



# OWN MATTERS

*Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc.  
No. 20 July 2003*

## CONTENTS

Make it memorable! .....	1
Just politics?.....	2
Danger! Danger! Danger!.....	2
Coordinators' Report .....	3
Can you help? .....	3
It's <i>not</i> always too good to be true!.....	3
Theatre Group Report.....	4
No-to-be-missed walks .....	4
General Practice and Violence .....	5
Creative Ageing .....	5
Save Medicare .....	5
Calcium and fat .....	5
Declaration of Interdependence .....	6
Literary Letters.....	6
Help women in Iraq .....	6
Insights into Leadership .....	7
High salt levels in meals.....	7
Priorities!.....	7
Worth worrying about?.....	7
Letters to the Editor .....	8-9
<i>At and Beyond the Rocks</i>	
Sydney OWN.....	10
Nowra OWN .....	10
Newcastle OWN.....	11
Wollondilly OWN .....	11
Wagga Wagga OWN .....	12
Shellharbour OWN .....	12
The Baby Boomers .....	13
How the Inquisition Stole .....	13
Representing Older Women .....	14
Not a clue.....	14
Identifying Differences .....	14
Sight for Sore Eyes .....	15
Like it used to be .....	15
Killing Me Softly.....	16
Creative Writers .....	16
That's how it is! .....	16
Book Reviews .....	17
The Boob Poem .....	17
Mental attitude and cancer .....	18
The 'truth' about cats and dogs.....	18
Notices.....	19

## Make it memorable!

Conferences can be exhilarating, monumental talkfests or deadly boring affairs. OWN NSW conferences, where members are involved at all levels from planning and facilitation to entertaining, can provide a stimulating and memorable experience for all.

Many thanks to those of you who returned the workshop questionnaire with ideas and suggestions. Many of you expressed an interest in *Analysing and Writing Responses to Government Policy* and *Influencing Politicians* and we will keep these in mind for future workshops. Other suggestions included housing, information services, organisational structures, rural services, Aged Care, improving cohesiveness within OWN, developing our image, conflict resolution and the differences between rural and city members.

As it's only possible to hold four or five workshops, we have chosen what we consider to be an interesting mix of skill development and issues-focused workshops for this year. A draft Conference program is included to whet your appetite/s.

The special strengths of OWN are highlighted at our conferences when old friends greet one another with warm hugs, and new friends are made. One of the main principles upon which OWN was established is inclusiveness. In practical terms this means including older women of all shapes and sizes, all ethnic backgrounds and all colours and creeds. It also means tolerance of personal difference and not defining ourselves by excluding people who are not like us, or who irritate us. When we accept and practice these values, noticeable by their lack in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we can return to our groups revived and renewed.

If you haven't registered for the conference there is still time, but you must act now! We need to firm up numbers so that accommodation and food arrangements can be confirmed with Sancta Sophia College.

Pat Simpson

## **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  
eighteen 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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Others should ask permission  
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### **Audio Version**

**OWN Matters** is available to  
subscribers on audio cassette at  
no extra cost.

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# Point of View

## **Just politics?**

I have just finished reading the June issue of *OWN Matters* and was pleased to read Russ Aroney's article, *A 'free' trade off?*

We are already being fed the line by government and private enterprise 'talking heads' about how wonderful a free trade agreement will be for the Australian farmers and manufacturers. This is absolute twaddle of the first degree, as Russ points out. The only benefits to come out of it will flow into the coffers of the US multinationals.

Since when has any past empire helped the countries they have conquered, be it by force or, as the US has been doing for some time, by political, economic and cultural invasion?

Anyone know how the words on the American anthem will fit into *Advance Australia Fair*? Just think about our presidential-style elections and US troops being allowed on Australian soil. Who runs our prisons and detention centres, how many US multinationals own our food industry, who owns our funeral services, our private hospitals?

Another article, *Characteristics of Fascism*, deserves to be read and re-read and passed on to as many people as possible. If you think that the United States is really the home of the free and the brave, then check out its record against the 14 points. Then go and check out what the Howard Government has done to Australia against the 14 points.

OK, so you want to shrug it off as 'politics'. By the way, when did you last complain about rising prices and how little you can buy with your pension? Oops, you were being political!

If we want to continue to have our say, have the right to protest, have the right of political thought, to have such an organisation as OWN, then we have to stand up and speak out before we find the horse has bolted. Like it or not, life ain't all milk and honey!

**June Goss**

## **Danger! Danger! Danger!**

Be alarmed and be alert at the prospect of Australia becoming an international nuclear waste dump. The OWN Aboriginal Support Circle invites you and your friends to join us to discuss this serious matter.

The fight to stop the proposed dumping of nuclear waste in South Australia has been led by Kupa Piti Tjuta - the Senior Aboriginal Women's Council, Coober Pedy, who were recently awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize 2003. A video and other material produced for their campaign will provide a basis for our discussion.

**10.30 am Monday 7 July      75 Windmill Street, Millers Point**

**Please bring lunch to share**

# OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

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The second Management Team is fast approaching its last meeting for 2003. Its duties conclude with the July meeting and the Annual General Meeting on 25 July that is part of the OWN NSW Annual Conference. The new 13 member Management Team will take over from the Conference. We hope that all groups have given due consideration to nominating women who wish to become part of the governing body of OWN NSW. Remember, nominations can also be made from the floor at the Conference.

Computer Training for Volunteers has commenced, with Bobbie Burke as our trainer. Trainees range from those who have never sat in front of a computer before to some who are quite skilled in some programs but not in others. Bobbie has organised training in groups of two or three to make learning enjoyable for everyone involved.

Thanks to Noreen Hewett and Isabel MacCallum for agreeing to be 'visiting lecturers' at the University of NSW and the University of Sydney last month. Noreen, with Peg Hewett and Lucy Porter illustrating some salient points with songs, spoke to 4<sup>th</sup> Year Social Work students on *My Experience is Your Evidence!* Isabel MacCallum's topic, *Ageing Well*, was delivered to students in the Faculty of Nursing at Sydney University. Isabel's opening remark: "You can age well – with grace and wisdom, wit and experience, energy and vitality", beautifully sums up our approach to ageing.

If you visit 87 Lower Fort Street, your attention, as you step inside the main meeting room, will be drawn to the striking quilts that hang on one wall. Conceived just prior to the last State conference, and created by members of Sydney OWN, the quilts are a testament to older women's deep concerns about violence and abuse, and to their creativity.

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

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## Can you help?

Over the past couple of years the OWN Aboriginal Support Circle (ASC) has been working towards the publication of a book of mainly older Aboriginal Women's stories to be entitled *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up*. The fifteen stories for this collection come from Aboriginal women who have been speakers at our meetings, including two who are members of the ASC, and from two non-Aboriginal women who have worked with Aboriginal communities.

Unfortunately, printing costs have risen dramatically since this project commenced, and despite some funding in the kitty from organisations and personal donations, there is still a serious shortfall.

The Aboriginal Support Circle appeals to OWN members for your support to enable this important project to proceed. All donations, large or small, will be greatly appreciated.

**Lucy Porter**

**Dorothy Cora**

## It's *not* always too good to be true!

It's a rare thing to be offered something for nothing, particularly so when the offer is from a bank! But that's what happened to us recently at 87. The Regional Manager of the National Australia Bank in George Street walked in off the street one day and offered to have the inside of our premises painted *for nothing*.

After some careful (well, suspicious, actually) questioning, we were told that the bank allows staff to have two days off each year for community service activities, and that they are provided with a small amount of money to assist the community group with whom they volunteer.

Given that 'banks' and 'community service' are not usually uttered in the same breath, we were astonished, to say the least.

So, a team of bank volunteers will not only paint our offices, but the bank will also provide the paint. In addition, OWN Sydney has received a cheque from the bank for \$300 to help with printing costs of its new brochure.

The painting will be done during the two days of our State Conference on 24 and 25 July, a most suitable arrangement, particularly for those of us who have a negative reaction to the smell of paint.

However, there is the small matter of preparing the office and for this we need volunteers to clear the walls and notice boards, pack away files and generally ensure there's nothing left out that will get in the way of the painters.

If you can help out on Monday 21, Tuesday 22 or Wednesday 23 July, please contact the office with details of your availability.

## Theatre Group Report

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We were delighted to welcome a new member, Brenda Hardwich, into our Group last month. Brenda is a seasoned performer with experience in theatre, dance and singing whose skills are very welcome. Earlier in the year, Monique Reiher, an active OWN member and Ceri Ritchie, who comes from Thiroul, joined the group and are now fully initiated and busy 'learning the words'.

On 20 May we held our Biggest Morning Tea (lunch, actually, and a short performance) at the Mott Hall.

After lunch we drew three raffle prizes (first prize was a bottle of brandy won by Ermes Solari) and awarded the *Count the Jelly Beans* competition prize of Jelly Beans to

Kris Ferguson, our financial whiz-kid in the office.

Although we were only a small group we managed to raise \$200, to which the Theatre Group added another \$200. So, we were able to give \$400 to the Cancer Council for the fight against cancer. It is through research that seven in every ten children who get Leukaemia now survive. In 1960, less than one in a hundred survived. Thank you for having a cuppa for cancer.

Instead of our usual meeting and rehearsal on Tuesday 10 June, the Theatre Group went to see *A Better Life* at the New Theatre in Newtown. For once we were the audience!

For the first half of June we focused on rehearsing for our appearance on the Andrew Denton show, *Enough Rope*.

The show goes to air on Monday nights on ABC TV at 9.30.

**Josephine Allon**

### Stop Press:

It's over! We have recorded for the Andrew Denton show.

Andrew described us at the end of the taping as a "landslide!"

We had a fantastic time.

Please make sure you watch the show on either 30 June, 7 or 14 July.

## Not-to-be-missed walks at Ulladulla

There's a lovely surprise in store for those of you going to the South Coast. On the northern head of the Ulladulla Harbour there are two walks built and designed by local Aboriginal People under grants from the Land Council. I have taken this walk three times now, and was delighted each time, despite being drenched by rain on the last visit. Ask for directions at the Information Centre.

The local 'mob' carved, varnished and painted old large split logs and placed these along the route. The pictures depict the life and environment before and after white settlement showing the richness in the variety of the ecosystems, from the ocean to the mountains close by. In few and humorous words, commentaries

give insight into the contrast of attitudes of the Aboriginal people and Europeans, to land and nature. The drawings and carvings are simple in style; everything is done very thoughtfully.

Local Aboriginal words are used to give the viewer the chance to learn some of the local language. I found it an exciting way "to walk through history as depicted from the viewpoint of the original inhabitants of the land". Animals, plants, varieties of fish are drawn, cut into the wood and named with lovely humorous anecdotes. Although one detects sadness at the results of white settlement and the resultant misunderstandings when local hunter-gatherers used their traditional methods for gathering food, I was amazed that

little anger and indignation was displayed.

I just loved the section when one comes to a lookout where there is a platform for viewing whales and dolphins. On this platform is a series of drawings cut into wood, and again, using few words, the story is told so well of the surprise of the locals on seeing the first sailing ships and then the consequences to their lives.

One can feel the love and pride in the land of the local people and how abundant and beautiful were their resources. I'm sorry I have not kept names, but fully intend to see it again as soon as I can. There are two branches to the walk, and I'd recommend it to anyone travelling south.

**Norma Anet**

## General Practice and Family Violence

General Practitioners who read around the subject of family violence admit the frequency of it: something like 1 in 10 to 1 in 4 of the people we see have issues with abuse by, or to, a family member. It is important that patients feel able to use GPs to help them with this problem, as well as more 'medical' ones.

GPs generally have patients who come with a complaint that we treat. The difficulty is when the complaint is embarrassing or not a 'medical' one. To uncover this needs time in the consultation and permission to talk about things that are not concrete. Patients can help by booking a long consultation. This is a flag to doctors that serious issues will be discussed.

Doctors should look past the list of physical complaints in at least one consultation a year. This can be identified at a regular consultation. A suitable script might be that the GP and the patient look at coping, sleeping and mental good health: an indication to the patient that this is a different consultation. GPs do this easily for PAP smears, cardiac risk consultations and diabetes checks. Now we need to consider mental/social health checks as a regular annual consultation.

Good general practice is good for all medicine, that is, listening comes before talking. Some GPs have a sign saying: "It's OK to talk to me about anything". I have seen similar words on a mug that the GP keeps on his or her desk. It serves as an excellent talking point.

Many practices have patients fill in a questionnaire at the first consultation. This can be used to ask about sexuality and could also incorporate a mission statement of the practice, indicating the

willingness to talk about "non-medical things that worry you".

Doctors serve as reality checks for patients. It is important for a woman to hear that there is never an excuse for violence. GPs are generally good networkers and can find legal, social, housing and psychological resources for patients. Doctors can serve as a confidential place to sort out thoughts, feelings, plans and contacts.

Doctors have authority as witnesses, both legally and socially, and must keep patient notes for at least seven years.

**Dr Linda Mann GP**

## Creative Ageing

Are you fed up with the way we are always stereotyped? Our society is very youth centred and we suffer ageist attitudes in all sorts of subtle ways all the time. Older women are usually 'grannies' or old people who have to be looked after. We are pitied for being old. Older women know these impressions are wrong. In fact most of us have a jolly good time and are often happier and more carefree than we have ever been.

To help change these tiresome ageist attitudes we have received a Government grant to launch a project called *Creative Ageing – Older Women Still Having Fun*.

This project will provide opportunities for older women to be involved in eight weekly workshops during which professional trainers will teach us creative and humorous techniques such as cartooning and satirical art. We will then use our skills to produce posters, cards and designs for calico bags and T-shirts to challenge the stereotypical image of older women. Please see the enclosed flyer for more info.

**Muriel Hortin**

## Save Medicare

Australians pay for and benefit from one of the most cost-effective public health systems in the world. Our Medicare cards enable us to access quality health care when we need it. From richest to poorest, we all pay for this system through taxes and Medicare levies.

Inclusiveness – universality – is the key to its success. But the Federal Government is mounting the biggest attack on Medicare and affordable health care since its introduction. If Howard's changes to Medicare go through it will Americanise our system: increasing the cost without increasing the care.

It's up to us to ensure that these changes don't go through. If they do, co-payments for doctor's visits announced in this year's budget will open up a future of rapidly increasing costs for doctor's visits. This will mean that more people will be forced to go to emergency rooms to be treated. This will put further pressure on our public hospital system, and one day some of us will have no access to health care at all.

Make a fuss! Write to your local member and/or join the SAVE MEDICARE ALLIANCE – phone Megan Lee, 9281 3588 for more information.

**Cate Turner**

## Calcium and fat

New research in the US demonstrates that higher calcium intake increases fat use by our bodies.

Since calcium is an important part of a healthy diet and maintains healthy bones, this is very good news, especially for those of us who would prefer to be a little lighter.

International Journal of Obesity  
2003;27:196-203

## **Declaration of Interdependence**

*A David Suzuki Foundation team wrote the following Declaration of Interdependence in 1992 for the United Nations' Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.*

### **This We Know**

We are the earth, through the plants and animals that nourish us.

We are the rains and the oceans that flow through our veins.

We are the breath of the forests of the land, and the plants of the sea.

We are human animals, related to all other life as descendants of the firstborn cell.

We share with these kin a common history, written in our genes.

We share a common present, filled with uncertainty.

And we share a common future, as yet untold.

We humans are but one of thirty million species weaving the thin layer of life enveloping the world.

The stability of communities of living things depends upon this diversity.

Linked in that web, we are interconnected — using, cleansing, sharing and replenishing the fundamental elements of life.

Our home, planet Earth, is finite; all life shares its resources and the energy from the sun, and therefore has limits to growth.

For the first time, we have touched those limits.

When we compromise the air, the water, the soil and the variety of life, we steal from the endless future to serve the fleeting present.

### **This We Believe**

Humans have become so numerous and our tools so powerful that we have driven fellow creatures to extinction, dammed the great rivers, torn down ancient forests, poisoned the earth, rain and wind, and ripped holes in the sky.

Our science has brought pain as well as joy; our comfort is paid for by the suffering of millions.

We are learning from our mistakes, we are mourning our vanished kin, and we now build a new politics of hope.

We respect and uphold the absolute need for clean air, water and soil.

We see that economic activities that benefit the few while shrinking the inheritance of many are wrong.

And since environmental degradation erodes biological capital forever, full ecological and social cost must enter all equations of development.

We are one brief generation in the long march of time; the future is not ours to erase.

So where knowledge is limited, we will remember all those who will walk after us, and err on the side of caution.

### **This We Resolve**

All this that we know and believe must now become the foundation of the way we live.

At this turning point in our relationship with Earth, we work for an evolution: from dominance to partnership; from fragmentation to connection; from insecurity, to interdependence.

## **Literary Letters**

Reading hand written letters definitely seems to offer us more personal and confidential information about the writer's private life. Sadly, nobody seems to write letters anymore; they write emails! Imagine trying to save significant email communications for fifteen or fifty years!

Following are some marvellous volumes of literary letters to enjoy.

*Sylvia Plath Letters Home 1950-1963* (Ed. Aurelia Schober Plath)

*Jean Rhys' Letters 1931-1966* (Ed. Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly)

*Congenial Spirits: Selected Letters of Virginia Woolf* (Ed. Joanne Trautmann Banks)

*The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield: 1903-1917* (Ed. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott)

*Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters* (Ed. Carla Kaplan and Robert Hemenway)

*May Sarton: Selected Letters, 1955-1995* (Ed. Susan Sherman)

**Kate Smith**

### **Help the women in Iraq shape their future.**

We have watched in anger and despair the pain of Iraqi women whose children have suffered for want of medical supplies and whose country is now devastated by war. Humanitarian aid such as medical supplies, food and shelter is necessary but there is a greater opportunity to help the women of Iraq shape their future.

Please donate to the International Women's Development Agency and make a difference. Send to IWDA PO Box 64, Flinders Lane, Melbourne 8009, phone 03 9650 5574 or [www.iwda.org.au](http://www.iwda.org.au).

## Insights into Leadership for Women

A paper, *Insights into Leadership for Women*, written by Diann Rodgers-Healey, is based on research conducted by the Centre for Leadership for Women.

Among the conclusions she reached about women and leadership are:

- Life experience focuses and incrementally develops women's leadership skills.
- Empowering others to achieve their vision and potential emerges as the main definition of leadership among women.
- Women need assistance from others who've achieved their visions.
- Most women leaders don't help other women to achieve the same.
- The workplace, the family and the community are the three significant domains in which women want to be leaders.
- Support, education and training are vital to achieve women's leadership in the workplace.

Visit the Centre for Leadership for Women website to read *12 Insights into Leadership for Women* or phone the OWN office for a copy.

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### High salt levels in prepared meals

Many prepared meals sold in supermarkets contain excessive levels of salt according to researchers from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) who investigated levels of salt in six popular meals. They found that some single portions of everyday favourites, such as shepherd's pie, lasagne and chicken korma, contained well over half the recommended maximum daily salt intake.

The study also examined the standard, 'healthy' versions of each type of meal and found some of the dishes, specifically aimed at children had salt levels as high as those found in adult meals. And, although on average the healthy choice meals contained slightly less salt than the standard versions, the differences were negligible.

Salt is used to lengthen shelf-life and improve texture, as well influence flavour, and it also provides sodium, a key nutrient.

But salt is also a key factor in increasing people's blood pressure. People with high blood pressure are three times more likely to die from heart disease and stroke than people with normal blood pressure levels. [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)

### Priorities!

Did you know...

- The defence budget for 2003-4 is \$13.970 billion and that this is up 6.3% on last year's spending and \$810m more than is spent on education?
- That 'public order and safety' (security, spies and so on) spending is up 11.8% on last year?
- That private schools now receive \$130 million per year more than universities because of the way funding is indexed?
- That health is up 10.5% and social security and welfare are up 5%, but housing and community amenities are down 4.1%, which is not good for women?

**Jennifer Bull**

## Worth worrying about?

The following is an extract from a parliamentary speech on a Gender Neutral Language by the Hon. Sandra Kanck, Leader of the Democrats in the SA Legislative Council.

"I think it is insulting and patronising to be told that he means she and his means her, because I am not a he and I resent being asked to accept this. One can imagine what men would say if we began using the words she and her and saying that they also mean he and his. There would be howls of protest. Yet women are expected to simply accept that they are subsumed in the use of male dominated language.

"One of the things I came across (on researching this topic on the web) was something called *The Bedford Handbook* by Diana Hacker. She refers to the early years of the women's movement when language was a hotly debated topic. She said: Many people, both men and women, felt there was nothing wrong with using he to mean he or she, or with using words like mankind, and they resented being asked to change their ways. They argued that according to tradition everyone knew that such terms included women.

"Feminists attempted to expose the absurdity of this view with sentences like these: Man, like the other mammals, breastfeeds his young, and everyone should be able to decide for himself whether to have an abortion.

"Feminists argued that sexist language has a powerful negative impact on women: it makes women invisible, reinforces stereotypical gender roles, and limits women's opportunities and even their aspirations."

(Let us know what *you* think. Eds.)

# Letters to the Editor

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## Life enhancing remedies

It was good to read Josephine Conway's letter in the June newsletter. Thanks, Josie, for your lifetime's ongoing commitment to supporting women in our struggle to maintain control of our bodies and minds. Yes, we do care that the forces marshalled against us seem to be growing monstrous. And yes, we'll continue to resist them.

Josephine's letter is a timely reminder that we older women must remain vigilant in our endeavours to look after our own health and wellbeing in a global setting of profiteering pharmaceutical companies and governments hell-bent on privatisation and so-called free-trade agreements. We must literally cultivate our own gardens (yes, cherish your garden and all wild places!) to ensure our continuing access to health remedies still freely available from nature. Ensure that you and your grandchildren know a lot about the therapeutic and life-enhancing powers of herbs and so-called weeds. Make sure that they grow where you live. There is a gentle remedy for just about every ailment in nature – free, unpatented and uncontaminated (at present, anyway).

It is no coincidence that the Pan Pharmaceuticals blow-up came at the same time as the government's attack on Medicare – a government terrorist act to frighten us into believing that conventional medicine is the one true way, even if you have to pay more for it in future.

The real purpose of much current medical research is to make big profits for pharmaceutical companies and bring into disrepute ways of healing, birthing

and dying that have enriched human life for millennia.

Cheers to all those women supporting the wellness centres and to all wild women resisting the m.a.d\* manoeuvres of the powerful profiteers.

**Carolyn Rose**

\* Mutual Assured Destruction  
*"A concept of reciprocal deterrence which rests on the ability of the two nuclear superpowers to inflict unacceptable damage on one another after surviving a nuclear first strike."*

John Packer, *A Glossary of Arms Control Terms*, Washington, D.C. Arms Control Association, 1979, courtesy of Mary Daly's Wickedary of the English Language.

## Not many options

Last month Margaret Sargent wrote concerning the lack of temporary accommodation for older women in the city.

Now I want to draw attention to the lack of accommodation for the temporarily sick. There is nowhere to go, even for those who have medical insurance if you are not sick enough for hospital care.

It is very frightening for old people who live alone and who experience health problems like upper respiratory infections with severe coughing accompanied by fever at night.

The only option they have is to call 000 and be taken to hospital as an emergency or be comforted and possibly reassured by kindly ambulance drivers. Sometimes temporary overnight care is available through HACC but this needs to be booked in advance and is not possible most of the time.

**Helen Monaghan**

## Support is important

As a long standing member of Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Western Sydney, I recently attended the launch of PFLAG Bankstown. PFLAG events are always supported by the Gay community, but this was something different.

Linda Burney, the newly elected member for the NSW Parliament, enthusiastically supported the new group and declared her commitment to civil rights. She read out part of the speech she made recently in favour of the equal age of consent. The applause was overwhelming.

But that is not all. Helen Westwood, the Mayor of Bankstown, also declared her support. To many of you this may not seem a major event. But to parents and families it was a miracle. At PFLAG Western Sydney we regularly invite local dignitaries to special events, but the response is always a polite "No". Come to think of it, when has OWN ever mentioned, let alone supported, a group connected to the Gay Community, in particular, the needs of older lesbians?

**Mollie Smith**

## My Story

I still have a few copies of my self-published book, *From Holocaust to Haven*, available. The published price is \$40. I thought it might strike a few chords/memories for some OWN members, so I will donate one to the OWN library.

Like others, I found the recent forum on domestic violence most interesting, useful and very well organised. Thank you.

**Nora Huppert**

# Letters to the Editor

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## Low cost funerals

Recently, an elderly cousin, died. I had only discovered him when researching the Family Tree ten years ago. Before he died he told me he wanted a very plain funeral with the plainest coffin.

It was possible to get the price down to \$3200 with flowers, for a cremation, though it can be done cheaper without flowers. Although I didn't have time to do it, I have seen friends place a special bouquet of wild flowers on the coffin themselves, and then someone brought a big basket of flowers for the attendees to take and place on the coffin in one part of the service. It was all very beautiful and inexpensive.

I understand that Jewish funerals are very plain and practical, but I haven't been able to find out more about that.

I'm told that the American firms now own most of the crematoriums and prices are rising dramatically. One woman had paid for a pre-paid funeral and a plot in the lawn cemetery, but despite this, a charge of \$2000 was presented to her relatives for putting her ashes on the rose garden! A relative who is in the funeral business told me this. I opted to have the ashes scattered over the harbour by a friend at no cost.

**Norma Anet**

## Beyond Comparison

Congratulations to the Editors of *OWN Matters* on a newsletter beyond comparison. I devour it as soon as it arrives – it inspires me every time – and then hand it on to our members, some of whom, I understood, were intending to subscribe separately. Maybe they haven't yet got around to it,

although the most likely explanation is the \$20 fee. We are all aged pensioners with no other income.

I am enclosing my subscription, because I couldn't imagine life without my dose of *OWN Matters*. I hope one day soon to contribute something myself. I am just recovering from a long and dreadful illness, and this is my first time sitting down to try my arthritic arm on the keyboard to write this.

**Betty Pybus, Tasmania**

## Important for older people to participate

In long lifetimes, older people have the advantage of their many and varied experiences. This was recognised as wisdom in other ages. If they have learnt tolerance and have broadened their minds, they have much to give to younger souls. Yet nowadays, they are subjected to arrogant patronage and disdain by the young, and too often by professionals.

There is a need to learn a balance about tolerance and it does not always apply. I find that I have become more than a little intolerant about talking heads. We can't do much about these on television, but we need to in the meeting places and halls in the land. In my experience, I have formed the assumption that if you want people to listen to what you have to say, you need to allow a two-way trade.

It is particularly important for older people that they participate and stay in life, so they do not suffer the pain and inconvenience of social isolation. Too many forums, seminars, meetings on political, health and social matters have agendas without allowing

time for questions and discussions.

It is important to let the audience learn from answers to questions, and to consider their own beliefs in discussion. It is also important that the speakers learn from interaction with live audiences. Teachers and more doctors see the need for this, as people will not absorb if they are not participants in what has to be discussed. A word of advice is that too much lecturing can become boring, and listeners will not listen.

Away with talking heads – they can put that in their pipes and smoke it, as the old saying goes – being aware, of course, that smoking is addictive also.

**Enid Harrison**

(First published in *Peninsular News*  
20.5.03)

## An angry (f)email

It never ceases to amaze me when reading of white men's blatant, arrogant, racist statements. This morning's SMH featured a heading, 'Iraqi civilian death toll is a minimum of 3240.' How would the people of USA have reacted to this headline if it was referring to their loss on September 11? How would we have reacted to this wording with regard to our losses at Bali? Oh, the boys, the boys, what havoc they wreak!

**Zelda D'Aprano**

## Hope springs eternal

An older man at work was seen putting a credit card into his floppy drive and pulling it out very quickly. When asked what he was doing, he said he was shopping on the Internet and they kept asking for a credit card number, so he was using the ATM 'thingy'!

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## Sydney OWN

It's been a heady mix of the social and the serious this month. Our continuing program includes Music in Mosman, Creative Movement, Lost Ladies of History, Current Affairs discussion group, Writing Group lunches, Wellness on Wednesdays and quarterly fish lunches.

Recently, we enjoyed a pleasurable morning with Margery Smith who indulged us with music on the clarinet, as well as telling us about some interesting directions in her life. Those who were present say that it needs to be repeated! Thank you, Margery. On Winter Solstice we celebrated the survival of our older sisters, the day being complete with OBEs (Over Blooming Eighties) and masks, champers and lots of fun.

Our Family and Community Services funded project, *Creative Ageing Women - Still Having Fun*, is being managed by Muriel Hortin and Peg Hewett. (Please see the enclosed flyer).

The grant for Wellness on Wednesdays runs out at the end of

June so, in order to keep the program running in the short term, we will be charging \$5 for each activity. In the meantime, we are looking for alternative sources of funding.

You've no doubt already read Dorothy Cora's article about the \$300 we received from the National Bank. The money will be used to print a classy new brochure which will help us promote OWN Sydney more widely.

Thanks to Frances Sodaro, the *Older Women's Right to Safety at Home* quilt is now hanging in the meeting room at 87. The *Older Women's Right to Safety at Home* Committee has decided to explore ways of mapping NSW services for older women experiencing violence and abuse. We have also commissioned a number of articles on medical, police and legal issues, the first, by Linda Mann, is on p 5.

We are hoping that OWN Australia will be successful in finding national funding to produce a brochure on violence and abuse which can be placed in doctors waiting rooms. Martha Ansara,

facilitator of a discussion on the current state of the world at our Members Quarterly Meeting, expressed despair and weariness about the war in Iraq and its aftermath, as did everyone present. It's good to know so many of our members care about the big issues. Members at the meeting were reminded that there are seven positions on the Management Team of OWN NSW to be filled by Sydney members, so do come to the State conference in July to support our peak body.

The committee preparing for the 2003 OWN (A) National Conference is drafting a resolution to have a role for State OWNs included in the national constitution. We are also making suggestions about issues which we would like OWN (A) to take up, for example, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Medicare, ageing, aged care and income security. The final resolutions will be put to the OWN-S Working Group meeting on August 9, prior to being forwarded to the OWN (A) conference.

**Joy Ross and Louise Anike**

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## Nowra OWN

Nowra OWN 'discovers' 5W! At our meeting on 16 May our guest speaker was Gloria Hodgson, an unofficial ambassador for 5W.

"What's 5W?" I hear you ask. Well, we learned that it stands for *Women Welcome Women World Wide*. It's an international friendship organisation for women. Especially women travellers.

Members can contact other members (in other Australian States or in other countries – 73 altogether), and arrange to stay for two or three days. This can give the traveller a chance to take a breather, catch up on laundry, letters, etc. But it gives more than this. It means a friendly person will meet them and make them welcome, maybe take them to local places they'd never see otherwise. It can lead to great friendships as people

meet people they'd like to have come and stay with them, although reciprocity is not a necessary condition of membership.

I can't go into all the details here, but 5W is clearly beneficial for women travelling alone – it could make all the difference between travelling and not travelling.

Gloria has been in 5W for almost twenty years, and is extremely enthusiastic about its value. She has travelled extensively, and made friends all over the world. I know she would be happy to talk to other OWN groups. Gloria came to Nowra for three days, and it rained continuously! But we had a fine time and learned a lot.

Gloria Hodgson can be contacted on 4950 9648 or if I can help, call me on 4422 0112.

**Everald Garner**

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## Newcastle OWN

Our first special event for this year was a Meet the Candidates Forum in February where representatives from four political parties spoke about their policies to our members and invited guests.

Then we had a terrific Seniors Week, holding a Wellness Information morning followed by a storytelling event, *Listen Up to Older Women*, and an information stall at a major shopping centre. One outcome has been an invitation to sit on the Newcastle-Lake Macquarie Seniors Week Advisory Panel, which we have accepted.

Following Seniors Week, three of our members joined the Fostering Wellness tour organised by OWN NSW. We returned home fired up with the hope that Newcastle OWN can expand its activities to include more wellness activities.

Our Advocacy Group has made representations to State Government politicians about a number of issues. We have complained about lack of luggage space on trains, written letters to Hunter Health about finding out who is directly responsible for patient care in public hospitals, and expressed concern to local government about the possible loss of an important Newcastle building. One of our members represents us on the Newcastle Community Safety Panel and keeps us informed of developments there.

Our Craft Group has recently decided to work on a collective quilt. Members will be contributing squares illustrating either a special memory from their lives or their involvement with OWN and what it means to them.

In April we surveyed our members to ask for suggestions on improving our activities and how we can share the workload beyond the Committee. This was a useful exercise and has already led to the allocation of numerous jobs to members. The information gained about members' preferences will assist in discussions about further wellness activities.

The speaker at our AGM in June was Jenny Powers, from Women's Health Australia, based at the University of Newcastle. Jenny gave a fascinating account of the longitudinal research on women's health being undertaken by her group. The visit has already led to Jenny suggesting more contact with our group, and she has also recommended to Women's Health Australia that a specific sub-study be undertaken on women and healthy ageing. In addition, she has put us in touch with other relevant organisations, such as the Hunter Institute on Ageing, and we will be pursuing these new contacts to see what benefits there might be for OWN Newcastle. Closer contact with the Women's Health Centre is also being explored.

We have had other interesting speakers this year, including a woman from the Warlga Ngurra Refuge in Newcastle.

The current Committee was returned at our recent AGM which will provide some stability for us in the coming year. We face a busy time, as we have received a Commonwealth Government grant of \$2000 to hold an event to promote Positive Ageing, and we aim to combine this with a celebration of Newcastle OWN's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in September.

**Pat Carlton**

## Wollondilly OWN

We've been having a ball as usual – lots of outings and lots more planned.

Our Drummers have recently had a huge success! Together with the Drumarama group from Campbelltown, they performed at the Argentinian National Day Festival. It was a big step for them to play Argentinian Drumming to an audience who really knew their drumming. We were their surprise guests.

One of our drummers, who did not want to be part of the performance, was sitting in the audience. When the curtains opened, she said we were blinking in the spotlights, looking scared stiff like rabbits caught in the car headlights and with the most worried looks on our faces.

We were introduced by our lovely teacher and went into our introduction, which included us chanting *Viva, Viva*, and ended with our sticks clapping above our heads as we shouted *Viva Argentina*. A deathly silence followed for about five seconds then the audience were on their feet shouting and clapping. And that was just our introduction! Our member who had declined to join us on stage said the transformation was lovely to behold. Relaxed and beaming, by the end of the performance we had completely won the audience over and the upshot of it all was we have been invited back next year to take part in the Uruguay Day Celebrations in August and the Chili Day of Celebration in September. We have had many local performances lately but none as satisfying as playing before an audience who have grown up to the sound of Argentinian drums.

**Barbara Malcolm**

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## Wagga Wagga OWN

During Seniors Week 2003 we accepted an invitation from the Seniors Week 2003 Committee to debate *That Maturity Matters* with a team of students from Koorringal High School.

Guess which side we older women took in the debate? We took the opposition! The students debated the affirmative and although they won, the adjudicator, Dr Brookes, said it was a close contest.

The First Speaker for the Opposition first of all defined a few terms, including maturity (full development), matter (to be important), intellect (knowing and reasoning), value (worth, desirability and utility) and social conscience (moral sense of right and wrong when living in organised communities).

Her argument was based on the ideas that intellect, the ability to produce something of value, having a social conscience, and being open to the needs of others are more important than maturity. None of these traits is dependent on maturity; therefore maturity does not matter.

The young are immature but they can also be vital, questing, ready to experiment, uninhibited, and fresh and ready to tackle the tasks ahead of them. Mature people may be happy to remain in the comfortable little rut that they have built around themselves. The young, or immature, are the ones who are able to accomplish what needs to be done, so again, maturity does not matter.

Many invaluable contributions have been made to society by the 'immature'. For instance, Mozart wrote four violin concertos in his nineteenth year and Mendelssohn wrote twelve symphonies for string by the age of fourteen. Charlotte Church, a young Welsh operatic singer still in her teens has thrilled

audiences in several countries. Many young people are recognised for their achievements in sport, politics and society. Maturity does not matter. Intellect and the ability to produce something of value to society are more important.

The second Speaker for the Opposition refuted the arguments of the Second Affirmative Speaker with some personal observations.

She drew attention to the fact that the members of the Opposition had obviously reached maturity. Some of them may even have gone past it!

Looking back, she said she saw a world without computers, calculators, mobile phones and sometimes even without any phones. During wartime people coped with loneliness, anxiety and rationing of essential items. Did maturity matter back then? No! We needed intelligence to overcome the hardships and survive productively as well as to act with sensitivity to the needs of others.

Today, we need intelligence to deal with the intricacies of modern banking and telephone systems, and patience to cope with electronic voices that ask us to press numbers and enjoy music while we wait interminably for a real person. Does maturity matter now? No!

**Dorothy Flint and Sylvia  
McRorie**

## Shellharbour OWN

Our group meets on the first and third Thursdays of each month. We can hardly believe that the year is almost half way through, but we can look back on a very busy schedule.

In March, many of us attended the International Women's Day celebration (*Women's Eggschange*) at

the Senior Citizens' Centre where there was an enjoyable exchange of ideas between students and Seniors and a lovely morning tea and lunch.

Members attended the opening of Seniors Week at Centenary Hall and to support Cancer Research we held a *Longest Morning Tea* in May – bang went everyone's diet!

Guest speakers have provided us with valuable information on a variety of subjects. The Community Liaison Coordinator from Mission Australia talked about support groups, counselling and the work of the Triple Care Farm. A health care consultant, in a talk on Older Women and Health, provided information about natural remedies for common complaints and Shellharbour Council's Worker for the Aged spoke on HACC services available in the community and changes in care for the aged.

Through to August, we are looking forward to visits from solicitor, Angela Devitt, who will talk on *Enduring Guardianship*; Nicky Sloan, from *Women for a Safer Community*, whose topic will be *Women's Experience of Fear* and the work of their committee; Joanne Luke will speak about *Home Hazards and Falls Prevention* and Barbara Dent's *Fun with Fashion*, will add a more light-hearted note.

Our OWN group has representation on some important local committees such as the Seniors Week Committee and the *Women for a Safer Community* committee, which has been involved with the very successful Intergenerational Forum. This was followed by the launch of the *Women's Wisdom Artwork*, which was a product of the forum. Jenni George graciously agreed to present this artwork to the community.

(Continues page 13)

A current project, a comprehensive *Welcome New Member Kit*, is off and running. In addition to information about OWN, we have included community information and local history and places of interest, as many of our members are new to the Shire.

While we would really like to participate in OWN NSW Quarterly meetings and other special events and focus groups in Sydney, transport from our region currently makes it just too difficult at present.

**Nan Pitt**



## How the Inquisition Stole Women's Health!

Naturopath, Karen Bridgman, was the very knowledgeable guest speaker at the forum, *How the Inquisition Stole Women's Health*, jointly organised by OWN and Northern Sydney Health and held on 30 May at the Dougherty Centre, Chatswood.

Karen provided an historical overview of the role women had as healers and health providers. In many societies, she said, women have traditionally held the secrets of healing. Their connection with nature and their knowledge of plants and herbs were gifts that became feared by those who did not possess them. Women who held ancient knowledge (and power!) were purged from our society over hundreds of years, culminating in the burning of the 'witches' during the inquisitions.

Attendance at the forum was high and following Karen's presentation there were many interesting questions and answers and a very lively discussion. Everyone seemed to enjoy the day, and evaluations were very positive.

**Renate Watkinson**

## The Baby Boomers

In our lifetime, when the glass ceiling was unbreakable, we lived a life in which boredom and alienation were primary factors for most of us. In my life, at least, job security did not figure much. As the film *The Hours* depicts, the 1950s was an era when decision-making didn't enter much into our perspective. We lived through a period when women were suppressed and oppressed, and we had to deal with stultifying conformity, albeit in a confused and often contradictory fashion.

Looking back, our lives were hard, but contrasted with present reality, it is a moot point whether life for female 'baby boomers' is as hard or even harder. They were born during a period of full employment and increasing affluence and have grown up during decades of hedonism, the growth of corporative culture, economic rationalism and globalisation.

Now life is catching up with them in the form of high mortgages that require them to work many hours unpaid overtime at work and at

home. Property and possessions are the measure of success, and many boomers have put themselves in hock living off credit.

Some are forced into early retirement at a relatively young age when the push for excessive company profits renders many high achievers expendable. The politicians are already running scared about the problems arising from the pending retirement of the large numbers of boomers, and this group will be a force to be reckoned with. They have learnt what constitutes a comfortable life, and will be much more demanding in retirement than we were.

The big question is where are the organisations that exist for the female boomers on retirement? There's our OWN organisation, but how can we entice the boomers to join us? I feel that a 'preachy' approach is not the way to win them over to our particular organisational structure. It might help, however, for us to examine from our own experience and strengths the issues that most

affect boomers in a society where immense wealth is in fewer and fewer hands and democracy is an increasingly wobbly concept.

Having spoken to a few women in the boomer category, I think some of their stresses come from the flood of consumer goods they feel they've got to have, inadequate incomes from casual work and under-employment and the death or declining health of a parent or spouse. Other stresses for women who've had a good career and are facing retirement are superannuation and budgeting, adjusting to new conditions, forging a new identity and dealing with funerals, family relationships, inheritance and making a will. Additional pressures also come from the aspirations many have for their offspring, viz, further education, and the increasing cost of maintaining health and wellbeing.

I think we need to be tuned into these issues if we want OWN to appeal to the next generation.

**Enid Harrison**

## Representing Older Women

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Late in 2002, I was nominated as the OWN NSW representative to the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHFA). Much good work had been done by our previous representative, Renate Watkinson, so OWN's voice was already respected on this forum.

A workshop was organised by CHFA in Sydney on 14 and 15 May to provide information about its role and functions to participants from all parts of Australia whose common concern is to have the interests of their organisations' health needs heard.

Nominated CHFA representatives pursue issues such as diversity of health needs and services. They spend time on specific committees, working groups, working parties, tribunals, boards, reference groups and consumer representatives on national bodies.

Consumer voices are able to provide an insight into policy directions and practices at all levels, although this concept still has a fair way to go in some situations.

OWN has excellent credibility and is a leading edge in best practice, showing independence of spirit well ahead of its time in acknowledging self-responsibility and management of health issues. As Pam Ledden wrote in *OWN Matters*, November 2002, "There are two separate opportunities for speaking on behalf of older women. The first involves representing OWN when OWN has been asked to send a representative and the second is being invited as an individual, usually with the understanding that they are members of OWN. In either case we generally speak from personal and/or professional experience, and bring added knowledge gained through our participation in OWN."

Two years ago I was invited to work as a volunteer consumer representative on the Northern Sydney Area Health Initiatives Committee for Acute and Post-Acute Care Services (APAC). It provides me with the opportunity to speak for my local networks as well as my OWN contacts. Following an accident last October, I took the opportunity to do a reality check over three months on local hospital service delivery, including discharge planning and home support.

By having a consumer representative on a health committee in your area, you too could be in a watchdog position. The more data that OWN has means the more we can use it for the mutual benefit of older women. I will be pleased to listen and act appropriately on any health issue you raise. My contact number, phone or fax, is 9420 2343.

For more information on CHFA, check the website [www.chf.org.au](http://www.chf.org.au) or read the CHFA journal and monthly *Health Updates* held in the OWN library.

**Jean Braithwaite**

### Not a clue

A couple of months ago I was checking out at the local Foodland with just a few items and the lady behind me put her things on the belt close to mine. I picked up one of those "dividers" that they keep by the cash register and placed it between our things so they wouldn't get mixed.

After the girl had scanned all of my items, she picked up the "divider", looking it all over for the bar code so she could scan it. Not finding the bar code she said to me, "Do you know how much this is?"

I said to her, "I've changed my mind, I don't think I'll buy that today."

She said "OK" and I paid her for the things and left. She had no clue as to what had just happened.

**Marion Keyes**

## Identifying Differences

Shlomo Argamon, a computer scientist, developed a computer program to analyse the texts of 566 British books and articles, both fiction and nonfiction, to find out whether women and men have different writing styles.

He found that female writers tend to choose grammatical terms that apply to personal relationships, such as "for" and "with," more frequently than men do. Women have a more interactive style; they want to create a relationship between the writer and the reader.

Men, on the other hand, use more numbers, adjectives and determiners – words such as "the," "this," and "that," because they apparently care more than women do about conveying specific information. Women, Argamon found, write the pronoun "she" more often than men do, although both sexes use "he" about equally.

Argamon claims that his program correctly determined the sex of the author in eighty percent of the works it checked. One it missed though, was A.S. Byatt's best-selling novel, *Possession*. The computer said it was written by a man.

**Lyn Casey**

## Sight for Sore Eyes

How wonderful not to have to peer any more! Thanks to the knowledge and expertise of the doctors at the Sydney Eye Hospital I have had an “intraocular lens replacement”. In lay terms, a cataract operation. The ageing process, eye injury, diabetes, or even some medications, can contribute to the development of a cataract, which is a clouding of the lens in the eye causing blurred or hazy vision.

I was expecting... well, I don't know quite what I was expecting. An overnight stay in hospital perhaps? A patched and wrapped - up face while the eye recovered? Nothing like that at all. The operation was completed in 25 minutes. That was it! The old lens had been removed and a permanent replacement inserted in its stead. I could see immediately, brilliantly, with no cloudiness. Unbelievable! And no pain at all.

While waiting for my daughter to drive me home, I was comforted by the thought that this expensive procedure, paid for by Medicare, would not cost me an arm and a leg. Nothing, in fact!

My thoughts turned to the very worrying legislation that the Federal Government has in its sights, if it gets the chance: the systematic and steady destruction of our public health system, Medicare. The universal health care system we have all relied on is very seriously under threat and, if the Government gets its way, only the most seriously disadvantaged in the community, like aged pensioners, will be eligible for free care.

This leaves out those thousands of people whose incomes are so low that expensive hospital procedures would be out of the question. These ‘working poor’ would not be able to access the medical benefits

they are at present entitled to receive. They will even have to pay for visits to the doctor if bulk billing is further eroded or they will have to compound the pressure on casualty and emergency treatment, already reaching crisis point, in public hospitals.

This is the highest taxing government in Australian history. There is no reason that we can't afford Medicare. We even have a surplus in the Budget!

OWN has recently joined the *SAVE MEDICARE ALLIANCE* which is calling on the Federal Government to properly fund public health and Medicare, amongst other reforms.

I sincerely hope that our members will get behind us to stop the Federal Government sending health care back to the dark ages and as for me, well, I can now work on my computer without sticking my face to within three centimetres of the screen.

**Muriel Hortin**

### ***Like it used to be...***

According to today's regulators and bureaucrats, those of us who were kids in the 50s, and 60s probably shouldn't have survived, because...

Our baby cots were covered with brightly coloured lead-based paint which was promptly chewed and licked.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, or latches on doors or cabinets.

When we rode our bikes, we wore no helmets, just thongs and fluorescent ‘clackers’ on our wheels. We rode in cars with no seat belts or air bags.

We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. We shared one drink with four friends,

from one bottle or can, and no one actually died from this.

We ate dripping sandwiches, bread and butter pudding and drank fizzy drinks with sugar in it, but we were never overweight because we were always outside playing.

We would spend hours building go-carts out of scraps and then go at top speed down the hill, only to find out that we forgot the brakes.

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back before it got dark. No one was able to reach us all day and no one minded.

We had friends – we went outside and found them. We walked to friends' homes.

We fell out of trees, got cut and broke bones and teeth, and there were no lawsuits. They were accidents. We learnt not to do the same thing again.

We had fights, punched each other hard and we learned to get over it.

Our actions were our own. Consequences were expected. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law. Imagine that!

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers and inventors, ever. The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all.

**Shirley James**

### **Well said**

“Political language – and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.”

**George Orwell**

# Killing Me Softly

## *Love, Death and Dying in Australia*

I recently attended a conference organised by Exit Australia. As the title implies, it was about Voluntary Euthanasia. It was a very thought-provoking and, at times, moving experience. We heard from Ian Cohen, one of the Greens in the Upper House of the NSW Parliament and from other politicians about the difficulties of changing the law, despite the fact that 70% of Australians appear to be in favour of Voluntary Euthanasia.

There are three places in the world where it is now legal for terminally ill people to have the choice to end their lives at a time of their choosing. These are the Netherlands, Belgium and the State of Oregon in the USA. Interestingly it has been found that once people have such a choice they actually tend to wait much longer before they take that option.

For me, the really bizarre situation is the legal position of someone who decides to help a loved one end their life because of a promise to prevent suffering. They may face imprisonment. This happened to Lesley Martin in New Zealand. She nursed her mother through the final six months of her life and then right at the end helped her to die. At the conference, she told us about this very sad experience and the consequences she is now facing.

We also heard about the formation of groups such as *Caring Friends* in the US and *Nancy's Friends* in Australia. These are people willing to be present to support people who have chosen to end their lives. And they are challenging the absurdity of the laws as they stand at the moment.

For more information about Exit Australia you can visit [www.euthanasia.net](http://www.euthanasia.net), email [exit@euthanasia.net](mailto:exit@euthanasia.net), or phone NSW EXIT on 0500-83-1929.

**Renate Watkinson**



## Creative Writers Wine and Dine

Our return luncheon visit to *Silks* on June 6 saw a record attendance of seven. We welcomed back Pam Sharpe from hospitalisation and newcomer, Denyse Rockey.

A near disaster had a happy ending when Joan Hook's missing wallet mysteriously turned up. The place was so crowded it was difficult to hear the pearls of wisdom uttered at our table, so we resolved to find quieter venues in future. The spunky man with a ponytail and earrings was behind the counter, which added to the

enjoyment of our fish and chips, omelette and lasagne.

Pam brought us details of a writing competition and, commencing in July, Jean Wurlod and Helen McMaugh will be attending a *Writing Memories* workshop at COTA for six weeks.

Polly Gow kindly offered to organise the July 4 lunch at the *Pancakes Parlour* in the Rocks. Hope they have some suitable fodder to honour Polly's homeland.

**Bon Vivant**

## That's how it is!

In April, writer, Maya Angelou was interviewed by Oprah on her 70th birthday.

Maya really is a marvel who has led quite an interesting and exciting life. Oprah asked her what she thought of growing older, and, there, on television, she said it was "exciting".

Regarding body changes, she said there were many, occurring everyday...like her breasts, which seem to be in a race to see which will reach her waist first. The audience laughed so hard they cried.

She is such a simple and honest woman with so much wisdom in her words. Because of that, I share these words, by Maya Angelou, with you.

*When I was younger, I weighed a few pounds less.*

*I needn't hold my tummy in to wear a belted dress,*

*But now that I am older, I've set my body free.*

*There's the comfort of elastic where once my waist would be.*

*Inventor of those high-heeled shoes, my feet have not forgiven,*

*I have to wear a nine now, but used to wear a seven.*

*And how about those pantyhose, they're sized by weight, you see,*

*So how come when I put them on the crotch is at my knee?*

*I need to wear these glasses as the print's been getting smaller,*

*And it wasn't very long ago I know that I was taller.*

*Though my hair has turned to grey and my skin no longer fits,*

*On the inside, I'm the same old me, it's the outside's changed a bit.*

**Jo Prejean**

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### Atonement

*Atonement* by Ian McEwan is a wonderful book set in the English countryside. The home of a family is torn to shreds on one dramatic night. Nothing is ever the same again. The retreat to Dunkirk by the army in World War II is graphically told, but with the art of a great writer, grimness and humour are cleverly mixed. The exhausted hungry corporal who has endured two days of strafing by the Messerschmidts (where was the R.A.F?) is told by the sergeant. "Do up your boots, man, you're a disgrace to the army!" Those of you who suffered under the rigid routines of the old fashioned hospital matrons will laugh at her insistence that the patients' noses must be in line with the crease of the sheets! Into those immaculate sheets fall the torn bodies of the Dunkirk victims. A book to disturb, enjoy and remember. Ian McEwan also won the Booker prize for his book *Amsterdam*.

**Joan Johns**

### Elderwoman

If your aches and pains limit your activities, if you are last to be recognised and served in shops, if you no longer identify with your image in the bathroom mirror, pull up your socks and read this book, *Elderwoman : Reap the wisdom, feel the power, embrace the joy*. By Marian Van Eyk McBain. [http:// www. elderwoman. org](http://www.elderwoman.org)

"Old age is a ripening, a harvest and potentially the most mentally, emotionally and spiritually satisfying stage of our whole lives". The book is published by Findhorn Press and distributed in Australia by Gemcraft. Waste no time, buy it now. Change your self-image today!

**Judith Mustard**

### The Carpet Wars

*The Carpet Wars* by Christopher Kremmer, is a book to be read, and read again!

In the last decade of the 20th Century, Christopher Kremmer travelled the old Silk Road from Central Asia to Baghdad collecting a carpet or a rug here and there – and collecting stories of ongoing conflicts, national and tribal, beginning in Afghanistan with the confrontation between the Taliban and mujahideen. After oil, rugs are the most important Muslim commodity and for the people the most useful. Rugs are portable and the owner/merchant can sell them for the benefit of his own family, even in exile. The rugs woven by the women and children portray the lives and traditions of the Moslems with motifs: religious, tribal and political. The writer hears accounts of child labour at the looms and sees boy soldiers, children robbed of

youth, trained in nothing but hate and the use of weapons, though he does remind us that Moslems are not alone in the practice of recruiting the very young for armed forces. He relates the devastation wrought by cruise missiles on villages in the operation Desert Fox and the little publicised hunt by the US for Osama bin Laden in 1998.

Kremmer's journeys take him to places most fabled like Samarkand and Babylon and places most of us only know of from tales of the North West Frontier, the Hindu Kush, the Khyber Pass, and Baghdad, the scene of many of the Arabian Nights. He travels to many places along the route taken by Alexander the Great so long ago. In his encounters with students, carpet sellers, sometimes soldiers, a few women and the men, in teahouse gossip we find the human face of Islam.

**Helen Monaghan**

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### The Boob Poem

*For years and years they told me, be careful of your breasts.  
Don't ever squeeze or bruise them and give them monthly tests.  
After 30 years of astute care, my gyno, Dr. Pruitt,  
Said I should get a Mammogram. "O.K.," I said, "let's do it."  
"Stand up here real close," she said, (she got my boob in line),  
"And tell me when it hurts," she said, "Ah yes! Right there, that's fine."  
She stepped upon a pedal; I could not believe my eyes!  
A plastic plate came slamming down, my hooter's in a vice!  
My skin was stretched and mangled, from underneath my chin.  
My poor boob was being squashed to Swedish Pancake thin.  
Excruciating pain I felt within its vice-like grip.  
A prisoner in this vicious thing,  
my poor defenceless tit!  
"There, that's good," I heard her say,  
(the room was slowly swaying)  
"Now, let's have a go at the other one."  
"Have mercy," I was praying.  
This machine was created by a man,  
of this, I have no doubt.  
I'd like to stick his balls in there and  
see how they come out.*

**Abitta Iyeful**

The Man-o-gram!

## 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.**

## Mental attitude and cancer

There's a widespread perception in the general community that if someone who has cancer has a positive optimistic outlook, they'll do better than someone who has a negative outlook. Self-help books extolling the virtues of positive thinking in cancer treatment have sold hundreds of thousands of copies. But is there really a physical effect, and if so, how does it work? It's known, for instance, that the immune function is affected by certain psychological states like anxiety and stress. Does lack of stress improve the immune function, and does this help the body's natural defences fight the cancer?

### Little real evidence

Unfortunately, at present, there is little real evidence for the beneficial effects of a positive attitude on survival and recurrence rates of cancer, according to researchers from the UK. They looked at results from a range of published and unpublished studies which examined the effect of various psychological coping styles (a fighting spirit; a sense of helplessness and hopelessness; denial; and avoidance) on survival and recurrence rates in patients with cancer. They found that the quality of research to date has been very poor. Those studies that *have* shown a positive effect have been small and unreliable. They concluded there was no good evidence suggesting the way someone copes with cancer has any significant effect on his or her outcome.

### Implications

That doesn't mean anyone with cancer should abandon hope and lapse into negativity and despair. There's no doubt that having a positive outlook will result in a much improved quality of life, even if it doesn't affect the progress of the disease. The researchers suggest that the practical message is that there isn't any good evidence to support the development of psychological interventions to promote particular types of coping in an attempt to prolong survival.

Reference:

Petticrew M et al. Influence of psychological coping on survival and recurrence in people with cancer; systematic review *British Medical Journal* 2002;325:1066-1069

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## The 'truth' about cats and dogs

Contrary to popular belief, people with asthma tend to have more severe reactions to dogs rather than cats. Researchers recently tested more than 800 people to see how cat, dog, grass, cockroach and dust mite allergens, among others, affected their condition. The results revealed that 38 per cent of patients had a reaction to dogs, 72 per cent were allergic to cats, 37 to cockroaches, 58 per cent to dust mites and 53 per cent to a mixture of ragweed and grass pollen. However, researchers also found that, surprisingly, dog allergens seemed to cause the most respiratory problems, thus dispelling the myth that cats cause more severe allergic reactions.

*Asthma Clinical Research Network*

# NOTICES

## **Female Sexual Empowerment**

Alison Dredge and Lara Piepschyk are planning to produce a film, *Sex for Supper*, for broadcasting on SBS or ABC.

They are seeking a select group of women of varying ages, religion, ethnicity and economic backgrounds who can talk about poignant issues relating to female sex and sexuality.

They want women who are embedded within their community or profession, who know and can talk about the socio-economic group they represent, and who also have personal stories to tell.

*Sex for Supper* will be a frank and vital documentary exploring real issues and real emotions about how women experience sex in this country.

Please contact Lara on 0414 799 226 or email [larapie@bigpond.com.au](mailto:larapie@bigpond.com.au), or Alison on 0410 652 655.

## ***From Holocaust to Haven: Five Countries ~ Five Migrations***

**by Nora Huppert.**

Nora tells the story of her life journey of a young girl, from vulnerability to maturity and independence at the age of 18.

It is a story of everyday people. Included are the contributions of seemingly ordinary people, whose more than ordinary humanity contributed to the successful survival of one individual.

The cost is \$40.

Please contact Nora on 9181 3918.

## ***Skin Deep* exhibition**

In the May issue of OWN Matters we publicised Brenda Saunders' (Palma) exhibition, *Skin Deep: Native Title Land Rights*.

*Skin Deep* is now on view in the main foyer of State Parliament from 18 June 2003.

The large fibre works reflect the cloaks and mission blankets worn by some of the brave heroes who fought to save or reclaim their land after white invasion.  
[www.palmasaunders.net](http://www.palmasaunders.net)

## **Conference**

### ***Ageing in a multicultural society: moving forward together***

**29 August 2003**

The Australian Association of Gerontology (NSW division)

For more details please phone Adelaide Bornmann on 02 9523 1715

Email: [abaust@smartchat.net.au](mailto:abaust@smartchat.net.au)

## **Painting for Pleasure**

KGV Recreation Centre,  
Cumberland Street, The Rocks

**Fridays 12.30 to 2.30 pm**

Tutor, Jean Leach  
Cost is \$3.30 per class and includes all art materials.

Please book on 9244 3600 as places are limited.

## **Music for the Bones**

The Lane Cove Music and Cultural Association will present a community music program starting on Tuesday 1 July at 10am for people over 55. The venue is 266 Longueville Road Lane Cove and you can register by phoning 9427 8027.

## ***Now We the People***

The 2003 *Now We the People* Conference is set for 23 and 24 August 2003 at the University of Technology.

For further information, please phone 9211 4164 or email [info@nowwethepeople.org](mailto:info@nowwethepeople.org).

## ***The Breath of Life*** **By David Hare**

Two women meet on the Isle of Wight to sift over 25 years of memories, dreams and regrets and their shared experiences of the same man, one as wife, another as mistress. A voyeuristic glimpse into the complex minds and hearts of two fascinating, utterly believable characters featuring Noni Hazlehurst and Robyn Nevin.

"Brings together two of Australia's finest actresses in an exquisitely staged production...a treat for theatre-lovers." **SMH**

**Until Sunday 27 July**  
**Duration 2 hours**  
**Sydney Theatre Company,**  
**Wharf 1 - 9250 1777.**

**DISCLAIMER**

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

**NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION TEAM**

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

**SURFACE  
MAIL**

**POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA**