend don't really count. It's important we keep letting him know that we live in a democracy and that the voices of the people do count.

Politicians tell us this war with Iraq is inevitable, they murmur a constant incantation of our powerlessness, lulling us into a nightmare sleep.

But we *can* stay awake! We can choose to walk out of the nightmare, and dream a different dream. All it takes is for each one of us who cherishes people's lives to refuse to be silent, to say NO to war, to say YES to peace.

Dream that we continue to stand up, speak out, not in the thousands but the millions, joining with millions around the world.

Dream that soldiers refuse their orders, dock workers refuse to load ships, secretaries shut off their computers, workers close their factories, and politicians find the courage to stand for what is right.

If you have spoken out before, now is the time to speak out again, to make another phone call, write another letter, stand in another vigil. If you have marched before, march again and this time bring more of your friends and neighbours. If you haven't marched, if you have been immersed in the demands of your own life, if you feel that your small voice makes no difference, now is the time to speak anyway, to interrupt your ordinary pursuits, to become the one small drop that just might turn the tide.

Be public. Be visible. Be loud.

**Susanna Strong**

## **Greek Australia Peace Meeting**

An enthusiastic gathering of more than 500 people attended the Greek/Australia Peace Committee meeting held at the Cyprus Community Club, Stanmore, in February. We congratulate this committee, which has only been in existence since November last year, for the sterling success they achieved in bringing together such prominent speakers from the Greek and Australian community.

Fay Grailousis, member of the Greek-Australian Peace Committee, chaired the meeting. Speakers included Dr Carmen Lawrence, Penny Costa-Thliveri, a member of the Greek Community and Senator Aiden Ridgeway, who paid respect to the Gadigal people, the traditional owners of the land.

All spoke of their opposition to war on Iraq, which is embodied in the following resolution, moved by Nick Papanikitis, Convenor of the Peace Committee, and addressed to Hon. John Howard.

“This public meeting organised by the Greek-Australian Peace Committee and held at the Cyprus Community Club on Sunday, 9 February, 2003, expresses strong opposition to the planned US military attack on Iraq and the involvement of any Australian forces in such an attack.

“We believe that the threat posed by the Iraqi regime has been taken out of proportion by the US administration and does not warrant military bombardment and invasion which would breach Iraqi sovereignty and inevitably lead to the loss of thousands of lives.

“A war on Iraq would not resolve any problems or lead to peace.

Rather it would create further instability, violence and increase the threat of terrorist activity around the world.

“Prime Minister, we ask you to take heed of the growing opposition in Australia and around the world to an attack on Iraq. It is obvious that there is a significant gap between the plans of the US leadership and the aspirations of the people of the world for peace and stability.

“We strongly believe that it is not in Australia's interest to be part of any US led military attack on Iraq. We call on the Australian government to withdraw its support for such an attack, bring home the Australian troops and concentrate its efforts on a peaceful settlement of the current crisis.”

This resolution was carried unanimously.

**Merle Hight**

## **Terror information packs returned**

The ABC reported on 13 February that terror information packs have been returned in their thousands even though the mailout was not fully completed. The packs, containing a message from the Prime Minister are part of a \$15 million terrorism awareness campaign. Many people believe the campaign is purely scare-mongering.

According to Australia Post, many thousands of packages have been marked 'return to sender'. The packs are being stockpiled in post offices around the country. A federal Senate Estimates Committee was told on 12 February that the stockpiled packages would all be counted.

# Vigil

Each Thursday evening a group of Women in Black meet for an hour's silent vigil on the steps of Sydney Town Hall.

This evening I am pleased to be one of them. Regular attendance is not possible for all, but now because it seems that war is inevitable, the vigils are weekly. There is an urgency that we be seen to be part of the growing opposition to war, irrespective of religious or geographic background.

I take my place near the balustrade and try not to envy the young women beside me who stand so still, silent, with eyes closed. An infrequent attender I am curious about the passing crowd. The Town Hall steps are Sydney's meeting place. Young people meet and greet each other; groups form and dissolve, there is chatter and laughter. Others hurry home. Some ignore our leaflets, others take them and hurry on and some stop and speak and ask questions.

Close your eyes, old woman, you are not here to stand and stare, get on with your silent meditation! I will try, but my mind is full of the things that have brought me here and images of scenes I have read of or seen, intrude.

I am here with these others because of war and our concern for the consequences of war for our fellow women. Before my mind's eye there is the sight of a woman with a child across her knees, the archetypal sorrowing mother. This sorrowing woman does not have to be a biological mother, her pain is universal, timeless. She watches a procession, women and children whose pain is paying for a catastrophe not of their making.

She sees a standpipe at the end of a dusty village street. There are

women, some with children, and a few old men, collecting their day's ration of water. Will there be enough? Will it be drinkable? Do they have fuel to boil it, if not, how far is it to be carried and with what care? None of it must be lost.

She sees a health clinic where tired aid workers are inoculating children against the next deadly infection threatening them. Some of the children look deathly ill already. There are grandmothers, and grandfathers, holding some of the children. The mothers have gone for the food ration or they are keeping a family business alive or tending a crop or maybe a goat or a few chooks, the gift of some family far away who assuage the guilt they feel for their self indulgence.

She sees an open shed where a woman is teaching some children of all ages. She has very few teaching aids but hopes she can give these people some of her own literacy and numeracy, survival tools as necessary as medicine.

She sees a family, a holy one by any system of belief; a boy, twelve years old, HIV positive, looking after his HIV positive brothers and sisters, AIDS orphans, victims of another kind of war. Their future will depend on more than the medication that is their immediate need.

She sees an exhausted young woman stumble from a brothel. It has been closed, temporarily, to give the prostitutes a rest from the R and R due to the servicemen who have come to liberate her country. In her few hours off she will visit relatives who are glad of her help.

Old woman, leave the sorrowing mother now or you will begin to cry, here on the Town Hall steps. So I remember a few things seen lately on television. An armoured division is being farewelled on its way to a war about which questions are still being turned

aside as 'hypothetical'. The camera rests on the face of a very young soldier, a childish boy's face topped by a black beret. That face has remained with me and not because it expressed fear or apprehension, but consternation. The expression was puzzled asking: "Why is this happening to me?" The perennial question of children dying before they have lived. Another video clip is of a mighty ship of war carrying warplanes which will need some of the billions of the currency of whoever buys or supplies these weapons of mass destruction.

There is movement behind me on the Town Hall steps. A functionary from within is telling us to disperse; there is silent resistance so he says he will send for the police. Some of our group is silently immobile, others speculate in whispers. Three police arrive at the other end of the broad sweep of the steps. Nothing happens. We are not obstructing the traffic or creating a disturbance; there are many others on the steps, no one annoying anyone. The police escort a harmless, hapless drunk to their empty paddy wagon.

**Helen Monaghan**

## **Women in Black**

*At the Walk Against the War on Sunday, 16 February, many women wore black and walked in silence with Women in Black. Wearing the black clothing of bereavement to mourn the dead also expresses our opposition to all forms of violence.*

*Women in Black is an international network of women who share a common opposition to militarism and violence and use a similar style of silent demonstration.*

*Please join our silent vigils to protest war and violence every Thursday on the steps of Sydney Town Hall from 5.30pm to 6.30pm.*

# Theatre Group Report

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Following a year of hard work, rehearsals and shows, we looked forward to our Christmas Luncheon, which took place on 17 December 2002 aboard the South Steyne Floating Restaurant and Function Centre, Cockle Bay, Darling Harbour. We had a great time.

Along with thirteen members of the Theatre Group, fourteen Friends of the Theatre Group, our Guest of Honour, Bernice Lynch, and a friend, we celebrated with a scrumptious lunch of turkey and plum pudding, and an entrée of Atlantic Salmon with all the trimmings.

We were especially pleased to have four guests from the Sutherland Wellness Centre, Barbara Burnham, Noreen Hewitt, Shirley Renshall and Connie McPherson, also Ann Warren from Nowra.

On this occasion, we farewelled our three champions, Lucy Porter, Peggy Hewett and Marie Williams, expressing our appreciation for their hours of work and commitment to the Theatre Group. We wish them well in their future ventures.



Josie Jackson and Marjorie Moffat have generously agreed to take on the coordination of the Theatre Group. We wish them well and every success in 2003.

After a five weeks' well-deserved break, we returned to the Mott Hall to find we did not have a pianist available, which made

rehearsals very difficult. Our pianist, Anne Cunynghame, was out of action due to surgery, and Elizabeth was still on holiday. We wish Anne a speedy recovery, and hope she will be back with us very soon.

There was great relief when Elizabeth returned for our rehearsal on Monday, 10 February, ready for our performance for the OWN Sydney quarterly meeting, with guest speaker, Carmel Tebbutt, Minister for Ageing.

The performance, our first since Peggy, Lucy and Marie retired, was pretty good. We were seven of the old troupe plus Ceri Richie, a new member who was performing with us for the first time. We put everything into our performance and the audience gave us a good reception. Although we were all apprehensive about the debut of the new troupe, as usual we came through with flying colours.

**Josephine Allon**

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# Aboriginal Support Circle

At the February 3 Aboriginal Support Circle Meeting, Betty Little, one of our coordinators, a Yorta Yorta Elder, reported to our group that the Submission for Yorta Yorta Land Rights to the High Court had been rejected. She shared with us the statement prepared by the supporters' workshop of nearly 1000 Yorta Yorta people and 150 non-Yorta Yorta people on 25 January 2003.

*"We recognise, without qualification, the sovereignty of the Yorta Yorta people over their land and waters.*

*We recognize that the Yorta Yorta people and their culture is strong and alive.*

*We refute any notion of a so-called 'tide of history' having eliminated their sovereignty and culture.*

*The non-indigenous people here particularly express our deep sorrow, shame and anger that our colonial, imposed legal system has insulted and continues to attack the people of the Yorta Yorta Nation.*

*We reject as a betrayal of truth and fairness that the written words of one pastoralist should be given precedence over the oral testimony of over 60 respected members of the Yorta Yorta Nation.*

*We call upon governments, federal and state, to acknowledge that the amended Native Title Act works against the interests and concerns of indigenous people and, after genuine negotiation with indigenous people, to amend or abandon it in favour of a system which produces just*

*outcomes for the Yorta Yorta peoples in general.*

*We call upon the State Labor Governments of Victoria and New South Wales to recognize the sovereignty of the Yorta Yorta Nation, immediately return the Crown Land they have claimed and properly resource the Yorta Yorta Nation to enable further negotiations.*

*We express our solidarity with the Yorta Yorta Nation and with all the indigenous nations of Australia in the fight for land rights and social justice and we commit ourselves to that fight.*

*No so called tide of history will stop our tidal waves of resistance."*

**Frayda Cooper**

## Strewth

Doug and I were tackling our steak and vegies in an outback Queensland pub. When you order steak, you get half a bullock, surrounded by masses of vegies. Suddenly, a voice above me yelled “Strewth!” as something brushed my leg. I looked down into the eyes of a small black and white spotted pig.

“Hi!” The voice belonged to a check-shirted fellow with a XXXX stubby of beer in his hand. “This is Strewth, our pig. He likes a bit of barb wire, don’t you Strewth?” he said, cupping his hand and pouring some beer into his palm. In local lingo, XXXX beer is called “barb wire”. Strewth slurped it up appreciatively.

The meaning of the banner on the wall with “Strewth” scrawled across it became obvious. He was a firm favourite in the hotel. Born in the wild, orphaned at an early age, the hotel owner had adopted him. I talked with my new friend about farming, the drought and wild pigs. “I believe there are four million tearing up the country in Aussie,” I commented. “Four million be bugged, more like forty million, and half of ‘em on my place,” my friend yelled, banging his fist angrily on the table, sending my glass flying.

Just then, Strewth trotted past. He raised his little snout and gave us an angelic smile. I swear it! My heart did a flip, and my friend’s angry face changed to a smile as he gently caressed the little animal. Strewth would never grow into a monstrous feral pig with destructive tusks that dig up trees and destroy little animals in their burrows. Oh, no.

Some little pigs go to market, but this little pig stayed at home, enjoying his XXXX.

*Joan Johns*

## Creative Writers New Year Nosh-Up

We chose the Bowlers’ Club in York Street for our monthly lunches in January and February. No wonder, considering the wondrous repast for \$11. The drinks are modestly priced, the desserts deliciously tempting and we fear for what’s left of our waistlines.

These lunches are well attended but writing progress demonstrates that the flesh is willing but the spirit weak.

Pam, with assignments to do, is the only one with a good excuse. Jean writes steadily, Judith has work in progress, and Helen is plugging away at some literary gemlets, if not gems.

Thanks to Jean for arranging the venue. We look forward to Polly’s mystery venue, promised for March. Hope it’s not pie ‘n peas at Wolloomooloo.

*Bon Vivant*

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## I am a Great-Grandma!

My first great-grandchild was born on 29 January 2003, a little boy. He is in Boston, Massachusetts, so I won’t be seeing him till they come here in July, by which time he will be interesting. I’m relieved about that, because I don’t like holding new babies – I just don’t know what to do with them, how to react, what to say. I am really not the maternal type, even though I gave birth to four babies, who didn’t seem to suffer any harm from that. They are all parents themselves now, though this is the first of the grandchildren to produce one of his own.

I started to think about the happenings when Andrew, my

eldest, now 56, was born in hospital. (I have to tell here about the midwife who delivered him – a really horsy type, with a deep baritone voice. Immediately after the birth, she boomed, “If I had my way, every mother would have a cigarette right after the birth...”)

In those days, you were confined to bed for about ten days, not allowed to have a shower or a bath. Several times a day, you lay in bed with your bent legs spread wide apart while a nurse poured a jugful of some kind of disinfectant mixture over the relevant area. You were quite weak when you were eventually allowed out of bed, and I remember being instructed on how to give the baby

a bath. The actual lying-in period was quite fun. You got matey with the other women in the ward, and by the time you left, they seemed like family. You made solemn vows to keep in touch, but of course you didn’t.

I was so scared when I got home with Andrew. My mother, then aged 50, was just as frightened as I was. She tried, but she wasn’t much help. I recall going to the doctor about something or other, and he asked me if I got to have a rest during the day. “Oh, no,” I said, “No time for that.” To which he replied scornfully, “What, with just one child?”

*Renee Simons*

# Letters to the Editor

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## **Pleasure and puzzlement**

This is to express thanks from an inactive member of OWN to all the people, members and paid staff who keep our Network going. They work hard and constantly for all the benefits and entertainment OWN gives us, moreover the benefits are for all, not just us.

I would like to share with you two little episodes I had on my way home on Tuesday. In the early afternoon a rest near First Fleet Park was so lovely – the pepper trees' green feathery foliage, the harbour, the ferries and the green grass where young people were lying full length. I'd have loved to lie there too, but how to get up?

Then, on Circular Quay Station, I found myself sharing a seat with a woman, a contemporary, old, poor, toothless woman with baggy knee-length pants threatening to fall. Was this the right platform for Merrylands? When would the train come? My train came. The guard reassured her. But why was she there alone?

**Helen Monaghan**

## **Back to the old "User Pays"?**

I see that Mr Brogden's policy on health includes abolishing current Area Health Service Boards and creating local Hospital Boards and District Hospitals Boards. My concern is that Discharge Planning, Acute and Post Acute Care, even Home Nursing, which are all implemented by Area Health Services and ensure a more effective spread of services in the State, will be negatively affected by this policy. In December and January I have been the receiver of these new

services, which we fought for, and which have worked well.

According to the opposition policy, the proposed Boards "will be well placed to carry out local fund-raising, the proceeds of which will be returned to their hospital". This might mean that Senior medical officers could then be in a position to influence how the money is to be spent.

It may appear attractive to have more direct consumer input at the local level, but if we have a return to local Boards we could have local senior medical offices operating from personal/parochial/political agendas and insisting that money be spent to achieve their interests.

As I read the rationale given in the Coalition policy, it seemed to me that it reverts to a user-pays principle. This term is not specifically used, but is implied.

What is needed is an increase in allocated funds to all public hospitals.

**Jean Braithwaite**

## **Vitamins that work!**

On ABC Television recently, in an address to the Press Club, a doctor who specialises in naturalistic remedies and evaluates pharmaceutical drugs advised that the Statin Lower Cholesterol range of drugs caused counter effects in lowering cholesterol. He suggested E and B complex vitamins.

He was so convincing that I decided to try the vitamin treatment and check up in a month or so with a blood test to evaluate whether this would work. I have a few weeks to go, but a side effect has been noted

by me. Suffering from osteoarthritis in the spine, I have noted a decided improvement in pain control and that I am able to be much more active. A friend was recently advised by her doctor to go off a Statin drug, so it may not be a 'snake oil'. The list of Statins includes brand names Lipitor, Lipex, Zocor, Vastin, Lescol, Pravadol. Also the good Doctor James Wright advocates taking vitamins for your health. However, as the saying goes, "Please consult your doctor if pain persists".

**Enid Harrison**

## **A few comments ...**

I am a member of the Southern Highlands OWN. I do enjoy receiving *OWN Matters*, and would like some info from page 18 on eco coffins. I am a lay Benedictine nun and work voluntarily with the elderly and do lots of networking. Many older people have made Living Wills (in relation to the article on Euthanasia) and they like to know what is 'new' re the end section of their lives.

I spend time in Sydney and look forward to joining the Fish Lunches if they are starting up this year. Also hope to get to a couple of events. I am very excited about the idea of sharing and networking with other women.

I'd like to mention a book of fairy tales for women, where the 'hero' is a heroine! Great for our self-esteem, called *Fearless Girls, Wise Women...* can't remember the female author (Australian) because it hasn't been returned to me!

**Valerie Dickson**

# Letters to the Editor

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## War is never the answer

I received an invitation to sign "One Voice for Peace" by email, so yes, I added my name. Wouldn't it be great to know how many signed?

In the Mountains we have shown our personal and combined support recently with a peace rally. Our march in Katoomba five weeks ago was supported by over 2000 people including our Mayor.

It is wonderful to hear the cries of so many people for peace but it does not rid me of my depression about it all, the evil old men ranting for war, the terrible plight of so many, particularly children, around the world. The cruelty, the lack of compassion for the needy, and so little being done to make a change. I am told by some, "It has always been thus!"

**Russ Aroney**

## Meet the candidates

Thought I'd let you know that we held our *Meet the Candidates* Forum on Thursday, 6 February, and it went quite well. We had candidates from the ALP, Liberals and Greens and a representative from the Progressive Labor Party whose candidates work full time. The audience was smaller than we had hoped, a total of 20, but then Newcastle's membership is smaller than it has been, and many are not interested in political issues. We also had representatives there from the Association of Independent Retirees, Newcastle Combined Pensioners Area Council, War Widows' Guild and VOCAL (Victims of Crime Assistance Hunter).

I don't think anyone's voting intentions would have changed but it was very useful PR, both in

relation to the candidates (in particular, the sitting member, Bryce Gaudry) and the other organisations who have all asked to be kept in touch about future activities. One of the issues highlighted is that many people do not differentiate easily between State and Commonwealth jurisdictions. Some of the questions were about issues such as residential care and medicare. One of the questions asked was about a Wellness Centre for Newcastle and of course everyone said it sounded like a good idea. Gaudry said he'd like to hear more detail about the proposal. This we should be able to do after our wellness fact-finding trip to Sydney at the end of March.

**Pat Carlton**

## Beware of Nurses Bearing Pills

I recently spent two weeks in a Rehabilitation Hospital. The physiotherapists and occupational therapists were excellent and most of the nurses were fine. But not all. My medicines were taken away from me when I arrived and put in a locked drawer. The implication being that I could not be trusted to take the right amount at the right time. Hospital policy. OK.

But I found out that not all the nurses could be trusted to give me the right amount at the right time. I take half a tablet of one medicine, and the first morning I was there I was given three halves.

Another tablet, of which I take two, I was given three, and yet another of which I take one, I was given two. On at least three occasions one nurse would give me the pills and tablets that I needed, then a little later another nurse would come and put out a second lot. Each time, I explained and refused to take the extras.

But what bothers me is that some patients might not know exactly what they should take, or would think it was a new treatment. What happens to them?

**Joyce Chapman**

## US secrets

Can we rattle anyone's cage by suggesting that if the Americans can call on the UN to inspect facilities regarding secrets other countries may have, why can't we call on the UN to inspect Pine Gap and at least let our government have access to what is going on in our own country?

**Barbara Malcolm**

### Email petition caution

Some of us receive daily anti-war petitions to sign and send on to our friends. The problem is that many of these petitions are 'spam' mail.

A email petition has no integrity. If someone wanted to they could just change the information on the top of the petition to make it look like all the signatories were people signing up for something completely different.

Someone could also make up all the names on the list as there is no real way of checking.

**Kris Ferguson**

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## **OWN Sydney Highlights**

We were fortunate to have Carmel Tebbutt, Minister for Ageing, at our quarterly meeting on 11 February. Carmel presented an outline of NSW Government policies for older people, with a particular reference to the NSW Healthy Ageing Framework. She responded with interest to the lively and informed questions put to her by our members.

OWN Sydney has optimistically applied for a Positive Ageing Community Sponsorship Grants (Federal) called *Creative Ageing Women - Still Having Fun*. The project aims to train older women in creative and humorous techniques such as cartooning and satirical art. If we get the funding, these techniques will be used to produce posters, cards and designs for calico bags and t-shirts to challenge negative stereotypes of older women. If you are interested in taking part contact Joy 9251 9333.

The new OWN Australia project, *Measuring Social Capital*, will research the contributions by older women to their communities. OWN Sydney members will have the opportunity to let our Federal Government know just how older women contribute to their community through our voluntary work and how it does need to be accounted for.

We are living in terrible times and many of us feel the need to express our deep fears about what's happening in the world! Some of us have been able to join Women in Black on Thursday evenings on Sydney Town Hall steps, and many of us were amongst the thousands at the Peace Rally on 16 February.

As usual, members of OWN will be a presence at the International

Women's Day march on Saturday, 8 March. This year, we are having our OWN brunch at Lower Fort Street, before joining the March (see flyer). Do think about coming!

Quite a few of our members – Eilie Dimse, Pam Ledden, Dorothy Cox and Wilhelmina van Dorp – are not at all well. Our thoughts and good wishes are with you.

Edith Gilmour died last week aged 101. We extend our condolences to her sister, Lorna Gilmour. Wonderful women!

***Louise Anike and Joy Ross***  
***Coordinators***

## **Wollondilly OWN**

At our first meeting of the year, held on 25 January at the Picton Resource Centre, we made some important decisions. Instead of a monthly meeting, we have decided to meet every second month for business and guest speakers/discussions, and on the other month we will go on an outing.

Suggestions for possible outings included a trip to Vacluse House, a cruise on the Parramatta River Cat, a ferry trip to Manly for lunch, a shopping day at Birkenhead Point via train and ferry, a train trip to Goulburn for lunch, a visit to the flower festival in Sydney, a visit to the Nan Tiem Temple, a weekend away at Bundanoon Youth Hostel Association, a circle dance day at Bundanoon, and a fish and chip outing to Kiama and Wollongong. A definite is the *Classics at Thirlmere* Day held each year at the Estonian Village in March. What a busy lot! We are also planning some weekend activities, as some of our members are involved in minding grandchildren and cannot always come on midweek outings.

We have a very big year planned, starting with our Myuna Bay Holiday, which I will report on, in the next *OWN Matters*. Our Drop-In Centre is about to open at Picton Resource Centre each Wednesday morning. Anyone interested in OWN can call in for a chat and a cuppa and learn what we are about. I will have our introduction packs on hand as well as our activity calendar and our brochure. OWN's lovely poster will be in the window to let the locals know when I will be there. We are also going to lobby City Rail to try to get a better entrance for Picton Railway, as some of our members cannot use the station because of the really high stairway.

Still going strong are our gym group, Tai Chi, Scottish Country Dancing, drumming group. Our drummers played at the opening of the Australia Day celebrations in Picton. To start the proceedings, a parachutist, carrying a large Australian flag, landed on the oval, then the drummers drummed the crowd back to the central stage, where we drummed the festival open. Later on, we drummed again in another part of the park and then held a workshop, which was immensely popular. We will resume practice on 12 February, and hope to have some new members, as several people expressed interest in joining the group during the Australia Day Ceremony. We have also been approached to take part in another three festivals in the coming months, the first being the International Women's Day Festival on 8 March.

One of our members has a friend who has started a school in Eritrea. The school has nothing but pupils who all desperately want to go to school. She has

*(Continued page 11)*

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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asked if we have any pencils, rulers or rubbers, new or used, that she can send straight on to her friend in Eritrea, who has no funding at all save for what her friends send. We have been very happy to help by collecting these items for her.

By next month's meeting, I hope to have our full program for the year, together with a photograph to include on the OWN website. It's shaping up to be a busy year in Wollondilly.

**Barbara Malcolm**

## **Southern Highlands OWN**

News from Women Embracing New Challenges in Health (WENCHES)!

Since our formation in May 2002, our group has been steadily growing with a current membership of about 35. Meetings are always well attended with 17 to 28 women present. Our meetings are open to non-members and many of these subsequently join up.

As our sobriquet suggests, we are women who want to be well informed on health issues, to be active, and to look after our emotional and physical wellbeing.

Meetings, which are held on the first Thursday of the month, feature a guest speaker who leads a discussion on a particular issue. Topics we have covered include writing your own life story; the emotional needs of women; benefits of remedial massage; health issues for older women; the importance of diet and exercise in avoiding diabetes; and how to access community services. The business section is very informal, consisting of any matters which need the approval of members, and an opportunity for them to

make suggestions and bring up matters of concern.

Several members have formed the SHOWN performance group. They were fairly chuffed by their first appearance which was at our Christmas luncheon. The luncheon was attended by forty of our members and guests as well as 16 women from Illawarra OWN and 16 from Wollondilly. After a delicious luncheon, the three groups shared their experiences of how OWN works for them, then the local performance group and women from Illawarra and Wollondilly provided the entertainment.

The SHOWN Performance Group will next be appearing at the Seniors Week concert in Bowral on Wednesday, 12 March. They will also be performing at our first anniversary luncheon in May.

Last year our members attended the State Conference, and the celebration luncheons of Nowra and Wollondilly groups. This month five members are off to Myuna Bay for a five-day break, organised by Wollondilly OWN.

We sent a survey to our members to find out what they liked about SHOWN and to give them the chance to have a say about future activities. One outcome of the survey results was that a significant number wanted to be involved in Learning Circles Australia, so, in addition to our regular meeting, we will now be having Learning Circles on the third Thursday of the month.

On Thursday, 20 February, we are taking up the opportunity to meet with the NSW Premier's Council for Women when it visits the Southern Highlands. We have also been invited to attend a legal workshop being run by the Women's Legal Resource Centre

on Tuesday 8 April.

Our anniversary luncheon will be on Thursday 1 May. Anyone who would like to visit the Southern Highlands for this celebration is welcome to join us at the Mittagong RSL. For information, ring Margaret on 4861 2294, Nola on 4872 1486 or Robyn on 4872 3955 before 11 April.

**Robyn Smith**

## **Kiama OWN**

We are planning to be very active this year. Not only has one of our members volunteered to lead us in a walking group but we will be practising Tai Chi from March for about six to eight weeks! In order to balance out all these physical endeavours we plan to hold discussions about book readings as well as invite guest speakers to our meetings.

One of our members wrote to Joanna Gash Federal MP last year about war widows not receiving full Veterans Affairs benefits if their husbands have not died from a war related illness. Her response was that this would be brought up in Parliament this year. Members will follow up on this later in the year.

It was decided late last year that the computer we bought from the International Year of the Volunteer grant would be brought along to meetings so members could familiarise themselves with it.

At our first meeting this year we each described how we spent our Christmas and New Year. Doing this helps us to get to know each other a little better and be supportive of each other.

**Jeanette Hindmarsh**

## **Modern version of Little Red Riding Hood**

One fine day, not long ago,  
Red Riding Hood was told to go  
and see her granny who was sick.  
“But don’t dawdle – you be quick”.

Grandma lay tucked up in bed,  
Wearing a bonnet on her head.  
She looked so ‘different’ today,  
which prompted Red Riding Hood  
to say,

“Such big eyes, granny – what’s  
the matter?”  
“That’s so I can see you better.”  
“And what about your great big  
ear?”  
“That’s so I can better hear.”  
“And your enormous mouth –  
what’s up?”  
“That’s so I can eat you up!”

Therewith the wolf jumped out of  
bed,  
determined to carry out his threat.

Just then Meals on Wheels  
appears,  
with two lady volunteers.  
“You wicked woman, can’t you see,  
you scared this child quite  
brutally!  
If you won’t watch those words of  
yours,  
we’ll have you up for child abuse.”

“No, you won’t,” the wolf retorts,  
“Forget about those bad reports.”  
He quickly disrobes  
totally to reveal his real identity.

“I’m The Big Bad Wolf, last of its  
kind –  
Protected Species, if you don’t  
mind!  
If you happen not to believe it,  
my protection tag is here to prove  
it.”

So that was that – the ladies had to  
face,  
this being so, they didn’t have a  
case.  
In their confusion, they forgot to  
see  
where the real grandma might be.

Little Red Riding Hood turned  
around,  
running her fastest homeward  
bound.  
Reaching the safety of mother’s  
arms,  
she told her story – with some  
qualms!

In the end, Mum shook her head  
and with a queer look at her said,  
“Your imagination seems ever  
brighter;  
you may yet become a famous  
writer.”

**Trudy Davis**

### **“...nor any drop to drink.”**

We let the tap run while cleaning  
our teeth, we bathe the dog, wash  
the car, hose the footpath without  
a second thought. We do this  
because, by a lucky chance, we are  
part of the 12% who carelessly  
consume 85% of the planet’s  
water. The others, the 88% who  
live in the developing world, have  
to make do with the rest, a mere  
15%!

And even these limited supplies  
are often not free! Why? Because,  
believe it or not, many of these  
poor countries have to *buy* it.  
Privately owned institutions like  
the World Bank and the Asian  
Development Bank have been  
strongly pushing for more  
privatisation of water as a  
condition for loans to low income  
countries.

***Water is a human right, not  
a commodity to sell to the  
highest bidder.***

Today, more than a billion people  
lack access to safe drinking water,  
and more than 2.4 billion people  
lack adequate sanitation. Every  
year, more than five million  
people, most of them children, die  
from illnesses caused from  
drinking unsafe water

The privatisation of water systems  
and services has serious economic,  
social, and environmental  
consequences, some of which  
include forcing people to choose  
between necessities such as water  
or health care, education or food.

Research done by AID Watch, a  
powerful lobby group, has  
presented shocking statistics in  
the lead up to the International  
Year of Fresh Water in 2004.  
According to research, more than  
half the world’s hospital beds are  
filled with people suffering from  
water-borne diseases.

Australians are in the midst of a  
devastating drought, so we know  
from this bitter experience the  
suffering that lack of water entails.  
We must be conscious of the need  
not to waste a drop at home and,  
as well, find ways to support and  
help those agencies which are  
working to prevent water being  
bought and sold for profit in the  
global water market.

If you would like to support the  
Right to Water campaign run by  
AID Watch, your tax deductible  
donations can be sent to the AID/  
WATCH Office, 19 Eve Street,  
Erskineville 2043 9557 8944.

### **Just Blobs of Fat**

I don’t suppose that the fans of the  
chase will ever run out of ideas for  
titillation for sex. Bum cleavage  
will become more visible than  
pushed up bazooms soon, or may  
be surpassed in a moment or two.  
One assiduous male critic told me  
disapprovingly that this come-on  
did not always lead up to its  
promise.

Bra manufacturers do not seem  
now to manufacture pushups for  
the ripe melon effect. Now the  
torso glimpses get wider and  
wider, just short of causing offence  
by exposing nipples. Is this effect  
maintained by expert hidden  
wiring? Such hypocrisy when

*(Continued on page 13)*

breastfeeding causes offence to some!

Does Botox get rid of the wrinkled foreheads of those tortured by teetering forwards on feet at 45 degree angles in stiletto heels? These need to be worn to achieve Kellogg Cardboard logo legs to regain the interest of the husband who requires such stimulation as the TV ad suggests.

With a certain irony, focused by age, can I say to my feminist friends, "So what else has changed?" Well, after all, I squeezed my body into controlling bras and corselettes of rubbery material, hellish in hot weather. I forced my feet into narrow shoes which eventually caused bony humps, as a female doctor pointed out to me. A fat lot of good glamour did for my body or interest from the opposite sex!

What has changed for the better, you may ask, in these enlightened times? Sex is still a marketable commodity, as prostitution in one form or another reveals. Hypocrisy still flourishes, when one considers that buttocks are supposed to cushion the spine from injury and wear and tear, and breasts are meant to be used as feed bags for babies.

The fashion aficionados never seem to run out of ideas for testosterone stimulation. Do gentle OWN readers think much or not at all about this great dilemma? I take the observer's view now, bones are my line of unfortunate interest, as in creaky.

**Enid Harrison**

### **Arnica "does not work"**

Arnica, a popular and well-known homeopathic remedy widely believed to help control bruising, swelling and generally help recovery from an injury or operation, is no more effective than a dummy treatment, according to a UK study.

The study, published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, involved three groups of patients who were about to have surgery on their wrists for carpal tunnel syndrome. One group was given "high-potency" (30C) homeopathic arnica tablets to be taken before the operation and afterwards for two weeks. Another group was given "low-potency" (6C) tablets and the third was given a placebo.

Patients filled in a standard pain-assessment questionnaire before and after surgery, and recorded their symptoms and use of painkillers in a daily "pain diary". Researchers analysed photographs of patients' wrists, using computer software to measure exact shades of bruising. They also measured changes in swelling around the wrist.

Results suggest there was "no significant difference" between any of the groups in terms of pain, bruising, swelling, or the number of painkillers the patients had taken.

Lead researcher, Professor Ernst, says that arnica's reputation may have come about through "positive selection bias". Some patients recover quickly from surgery, and if they have been taking arnica, they tell their friends that the remedy helps. But if they recover well without arnica, or they take it and recover slowly, they are much less likely to tell others of their experience and the myth becomes reinforced, he suggests.

<http://www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=2860>

I know what I believe.  
I will continue to  
articulate what I believe  
and what I  
believe, uh I believe  
what I believe is right."  
George W. Bush,  
in Rome, July 22, 2001

### **Computer users over 40**

*A computer was something on TV  
From a science show of note  
A window was something you  
hated to clean  
And ram was the father of a goat*

*Meg was the name of my  
girlfriend  
And gig was a job for the nights  
Now they all mean different  
things  
And that really mega bytes*

*An application was for  
employment  
A program was a TV show  
A cursor used profanity  
A keyboard was a piano.*

*A Memory was something that  
you lost with age  
A CD was a bank account  
And if you had a 3-in floppy  
You hoped nobody found out*

*Compress was something you did  
with the garbage  
Not something you did with a file  
And if you unzipped anything in  
public  
You'd be in jail for a while.*

*Log on was adding wood to the  
fire  
And drive was a long trip up the  
road  
A mouse pad was where a mouse  
lived  
And a backup happened to a  
commode.*

*Cut you did with a pocket knife  
Paste you did with glue  
A web was a spider's home  
And a virus was the flu.*

*I guess I'll stick to my pad and  
paper  
And the memory in my head.  
I hear nobody's been killed in a  
computer crash  
But when it happens they wish  
they were dead.*

**Maureen King's daughter**

# Voluntary Euthanasia

OWN Sydney invited Dorothy Simons, ex-President, and now Vice-President, of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society (VES) of NSW Inc., to speak to members and friends in January. Dorothy has been involved with VES since 1976. She has also been involved with the Family Planning Association, Women's Electoral Lobby and the Preterm Foundation for many years. She described the work of VES and commented on the debate surrounding this very controversial topic. She answered many questions and made the following relevant points:

The aim of the Society is to "promote legislation which, with proper safeguards, entitles any person suffering severe pain or distress, with no reasonable prospect of recovery, to a painless and dignified death in accordance with his or her expressed direction". VES is a member of the more than 30 World Federation of Right to Die Societies.

An Advance Health Care Directive deals with a person's future health care if or when they cannot speak for themselves. So when a person is competent they can make their wishes known in writing. However, a request for euthanasia would not be followed. If you give someone Enduring Power of Attorney they can make health care decisions on your behalf.

Palliative and hospice care is excellent for people whose pain and symptoms can be controlled and who want this option. However, there are about five percent of people at the end of life for whom relief is not possible.

At present many doctors help patients to die although voluntary euthanasia in NSW is not legal.

There are no controls and there is a greater possibility of abuse than would exist under appropriate legislation.

The AGM of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of NSW will be held on at 2pm on Sunday, March 30 at the Dougherty Centre, Victor Road, Chatswood, followed by open discussion led by Dr Peter Baume. Everyone is welcome.

**Jan Monson**

## Join Us!

OWN's current affairs discussion group is reassembling and we invite new members to join us for coffee and discussion once a month.

What do we talk about? Well, for want of a better word, we talk about politics, but don't retreat in horror at this very heavily charged word. We say that politics is what is happening to us, and our society, from day to day and as intelligent, wise and experienced older women we want to participate in our society, and not be side-lined just because we are no longer in the workforce.

We think the best way to start is to be thoroughly informed about everything that affects our lives.

No longer is there a simple left or right matrix in politics. Every issue has so many aspects so we talk about the burning questions of the day, discuss if there is any way we can help to bring about change.

Our first discussion this year will probably continue the one that concerned us last year when the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) was held at Homebush.

These talks are very scary because the quality of the majority of women's lives will depend on their success or failure. If our government signs the agreement with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) this year, we could see the

privatisation of government services such as hospitals, health clinics, schools, child care, nursing homes and disability services. The rationale being that business is a more efficient provider of services than the government.

Actually, the GATS Agreement is designed to help transnational corporations constrain or even override democratic government laws. Its ultimate purpose is to commercialise every service sector in every WTO country. It is extraordinarily broad and even threatens domestic and international regulations that protect the environment and conserve natural resources.

Public concern is growing, but it must be more widely understood by more people. Our letters, sent to the Minister of Trade last year, brought lengthy replies from him justifying the Government's pro-GATS stance. This leads us to believe that the Bill agreeing to these measures will be quietly pushed through without anyone realising what we are in for. Let's hope it is brought into the open by a private member's bill or some Senator standing up and demanding answers. This is what happened three years ago when the Multinational Agreement on Trade reared its ugly head. It was then defeated by well organised citizens' movements all over the world.

This is just one of the issues we will be talking about. If you have other topics you'd like to chew the fat about come to morning tea at Windmill Street at 10.30 on Friday, 21 March.

**Muriel Hortin**

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A guy asks an American, "What proof do you have that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction?"

The American replies: "We kept the receipts."

# Notices

## FREE Forum

Zonta, YWCA, Womensport & Recreation NSW and the Women's Electoral Lobby have joined forces to present a forum during IWD week.

**6.30 to 9.00pm, Wednesday 5 March 2003**

**YWCA, Level 4, 5-11 Wentworth Avenue, Darlinghurst**

Hear what the major political parties have planned for achieving opportunities and equality for women in NSW and to respond to your questions. Jan Burnswood (ALP), Patricia Forsythe (Lib), Lee Rhiannon (Greens), Nina Burrige (Dems), Melinda Pavey (Nat) are in the hot seat with MC extraordinaire Julie McCrossin to keep us focussed and entertained.

**Phone Christina, 9285.6211, by 28 February, to book.**

## Lunch Hour Talk -

**Jessie Street National Women's Library**

**12 noon to 1.30 pm Thursday 20 March, 2003.**

Southern Function Room, Level 4, Town Hall House, 456 Kent St, Sydney

Entry \$20 (non-members) \$15 (members). Sandwich lunch included.

Speaker: Gina Lennox. Editor, writer and film-maker, Gina Lennox outlines the history, culture, experiences and political struggles of Kurdish women and men from Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria, based on their contributions to her book *Fire, Snow and Honey: Voices from Kurdistan.* She also explores the ramifications of a war with Iraq from the Kurdish point of view.

**To book, phone Shirley on 9876 3927 or the Library 9265 9486**

## Remember Peggy?

*Archwoman* by Peggy Clarke, poet, writing teacher and passionate feminist is a self-published volume of poetry dealing with the poet's life.

Available from Peg Clarke, PO Box 718, Kingswood 2747 or from The Feminist Bookshop - \$20.

## \$\$ Please Note \$\$

**If you are currently receiving regular issues of *OWN Matters* it means that you are financial to 30 June, 2003.**

**A reminder to pay your subscription for 2003/2004 will be printed in the June 2003 issue.**

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