



OWN MATTERS

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

No.22 September 2003

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OWN matters to us!

As we get older, older women are often pushed out of the mainstream of life, people can stop listening to us and we can feel invisible. This can sometimes lead to feelings of inferiority.

At OWN, it's different. Here, there's an assumption that older women are intelligent, thoughtful, have multiple skills and are worth listening to! In practice, this means we plan projects and activities that are of interest to *us* and then we run them *ourselves*, sometimes with the assistance of a qualified leader or teacher. There are lots of opportunities at OWN to learn new skills and develop the ones we already have, and through this we can feel more independent and more capable of managing our own lives, in every sense.

OWN offers us support and friendship and lots of opportunities to get involved in community and political issues with like-minded others. Some members are interested in decision-making and volunteer for coordination or management roles at a State level or within their local group, while some contribute regularly through *OWN Matters*, either as editors or as writers.

The important thing is that each woman decides how much she wants to be involved and what she can contribute – without pressure. Mind you, those of us who do decide to move outside our 'comfort zone' generally report it as a worthwhile and often exhilarating experience.

Despite not feeling driven to perform, or to do what others think we should do, many of us do become involved when our experience is needed and we have the time. After a lifetime of meeting other people's needs, making the choice to become involved is a wonderful liberation from 'should' and a wonderful opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to our own wellbeing and that of our peers.

These are just some of the reasons why OWN matters to so many of us.

Noreen Hewett

OWN Matters

is the newsletter of the Older Women's Network (OWN) NSW. It is published eleven times a year.

A subscription is \$20.

Who Are We?

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

OWN is a volunteer organisation whose members work to promote the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women through a range of activities and resources, and through advocacy 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, creative writing and letters to the Editor.

Send contributions by mail or email marked 'Attention – Editorial Team'. Please include your contact details.

Deadline for contributions is the second Monday of each month.

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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

Violence and Democracy: are they mutually exclusive?

It seems that every day there are more deaths in Iraq, more British and American soldiers being killed, more Iraqi civilians injured and made homeless, and more essential services breaking down. This is the war which was supposed to bring democracy.

The following is a list of countries that the U.S. has bombed since the end of World War II, compiled by historian William Blum, and listed by Mike Moore in his unforgettable documentary film, *Bowling for Columbine*.

China 1945-46	Cambodia 1969-70
Korea 1950-53	Guatemala 1967-69
China 1950-53	Grenada 1983
Guatemala 1954	Libya 1986
Indonesia 1958	El Salvador 1980s
Cuba 1959-60	Nicaragua 1980s
Guatemala 1960	Panama 1989
Congo 1964	Iraq 1991-99
Peru 1965	Sudan 1998
Laos 1964-73	Afghanistan 1998
Vietnam 1961-73	Yugoslavia 1999

In how many of these instances did a democratic government, respectful of human rights, occur as a direct result?

The answer?

- (a) 0
- (b) zero
- (c) none
- (d) not a one
- (e) a whole number between -1 and +1
- (f) zip
- (g) squat
- (h) nada
- (i) bubkis

Muriel Hortin

The Story of OWN

The OWN NSW Annual Report is a good read! If you want to know what we achieved last year, it is essential reading. Please phone the office for *your* copy.

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

Well, our second State conference is over! And what an interesting Conference it was – stimulating, friendly and very productive with around 70 members from across NSW energetically participating in a relevant and well-devised program. It was very exciting to see so many new faces this year.

Our guest speaker, Anne Symonds, set the tone with an interesting and thought-provoking talk on the conference theme of *Women Making a Difference*. Speakers from OWN NSW projects who described their achievement during the past year furthered this theme.

The Theatre Group's brilliant, funny and always professional performance added spice to the pre-lunch program, and after lunch, four workshops – media, public speaking, health issues and song-writing – provided challenges and ideas that will be extremely useful in the future.

The mood-enhancing session at the end of the day was enlivened by a re-run of Andrew Denton's recent interview with Josie and Louise. About 40 of us then partied on, renewing old friendships and making new ones. There's been a suggestion from the quarterly meeting of NSW groups that we have a conference dinner next year instead of a cocktail party, so if anyone who attended this year has a point of view on this idea, we would be very interested to hear it.

The second day of the conference, our business day, saw a constitutional amendment passed which allows all NSW groups to become members of OWN Australia. Then it was election time. Nine willing members agreed to be members the 2003-2004 Management Team – Pat Carlton from Newcastle and Peggy Hewett, Lucy Porter and Ermes Solari from Sydney. Anne Warren, Cate Turner, Louise Anike, Isabel MacCallum and Barbara Malcolm were re-elected for a further term. We look forward to a very productive year.

The conference finished with a marvellous performance by the *SilvertOWNs* from Illawarra OWN who had us rolling in the aisles with their songs, poems and raunchy jokes. After lunch, it was goodbye... Many thanks to everyone who made this conference such a success.

Of course while we were busy conferencing, the volunteer National Bank painters had been hard at work at 87 creating a sparkling clean office and meeting space. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped move everything out of the way for the painters to have a clear go and for assisting in the clean-up.

We are happy to report that the new Management Team got off to a flying start at our first meeting on 11 August. Four coordinators were appointed and various roles and tasks were directed towards different members of the Team, according to their skills and experience.

There *is* a vacancy for someone with a financial background to join the Finance Committee and we also need someone with media skills to head up the Public Relations Team. If you are interested in either of these positions (you don't have to be a member of the Management Team to apply), please phone the office and speak to one of us. Be assured, your skills and experience will be highly valued.

Peggy Hewett, Lucy Porter, Cate Turner and Anne Warren

Women Make Waves

The Bankstown Area Multicultural Network has received Council funding of around \$8000 to run a women-only pool project in partnership with the Wellness Centre. Women Make Waves is a pilot project involving learn-to-swim and aqua exercise classes in a women-only environment for 20 weeks and will be held at the Wran Leisure Centre, Villawood. It is expected that around 30 women will participate, including members of the Afghan Women's Network and Arabic-speaking women, many of whom will be Muslim women who currently attend OWN Bankstown Wellness Centre.

We want to demonstrate to Council that it is possible to organise successful women-only aqua activities at the Wran Leisure Centre and that they should be thinking about offering women-only activities at some of their other aqua centres which have indoor heated pools. Many of our local pools seem to have long periods of 'down time', especially in the colder months and they could be offering such activities at a reasonable cost, thereby generating more income and meeting a local community need.

Women Make Waves will start in the second week of 1st Term 2004 – unfortunately school holidays and Ramadan preclude starting the project this year.

Jan Malley

A healthy discussion!

More than 18 older women from many different OWN groups joined the workshop, *What makes and keeps an older woman healthy?* at the recent State conference. After exploring the word 'healthy', we found it far too limiting. Since it is possible to have a sense of wellbeing even whilst experiencing various levels of illness or disability, we agreed that the focus of our discussion would be 'wellbeing' rather than 'health'.

* Wellbeing is a holistic concept which includes physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social aspects of our lives.

* We do not have a sense of wellbeing all the time.

A very animated discussion followed as we searched for the 'things' which have helped us achieve a sense of wellbeing. We didn't always agree with each other, accepting that we each need to discover our own individual elements of wellbeing and that they may change over time and according to different circumstances. Several times we heard very personal stories about

managing an illness, often in partnership with a medical provider. These stories were wonderful examples of coming to terms with the limitations imposed by illness or disability.

Most of us felt that psychological issues such as being valued by one's self and others, developing a sense of humour, giving and receiving love, feeling confident about being able to achieve emotional equilibrium, being self-aware and having a positive attitude (but not being 'pollyannaish'), are very important factors in wellbeing.

Social issues were also mentioned as important – freedom from stereotyping, discrimination and abuse, economic security, having support and a sense of belonging, having access to appropriate and accessible resources and services, being involved in productive work, having challenges and experiencing fulfilling activities.

Having choices, being physically and mentally active, accepting limitations and managing one's illness or disability, seeking out

and accepting help, being able to say "no", being involved/not isolated, and achieving a balance between inward and outward-looking.

Of course many of the actions and qualities mentioned above start much earlier in life and are then carried through into later life. We agreed that utilising local, State and National partnerships and the OWN network can assist us to achieve some or all of the above.

Many of the points raised above merit advocacy initiatives at State and National level, for example, freedom from discrimination and stereotyping, support services, economic security, access to appropriate resources/services, freedom from abuse, productive work, and having suitable challenges.

Some of the issues raised are also suitable topics for classes, group discussions and workshops within local OWN groups, for example, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-confidence workshops, assertiveness training (learning to say "no") and sessions on developing positive attitudes and managing change.

Renate Watkinson

Creative Writers and Catholic Club Cuisine

On August 1, we braved the very popular Catholic Club bistro in Castlereagh Street. While awaiting the stragglers, a friendly gent at the next table was keen to buy us drinks, but we declined, politely.

We received enormous servings for only \$8 – fish and chips, ham, and chicken were the favourites. The place was crowded and the loud announcing of order numbers finally drove some of us to the foyer coffee lounge. Our whole party ended up in this pleasant oasis. In spite of the bistro noise we decided to return for some more good fodder for our September get-together.

On the writing front, Maureen has had some success with letters to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald. Jean and Helen have almost finished their COTA Life History course, and Jean will continue on.

It was Horses' Birthday and Pam was wearing what she called her horse's blanket. It was a smart spun wool poncho, complemented with amber beads. .

Bon Vivant

Achieving 'equality'?

Barbara Walters of 60 Minutes (USA) did a story on gender roles in Kabul several years before the Afghan conflict. She noted that women customarily walked about ten paces behind their husbands. She returned to Kabul recently and observed that the men now walked several paces behind their wives.

Ms Walters approached one of the Afghani women and said. "This is marvellous. Can you tell the free world just what enabled women to achieve this reversal of roles?"

"Land mines," said the woman.

Jenny Baird

Theatre Group Report

Once again we have had a busy month, beginning with a performance of *To Wellness*, at the Dougherty Centre forum, *Exploring the Potential of Older Women*.

Following our appearance on the Andrew Denton Show, Dianna Simmons, a Sunday Telegraph columnist, expressed an interest in writing an article about us. The first attempt to take some indoor shots of our rehearsal was not satisfactory, so on the second occasion we were herded outdoors, and there, amid the flowers and lawns and warm sunshine we were photographed in various groups – singing, smiling and, as Dianna put it, “pretending to like each other”. The article will probably have been published by the time you read this, but we’ll have copies at OWN if you’re interested.

Bernice Lynch, our musician for so many years, celebrated another birthday, and Lucy Porter entertained members of the group for the occasion. We were delighted to welcome Merle Hight back after her stay in hospital. She made it just in time to attend Bernice’s birthday party.

Our inestimable Josie Jackson, star of National TV, comedienne, writer of lyrics, actor and Theatre Group coordinator has added another dimension to her ‘brilliant career’ – electronics expert! We arrived at rehearsal to find lots of high-tech equipment and, standing among what looked like a nest of serpents, Josie attempting to assemble four new multi-directional microphones. After hours of sweat and frustration she did just that.

On 29 August, we are performing at a Suicide Prevention forum at Sutherland and on 10 September we are off to perform at OWN Newcastle’s 10th Anniversary party. To make sure we are there on time, we’ll be meeting under the Central clock, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, around dawn!

A warm welcome to our most recent member, Zlata Razmilic, who found out about OWN on the internet!

We are frantically rehearsing for our *Women on Wheels 3* tour in October with the Department. Brenda Hardwick, a professional dancer, is teaching us some fancy footwork to enhance our performances. Move over, *Riverdance*.

Marjorie Moffatt is up to her neck in paperwork, while Louise Anike, our celebrated director, has her hands full with an unruly and feisty group. Wouldn’t have her job for quids.

Marie Williams

Did You Know...

...that the USA supported Bin Laden and the Taliban for years, and viewed them as freedom fighters against the Russians? As late as 1988, the USA was paying the salary of every single Taliban official in Afghanistan. In 2000 the Taliban became the most evil people in the world!

First printed in the Peace Courier May-June 2003

The mind boggles...

SMH July 29 2003 – back page, “What the Women’s Mags Say” – in NW, (I don’t know what that stands for), there is a report, amongst others, which says, “...86-centimetre actor Verne Troyer (Mini-Me in the Austin Powers flicks) will marry a 188-centimetre blonde bombshell, Genevieve Gallen..there’s even a shot of the happy couple – they look like circus performers”. I don’t know what the measurements mean in feet and inches. I just know that she is Very Tall and he is Very Short. (I wonder whether the marriage will last... And, of course, you have to wonder about their sex life, don’t you?)

Took me back to my late teens, when I picked up a women’s magazine in a waiting room – this would be sixty-odd years ago, when the magazines contained recipes, dressmaking ideas, knitting patterns, heart-warming stories about celebrities, how to feed your babies, how to keep your husband happy, your stars for the week, etc., etc. But no sex. No rude words. No bare flesh. And I came across a contribution from a reader – instructions for making knitted covers for doorknobs... I kid you not. I have never forgotten it. I stopped reading those magazines forever.

I also recall reading a suggestion in another magazine, that you should hang your clothes up with the hooks on the hangers all facing the same way, so that in case of fire or other emergency, you would be able to grab them quickly. Maybe that was a useful suggestion. I can’t make up my mind.

Renee Simons



Medicare Concern

This is a letter sent to Senator Kay Paterson, Minister for Health, from Barbara Silverstone, OWN Australia. Please feel free to copy this letter or take extracts from it to send to your local member or to the Minister.

The Older Women's Network (Australia) is very concerned about the current Medicare situation. We believe there will be a very severe impact on our members, the majority of whom are pensioners or self funded retirees living on very low fixed incomes. The latter have been gravely affected by current low interest rates.

We very much doubt that the proposed subsidy to doctors will be sufficient to encourage them to bulk bill concession cardholders. Older women, who do not hold cards, but who are finding it hard to make ends meet, will be gravely impacted.

Many GPs have stopped bulk billing and cardholders already have to pay a 'gap' of several dollars if they visit the doctor of their choice. The hike in insurance premiums has forced doctors to impose a charge, if they are to continue to operate. The proposed subsidy is obviously insufficient to persuade GPs to reverse this policy.

The subsidy may enable continuation of bulk billing in large city clinics which already do so, but this often means that patients cannot see the doctor of their choice and they thus lose continuity of care and a relationship with their GP which is so important. The clinics are often not situated close to where there is need, and are difficult to get to by many older women many of whom live alone and do not have their own transport.

Those doctors in suburban practices who do still bulk bill are so busy that it can take many days,

if not weeks, to get an appointment. This could lead to a medical condition deteriorating to a stage which is life threatening, or requires much more treatment (and expense) to correct than would have originally been the case.

Many people are being forced to attend public hospital emergency departments, already overcrowded, for minor ailments which could well be treated by a GP.

GPs are saying that, even if they did agree to bulk bill, they would need additional software to enable their other patients to claim directly their Medicare rebates, so this would be impossible for some time.

I believe that the insurance for the gap payment only kicks in after a patient has spent \$1000, which means that only the very ill who have many doctor and specialist visits would benefit from this. Many people in real need would postpone or neglect to visit their doctor because of cost. This could well jeopardise their health as they could become seriously ill or even die through lack of timely treatment.

We urge that the government consider the serious effect the legislation will have on the lives of many older women and others who are living on low incomes.

Barbara Silverstone

Chestnuts

*Shiny brown globes
in the fruitman's shop
bring back a scene of
my childhood days
in a faraway land.*

*I'm holding tight
to my nanny's hand
in the crowds of
the marketplace
on a frosty winter's day.*

*My pace is lagging
but round the corner
a welcome sight –
I skip with joy –
the Chestnut Lady's stall.*

*An old woman in peasants' gear,
a large warm shawl
around her back,
hunched on a stool by an
iron stove
alive with glowing coals.*

*Sensuous aroma
draws me near;
nuts roasting on the rack –
hard shells popping –
and they're ready to eat.*

*With sleight of hand
she twists
cones from paper squares,
to fill with
sweet hot treats.*

*I clutch my parcel,
cold hands warming,
my face a-glow
anticipating
my favourite fare.*

Trudy Davis

Local 'Save Medicare' Groups

The Save Medicare Alliance is looking to contact and support people who have set up local Medicare activist groups, or people who are interested in setting up local activist groups to campaign on this issue. Local groups are essential to the success of a campaign like this. Please email details through to a.tattersall@labor.org.au or phone me on (02) 9286 1624.

Amanda Tattersall

Making a difference

Ann Symonds, former Member of the Legislative Council, NSW Parliament, was the guest speaker at our recent conference. Pat Simpson, who was chairing the first day, introduced Anne with an awe-inspiring list of her achievements, most of them focused on women's issues.

Ann's talk revolved around the conference theme of 'women making a difference'. She began by taking an historical perspective, beginning with Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792 in which she attacked the educational restrictions that kept women in a state of "ignorance and slavish dependence". Mary Wollstonecraft was especially critical of a society that encouraged women to be "docile and attentive to their looks to the exclusion of all else". She wrote in terms of the powerless poor and the effect that poverty had on women of every class and creed. For her outspoken views on the need for education, social equity

and a supportive environment she was lampooned in the (all male) British Parliament of the day.

In moving her focus to the 20th century, Ann named Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963, as an important inducement for women world wide to re-examine their lives and to consider whether they were completely fulfilled in their domestic and motherhood roles. Ann also mentioned Rose Scott, an Australian who was one of the key figures in the turn-of-the century movement committed to universal suffrage and a general improvement in the condition of women.

Ann has courageously tackled some of the most thorny issues of the 20th century with regard to the inequality and invisibility of women. She is particularly passionate about the rights of women and children where the mother has been imprisoned, often for alcohol or drug abuse, and the inequality of women's and men's monetary rewards in the

work- place. According to a Smith Family study, 10-12% of Australia families live on less than \$419 per week and on \$244 for a single person.

Claiming that women *can* make a difference, Anne said that there is no reason why a woman can't have a good time *and* be an activist when we recognise injustice and inequality. She suggested that OWN has much in common with other women's groups, for instance, the Country Women's Association, and feels that we could work together to achieve common aims. For example, domestic violence has received much more attention lately, and is an issue that should be pursued nationally and internationally.

Overall, Ann's research, and her evidence of direct action, strongly supports the belief that women *can* make a difference. Her talk was a real challenge to her listeners and an encouragement for us to 'spread the word'.

Isabel MacCallum

When it's my time, how do I want to be farewelled?

Despite close family ties we might have, many of us have probably learned long ago the value of friendship. Already some of us have faced the loss of old and valued friends. Maybe we should also think about what our loss, our death, might mean for others.

There's a jokey line about funerals that you've probably heard – die early and you're bound to get a big send-off – live to a ripe, old age and your funeral is destined to be a lonely affair. Thinking about death might make some people feel morbid, so exploring how we want to be farewelled is best done with a good dose of humour.

Think of ways you might like your friends and family to celebrate your life. You might like to start with something simple – like music. Would your choice be

for a live band belting out your favourite song or something quieter, to create a mood of reflection, perhaps? Or might you prefer to say no to music and leave a poem to be read, or a gritty letter so they'll know you were aiming for the last word on something or other?

And will you want an alternative kind of farewell? How might it be different from the norm? Have you thought about *where* you want to be farewelled? Who might play a role in your plans? Are you going to let them know beforehand?

All worth thinking about, don't you agree?

Pearlie McNeill

Letters to the Editor

Say a few words

At the State Conference, I attended the Public Speaking workshop conducted by Ellin Krinsky. Ellin explained (amongst many other things) that the construction of a speech must have a beginning, a middle section and an ending. As I listened, I was reminded of what I was learning at Toastmasters.

Toastmasters is an international organisation committed to teaching its members communication skills. Speeches are prepared and presented, and then evaluated by other Toastmasters. At each meeting, there is the opportunity to make impromptu speeches. How often have you been asked to “say a few words” off the cuff? Speeches can include proposing a Toast, speaking at a wedding or at a birthday party.

Toastmasters meetings are run informally, yet, like OWN, are lots of fun. Members learn how to chair a meeting, how to propose motions, how to fill the roles of Secretary and treasurer as well as other positions. It is a very worthwhile organisation to join, and I would be glad to provide OWN members with contact details.

Toastmasters has given me the confidence to speak off the cuff when I am asked to say a few words. These days I don't hesitate to 'have my say' – briefly and to the point.

One up for Wellness! *Nap Unwin*

You'd be proud of me. Doug and I climbed up, across, and down into King's Canyon the other day. A mighty performance straight up the rocky canyon, then across and through those amazing miniature Bungle Bungles, then down, yes, straight down, into the canyon,

rightly called the Garden of Eden. A stream, ghost gums, cycads, birds calling, the green of the eucalypts silhouetted against the oh, so blue sky, and then straight up the other side. “Not long now,” Doug encouraged me. “Just around the corner.” Then I stumbled over a peg that said 2kms! Groan, 6kms over the roughest terrain two 80 year olds could ever tackle. Madness, but we did it in five hours – just two more than the estimated time for 'others'. One up for OWN and Wellness.

Joan Johns

Chasing the 'blues'

A car crash fifty years ago which broke a neck vertebra, among other fractures, and hereditary osteo-arthritis, left me with a number of physical problems. I coped with them reasonably well and was able to lead a fairly active life until I reached my late seventies. Then my arms became affected with tendonitis from arthritis in my neck. Working became so painful that I was forced to spend my days watching someone else do the tasks that had been my delight. I was devastated. The depression, which ensued from having no quality of life, made me consider opting out of life altogether.

I can't remember where I found the leaflet about OWN, but I had always been interested in women's issues, and decided to go to a meeting. At first, I found it painful sitting too long, but I accepted the tolerance of other members and popped out for a cuppa and moved from my chair when necessary.

I remembered my many years of public speaking, so volunteered for a poetry reading. Soon I was involved in the Southern Highland's OWN performing group, using long forgotten skills

to write parodies. Now I am having fun again.

The stimulation is carrying me through the more painful days, and giving my brain chemicals a boost. I have a life again, perhaps only for a few short years, but joining a group and laughing with friends has definitely chased the blues.

Pat Reynolds

A strong presence

OWN Matters stops me in my tracks. I devour it from front to back – and forget about my morning walk. I joined OWN about twelve months ago in preparation for my retirement in 2004 – and I can't wait to join Illawarra OWN, as I will be moving to Woonona.

I hear great things about you from my friend, Joy Ross. I have known OWN for years through Joy, and am always excited by your strong presence in our communities. Josie and Louise were winners on *Enough Rope* and great role models for us older women – and younger ones.

Thank you so much for your lively enthusiasm and support, OWN.

Lindley Bernie

Wow from cover to cover

I had to read this No 21 issue of *OWN Matters* from cover to cover today when it arrived. Wow! What a wonderful lot of letters expressing so many points of views. Congratulations to both Josie and Louise for their courage in appearing on the Denton show.

Now, how can we expand the publicity to show that we are Australia-wide and that OWN is always there in Canberra, lobbying in the interest of older people of both sexes?

Letters to the Editor

I heartily endorse the sentiments by Pat Simpson on Page 1, *The Personal is Political*. I also wish to say goodbye to Betty Searle, whom I had the privilege to hear speak and also had friendly chats with at Canberra conferences. She will certainly be sorely missed by many people, as Christina Ryan said. Rest in Peace, Betty.

"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is. I only know that people call me a 'feminist' whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat." – Rebecca West. I find this the greatest truth today!

Edie Connellan

A great read

I would like to say how wonderful, informative and stimulating the recent newsletter was.

The doings of OWN sisters everywhere mount a challenge for those of us who feel that we're doing OK, but pale a little into insignificance in comparison. But hey, the challenge will be taken up and I hope that we'll meet our fellow OWN sisters, perhaps at some function?

Once again, a great read – keep them coming and thank you.

Helen Standing

Less breast cancer

I felt quite sad when I read the Chris Frances letter re bras for the Bougainville women, because surveys indicate that in countries where women do not wear bras, there is far less breast cancer. It is considered that the tightness of bras can block toxins draining from our skin. Our skin is really an excretory organ, and chemicals from bra material could be absorbed through the excretory ducts. As we all know, our whole

world is now inundated with carcinogenic chemicals – so, women, go bra-less, save money and donate to OWN instead.

Josephine Conway

Go girls!

I was deeply moved and very impressed with the Denton interview – gutsy, very brave and honest.

I wonder sometimes at the lack of honesty that still persists with many of our age group. Maybe old habits of pretending and hiding are hard to break.

Quite a number of my friends outside OWN have phoned me to express their admiration for these feisty women. My daughter was very impressed and all the comments I've received have been...go girls...or similar.

Gwen Knipe

Jewish funerals

What is wrong with your anonymous correspondent? Why hasn't she put her name to her letter? What is she afraid of?

I am Jewish, too. I didn't find anything offensive in Norma Anet's letter. I have read the letter over and over, and can't find anything to complain about. Our funerals are just like those of any religion. It is not our custom to put flowers on the coffins, but there is no objection if you do. The only thing that is cheaper about Jewish funerals is the coffin itself. As for the headstones, the plot of ground and everything else, the cost is the same as in any other religion.

I am quite mystified by the tone of her letter. I think she has read something into Norma's letter that isn't there.

Renee Simons

Anger can cause headaches

People who bottle up their anger could be putting themselves at risk of headaches, according to US researchers. Dr Robert Nicholson, from Saint Louis University, studied 422 adults, 171 of whom suffered from headaches. He assessed how angry the participants were, how much they internalised their anger and how severe and frequent their headaches were.

The study revealed that bottling up anger is more likely to cause headaches than depression and anxiety, both of which have been linked to headaches.

However, Dr Nicholson warns that letting your anger out may not always be appropriate. What I would hope to do is help people learn ways to lengthen their fuses so they avoid becoming angry," he said.

Taking three deep breaths when you are angry lowers your internal anger meter. It's also useful to identify the kinds of people, situations and events that trigger your anger so you can change your environment. A five-minute walk often helps to diffuse your angry feelings. Also, telling others how you feel in an assertive, non-confrontational way can make you feel better and lets others know how they have annoyed you.

However, if expressing your anger will cause more harm than good in the long run, it is best to vent your rage by telling a friend rather than berating the person who wronged you. Another suggestion is to let go of things beyond your control and recognise that you can only change yourself and your responses to others, not what others do to you. (Easy to say, not so easy to do! Eds.)

www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=3637

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney

From now on, to 'help save the trees', unless it is essential, OWN Sydney's notices of events will be printed in the Noticeboard section of *OWN Matters*. So, do keep an eye out!

We had an excellent discussion during Incontinence Week on *Women's Waterworks* with Denise Edgar who works at the Incontinence Foundation.

Those of us working on the Creative Ageing project – creating words and images for posters, bags and cards – are really chuffed to be asked by Sutherland OWN to create some images for them. Going into print at last!

We would like to express our appreciation to OWN NSW for one of the best conferences OWN has held, well run, inclusive and informative. Just loved the SilvertOWNs' performance!

The formation of OWN Sydney in 2001 gave members the opportunity to focus more directly on older women's issues in inner and outer city. The Working Group feels that members did well this past year,

meeting our commitments and offering new opportunities for friendship and activism. At our Annual General Meeting on 25 August, we began a discussion about how we can expand and promote OWN Sydney in the coming year.

Arrangements for the OWN (Australia) National Conference and AGM, which will be held in Canberra on September 22/23, are well underway. OWN Sydney has submitted a conference resolution to have a role for State bodies included in the OWN (A) Constitution, and have also submitted resolutions to the OWN (A) *Policies and Statements* on Medicare, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and Aged Care.

Meg Bishop has now completed this year's Office of the Status of Women funded project and has produced a report, *Measuring Social Capital: An Action Research Project for Older Women in Australia* which will be available at the conference and later at the OWN NSW office.

Louise Anike and Joy Ross

OWN Illawarra

A large number of our members attended the recent OWN NSW Conference, many of them performers in the SilvertOWNs performance group. Everyone enjoyed it so much we hope to encourage even more members to attend next time. The SilvertOWNs would like to thank the audience for their very enthusiastic reception and say they would be delighted to perform at a future conference! They are busier than ever at the moment with many demands on their time.

The most recent edition of our Illawarra OWN Newsletter is bursting at the seams as so many members have contributed articles, reports, jokes poems...the list goes on and on!

Our recent activities have included an "Undercover Party" which sounds like an ASIO gathering but was, in actual fact, a rather 'risque' event where underwear and other garments were sold. Many of us attended out of sheer (?) curiosity, but actually came away with a few purchases after having had a very good laugh.

OWN Illawarra members were lucky enough to be given (courtesy of member Arlene Little) complimentary tickets to the Federation Cup match (like the women's Davis Cup for those who don't know) between Australia and Columbia, held recently at the Wollongong Entertainment Centre. Australia won but only just. We enjoyed a very entertaining and exciting series of matches, cheering on our girls and having the chance to see the gracious and delightful Evonne Goolagong Cawley shepherding her charges through the hard-fought competition.

Our Social Committee has come up with an interesting and exciting program for the second half of the year including sessions on self-defence and Reflexology. There is also a planned visit to see the tulips at Bowral and to a musical museum at Robertson now that spring is about to burst out all over.

Like all OWN groups, Illawarra OWN was thrilled with the wonderful response of viewers to the appearance of the OWN NSW Theatre Group on the Andrew Denton show *Enough Rope*. A tape of this interview was played at our last meeting and many of us thought that seeing it for a second time was even better than the first! Our best wishes go to the group for their forthcoming WOW tour.

Peggy Rodden

Membership Income

Your membership of OWN Sydney reflects your enthusiastic support for what we are doing and tells us that you really want us to stay in existence. We set the membership fee at \$5 so that people wouldn't be deterred from joining, but since membership and the newsletter subscription were separated in 2001, membership to OWN Sydney has fallen quite a lot. Although income from this fee is small, it is important. If we can rely on a fairly consistent membership income it means the Working Group can budget for a few things we might not otherwise be able to provide, so please, reconsider...and join OWN Sydney today!

On behalf of older women

Since 1991, when Louise Anike presented a paper at a Domestic Violence Committee Conference, OWN has been 'showing the way' in our work against violence and abuse towards older women. This year has seen a resurgence of energy with members speaking out, presenting papers and undertaking research into different aspects of violence and abuse towards older women.

This is what advocacy at OWN is all about – challenging and changing things we don't like, or that limit us in some way, and providing understanding, support and resources for older women who don't (yet) have a voice.

Older women can be silenced by feelings that they will not be believed, or they may feel embarrassed that they have suffered abuse for so long and think that there is no point in trying to change their situation. Many women still believe that they have brought it on themselves! These are powerful restraints to speaking out.

Theatre Group performances over

the past few years, with members of the cast who have experienced domestic violence and abuse courageously sharing their personal stories, have had a considerable impact on audiences across the state. Andrew Denton invited them onto his show after seeing *Off the Beaten Track*, the video which documents the Theatre Group's 1999 Southern Highlands tour where domestic violence was the central theme of each performance.

OWN Sydney's contribution to advocating on domestic violence issues was a public forum held in collaboration with the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women. The aim of the *Older Women's Rights to Safety in the Home* forum was to raise awareness of the under-reported and usually hidden issue of violence against older women and to look at gaps in services.

More than 100 women heard a panel of speakers talk about types of abuse, legal issues, police responses, medical ignorance, emergency accommodation and prevention. The forum also

included the launch of the *Older Women's Right to Safety in the Home* Quilt, an idea launched at the 2002 State Conference NSW and brought to fruition by the OWN Sydney quilting group. The quilt now adorns one wall of our premises at Lower Fort Street.

In February 2003, the Advocacy Coordination Group decided that its number one priority for the year was to undertake research into women's refuges to see how many older women seek refuge accommodation and what refuges can offer older women. A questionnaire was produced and sent out to all NSW refuges. A significant number have been returned and are currently being analysed. Face-to-face interviews are planned with refuge staff to more fully explore the issues facing older women.

It would be interesting to know how many other OWN groups are involved in anti-violence committees or other forms of activism around this issue in their local communities.

Dorothy Cora

Defunct!

So many things happen at OWN each week, that something has to give and it seems that this is, unfortunately, the Current Affairs Discussion Group.

There is still much interest in talking about what is happening in Australia today and everywhere. We still want to put in our two cents worth of advice and protest about what we don't like to various government departments and politicians... BUT there are so

many activities that demand our interest and attention, there are not enough days in the week to do everything. Our meetings will cease from now on.

We will, instead, from time to time invite speakers to address the membership as we have done in the past. We still have a forum in OWN Matters and I hope our erstwhile members will write about their concerns and thereby encourage healthy discourse and debate through our pages.

In the meantime continue to think about how we are trading Australia away with the Free Trade Agreement we are currently negotiating with America; think about the eroding of Medicare; think about the dumping of nuclear waste in our country and assist the Aboriginal Study Group in this regard.

We don't have to come to meetings to keep informed and active. Just watch for notices in the newsletter.

Muriel Hortin

Do not resuscitate!

Ages ago, when in rude health, I brought home a bundle of stuff on 'Death and Dying' from the OWN office, and promptly forgot all about it. Then I was struck by the agony of a collision between crushed vertebrae and the sciatic nerve. Suddenly, dying didn't seem quite so theoretical!

So out came the bundle. My son and I together studied the information...about Wills and Living Wills, and what you would want to happen in the case of your severe impairment. Do you want to be resuscitated? Even where to order a cardboard coffin! (Tasmania, and costs more than you imagined.)

Two forms about Power of Attorney and Enduring Guardianship required the signature of the Clerk of the Court, so we duly found ourselves in the magisterial presence. Slowly we waited, while he read out the forms from front to back. Then, leaning back very importantly, fingertips pressed together, he asked us both, in turn, the following questions.

"Have you read these documents, and do you understand them?"
Yes.

Then, looking me straight in the eye, and me in terrible pain, feeling like Death itself, he said, "Are you a lawyer?" No.

Then, to my son, "Are you a lawyer?" No.

"Well," he said, pausing for dramatic effect, "These are most impressive. If everyone did what you have done, a great deal of trouble could be avoided!"

I was too overwhelmed to admit that it wasn't all our own work! But oh, what a wonderful feather in OWN's cap!

Dorothy Cox

Falls Prevention Programs

Having had two nasty falls and badly injuring vital joints, (shoulder and ankle), I became very conscious that I could have another fall and this time it could be even worse! The thought of fracturing a hip loomed heavily in my fears. As a result I became anxious and under-confident. My solution was to walk leaning over, looking for dangerous obstacles. Yet something told me that this was the wrong approach. It is necessary for good posture to walk erect, but how could I see the obstacles which caused my bad falls?

When things were at their gloomy worst, I saw a Sydney University Falls Prevention Program advertisement and telephoned immediately. It took some time before being slotted into a program, but it was well worth the wait, and I'd recommend it to anyone who has experienced falls. This program was held in the Balmain Leagues Club but there are many similar programs run elsewhere.

The program covered several sessions led by an occupational therapist with a physiotherapist and other professionals attending at different times. Six exercises are taught which challenge one's balance and build up muscle strength, and weights are used in conjunction with exercises. They are easy to do and participants are encouraged to practise on alternate days. They take about half an hour. There are displays of helpful equipment, and discussions about individual progress and attitudes.

I particularly found the Vision Clinic worker a very great help. She will come to people's homes to make safety suggestions. We looked at safety in crossing roads, eyeballing motorists so they will stop, how to walk and being alert to hazards, while retaining good posture. In other sessions we looked at suitable shoes, and walking aids such as walking sticks. It was particularly helpful to be shown how to handle a fall if one is at home, alone. Reassuring, too, to know that there is an aid to wear if one fears breaking a hip. There was more about hazards in the home – loose wiring, leads, poor lighting, rugs, bedclothes lapping over the end of the bed, spilt liquid in the kitchen. I now use a torch if I'm moving about in the night, and have a little night light for visitors.

The exercises have certainly strengthened my muscles and given me a better sense of balance. I hope I won't ever have another fall!

Norma Anet

Preventing brain shrinkage!

It appears that antidepressants may do more than simply reduce our mental agony. It may also, say researchers, improve the *physical* health of our brain! In the American Journal of Psychiatry, psychiatrists speculate that antidepressant medication, when taken over a long period of time, may actually *prevent* the area of the brain called the hippocampus from shrinking. The team of researchers looked at 38 women with a history of depression and compared the size of their hippocampus with other women who had never displayed signs of depression. The findings could explain why patients with depression who don't take antidepressants have trouble concentrating and paying attention, as the hippocampus is involved in learning and memory.

www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=3727

Domestic Violence –

the Police can help whatever your age

It doesn't matter how young or old you are, if you are experiencing domestic violence contact the Police. General Duties police officers can attend your home, the home of a friend or make arrangements to bring you to the Police Station. We know that it is not always possible for you to get away or speak freely if the other party is with you.

Once you have made contact with the police a report will be taken and filed on the Police Computer System. A report number will be issued to you for future reference. We will need to take a detailed statement from you and understand that talking about domestic violence is difficult and can be very traumatic. A support person or an interpreter if you are from a non-English speaking background can be organised to help you during this time.

If you or police fear for your safety, we will seek an Apprehended Violence Order from the Local Court. This is a legal document that asks a Magistrate to make certain orders that restrict your partner's behaviour towards you, ie contacting or approaching you. There are a number of orders that can be made depending on

your circumstances and we will explain these in detail to you. The Domestic Violence Liaison Officer, who is trained specifically in this field, will attend the Court with you and a Police Prosecutor will act on your behalf at no cost.

If you need to leave your home, the police will assist you in finding alternative accommodation. We can also refer you to other organisations such as Centrelink, Counsellors, Local Court Assistance Scheme, Community Health Centres who, among many others, offer assistance to those experiencing domestic violence.

If you know someone or are experiencing domestic violence, please tell someone or contact the police so that we can help.

Val Short, Domestic Violence Liaison Officer, City Central Police phone 9265 6499

This is the second of four articles on issues of Domestic Violence.

Hollows on the Hill

An exhilarating wind blew through the immense sandstone boulder in Desert Park near Broken Hill, somehow adding to the power and strength of those great monoliths, where sculptors from all over the world had come to honour the late Fred Hollows and carved monuments in stone to his memory. I was standing in awe gazing at *Madonna and Child*. How could such a rocky, hard surface yield such a gentle, tender picture?

I walked to my favourite carving, *The Horse's Head*, a noble image of strength and beauty. A loud, strident voice interrupted my reverie as a woman rattled her guide sheet, rapidly looking up and down the carving next to me. "Where's the emu?" she said petulantly. "It says here there's an emu, I can't see it." Her friend

came to look, and so did I.

"This is ridiculous, I can't make head nor tail of it." She impatiently dragged the long hair from across her face, cursing the wind. Her friend and I walked slowly around the great stone.

"Here's your emu," we said in unison, and laughed together. But she hurried on, waving her guide sheet irritably. She stood in front of my magnificent *Horse's Head*.

"Look at the graffiti. Disgusting." We hurried to look. Graffiti? "That's not graffiti," I explained. "It's the sculptor's name. See? He comes from Georgia in Russia." Another shake of the pamphlet, a snort, and she was off. "Ugliest thing I've ever seen." I turned in astonishment to her friend, and we fell about laughing.

"We kindly asked her to come with us

on an eight weeks' trip. She had never been outback. Recently widowed. Nothing pleases her. Whingeing all the time, and we are only five days of the track. Heaven preserve us." I sympathised, and we slowly walked on, arm in arm, like old friends, standing in front of each monument in quiet wonder – but not for long. "Where are you, Madge? Hurry up. This wind is killing me." The command came from below, and reluctantly my new friend said, "Goodbye." We hugged, and she walked on "Good luck," I called. "Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood, things will get better," – not believing it for a minute. What I would have liked to advise was, "Strangle her..."

Joan Johns

Sleeping Rough – Homeless Women

In a report made late year in Victoria, *Single Women and Homelessness*, the case was quoted of Carolyn Hayes, then 55, being turned out of her rented premises in the country and forced to live on the streets in Melbourne. When Carolyn's husband died, she mortgaged her home to finance a business venture, which failed. She couldn't keep up the mortgage payments, so her house was sold. Carolyn Hayes said living on the street is not just something that affects only men, and went on to say there was the same number of homeless men and women when she was on the streets.

At the National Homelessness Conference in Brisbane recently, the strong links between women's homelessness and domestic violence were underlined. Affordable and adequate housing and accommodation issues are a major consideration in women's decisions about leaving a violent situation. In some cases, a woman returns home to the violence rather than face being homeless.

There are nearly 250,000 Australians now on waiting lists for public housing. The 1996 (latest reliable) figures show 150,000 Australians are homeless.

Under an International Covenant on Economic, Social

and Cultural Rights, which Australia signed in 1972, there is an obligation for Australia to progressively implement certain human rights, such as the right to adequate housing. Australia stands alone among common law nations, as it does not have a bill of rights. We don't have laws to enforce affordable housing for those who need it. The homeless cannot plead legal rights to be housed.

Welfare agencies have repeatedly called attention to the fact that there are far fewer services for emergency care and long term accommodation for homeless women than men.

Of course, not all homeless women are homeless because of domestic violence, but it is a growing factor, and older women are affected as well as younger ones. For older women, there are even fewer refuges for them to turn to in times of emergency, and long-term accommodation may be even more problematic.

At our *Older Women's Right to Safety* forum in April, the keynote speaker, Joy Fuller, concluded with a plea that more funds and support services be made available for older women. OWN wants not only more funding and support services but ongoing housing in affordable, adequate accommodation for the already and the potential homeless women in Australia.

Louise Anike

Ripples

Some months ago I was at Circular Quay waiting for a ferry. Even with my nose in a book, I was aware that someone sat next to me. The person, a casually dressed young man, greeted me and asked what I was reading. This led to a polite conversation which continued during the eight minute ferry trip. As I got up he asked me for my email address. Having swiftly made an assessment of him from the small amount of information he had given me (he worked in health resources) and the openness of his face. I gave him my email address and promptly forgot the whole incident.

I was somewhat surprised when, a week later, I received an email from him with a story about Rosie, an older woman who, at 75, had begun a university course and

endeared herself to so many undergraduates that she became the mascot for the university football team. (Of course the story he told was more detailed than the bare sketch I can give here.) I read the story to members of Nowra OWN, some of whom reminded me of the dangers of speaking to strangers, to which I defended myself by saying I always followed my instinct, had never been disappointed, and had made acquaintances with some very interesting people.

This was not the end of this brief introduction. My new-found friend sent another email to let me know he was setting up a voluntary organisation which he was calling *Ripples*. The idea is to encourage young people to make a commitment to visit a chosen nursing home once a month, with a bunch of flowers, and spend a

couple of hours with one or two of the elderly residents.

When I gave a two-hour lecture recently to undergraduate nurses at the University of Sydney, I described what this enthusiastic young man was doing. Several wanted to know more so I spoke to the Faculty representative about making contact through the university and sent an email to Rob so that he could make contact through the students to encourage more recruits.

Rob has continued to keep in touch about the growth of his project and in response to a recent update I suggested he might tell his story to Radio National for the morning program. Ripples indeed!

Rob can be contacted on 0410 582 982 or by email rob@package.com.au.

Isabel MacCallum

Mourning Lost Bohemia

So Sydney City Council means to sanitise Kings Cross. Louis Nowra's excellent article in the Sydney Morning Herald on June 25 states some opposing views.

I agree with him that we don't want another Paddington, or Double Bay for that matter. The 'Cross is unique, seen by Nowra as a "place of resilience and tolerance", not just a "hotbed of sin". I lived there for twelve years, and mourned the day in the early 1980s when I had to move away to buy a unit. The developers had moved in and I disliked the tiny 'shoe-boxes' on sale at inflated prices.

I hope the do-gooders do not sanitise the Cross out of existence. The Cross residents go about their business and avoid potential trouble spots. I felt much safer walking home after dark from Kings Cross station than I do in Waverley.

However, a friend who has been a Cross dweller for over 30 years is voicing worries typical of many residents. She deplors the loss of their wonderful library, for which no satisfactory relocation has been finalised. She also regrets the disappearance of small, modestly priced restaurants.

At least 16 hotels are being converted into expensive home units, some selling at over a million dollars. The high flyers will buy these units, with large maintenance fees. As Nowra points out, these newcomers will demand that "the spruikers be gotten rid of, prostitutes dispersed

and sex clubs closed down." This will lead to a bland lifestyle.

There are only faint lingering reminders of the Bohemian past of the Cross. I am reminded of the song *Macarthur Park*, where the singer regrets his lost love, "I will never have that recipe again". The cynics say he is referring to drugs, but his sadness could arise from a loved and lost past.

In the 1970s I rented a bed-sitter in Royston Street (a cul-de-sac) in an old four-storey building snuggled into a corner. I was on greeting

“a cross section of society – blue and white collar workers, pensioners, students, drifters, and some couples with young children”

terms with most of my fellow tenants, and knew a lot of the people renting in other buildings in the square. They were a cross section of society – blue and white collar workers, pensioners, students, drifters, and some couples with young children. It was our little village, with our own old-fashioned family corner shop.

It was doomed to change. In the early 1980s, the developers moved in to turn our bed-sitters and flats into expensive home units. Most of the residents could not afford to buy and moved away. One family with four small children was given public housing in the then Green Valley. I met them revisiting the square, deeply saddened about their lost urban life, close to the city and amenities. They hated living in 'woop woop'. At that time, protesters were painting on walls, 'send the rich to Green Valley'. Now the rich are flooding into the Cross.

I feel I knew the best of the Cross. The new Council is not interested in housing for battlers, of any age.

Helen McMaugh

Urban Legends

"Dioxin carcinogens causes cancer, especially breast cancer. Don't use plastic containers in your microwave because they release dioxins and don't freeze your plastic water bottles with water as this also releases dioxin which is in the plastic."

This 'health alert' began appearing in email inboxes in February 2002. It was someone's summarisation of a morning news health segment aired on **KHON TV in Hawaii on 23 January 2002.**

Commercial TV news is dictated by ratings, not importance, and sensational claims get better ratings than straightforward, more mundane information, even if the latter is more valuable to the viewing audience. It's a pretty good assumption that if using plastic containers in microwaves, as millions of people have been doing for decades, posed a significant risk of cancer, you'd be hearing about it somewhere other than from an email!

If you have access to the internet, check out Urban Legends at www.snopes.com/

It's an illuminating read.

Dorothy Cora

The things kids say

A census taker is a man who goes from house to house increasing the population.

A city purifies its water supply by filtering the water and then forcing it through an aviator.

Most of the houses in France are made of plaster of Paris.

The spinal column is a long bunch of bones. The head sits on the top and you sit on the bottom.

One by-product of raising cattle is calves.

Home alone sick

Day 1. A 'stress test' by our friendly cardiologist reassures me that my chest pain is not due to any heart problem. Going home I feel my throat sore and my voice husky. I learn that a neighbour, Peggy, 86, frail and forgetful, has had a fall. Sister Clare asks will I see that Peg has food and drink? I will.

Day 2. Peg is hungry, but in pain; no food in her flat. Doctor comes and orders Panamax. Another neighbour, Pearl, comes and tells me she can't help; she is 85 and has a heart problem.

Day 3. My voice is almost gone. I can't go on with Peg. I phone her doctor who says she doesn't want to go to hospital. Well, I tell him, I'm phoning 000. Ambulance comes and the officer asks if there is no one else who can help. I am dishevelled and hoarse and tell him that all the people in this part of the units are either over 80 or still at work. Peg is taken to hospital.

Day 4. I cough all day. An after hours doctor comes at 10pm, leaves some antibiotics and a script for more.

Day 5 & 6 Feel worse, chest wheezes and rattles. Sister Clare says get GP who says "bronchitis". Can't eat or drink; my skin is hot, dry and loose, I'm dehydrated. Phone the GP who talks about flat lemonade ice blocks. How does she think I'm going to get them? I drink tap water.

Days 7 & 8. Cough and sleep. Manage a few meals, my fridge is full.

Day 9. Feel better, sunny day so I sit on verandah for a while, glad to be able to read again.

Day 10. Feel terrible; it's Saturday, ring surgery for a home visit. Part-time female GP does not do home visits, so I send for another after-

hours doctor. He comes and prescribes more antibiotics and an expectorant. Today some of my family are coming so they can collect medicine from chemist who does not deliver on Saturdays.

Day 11. Feel better – a visit from my family means a lot. All this time Sister Clare, who is 80 and has many health problems, has been enquiring how I feel and bringing small offerings of food. She is doing the same for Peg who is home from hospital. Sister has support from Wesley Mission Live at Home Program, for which she has been assessed by ACAT. This is for ongoing, not temporary, help. I don't see anyone else; fear of infection is very real for old people.

Day 12 & 13. Coughing and spitting too much. Feel terrible, short of breath, chest rattling. Phone the surgery, the other part-time female GP, the one whom I usually see, does not do home visits before she starts work today. I throw a tantrum and tell the receptionist that she "can get someone here pretty damn quick or I'll call another practice".

The GP comes, listens to my chest and says, "I think I can hear pneumonia". I can feel it! She orders Xray, cortisone and more antibiotics, tells me I'm not sick enough for hospital. How sick?

When you need oxygen and IV fluids. On reflection, I'm better off here; hospitals can be pest houses.

Day 14. Cough and spit all day. Doctor phones, "lobar pneumonia with pleural effusion, lots of fluid there, looks like you are in heart failure, are your ankles swollen?" "No." "You can't be in heart failure, your tests were normal." Well, that's something!

Day 15. Another neighbour reminds me that these are 'self-care units' – as if I need reminding!

Days 16 to 20. Coughing and spitting and coping with stress incontinence. Why an otherwise efficient bladder fails during a coughing attack is a mystery. I solve the problem at night with a thick bath towel folded in four. Sister Clare has developed a cough and is having antibiotics!

Day 21. Not a good day. I feel depressed. My chest hurts, I spend a sleepless night planning my funeral, sleep towards morning.

Day 22 I'm damned if I'm going to spend another day like yesterday. I put in a load of washing and look forward to sleeping in fresh sheets, do some 'retail therapy' over the phone, walk to the shops and buy a newspaper. Pearl's friend comes in. Can I go and have a talk to her; she doesn't want to get up?

Someone chants the mantra "These are self-care units"!

Helen Monaghan

A Gift

Women volunteers see their contribution to human services as “a gift” and resist being taken for granted and ordered about, a new report has found. The 91-page report, *The Gift*, was written by academics Helen Hayward-Brown, Ros Bragg, Rosemary Leonard and Jenny Onyx.

The women volunteers who participated in the study were predominantly older – the average age was 57 – and volunteered eight to nine hours per week. They were involved with palliative care, home maintenance, family support, disability, cancer support, migrant education, day care for frail aged, drug users, youth activities, palliative care, health services and auxiliaries, school activities, respite care, country women’s associations and breast cancer support.

Those in the study said they want a clear role and some control over how they provide their services. They also want a choice in the tasks they are asked to do and the timing of their work. The report says volunteers want support, opportunities for personal growth and the chance to make real connections with other volunteers. “Above all, making a difference was seen as central to the volunteering experience, so volunteers need to be able to see that their work is important.”

A full version of *The Gift* is available at www.women.nsw.gov.au/pdf/gift.pdf and from the OWN office.



That’s Right!

As a long time volunteer with the Older Women’s Network I find great satisfaction in my work here. The reason is precisely as outlined by the authors of *The Gift*. I have chosen my fields of work – assisting with the newsletter, organising a discussion group and, at the moment, overseeing a creative arts program. I have control over my involvement in all these activities and can plan my

hours of work, usually around eight to ten hours a week. I have the support of my fellow workers and, like all OWN volunteers, feel appreciated.

My work at OWN has added a new dimension to my life in retirement and I also feel happy that I make a small contribution to the cause of older women.

Muriel Hortin

Winter Breakfast at Thirroul Beach

The pale winter sun, warming

The sound of waves lapping gently on the sand.

Inexorable, but comforting, hypnotic.

A new grandmother recognizable by the glowing face and the love filled eyes.

Also by the new dazzling walking shoes, the sparkling high tech three-wheeled stroller.

A couple of Kelp Gulls drop in briefly

Bigger, clumsier than our pretty, dainty Silver Gulls.

Scavengers still,

So, keep an eye for a sudden swoop on your breakfast.

It is winter and they are not as well fed as they would like.

The young man reading his prospectus

Speaking quietly into his cell phone.

It’s a new,

Different,

But still familiar world we live in now

A pot of tea,

A novel before me on the table

Life is good.

Pamela Peacock

NOTICES

Bequests to the Older Women's Network

If you would like to include a bequest to OWN in your Will, the following options will guide you in its wording.

Please specify which Older Women's Network you wish to be the recipient of your gift:

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.**

W O W3

...back on the road again in
October.

The Department for Women is currently organising the Women On Wheels (WOW) 2003 tour and the **Theatre Group** is again part of it!

On October 12, WOW3 starts at Cootamundra/Junee; then on to Wagga Wagga/Lockhart/Ganmain; Gundagai; Tumut/Tumbarumba/Batlow and Adaminaby/Cooma in the first week.

On October 20 we are in Jindabyne/Bombala/Wyndham; Eden/Bega/Merimbula; Narooma/Moruya/(Bermagui); ending at Bateman's Bay on **October 23** in the morning.

Watch your local news for programs and times.

PASS the word along and don't miss WOW3.



Necessary Targets

by Eve Ensler

**August 14 – September 6.
Tues to Sat 8pm, Sun 5pm.**

Darlinghurst Theatre
19 Greenknowe Ave. Potts Point

"A journey into the very human stories behind the headlines, Necessary Targets lets us peer beneath the head scarves of women whom we recognise as our friends, sisters and daughters. A brave, powerful, and crucial testimony against violence aimed at women as an act of war." Meryl Streep

Tickets: \$27 Concession: \$21
Bookings 02 8356 9987 or
www.darlinghursttheatre.com

A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE CONCERT

To honour the memory of Pauline McLeod, storyteller, actor, writer and poet

SYDNEY TOWN HALL
Friday 10 October.

Come and join singers, dancers, actors and musicians in celebrating Pauline's life.

**The concert will launch The
Pauline E. McLeod
Foundation**

'One day my mother told me a dreamtime story and, as soon as I heard it, I thought, "that is the way I want to go – as a storyteller I can reach people and change attitudes – with Dreamtime stories".'



Speak Out Speak Strong

Researching the Needs of
Aboriginal Women in Custody

A major research report that comprehensively examines the need of Aboriginal women in NSW prisons has been released by the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council.

For further information, please contact the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council
02 9228 8106



Travel

Odyssey Travel is a not-for-profit organisation which develops educational travel programs for people over 50.

www.odysseytravel.com.au/

NOTICES

OWN Sydney

We've decided there's not enough time for enjoying the friends we've made at OWN, and the new ones who are just joining... so we're lunching out.

11.30ish - Thursday, 18 September

Hero of Waterloo Hotel

Cnr. Lower Fort and Windmill Streets Millers Point.

We thought we'd take a look around the tunnels and cellars of this old pub which was once used for smuggling and shanghaing of unsuspecting sailors.

Cost of average lunch is about \$10.

Please leave your name to make a booking by phoning the OWN office 9247 7046

Join Older Women's Network Newcastle for a **FREE** fun day to celebrate our 10th Anniversary

Well Well Well!

Over Fifty and Feeling Fabulous!

Thursday 11 September 2003

9.30 am to 3.30 pm

Wesley Hall, 150 Beaumont St, Hamilton

Morning tea and lunch provided.

Sessions on: Laughter as Medicine.
Drumming, Gentle Exercise, International
Dancing AND A Forum on Positive Ageing.

Entertainment by
OWN NSW Theatre Group.

This event will launch our first 6-week OWN
Wellness Program (open to all), featuring
Gentle Exercise and Celtic Dancing, at Wesley
Hall.

Enquiries, bookings and programs:
Gwenda, 4961 2162 or Gwen, 4940 8956

Wollondilly Older Women's Network

TRIP TO JINDABYNE

15 to 19 September

Jindabyne Sport and Recreation Centre

Cost: \$432.23 per person

The cost includes coach travel from Picton, all
meals, accommodation and the following
activities throughout the week. Visit to Mt Kosi
Lookout, Thredbo Riverside Walk, Merritts
Nature Track Walk, visit to Thredbo Village, ride
on the chairlift and ski tube, Dalgety Historical
Tour and a Trip to the Snowy River Winery. Other
pick up points can be arranged but there may be a
small additional charge!

Places are limited, so to book your place, now! A
deposit within 7 days from booking is required.

Contact Wendy Roberts on 46 836006 or email

Wendy.Roberts2@swsahs.nsw.gov.au

DISCLAIMER

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

OWN MATTERS 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
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AUSTRALIA**