



# OWN MATTERS

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

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## The personal is political!

'The personal is political' is an oft-quoted maxim from another era, but it is still relevant today.

The NSW OWN Theatre Group's appearance on the Andrew Denton show, *Enough Rope*, illustrates this point. By appearing and telling personal stories and giving opinions in tune with OWN's philosophy of self-help, support and achieving wellbeing in the emotional and physical sense, we hope to strike an echo of recognition in our audience. Speaking (or singing!) about one or more aspects of our work can lead people to identify with OWN, or stimulate some curiosity about what we stand for in a broader sense.

The words 'role model' might seem too cold and unemotional but, as you will read on the Bouquets and Brickbats pages, women use them to describe feelings of identification. Exposing our personal thoughts and stories can often lead to actions from other women who have experienced similar events in their lives.

Recently I had the experience of being interviewed by a 33 year-old male reporter from the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the subject of sex and the older woman. More than two months later, the article remains a topic of conversation amongst older colleagues and some friends whom I see infrequently. My family has had a good laugh at my expense and my friends have commented with great hilarity. Sex seems to elicit these responses in some people!

Running through these two media events is the thread of seriousness – older women are not dead from the neck down just because we are over 60! Exposure may be personal, but the end result can be a political statement.

When you read this, our NSW State conference will have been and gone. I hope that those of you who attended the Media Skills workshop will find yourselves in the future actively seeking some media exposure!

**Pat Simpson**

# OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

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This is our very last report for 2002-2003. By the time you receive it, the State Conference will be over for another year and a new Management Team will be raring to go!

A number of MT members have not re-nominated for 2003-2004 as they will be undertaking other roles and other tasks in the next twelve months. We thank them for their wisdom and the generous contributions they have made to OWN. Each person has contributed greatly to the work of the Management Team, bringing with her a different perspective, which made for lively discussions and clear decisions.

This year, our aims as a Management Team have been to be more inclusive of groups in the Network, to encourage them to network with each other and to have groups communicate on a regular basis through *OWN Matters*. We have also worked to ensure that information between the MT and OWN NSW projects – the Theatre Group, Aboriginal Support Circle, Wellness Coordination Group and Advocacy Coordination Group – has been regularly exchanged. The practice of having a member of the Management Team report on projects on a monthly or quarterly basis has assisted in keeping communication lines open.

The Management Team has actively pursued project funding to support and enrich the groups and promote the aims of the Older Women's Network. We have also auspiced many submissions made by individual groups, and have recently moved to produce Auspicing Guidelines to help groups and the MT understand the roles and responsibilities of both parties involved in auspicing. The completion of the Guidelines will be a task for the incoming MT.

The OWN NSW Volunteer Computer Skills project is progressing very well with participants saying they are very pleased with the quality of teaching, and that they are achieving their aims.

Many of you will have seen the NSW OWN Theatre Group's performance on *Enough Rope*. Around 1.7 million viewers saw the segment, and feedback has been overwhelmingly good. We congratulate members of the Theatre Group for their clever, funny and deeply moving representation of older women.

Best wishes to members of the new Committee – we hope you enjoy your new role.

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

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## 'Operation Dismantle Medicare' Nearing Completion

Medicare is paid for according to income and it guarantees access to hospital and doctor services, regardless of ability to pay.

Prime Minister Howard and Health Minister Patterson are vigorously defending the latest changes which will dismantle Medicare outside hospitals.

The changes will end bulk billing, except for concession card holders.

Bulk billing is the one mechanism that allows people to see a doctor without having to pay large fees. Bulk billing has been declining rapidly for the last two years because doctors are dissatisfied with the level of the Medicare rebate which has been reduced in value by \$6 since 1984. The Government is refusing to raise the rebate, which will cause bulk billing to fall faster than ever.

In introducing special safety net schemes, the Government is openly acknowledging the end of bulk-billing which means that millions of low income people, who are not eligible for a concession card, will pay a high price, currently \$20-\$35, to see a GP.

Senator Patterson's claim that "there is nothing in the package that should cause doctors to increase their fees" ignores reality. Doctors have been increasing their fees for the last two years and will continue to do so because the rebate has been frozen.

Private medical insurance will now steadily replace Medicare. As doctors abandon bulk billing and increase their fees, more and more people will find that their out-of-pocket expenses exceed \$1,000.

Senator Patterson says that private

medical insurance is protection for people who don't hold concession cards. But private health insurance premiums are flat rate: people pay the same whatever their incomes. And private insurance is much more expensive than Medicare. Medicare is super efficient administratively, costing about one third of private health insurance to run.

The Prime Minister has vehemently opposed public health insurance since the 1970s. While pretending to 'maintain Medicare', every major health policy change of his government has shaken the foundations of the system.

Henceforth, Australia joins the United States as the only other OECD country where millions of citizens face financial barriers when trying to access health care.

**Gwen Gray**

# Theatre Group Report

On Monday June 23 we entertained around 70 people at a public meeting in Parramatta to launch a new OWN branch. They were a very enthusiastic audience considering the fact that the weather was so very cold and the heaters in the Town Hall didn't work very well. We managed to raise a few smiles and our songs received a very good reception. We wish Molly Smith, whose idea it was, the very best of luck in the new venture.

The next day we hosted a luncheon and gave a show for the *Friends of the Theatre Group*. We were pleased to see the usual stalwarts show up, but we should try and find some other way to show our appreciation to the *Friends* for their financial support. It seems a shame that all we offer is a cold lunch on a cold day. Our *Friends* deserve better and if anyone has

any suggestions, we would welcome them.

July 1 saw us at the Gynea Campus of Sutherland TAFE. What a reception we had there! An audience of about 100 were there to see students collect diplomas for their hard work in various subjects. They really appreciated the words of our songs – it was the right time for the right songs. Thanks for a very nice day.

Then of course there was the Andrew Denton show. We had rehearsed four songs for the show and as most of you will know we were cut down to one verse. We were all disappointed, but it was not our decision. Apart from that, I thought we scrubbed up extremely well and we gained some amazing publicity. We are being interviewed on July 22 by Diana Simmonds from the *Sunday*

*Telegraph*, who wants to do a follow-up on the Denton show.

We have some sad news. Josephine Allon has decided to stay home to care for her husband, who is not well. Jo is a backbone member of the group, our social secretary, and responsible for the yummy cakes, plus costume designer and machinist. Ceri Richie, a new member, is also taking some time off to recuperate from health problems. We wish her a speedy recovery. But, the good news is that Peggy Hewett has come back into the fold!

We've had our first meeting with the Department for Women to collect information in readiness for the *Women on Wheels 3* tour in October. Seems to be better organised this year and will be quite exciting.

**Josie Jackson**

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## Role models

I thought you both wonderful on the Andrew Denton show last night. In my previous position at Parramatta City Council, I worked with Mollie Smith in starting up the OWN in Parramatta. I'm now at the NSW Department of Sport & Recreation as the Disability Consultant, but I still have a keen interest in issues for older women – considering I'm going to be one one day!

It must have taken a lot of bravery, Josie, for you to tell your story. I thought you handled it with dignity, honesty and pride. It seems to me that you are a role model not only for older women, but also for younger women who may be experiencing difficulties in their lives.

It's women of your generation, and before, who have made the path easier for younger women like myself. I still think we have a long way to go though, and it's important that women tell their stories without feeling shamed.

The other brilliant thing is that you both showed how older women can lead full and enriching lives, no matter what their experiences in the past. I think it's so important for women to realise that you can move on from a bad experience and that you don't have to live as a victim.

Congratulations on an entertaining, informative, honest and enriching interview!

**Joanna Battersby.**

## Inspirational!

I just wanted to say how wonderful the interview with the two older women was. They were truly inspirational - strong, funny, brave, smart, compassionate and real! It was really remarkable television and I congratulate you for it. Thank you

**Alison Wilkinson**

The response to the Theatre Group's appearance on *Enough Rope* has been amazing!

See pages 12–15.

## Absolutely superb!

I just wanted to say that tonight's guests – OLDER WOMEN – were just absolutely superb. Those women are fantastic.

**Paul Coppock**

## **Lillian May**

*A small quiet woman named Lillian May  
Sat in her chair and watched TV all day.  
Twelve children she'd raised and some she'd seen die;  
I wonder if she'd ever had the chance to cry.*

*I met her when I was barely sixteen;  
She smiled quite shyly and turned back to the screen.  
I never once saw her out of that chair;  
And now that I'm older, I'm sure she didn't dare.*

*I married her son and beared her grandchild;  
But still she was quiet, subdued and mild.  
French was her language; her English was poor,  
But she didn't need English behind the closed door.*

*I know that she saw the bruises on me;  
She spoke with her eyes and said she could see.  
But I was so young, concerned for my life;  
I had no idea that she too saw the knife.*

*He shattered my mind, my body, my soul;  
The doctor informed the local police patrol.  
With pressure from family, I ran right away.  
Not a thought did I give to Lillian May.*

*For four long years he played with my mind;  
I moved from one home and still he did find.  
Until he hurt me in the worst possible way  
And finally they chose to lock him away.*

*One day they found him fit to be free;  
So relieved was I when he didn't find me.  
But relief was short-lived and doomed to not last;  
When police rang soon after to talk of my past.*

*His mother had died – found alone in her house;  
Her death was not easy and they questioned that louse.  
His rage had risen and he'd struck out once more;  
Bringing pain to her family and again to my door.*

*Two lines in the paper was all it was worth;  
An old lady had died and returned to the earth.  
He was charged with contributing to her early demise,  
And served a short sentence to no one's surprise.*

*So now my eyes are open and clear.  
Violence against women creates great fear.  
Domestic Violence affects women – who are young and old;  
So search for the story – don't wait to be told.*

*And to this old woman named Lillian May;  
I'm sorry,  
Forgive me,  
My thoughts are with you today.*

**Joy Fuller**

## **Having fun ... as usual**

Wednesday July 9 saw us up to our necks in paints, wonderful colourful acrylics, scratch boards, paper, scissors, glue, boxes of pristine, beautiful pastels and all the other paraphernalia needed to create works of art. And we were not there just to kill time with an interesting diversion either!

Our rather serious purpose at the end of the next seven weeks of art workshops is to have learnt the techniques necessary to produce, on a range of articles such as calico shopping bags, cards, T-shirts, witty and pertinent slogans challenging the stereotypical image of older women.

Under the guidance of artist, Jane Caveney, we expect to master screen printing, block making, photo montage and other arcane skills as well as investigating cartooning to interpret the world and to come up with our own images using pen and ink.

A very enthusiastic group of OWN members turned up for the first workshop, actually more than we bargained for, but fortunately we were able to accommodate them quite comfortably in the gym at the Mott Hall.

We were the recipients of a small government grant, thanks to the savvy of our coordinators who keep a weather eye open for such offers of government largesse and are quickly off the mark with a well-written submission. With the \$2,000 in our hands we were able to engage an artist with the necessary expertise and to purchase the materials we needed.

When we present the final works we will be asking members to judge their visual impact. If we have been successful in communicating our themes, the trainees will be able to assist groups in other areas to use the same techniques to make their own cards, T-shirts and 'billboards' of various sorts.

**Muriel Hortin**

## Listen to Aboriginal Voices

Many of you may have read about historian Keith Windshuttle's arguments that reports of Aboriginal deaths in conflicts with white settlers have been grossly exaggerated. Between October and December 2000 he wrote three articles in *Quadrant* magazine on this subject, following this up by publishing a book *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History: Volume 1: Van Dieman's Land 1803-1847*.

In this book he argued that Professor Henry Reynold's calculation of the number of Aboriginal people killed since white settlement in massacres were flawed and that he had, on many occasions, given false numbers. Windshuttle's views are being used by some prominent right-wing media figures to validate their points of view.

Professor Reynolds and Keith Windshuttle engaged in a debate in Tasmania early this year. While both academics were battling each other, particularly about the Risdon Cove massacre in Tasmania, neither of them took notice of an Aboriginal man who managed to speak about his own knowledge of the subject. Windshuttle went so far as to reiterate that oral history has no value.

### Six of one ...

At McDonald's, I saw on the menu that you could have an order of 6, 9 or 12 Chicken McNuggets. I asked for a half dozen nuggets. "We don't have half dozen nuggets," said the teenager at the counter.

"You don't?" I queried.

"We only have 6, 9, or 12," was the reply.

"So I can't order a half dozen nuggets, but I can order 6?"

"That's right." I shook my head and ordered 6 McNuggets.

**Nancy Gilmore**

This is one of many instances where non-Indigenous Australians don't want to hear authentic Aboriginal voices – we can be too arrogant to actually listen to stories of events that may have been passed down through Aboriginal families. This can cause us to be insensitive to personal histories and, ultimately, to regard oral history as 'myths'. Fortunately, there are people in authority who recognise the value of oral history and who are publishing books of stories, the latest being *Many Voices* edited by Doreen Mellor and Anna Haebich, published by the National Library of Australia. One of the motivating factors in the Aboriginal Support

Circle's effort to publish our forthcoming book *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up* was the recognition of the value of these stories and our respect for the women who told them.

Keith Windshuttle's views have been refuted in a new publication by the National Museum of Australia, *Frontier Conflict - The Australian Experience*. In his review, Bruce Elder states: "There are just too many random acts of violence, too many horror stories. The story no longer requires serious debate. The evidence – oral, anecdotal, official, and judicial – is substantial and compelling. Everyone who works professionally in the field of frontier conflict knows that."

**Pat Zinn**

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## It's Only Fair

As most of us know, photo identification is often necessary when withdrawing cash from the bank, picking up an electronic airline tickets, buying a mobile phone and, increasingly, using a credit card. All are everyday activities we take for granted. Older people and people with a disability who don't have photo identification such as a driver's licence or passport, are often denied these services.

One older woman, who doesn't hold a driver's licence, tells the story of trying to cancel a lay-by and not being able to because she couldn't provide identification which included a photograph and her address. When her husband provided his driver's licence, they agreed to close the lay-by, an item worth \$59! The woman called her local Roads and Transport Authority office to ask about getting a card similar to a 'Proof of Age' card, currently available to people aged 18 to 25, and was advised to apply for a learner's driving permit and to renew the permit each year!

Of course, some older people have a passport, but it can be too large to carry in a wallet or small purse and too expensive to replace if lost.

We would like to compile some examples of difficulties that members of OWN have experienced due to a lack of photo identification. If you overcame this problem, please let us know how you achieved this.

The *Photo Identification Access Alliance* believes a simple solution would be to allow the Roads and Transport Authority to provide a photo ID card which would include an address and birth date. This would be available to any resident of NSW, regardless of age and abilities, who needs one.

The *Photo Identification Access Alliance*, of which OWN is a member, is made up of older people's organisations in NSW.

**Cate Turner**

## A Birthday Celebration

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A special party for those of us in our second childhood of 80 years or more! Brightly coloured balloons and warm welcomes to greet us. Happy faces all around. We wore masks, of all kinds, which was fun.

We sang songs, led by some members of the Theatre Group with Ann Cunyngame playing keyboard. Mary McCusker composed a song just for us, EIEIEIO. Great laughter!

Then we told each other naughty jokes. More laughter ... and even more laughter. Great fun!

We took a peep at what we would like to happen in the future. We hope that John Howard will soon be out of Kirribilli House and that

he will not forget to pay *all* the rent for his stay there. Fat chance!

After all this, we were ready to enjoy the champers and orange juice, or orange juice and champers. The afternoon tea nibbles were more than good; they were delicious. There were biscuits with many kinds of cheese and paté, plus sweet things and a lovely chocolate cake with rich, melt-in-your-mouth chocolate icing. Lush!

It was a wonderful and most enjoyable afternoon for everyone. A great big thank you to Joy and to those who must have spent much time and kind thoughts in planning such an event.

**Hilda Gibbons**

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## Farewell, Betty

It is with real sadness that I heard today of the death of Betty Searle. Betty died in Sydney on Wednesday July 9, aged 87.

Betty was one of that group of radical working class women that included Jessie Street and Edna Ryan who were active in Sydney (and also nationally) around women's rights from earlier last century.

More recently, Betty was a very active member of the Older Women's Network in Canberra, and they will miss her sorely, I am sure.

She lived in a public housing flat just down the block from Tilleys which was a useful venue for meetings and functions for OWN. A few other OWN members live in the same complex of flats.

Betty never forgot her working

class roots or the continuing need to advance the status of women in poverty.

Earlier this year she was recognised with an ACT women's award on International Women's Day. She was very deserving of this and was pleased to receive the most wonderful painting by an Aboriginal woman as part of the award. She immediately considered this to be an OWN artwork.

Farewell Betty, and thanks so much for it all. I am proud to be one of three generations of Ryan women who have known, and been a part of, your work. You will be greatly missed and will be fondly remembered as we all carry your work forward.

**Christina Ryan**

## Celebration?

*Ain't it grand to be eighty when  
Help is offered with grace  
They don't seem to know  
That this is a special face  
Giving hope for the human race.*

*Ain't it grand to be eighty  
To now know the bullies  
Who give us the willies  
When we meet face to face  
So they back down in disgrace.*

*Ain't it grand to be eighty  
I say the devil with that  
Pain is no gain but with  
That fire in our bellies  
Even if our legs are like jelly.*

*Ain't it grand to be eighty  
To seem that dear old dame  
Who gets sick of her whine  
You're so kind, so very sweet  
To help me cross the street.*

*Ain't it grand to be eighty  
As I feel it's now my turn  
To use my repartee to spurn  
To disagree and shout  
And let it all hang out.*

*Ain't it great to be eighty  
To be a member of OWN  
And claim a space of my own  
To shake a fist and say  
I'm still here where I am;  
A grand ol' gal of eighty.*

**Enid Harrison**

## A rarity?

A little boy got lost at the YMCA and found himself in the women's change room. When he was noticed, they burst into shrieks, with women grabbing towels and running for cover. The little boy watched in amazement and then asked, "What's the matter – haven't you ever seen a little boy before?"

## More Bouquets ...

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### **A rethink of attitudes**

To Andrew Denton: I just wanted to drop a note to tell you how much I enjoyed the interview with the Older Women's Group. When you announced what was coming on next I groaned at the thought of it! I should have had more faith in you.

I found the humour and candid honesty of Josie just amazing. What a woman! To have lived through all of that and be the happy jolly person she is – I will be more than happy if I live to be half the woman she is.

I found their description of how the young think of ageing, and the old, rather sad, especially the ad on the side of the bus about something being as low as your granny's libido!

I am 31, and they certainly made me rethink my attitudes towards older people, but also my attitudes to my own inevitable ageing.

Full points for having such surprisingly delightful and wonderful guests. And thanks for the years of entertainment.

**Robyne Hingeley**

### **The Best!**

I just wanted to congratulate OWN on a brilliant appearance on the Andrew Denton Show. Both my husband and I thoroughly enjoyed the interview which had a good mix of humour and serious information.

My husband, who had not known about the Older Women's Network before, said that he thought it was the best interview he had heard this year. You have to understand that for a couple of serious news and current affairs 'junkies' like we are, that comment is really saying something.

Being both in our mid-thirties, we appreciated the honesty of your representatives about the prevalence of ageism.

We have often talked about the lack of older people in the workforce to mentor us and from whom we can learn and be guided. It is our opinion that we need to have a better cross-representation of all age groups in both the workforce and leading community positions. After all, it is only through better integration across the generations in our community that we will overcome people's uneducated prejudices and biases.

**Teresa Corbin & Julian Dunn**

### **My story, too**

Last night I saw Josie Jackson on *Enough Rope* with Andrew Denton and I think she is amazing!

I am only 45, but can relate so much to Josie that it's just incredible. I too was physically and emotionally abused by my first husband and am still trying to overcome my fear. I too still sleep with a night light when my husband is away working. As I said, some of the similarities are amazing, and Josie talked so freely. She is wonderful.

**Skye Shepparton, Victoria**

### **A brave effort**

I was waiting in confident expectation on Monday evening. There were the familiar faces I knew; there was the expected enthusiasm from these older women who have sung in universities, Parliament House, in cities and towns and remote outback places. I felt a sense of

pride in being one of their number and sat back expecting to have the worth of OWN explicitly elucidated. Some aspects were presented, warts and all, and there is no doubt those who remember the presentation will give it full accolades for being what it is – an organisation which encourages older women to be themselves and never to be afraid of challenges.

It seemed to me that the attitude of invisibility was somewhat laboured. Whether we are invisible or not, Josie made sure OWN won't be forgotten. We will be remembered for having members who have known the seamy side of life and come out triumphant and for taking that hard earned knowledge into their presentation and interaction with other women. For not being afraid to call a spade a spade and for presenting an image far removed from the blue rinse set.

The presentation also illustrated that older women can have fun and do not want to be remembered as cringing in corners or bemoaning their increasing destitution and frailty. Josie was the devil's advocate. Louise's presentation indicated that there were other aspects in the OWN philosophy which are well worth exploring to provide a balance of personalities, talents and ongoing policies. It was a brave effort.

**Isabel MacCallum**

### **Not little old ladies**

Congratulations to all the Theatre Group members who appeared on Andrew Denton's TV show *Enough Rope* on July 7.

Josie and Louise were worthy representatives, especially when they put Andrew right about 'little old ladies'.

**Helen McMaugh**

## and more ...

### Glued to the screen

It was absolutely brilliant. I sat glued to the screen. It gave me particular joy as they used the slogan, *You Can't Beat a Woman*, which I ran with during the previous State election here in South Australia. Josie and Louise were a breath of fresh air and have done wonders for anyone who may have experienced child sexual abuse or domestic violence. Loved the way they tackled the big issue, ageism. Yeah for Josie and Louise!

**Edith Pringle**

### No longer invisible!

I just wanted to let you know how impressed I was with the interview that Josie and Louise gave on Andrew Denton last night. You really showed that older women are a force to be reckoned with and are not invisible.

My mother, who died in October 2001, aged 82 was really concerned about the way she was treated as an older woman who was partially sighted. The most hurtful thing that happened to her was when in hospital (in a geriatric ward) with fluid on the lungs, which was eventually diagnosed as lung cancer, she asked a nurse to tell her where on the table she had put her tablets and the nurse replied, "I'm not here, child, to tell you where I put things". My mother, who was a nurse for over 50 years, was disgusted at such treatment and vowed never to go into that ward again even if she was dying. Luckily, in the final year of her illness, she was placed in a loving, caring hospital where the staff treated her with respect.

I was very impressed with the way in which Josie was able to talk about her years of abuse and that the Network had given her the strength to face the future. It was

obvious that she has gained the inner strength necessary to be able to not only put the past behind her but to be able to talk about it to help others.

I speak from experience as a woman who suffered over 25 years of mental abuse from my ex-husband and indirect emotional abuse from a father who left the family when I was nine. The mental abuse continued when I came to Australia to live with him and his second family when I was 22. Josie gave me the push I needed to write my story in the hope it will help others.

I am 56 now and have found happiness with another man who is 15 years younger than me – we met on the Internet. I can relate to Josie's comments about her children (or anyone else for that matter) not being able to cope with the image of their mother having sex!

The past came back to haunt me when I started my relationship with Sam, and my children couldn't cope with me having a relationship at my age. When my mother was 49 she remarried (after 14 years without a husband) and I wrote and asked my sisters if my mother and her new husband had a double bed!

Keep on the good work and I hope you are still around when I retire so that I can join you.

**Rachel Symons**

### Too young at 59?

I was most impressed and delighted at the appearance of your members on the Andrew Denton show.

I am not sure if I am too young at 59 or too far away in Newcastle to be involved, but I think the idea is just wonderful.

I am a bright bubbly person, have

no real fear of public appearances, having been involved in theatre in the past and a number of years in promotions until ill-health forced me to retire.

I am however very keen on pursuing a better deal for older women, and I would be very grateful if you could supply me with further information as some of the issues mentioned have touched my life.

**Raelena Oakley**

### Your wonderful energy

Are you the ladies I had the absolute privilege of seeing last night on Andrew Denton's *Enough Rope*? Wonderful, heart wrenching, moving, human. Thank you for your wonderful energy and love. My mother was abused by my father until the day she plucked up enough courage to leave. Keep up the wonderful work you sisters are carrying out.

**Bill Healy**

### More of this!

Darren Hinch, OK, but the ladies! There should be more of this.

**Ian Epstein**

### What a story

Well, I made sure I stayed up to see Andrew Denton last night. The Theatre Group did themselves proud, and I liked him more than I normally do. Usually I turn him off very speedily, irritated by some of his questions. I thought he listened well and got Josie, especially, to go deeper.

What a story. I find so many women with abusive backgrounds are the really feisty, funny ones after they work things through.

Congratulations to you both for getting the word out about OWN so punchily!

**Caro Davis**

## Recommended Winter readings

*Between Ourselves: Letters Between Mothers and Daughters, 1750-1982*, edited by Karen Payne (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983) is organised under themes such as Killing the Angel in the House, The Men in Our Lives, Dangerous Dreams, Tender Rage, Children, Loving Women, and The Infinitely Healing Conversation. The collection also includes letters from unknown women who confront problems such as money, alcoholism, lack of education and loveless marriages.

*Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy 1949-1975*, edited and with an Introduction by Carol Brightman (Harcourt Brace, 1995) is captivating. This is an extract from the *New Yorker* review: "One of the deepest pleasures of this book is to see how each woman comes to fill a role that neither could have imagined: how in their years of crisis McCarthy becomes Arendt's most trusted intellectual defender, while Arendt becomes an adviser of genuine wisdom on matters of love." This is their entire twenty-five year exchange.

**Denise Jones**

## Book Review

*The Smithsonian Institute* by Gore Vidal is unputdownable. It can be read at a single sitting, given the time for a long one.

On Good Friday, T, a schoolboy genius, visits the Smithsonian Institute in Washington. He remains after closing time and encounters in time travel the historical personages depicted in the tableaux who come alive during the night hours. He also meets Robert Oppenheimer in present time, agonising over the possible effects of his atomic bomb and desperately seeking the

formula to prevent the chain reaction which could destroy the whole planet. T is able to help him discover it.

At a 'time travel' conference of all past presidents in the days following the bombing of Pearl Harbour, George Washington wonders "how we got to be so hated", a notion repeated by Gore Vidal in his post September 11 2001 book *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*. The US is not without critics, even among its own, and we are left wondering about that 'chain reaction' which so worried Oppenheimer.

**Helen Monaghan**

## Are you in crisis or needing help?

Centrelink supports people going through difficult times in their lives, such as carers looking after someone who is frail, ill or who has a disability, or when a partner has died. With some extra assistance and special services, Centrelink will help people with special needs get back on their feet.

Crisis support can be a one-off payment equal to a week's payment (without adds-ons) of the normal Centrelink benefit you are entitled to get. There is a limit to the number of times each year that you can get this payment.

You may be entitled to a special relief payment and partner allowance. While you may not be entitled to crisis help, you may be entitled to other concessions such as rent assistance, help with phone bills, help toward the cost of living in a remote area.

If you would like more information on any of these topics, please phone Seniors Information Service on 13 12 44 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Or phone Centrelink for a free booklet called *Are you in a crisis or needing special help?*

## Weird phrases

But what do they *really* mean?

We use these phrases all the time, but when you come to think about it (another weird one), the words don't make literal sense.

By and large (the spell check on my computer says, "Fragment, consider revising...").

Here you are (when handing something to somebody).

There you are.

As well (instead of "also").

As well as.

Not at all.

At all (as in, "Have you seen him at all?").

Learn by heart.

Of course.

It's up to you.

By the way.

Passed away (where is "away"?).

There are probably a lot more, but I can't "call them to mind" (?) just now. Suggestions, please.

**Renee Simons**

## Talking to your phone!

Telstra has announced the introduction of a free state-of-the-art technology that allows customers to operate some features on their phones by telling the phone what to do.

Telstra local call customers can use the "1# Telstra Feature Assistant", a voice command system for activating features such as Call Waiting and Call Forward.

By simply dialling 1#, customers connect to a voice-activated phone service where Call Waiting and Call Forward can be activated by the customer asking for the feature they want to use, instead of dialling different codes for each feature.

However, customers can still continue to dial the access codes for both Call Waiting and Call Forward if they wish.

# NOTICES

## **Pine Gap Reunion**

If you know any women who were involved in the Women's Protest in 1983 at Pine Gap, can you contact them to let them know there is a reunion planned for November 11 this year to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the action.

The Reunion will be held in the Theatre at Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney.

Proposed program from 10.00 am starting with morning tea: Welcome to land and welcome to women, followed by speakers, songs and an open mike segment where women can speak about their experiences.

An oral history project has been suggested and it is also planned to have a photographic exhibition in the foyer of Parliament House as well.

Lunch is planned for about 1.00 or 1.30 pm in the Stranger's Bar. This is a temporary program so far and may possibly be amended at a later date as participants are confirmed.

All welcome to attend.

Contact Maureen King:  
Email: [mking@pacific.net.au](mailto:mking@pacific.net.au)  
Phone: 9420 0269

### **Advocacy at OWN**

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 2 September at 10.30 am at Windmill St.

We would love to see again all those who have an interest in advocacy, but have not made it to previous meetings.

**Margaret Sargent**

## **Review of bus services**

The Ministry of Transport is undertaking a review of bus services in NSW.

This is a unique chance to have some input into the reform of bus services in NSW. The consultation period is rather short with submissions closing on August 22. This review has the potential to address some of the geographical inequities (such as inequitable concession fares) that characterise the public transport system.

On the Ministry's website [www.transport.nsw.gov.au/busreview/form.html](http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/busreview/form.html) you'll find a link to a feedback form which might assist individuals to have their say (or phone OWN for a copy of the form).

For more information, contact Denis Juelicher, Busways, phone 9497 1823.

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## **University Study on Depression in Older Adults**

Would you like to take part in an unusual and interesting study on life satisfaction? You will be paid \$30 for your valuable time and effort.

Who are we looking for?

People who:

- feel considerably down or sad
- are 65 years of age or older
- have adequate eyesight to read this page
- speak English fluently

What will the study involve?

This study will take approximately one- to one-and-a-half hours to complete. It will involve self-report ratings, cognitive tasks and a questionnaire.

If you are interested, please phone Talia Gonda on 9343-0079 or 0414 399 822 so that a suitable time can be arranged.

## **VOLUNTEERS wanted for RESEARCH**

A group of health professionals from the University of Sydney and the Centre of Education and Research on Ageing are doing a large research project investigating improving vision to help prevent falls.

We require volunteers over 70 years of age who have not received new glasses nor had cataract surgery performed in the last three months. It does not matter whether you have fallen over or not or if you have good or poor eyesight. Unfortunately, we cannot accept volunteers who live in hostels or nursing homes, although people living in a retirement village may participate.

Volunteering for the project takes about an hour of your time and does not require you to leave your home – we are happy to come to you.

Please phone Hilary McGowan on 9767 7268 for more information.