



# OWN MATTERS

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

**No. 23 October 2003**

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## Media Moments

Regular readers of *OWN Matters* will no doubt be aware that OWN has had more media coverage in the past couple of months than we've had in the past couple of years!

The article that began the media focus was published in early July in *The Bulletin*. Josie Jackson had agreed to be interviewed for a staff reporter's exposé of family violence and to have her name used in the article. Josie gave the reporter a copy of the Theatre Group's video, *Off the Beaten Track*, which the reporter promptly sent on to her friend, Andrew Denton.

When Andrew asked the Theatre Group to go on his show, *Enough Rope*, there were some initial ums and ahs about whether or not to accept. Would he take the 'micky' out of us? Will he let us talk about being older women on our terms? Would we be made to look foolish? Eventually, of course, the warmly respectful and encouraging way that Andrew and his producers related to them eased their doubts, and the rest is history. (We still receive the occasional phone call and email commenting appreciatively about Josie's and Louise's vitality, candour and resourcefulness.)

*Enough Rope* stimulated a flurry of interest from other media outlets – the Sunday Telegraph, Radio 2GB and Channel 9 – and a large number of organisations who suddenly wanted the Theatre Group to perform at their next event.

Radio 2GB enthusiastically courted Josie Jackson, brash comedienne that she is, to deliver a five-minute segment once a week on the topic of older women. That Josie had also shared her personal story of family violence so movingly on *Enough Rope* was of no interest to 2GB; they wanted to make the audience laugh. As Josie walked out of the studio after her first broadcast, Philip Clark said on air, "She's a good old stick, isn't she?" At the beginning of the third week, a producer rang and asked what Josie planned to talk about that week. "Older women and homelessness," replied Josie, "I like to be serious sometimes." That comment effectively ended Josie's media career on 2GB!

So, while we appreciate the media's attention, once again we are reminded who is in control. And sometimes we need to take a stand!

**Dorothy Cora**

### **OWN Matters**

is the Newsletter of the Older Women's Network NSW. It is published 11 times a year. Subscriptions are \$20.

### **Who Are We?**

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

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

### **Contributions**

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

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

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### **Audio Version**

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

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# Point of View

## **We must hang on to the PBS!**

Up until now Australians have enjoyed the most affordable medicines in the world. And we want to keep it that way! We get cheap medicines because, for many years, the government in power has had what they call a "referencing policy". That is, they pay the pharmaceutical companies for drugs based on the cheapest equivalent ones available. The drugs are then subsidised to make them affordable for everyone.

Up until now, that is! Our Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, (PBS) is seriously under threat from the USA which wants to prevent us from 'undercutting' the rights of American drug companies! It is unfair, they say, and will try to have the regulations changed in the Free Trade Agreement currently being negotiated between Australia and the US.

One would expect the response from our Minister for Trade to be a firm, categorical "No". On the contrary, he has refused to rule out trading away the reference pricing system in these negotiations. Many important therapeutic items will be affected, like the breast cancer drug, Nolvadex, the antibiotic drug, Keflex, the contraceptive pill, Levlén, and many others. Alarming, to me anyway, the drugs that lower cholesterol will also rise dramatically in price. These are very expensive drugs indeed and could cost me \$60 instead of the \$3.80 I currently pay.

What can we do? We must join the campaign: write, ring MPs, fax or email the Minister, write a letter, anything, but do something to make your voice heard. Enough protesting voices must be heard.

OWN has a draft letter to Mark Vaile which you can use as a basis for writing one of your own. Phone 9247 7046 and we will send it to you. The Minister's address is The Hon. Mark Vaile MP, Minister for Trade, Parliament House, Canberra. Email: [mark.vaile.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:mark.vaile.mp@aph.gov.au)

**Muriel Hortin**

## **Feel neglected no more!**

OWN has been providing free computer training on Apple Macs to our volunteers and we are now pleased to announce free computer training to members with PCs.

If you want to smarten up your everyday Word skills, use templates, design a newsletter or be a more skilful email user, then this is the course for you.

The training will be held at Glebe and will be run by Rosemary Smith, a skilled older woman whose business is PCs. There will be two sessions, the first on Friday, 24 October, and the second on Friday 31 October, both from 8.30am to 1pm.

If you would like more information about the class or want to enrol, please email [rosemary@smallbizcomputers.com.au](mailto:rosemary@smallbizcomputers.com.au) or phone her on 95188316. Numbers are limited.

# OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

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This report contains some good news and some not so good news. The good news is that Parramatta is now officially an OWN Group and becomes our nineteenth group in NSW. We thank Mollie Smith for all her hard work. For years there has been vague interest shown by various community groups and individuals about setting up an OWN group in the area, but it took someone like Mollie, with her enthusiasm and commitment, to make it happen. It's good to know that the Older Women's Network is at last providing a much-needed facility for older women living in Parramatta area. We wish them well, and hope they go from strength to strength.

The not so good news is that Cara McDougall has finally retired from her position as Women's Health Officer with Northern Sydney Health Services. Cara has been connected with OWN for many years, first as the Northside Wellness Project Worker and then through her continued support of Northside Wellness Centre under her Women's Health Officer hat. Cara also maintained her commitment to Wellness and to OWN through her membership of the OWN Wellness Coordination Group. This year she came up with the idea, and in consultation with OWN, organised three successful health forums for older women at the Dougherty Centre in Chatswood. Each forum was attended by around 80 to 100 older women. Cara's knowledge about and support for Wellness will be sorely missed. We wish her well for her future career and the new life she and her partner have planned for their family on a South Coast farm.

Congratulations to our very active Newcastle OWN group who celebrated their 10th Anniversary in style on 10 September with a fun day called *Over Fifty and Feeling Fabulous*. In their inimitable way, the Theatre Group joined in the celebrations by launching their new show, which includes a song on older women's homelessness and a song on social isolation. Here's to Newcastle's next ten years!

We continue to receive emails from various people about how impressed they were with the Theatre Group's appearance on the Andrew Denton Show. Since then the Theatre Group has been in constant demand, although the need to vigorously rehearse their new show for the WOW tour of NSW in October has meant that they have been unable to accept most of the invitations they've received.

Although Medicare is a Federal issue (well, it's a people's issue, isn't it?), the government's proposed changes to it are of great concern to OWN members everywhere. Trude Kallir has been representing OWN NSW at the monthly meetings of the Save Medicare

Alliance in Sydney which is made up of unions, consumer, health, community, religious and student organisations. See the notice board for details of how you can celebrate Medicare's 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday in an active way! We are also represented at meetings of the Photo ID Alliance which is hoping to make representation to NSW politicians in the very near future.

The NSW Management team has agreed that training workshops for NSW groups will be our number one priority in 2004. We need to know what type of training each group would be interested in, so please put on your thinking caps and discuss this at your group meetings. The idea for this initiative came from members who attended the State conference and were very disappointed that they couldn't attend all the workshops on offer because they were all on at the same time. The workshops that generated most interest at the conference were media skills, public speaking and script writing.

We are still open to accepting new members onto the OWN NSW Management Team, so if you have some time and are looking to make an important contribution to OWN's future, give us a ring. We are a friendly mob ... just ask anyone on the Team and they'll tell you what a pleasure it is to be involved.

**Cate Turner, Lucy Porter, Anne Warren and  
Peg Hewett**

## Join the Team!

OWN is run by and for volunteers. We currently need members to fill a number of key roles, so if you think you might be interested or want more information, please phone the office and speak to one of the coordinators. We need:

- A treasurer, to join the Management Team
- Someone with some bookkeeping or financial experience to join the Finance Team, which meets once a month
- Someone to co-ordinate the Public Relations/Media Team
- One or two members willing to learn how to retrieve information from our computerised Resources Database
- Someone with librarian-type skills to learn information entry into the Resources Database.

# Theatre Group Report

Having done a 'Madame Melba' and returned to the Theatre Group after my 'retirement', I guess getting to write this report could be called poetic justice.

The Sunday Telegraph article about the Theatre Group mentioned by Marie Williams in last months report didn't eventuate until Sunday, 31 August due to an illness suffered by the journalist, Dianna Simmons. It was a light-hearted article – not a lot of substance – portraying us as women who like to have lots of fun (which we do of course, but we also have some serious messages we want to get out there). Anyway, what do they say about any publicity being good publicity?

We have been frantically rehearsing, sometimes two days a week, on a potpourri of new and old songs and sketches for our forthcoming WOW tour in October. We set our sights on launching the new show at Newcastle OWN's 10th Birthday celebrations on 11 September, where we got a fabulous reception.

As you can imagine, an awful lot of 'remembering' is needed for our shows, so our newest members are quite wide-eyed (amongst other things) at our expectations of them. They are, however, managing magnificently.

We had to perform a different show for a Suicide Prevention forum at Sutherland at the end of August, so you can imagine there were a few 'senior moments' as we struggled to remember the right words for the right script! However, the performance was extremely well received by a large audience, many of them men, a bit of a first for us. There have been three expressions of interest to do more shows from that day so it must have been ok.

There have been a few setbacks this month: Anne Cunynghame, our pianist, had a face operation and was unable to play at Sutherland; Louise Anike, our Director, had an eye operation and was out of action for a week; and Nicole Boas, our stand-in pianist, had a death in the family in Brisbane and had to play without a rehearsal on her return! Then Norma Bastock tried walking into space off a ladder and sprained her ankle and Ceri Ritchie fell on her way to catch the train to Newcastle, but decided she would carry on. Yes, the show must go on – I wonder who started that rumour?

The Theatre Group's debut on the Andrew Denton show had a number of spin-offs, one being an invitation from Channel 9 to interview some of us on the live-to-air Kerri-Anne Kennelly show. In five short minutes on 15 September we managed to sing a couple of songs, *Flat Shoes*, *Warm Socks* and *Older Women, That's Our Name*, plus have our say about OWN and what being older means to us, including the fact that we are definitely not a burden on society.

Peg Hewett

**WOW TOUR** On Sunday 12 October the WOW 3 tour will be launched at Cootamundra. On the Monday we perform at the Country Club, Tuesday at Lockhart RSL, Wednesday at Gundagai RSL, Thursday in Tumbarumba and Friday in the Adaminaby. Between 20 and 23 October we are in Bombala; Eden/Bega/Merimbula; Narooma/Moruya/(Bermagui) and Bateman's Bay.  
**Let your friends know we are coming!**

# Good for the Memory

Keep active – exercise, walk often, because that means good circulation, which provides oxygen to the brain.

Drink six to eight glasses of water a day. Check with your doctor before you do this if you have a heart condition.

Iron – the brain needs oxygen. The haemoglobin in red blood cells carries oxygen to the tissues of the body. Haemoglobin require iron to be an effective carrier of oxygen. If you have a low haemoglobin level, ie, you are anaemic, then your brain may not be getting enough oxygen. Check with the following list to make sure you are having an iron-rich diet: molasses, almonds, greens, wheat bran and germ, sunflower seeds, prunes, liver, parsley and beef.

Zinc, a trace element, is useful for memory. Sources of zinc are oysters (raw are very high in zinc), lamb chops, beef and liver, brazil and pecan nuts, egg yolks, peanuts, almonds and legumes, whole grains, wheat, rye, oats, sardines and chicken.

Vitamin B is essential for proper brain functioning. Take a supplement if your diet is inadequate. Vitamin B is found in whole grains and is water-soluble so it cannot accumulate in the body.

Be aware that too much alcohol can cause memory loss.

Avoid medications that could make you feel depressed.

Keep socially involved.

Practise the memory training hint, "Use it or lose it".

Laugh a lot!

Practice relaxation, both physical and mental.

[www.mothernature.com](http://www.mothernature.com)

## **Ageing in a Multicultural Society: The situation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds**

Dorothy Buckland-Fuller, sociologist, social activist and OWN member, was a keynote speaker at a recent conference on *Ageing in a Multicultural Society* organised by the Australian Society of Gerontology. Below is some of the knowledge she has gained during 35 years of active involvement with people in all areas of life and on all levels of the social ladder. Dorothy was Commissioner for Ethnic Affairs for four years in the 1970s.

Ageing people of non-English speaking background have the same basic needs and difficulties as their Anglo-Australian counterparts *plus* they experience language problems and the 'us and them', attitude (the fear of others who look different).

Our elders, whether born in Australia or overseas, grew up in a poorer and simpler world. Many of them, rightly or wrongly, believe that theirs was a better world, a kinder world, a world where integrity, family and friendships counted and politicians could be trusted.

It is obvious that our rapidly changing society worries, upsets and frightens vast numbers of ageing people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They feel concern about the demise of the Multicultural Policy, the continuing erosion of Community Services, the assumption that older and more established communities will take care of their elders and the continuing social and cultural divisions in our society. They feel worried about the growing cost of living, unemployment, the long hours their children have to work for fear of losing their jobs, divorce and youth suicide. A great number of them are also concerned about the increasing racism in our society, our increasing involvement with the USA, and the effects of globalisation on our society and culture. The future of Medicare and the resistance by many doctors to bulk billing continues to cause considerable alarm amongst older people on low incomes and with failing health.

The questions I hear them ask include: Is this the type of society in which we can grow old gracefully? Is this the type of society in which we wish to spend the rest of our lives? Is this the type of society we wish our children and grandchildren to inherit?

I am aware that one cannot generalise when talking about one single ethnic group, let alone when talking about nearly 200 ethnic groups – that's about how many there are in Australia today. It is very important that we listen carefully to the concerns and fears of all older people from non-English speaking backgrounds and support them to act when and where we can.

**Dorothy Buckland-Fuller**

### **Oral Health Stories**

Do you have a personal 'horror' stories about obtaining affordable, timely and appropriate dental care? Not just with public dental services, (long waits and emergency type treatment) but also interesting stories of

unaffordability and delayed or ignored treatment from people not entitled to a health care card. The stories should be concise, if possible. Please contact Samantha Edmonds on 9211 2599 or email [samantha@ncoss.org.au](mailto:samantha@ncoss.org.au)

## **Computer Clubs**

Membership of Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA) is open to all Seniors Computer Clubs, organisations with a membership including Seniors, and organisations that recognise the value of computer technology for Seniors.

The cost of membership is \$100 per year. If you are interested in joining ASCCA please email [nanboz@ozemail.com.au](mailto:nanboz@ozemail.com.au) or go to [www.seniorcomputing.org](http://www.seniorcomputing.org) and click on Development Kit to find out how to start a club or read some of the advantages of joining ASCCA if you are an existing club.

**Nan Bosler**

## **Man of the Year?**



### **Mmmm...**

"I don't approve of political jokes, I've seen too many of them get elected."

"I am a nobody, and nobody is perfect; therefore, I am perfect."

I don't do drugs anymore. I get the same effect just standing up fast.

# Fear of Public Speaking?

## *Not any more!*

Ellin Krinsley, who ran the Public Speaking workshop at our recent State conference, is an accomplished trainer who has been running public speaking courses for many years. Eight of us attended her workshop, many of us in various states of anxiety but determined to overcome our fears and learn some skills.

The first thing we were asked to do after a brief overview of some ideas about public speaking (to relax us?) was to make a one minute speech about an aspect of OWN or an experience we'd had at OWN. This was a terrific start to a marvellous workshop. We clapped each other, gave feedback about what we liked in each speech and felt appreciated for our courage in 'having a go'.

Ellin stressed the importance of speaking with passion, commitment and warmth in order to help our audience hear, remember and enjoy. We all know that listening is hard work so it's critical as a speaker that we want people to listen. Being 'alive' in our presentation also tells listeners that the subject is more important than me and that I care about sharing with them.

Ellin's presentation of the theory of public speaking was very accessible. She suggested that people are likely to listen if we follow the 'Three Ms' of public speaking:

**Matter** – ideas, facts, quotes, illustrations and stories.

**Method** – organise a speech into a clear structure of beginning, middle and end. The pattern within a speech can be past, present and future, or compare and contrast, or a call to action. A concise conclusion is essential.

**Manner** – body language, tone of voice, eye contact, gestures.

To make sure the theme of your speech is simple and concise, choose three points in the body of the speech and have a story, illustration or quote for each point. Then practise, practise, practise. We can too easily get lost in a speech if we have too many points, have not prepared, have no structure, are not concise, have not considered the audience and have chosen a theme that is too complex.

Ellin stressed that good preparation can help to calm down the butterflies and stage fright. If we hone our speech, keep it simple, know who we are

talking to and mould it to the audience, anxiety is lessened. However, if anxiety threatens to take us over, there are a number of strategies that can help to minimise its effects. Ellin suggested that we consciously relax, drop our shoulders, feel our feet, breathe quietly and focus on the speech we have planned so carefully.

It's important not to start speaking straight away, so leave a moment's silence to focus the listener's attention and always look at the triangles of faces, not the eyes of your audience. Pauses are important as they allow the audience to catch up. One trick that Ellin suggested many people never learn is to know when to end a speech! Or an article?

**Kris Ferguson**

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## As Good As New

A young woman was supposed to marry, have children and be a good wife. This was the general expectation of life for women before the Seventies. That is before the Women's Liberation Movement challenged and ultimately changed this agenda.

Betty Vivian, in her book, *As Good As New: Stories from a Long Life, 1923-2003*, tells of her struggle to become 'a good wife', to please her family, to look after her husband and home as a good wife should and, above all, to conform. In an engrossing account of her journey from a restrictive and respectable marriage to discovery of herself, she tells the story of her own liberation after the 1973 Women's Commission shed a glimmer of light for her. She became part of the emerging Women's Liberation Movement and this became her life's interest and work, involving her actively and philosophically, from 1973 till now, in her eightieth year.

One of the main reasons for publishing this book, said Betty, was the discovery of how little of the reforms, now taken for granted, are known or remembered by women who were uninvolved at the time. She has written and published this book in the hope that it will revive an interest in the women of the second wave and won't have to wait for their granddaughters to cry, "Why didn't we know about this?"

Betty Vivian, a long time member of OWN Tasmania, is well known to many of us who probably only know her under her married name. She chose to use her birth name for the book to protect her ex-husband and not wanting to be identified with her famous daughter.

I found this a fascinating read as many of the people and events she mentions were known to me. I couldn't put it down.

Copies can be ordered from Betty Vivian Pybus, 99 Old Station Rd, Lower Snug, Tasmania, 7054. Retail \$10 +\$1.50 postage and seniors \$7 +postage plus \$1.50.

**Muriel Hortin**

## Friends are good for us!

It is now official! Friendship between women is special and the TV soaps and movies that try to convince us that a woman's worst enemy is another woman couldn't be more wrong. At least this is the view asserted by scientists Shelley Taylor and Laura Klein in their paper, *Female Responses to Stress: Tend and Befriend, Not Fight or Flight*, published in *Psychological Review*, 107(3), 41-429.

Their study suggests that friendships between women not only shape who we are and who we are yet to be, they soothe our tumultuous inner world and fill the emotional gaps in our marriage. Women do reach out to other women in times of need, releasing pent-up frustration and hurt instead of sitting on it and brooding. We talk, discuss and analyse and more often than not, it's with another woman which, according to Taylor and Klein, not only releases our stress, but also helps us bounce back a lot quicker.

Men, on the other hand, will sit and tear at their hair. Stubborn and unwilling to admit that something could go wrong, or that they were wrong, they brood, drink or pick a fight with someone. Think how many times you've heard a man say, "Not one word. I just want to be left alone."

Apparently this difference is linked to a hormone called oxytocin. Like adrenaline, oxytocin is generated when people are faced with stress. In women the female hormone oestrogen enhances oxytocin, but in men it is inhibited by the male hormone testosterone. The oxytocin buffers the 'fight or flight' response in women and encourages her to engage in 'tending' or 'befriending' behaviour. Taylor and Klein found that this behaviour releases more oxytocin which further counters stress and produces a calming effect.

This isn't to say that women never become angry or aggressive or that men never tend or befriend, only that women 'tend' and 'befriend' when stressed out. Given the evidence that chronic stress is bad for us, could this be one of the reasons why women consistently outlive men?

The famed longitudinal *Nurses' Health Study* at Harvard Medical School found that women with more friends were less likely to develop physical problems as they aged and more likely to be content with life. Women who had a close friend were more likely to survive a traumatic experience like the death of the spouse without developing any new ailment or permanent loss of vitality, while those without friends were less lucky. It's a stunning find that has turned five decades of stress research, most of it on men, upside down.

**Dorothy Cora**

### What did they really mean?

The simple process of translating a message from one language to another is often an excellent reminder of how difficult communicating can be. These signs were spotted in public buildings around the world:

- At a laundry in Rome – *Ladies, leave your clothes here and spend the afternoon having a good time.*
- At Budapest Zoo – *Please do not feed the animals. If you have any suitable food, give it to the guard on duty.*
- In a Tokyo car rental agency – *When a passenger of foot heave in sight, tottle the horn. Trumped him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage then tottle him with vigour.*

## Guess Who?

What's she like, this friend of yours?

Well, she looks ok. Her clothing tells us nothing, just one of the many thrifty, tidy-but-with-a-bit-of-dash elders walking our city streets.

Shoulders a bit bowed, but she moves with certainty, showing some determination. "Look at me, I know who I am." Watches where she puts her jogger-shod feet, a concession to thinning bones – and crooked pavements. She's slight... If coffins are still in, she'll only need a small one when she goes.

What does the face say? There's a lightness there – laughter is deeply etched in the grooves. Tears too have left their mark.

Some say there's courage, others might call her foolhardy.

She's quick; in tongue as well as body. Does this suggest the impatience which lies beneath the surface? One could assume that this leads her into doubtful situations, but she has the good sense to extricate herself.

God, she's touchy! Easily offended. But soon mended. Tries hard not to offend others, but such forthrightness is not always appreciated.

The life force is slowing down, but passion is still there, for the people and the causes she cares about.

You make her sound so serious, what's she like?

She's open, honest, warm, friendly, no bull, tells a good story, and she's funny. She makes me laugh.

Ah, yes... But can she write? Well... What do you think?

**Dorothy Cox**

# Letters to the Editor

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## Gobsmacked!

After joining OWN I found a freedom that I never knew existed – freedom to speak my mind, have my own opinion and live my life as I choose. I relish this freedom and I support others to enjoy it too.

The other day I was at an OWN function in Hamilton when I was approached by another older woman who smiled as she reached out and pinched my left breast, the nipple actually. She laughed and said she thought that she was ‘turning’ into a lesbian and fancied older women. I was gobsmacked.

Before I could find my voice she had moved on, only to return a short time later and do the same thing! And as if that was not enough, she returned even later and pinched my bum!

I have a pretty good sense of humour and like a joke the same as the next person, but I was floored that someone could treat me this way. It took me a while to realise exactly what had happened, but when I did I got so angry. This person thought she could physically assault me and expect me to accept it under the guise of her ‘turning lesbian’. If a man had done this to me I would not have stayed silent, but I was so shocked that one woman could treat another in this way that all I could do was mutter, “You’ve picked the wrong woman”.

The lesbian women that I know respect themselves and respect other women, whether they are lesbian or not.

**Josie Jackson**

## Something from OWN

I was fortunate to have watched *Enough Rope* when Andrew interviewed Louise and Josie. I was totally rapt. It was funny, sad, dramatic, incisive and insightful.

I am the editor of *Bonzer!* which is a free, monthly, on-line journal by, for, and about seniors. All the editors, artists and writers are volunteers – we have no money to pay anyone anything. *Bonzer!* has writers and readers from Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, UK and the USA – there’s never a shortage of contributions.

What I’d love is to have something from someone in OWN. It could be an article about OWN itself – how it got started and what it does, or it could be a story about a particular event, or women in the organisation. It can be funny or sad or just descriptive. Or all three.

**Alan Wheatley**

[www.bonzer.org.au](http://www.bonzer.org.au)

*(Proudly not sponsored by anyone.)*

## Sexy older women?

I am a Health Science student at Charles Sturt University and I am currently completing an assignment on the older woman and the taboo there appears to be surrounding the topic of the older woman being ‘allowed’ to feel sexy or feminine.

Basically because a woman is older she can no longer feel these things? Do you have or know of information or organisations that may be of help to me in exploring this issue?

**Sallie-Anne**

[sallianne76@hotmail.com.au](mailto:sallianne76@hotmail.com.au)

## A sensitive issue

I refer to the anonymous letter printed in August *OWN Matters* responding to my letter about funerals. The item was written solely for the purpose of helping and informing others. I realised from my recent and previous experiences how difficult it is

when confronted by bereavement while at the same time having to do all the necessary arrangements. It was a very sad, difficult and stressful time for me and, as often happens, at a stage when there were many other pressures.

Some time ago, after articles printed on the topic of funerals, OWN had indicated that a file was to be kept on this subject. It is a sensitive issue and not one that everyone wishes to pursue. Hence my outline on funerals was sent with this in view. Initially not for publication, but to add to a resource file that others could access when they felt the need.

It is regrettable that it caused distress to the unnamed writer. I can only say that discrimination and racism were furthest from my intention.

**Norma Anet**

## Fortunate?

Thank you for publishing my account of my brush with pneumonia. The point I wanted to make was that the only suggestion the GP had to make about help was, “You could get Meals on Wheels”. I did not swear at her, though I felt inclined to, but remembered that in the Inner West we are fortunate in that most of our GPs do house calls.

**Helen Monaghan**

## Vision and falls

Just writing to thank you for putting the article in your publication regarding the Vision and Falls Project for which Sydney University is currently seeking volunteers. We have had several responses from OWN members resulting from the publication.

**Hilary McGowan** (Occupational Therapist, Research Assistant)

# Letters to the Editor

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## Some stories never die

I refer to the story told by Barbara Walters about the women of Afghanistan walking in front of their husbands reported in September *OWN Matters*. I remember this story being told in England just after the Second World War. Only it was about Arab women in North Africa. Does this mean that men everywhere are the same and never change? Or is this another urban myth?

**Joyce Chapman**

## How wonderful

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**

## The Tall Poppeas

The group I started two years ago is called *Tall Poppeas* and is unique in performing music composed exclusively for three women.

Given the nature of your organisation – my mother is a member – it may interest you to know that when I started this group one of my aims was to include singers of all ages.

Our group comprises women aged 25 -45. While we may not yet qualify for membership of your Network, some of us are regarded as 'older' in this industry!

With few jobs available, talented women in their middle age are repeatedly overlooked for younger singers. Women dominate our production on stage and behind the scenes and bring to it a wealth of talent, energy and enthusiasm.

If your members are interested in seeing one of our performances as a group, I would gladly look into the possibility of a discounted group booking. My phone number is 9590 4503.

**Inara Molinari, Artistic Director**

For details of performances, please see the Notices page (Eds.)

## Conquer your computer

I thought those of you with a PC might be interested in a new book called *Conquer Your Computer* which I've been using. Its shortcuts, hints and tips are terrific – I've learned to narrow down my Internet searching, customise my favourite programs and attach photos to email. Highly recommended to women coming to grips with their computer. More info at [www.getmega.com](http://www.getmega.com).

**Polly Gow**

## In whose interests?

Vegetarians need to add protein to their diet in the form of pulses. I find broad beans the most palatable. These usually come in a tin, from whence I do not know, but last week a plastic packet came with lima beans – dried beans – with no cooking directions, but with a label, Product of U.S.A. Can we not grow our own beans?

In a few weeks time George Bush will visit John Howard for a day's walk and talk. Surely they will talk free trade? A number of groups, among them *Women in Black*, are

planning a rally to let Bush, and Howard, know that the chaos in the Middle East and any trade which benefits only the US does not have universal approval here.

**Helen Monaghan**

## Safety from what?

Did you know that the Federal Government spent \$7.5 million from the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program, and \$2.6 million from the National Approach Against Sexual Assault on the terrorist information kit it sent to Australian homes in 2003?

The money was claimed to be 'unspent funds'. It is obvious that the Government is more concerned with spending money on campaigns to fight the potential threat of terrorism rather than the immediate and endemic threat to Australian women and children of family violence and sexual assault.

**Monica Mazzone**

## Different points of view

Following on from Renee Simons' excellent letter last month, I agree that there was most definitely nothing offensive in Norma Anet's enquiries regarding Jewish funerals.

There has been a tremendous upsurge in anti-semitism over the last few years because of the dreadful situation in the Middle East. Being Jewish myself, I know that I've become supersensitive about detecting anti-semitism in articles, letters, and conversations. Any sensible person knows that not all Moslems are terrorists and not all Jews support the actions of the Israeli government, yet both groups are demonised.

**Pat Zinn**

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## OWN Sydney

All but two of last year's Working Group members chose to stand for re-election at the Annual General Meeting on August 25, so we must be doing something right! Peggy Hewett and Ermes Solari have gone on to higher things – the OWN NSW Management Team!

Our guest speaker at the AGM was Barbara Holborow, former solicitor and Children's Magistrate. Barbara spoke in general about her working life and then went on to relate the experience that led her to leave the Bench. She had provided a great deal of support to two parents (who had been institutionalised from an early age) and their three small daughters, by assisting them in practical and emotional ways.

She felt that the support she offered, plus what was available from other sources, would be sufficient for the children to stay with their parents. In fact, she had promised the parents that the children would not be taken away. However, when the critical time came, the Department of Community Services did take the children away, and, worse, separated them. In anger and despair, Barbara resigned.

Barbara believes that no political party cares about kids – or older people – and that there are far too many children with no future; instead, kids are locked up and too many children die. Governments don't have answers. She said that while it is OK to bask in the title of 'older women', she felt that we have to get out there, as there is so much that can be done for younger women and children.

We are pleased to welcome nine new members this month. We hope you enjoy being part of Australia's largest OWN group.

At its September meeting, the Working Group started the year by acknowledging that spring has sprung, and planned a number of new activities.

Do have a look at the Notices (page 19). Remember, we're saving the trees so there will be no more flyers.

On the Wellness front, we expect to learn very shortly if we were successful in getting City of Sydney funds to continue these activities. If so, we plan to extend publicity to those areas now included in the City's new boundaries.

It's Mental Health Week October 5-11, and we have a number of cards available which display the theme *Ten Tips for Stress Less*.

We have also been asked to partner a project on the NSW Department of Housing's Northcott estate, to explore the needs of frail aged and disabled older women who need to address their needs as they become more dependent.

*Louise Anike and Joy Ross*

## Till the Money Runs Out

Members of OWN Sydney successfully concluded our Creative Arts project last week when our eight weeks of workshops on printing, drawing and cartooning came to an end.

After printing original and witty slogans and logos on shopping bags, using interesting techniques like montage, cartoons and scratch boards, we were reluctant to stop the creative juices which had begun to flow so vigorously. So, we have engaged Jane, our art teacher, to run four more sessions. Jane enjoyed it all as much as we did. She said we were the most interesting and creative class she'd

had for a long time!

The classes will begin on Wednesday 8 October from 10.30 till 12.30 in the Mott Hall gym.

If you have been enthused and astounded by the samples of our artistry now displayed on the notice board and would like to try your hand at creating similar masterpieces, you are very welcome to join the next sessions. We guarantee you will become so involved you won't even want to stop for a coffee.

*Muriel Hortin*

## OWN Parramatta

The August meeting of our group at the Harris Park Community Centre was very well supported with 26 members out of our enthusiastic membership of 34 being present.

We had been asked to bring along suggestions for avoiding falls, a subject of importance to all older women and one that requires constant vigilance and thought. In addition to the facts we already knew, obvious ones like wearing safer shoes, we were also warned that some medications can add to the risk of falling. Eyes, of course, should have an annual checkup. Optometrists bulk bill for this with your Medicare card. It is also important to eat well and to exercise regularly to increase circulation and improve balance. We watched live demonstrations and found out how to get up after a fall. We all entered into the spirit of keep well, keep safe and above all, keep a sense of humour!

Our next three monthly meetings until the end of the year will be interesting. Peter Antrum, the new Aged Care worker for Parramatta

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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Council, is coming to meet us in September and Elsie McEwen, a local artist and teacher, will be our guest speaker.

In October, we are going to share stories, which is a great way to get to know each other. We believe that every woman in OWN has a great story to tell. How did you come to live in your suburb? Tell us an unforgettable incident you experienced that may trigger another story from someone else.

Finally, the last meeting of the year on November 23 will be our Christmas party. Any suggestions about how to celebrate?

**Mollie Smith**

## OWN Newcastle

Well, what a birthday celebration! Over 60 women, including some from Nowra, Wollondilly, Sydney, Sutherland and Wyong came from far and near to celebrate our Tenth Anniversary. Add the full cast of the Theatre Group and you know you're part of a family!

We brightened up a pretty dull church hall with purple, green and white balloons, Happy Birthday banners, fresh flowers and OWN posters. We also hung a beautiful banner decorated with embroidery, cross-stitching, painting and all manner of decorations, produced by members of our group. A fairly new member, Trish Mooney-Smith, cooked two chocolate birthday cakes, one in the shape of a 'one' and the other a 'nought', and Gwen Knipe provided a huge purple birthday candle.

The day was officially opened by Margaret McNaughton, former Mayoress of Newcastle. Her bright, cheerful manner and lively piano-accordion playing set a happy tone for the day. Mark

Penkala then demonstrated that laughter is *the* best medicine! As we broke for morning tea, awards were presented to one of our inaugural members, Dorothy Oakley, who was surprised and touched by the gesture. Another inaugural member, Phyllis Jones, was unfortunately unable to be with us and will receive her award at our next meeting.

After morning tea, a panel of four speakers – a naturopath, yoga practitioner, beauty therapist and aged care nurse consultant – focused on Positive Ageing. The theme that emerged was the importance of how you feel inside, that thinking positively and feeling happy contribute significantly to health and wellbeing, although we can't neglect to 'do the right things' like eating healthily, drinking moderately and exercising regularly.

As usual, the Theatre Group's dynamic and relevant performance was very warmly received. We knew they'd travelled a long way to be with us for such a short time, and we love them for it.

Jane Elworthy then explained the history of drumming and demonstrated different types of drums, telling us where they came from and singing several ancient songs. She finished with a bright rhythmic number which got many of us 'dancing' – using the term very loosely!

Then there was the Gentle Exercise class – most of it done in our chairs – led by Laraine Dunn. Our final session for the day was half an hour of Celtic Dancing led by Stella Aubrey from the Australian Institute of Celtic Studies. Stella had a hard job introducing us to Celtic Dancing in such a short time, and being the

final item in our program, we were all pretty tired. Things became rather hysterical and some women forgot whether they were 'men' or 'women' – with disastrous results! Nevertheless, everyone was in great good humour and no hard feelings from those with stepped-on toes!

We received 35 very positive evaluations on the day. Fourteen of those attending have asked for further information about our group so we are very hopeful of gaining some new members.

There wasn't a lot of media interest in our event on the day – it was, after all, 11 September – although a photographer from the local paper took some photos, so hopefully there will be some follow-up publicity in next week's issue of that paper.

We were grateful to have a \$2000 grant from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, as it enabled us to offer participants a totally free day including lunch and morning tea.

It also allowed us to produce a large number of flyers which were distributed widely. I think it's worth noting that all publicity has a 'sleeper effect' – many people reading a notice or flyer will note the existence of the group, even though they may not attend that particular event at that time.

I could itemise the things that went wrong with the day – but I won't! I will say, however, that I hope I never see another microphone in my life! Everything is a learning process and we intend to learn from our mistakes and do it even better next time!

So, for now members of the Organising Committee are slowly recovering ...

**Pat Carlton**

## Reflections ...

When I was in my younger days, I weighed a few pounds less, I needn't hold my tummy in to wear a belted dress. But now that I am older, I've set my body free, There's the comfort of elastic, where once my waist would be.

Inventor of those high-heeled shoes my feet have not forgiven; I have to wear a nine now, but used to wear a seven. And how about those pantyhose, they're sized by weight, you see, So how come when I put them on, the crotch is at my knee?

I need to wear these glasses as the print's been getting smaller; And it wasn't very long ago I know that I was taller. Though my hair has turned to gray and my skin no longer fits, On the inside, I'm the same old me, it's the outside's changed a bit.

*On the other hand ...*

I've learned that making a 'living' is not the same thing as making a 'life'.

I've learned that life sometimes gives you a second chance.

I've learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision.

I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one.

I've learned that every day you should reach out and touch someone. People love a warm hug or just a friendly pat on the back.

I've learned that I still have a lot to learn.

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

**Maya Angelou**

## Who's Law?

Dr. Laura Schlessinger is a US radio personality who dispenses advice to people who call in to her radio show. Recently, she said that according to Leviticus 18:22, homosexuality is an abomination and cannot be condoned under any circumstance.

The following is an extract from an open letter to Dr. Laura penned by a US resident, which was posted on the Internet. It's funny, as well as informative.

*Dear Dr. Laura*

*Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from your show, and try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination. End of debate.*

*I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some of the other specific laws and how to follow them.*

- ◇ *I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age what do you think would be a fair price for her?*
- ◇ *Leviticus 25:44 states that I may possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?*
- ◇ *My uncle violates Leviticus 19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton and polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them, Leviticus 24:10-16? Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws, Leviticus 20:14?*

*I know you have studied these things extensively, so I am confident you can help. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.*

**Your devoted fan, Jim**

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## Creative Writers revisit the Catholic Club

On our last visit we thoroughly enjoyed the huge servings and modest prices. So, the usual suspects returned on September 5. This time Judith Mustard was able to join us. Sadly, the jolly gent who offered us drinks last time was missing.

As for writing, Maureen King has had success with Letters to the

Editors of the Herald and Jean Wurlod has resumed her Life Writing course at COTA. Helen McMaugh reports that the publication, *Australian Short Stories*, is no longer in existence. So, another good market has dried up.

For our next luncheon we are venturing into OWN territory, a pub in The Rocks.

**BON VIVANT**

## Playing Musical Beds

"You've been a naughty girl," my female GP chided. "Yes," I replied, "and I ended up in the maternity ward!" That was where I did wind up!

I should explain that the regional hospital in my area is being rebuilt and that things were very congested. Bob Carr's comment about chaos in public hospitals seemed to me to be borne out.

When I arrived by ambulance, I noted that there were many ambulances facing mine, so I asked the ambulance officer if they all contained patients. He affirmed that they did, but because I had angina and chest pain I didn't have to wait and was taken to Reception quickly. Then I was taken into the Emergency Ward. The activity in both areas was frenetic. Because the ward was so understaffed and it was hard to get a bedpan, I eventually demanded – to the amusement of some viewers – that I be allowed to walk to the toilet.

I was awakened from a light sleep at 11 pm and told I would be taken to a one-bed ward at 3 am, but would be shifted later in the morning to a larger ward. This was

hardly reassuring for someone with a heart condition. The larger ward was congested, with constant traffic in and out of beds. The wards-people seemed to be the busiest staff in the hospital.

For a while I was on a free-fluid diet, which was in the main, coloured water! I found out afterwards that this had been stopped, but that no one had actually informed the kitchen!

After a few more days, I was asked if I would mind going to the maternity ward as I was "healthy". Of course I jumped at the chance. With the dropping birthrate there were two rooms in this ward housing 'ancient mothers'. It was lovely. The toilets and showers were not congested and the nurses were maternal. They told me they liked the older women – possibly because we were quieter? On the last day, a specialist, retinue in tow, came in, looked around and then asked me, "Are you pregnant?" I replied, "Yes, but my waters haven't broken yet." They retreated down the corridor, laughing.

Public hospitals are definitely in crisis, on the Central Coast at least. Staff shortages mean nurses and

doctors are often pushed beyond their limits and this seriously affects patients' wellbeing. The congestion is possibly due to the very large percentage of older people living on the Central Coast, and exacerbated by the medical community being undermined by the lack of insurance regulation and the destruction of Medicare. GPs are leaving for an easier life away from increasing bureaucratic domination, and because of what they see as limits on their earnings, few are bulk billing. This means more low-income people are going to public hospitals in droves. One can take one's pick about who or what is responsible, but something needs to be done before the whole caboodle collapses in a heap!

**Enid Harrison**

## Reviews

***The Blind Assassin*** by Margaret Atwood is a tale of two sisters, one of whom dies under ambiguous circumstances in the opening pages. The survivor, Iris, initially seems a little cold-blooded about this death in the family. But as this amazing book unfolds – there are several narratives and even an entire novel-within-a-novel – we are reminded of how complicated sibling rivalry, family secrets and social unrest can be.

I think it's a brilliant novel, but because of its complex structure – it's not written chronologically – it needs your full attention. So, wait until you have lots of time before starting to read!

**Jan Woden**

***Travelling Birds*** – amazing photography and insights into these creatures humbled me so much. How they survive is truly remarkable. The accompanying music in the film was appropriate. Not to be missed!

**Ceri Ritchie**

## How smug can they be?

In the Sydney Morning Herald 8/9/03, our Prime Minister says that the issue of reconciliation with the Aboriginal community is dead. "People no longer ask me for an apology," he said. So I thought, why not ask him myself?

*Dear Mr. Howard,*

*I do not want you to speak for me when you say Australians are no longer interested in an apology for past injustices to the Aboriginal people. I want you to say 'sorry' on behalf of the nation, not because I have anything to personally apologise for, but to acknowledge that white settlement had a terrible effect on the Aboriginal people - and that they are still suffering for it today.*

*If you will not say 'sorry', I will. I am sorry that land was once illegally taken from Aboriginal people, that so many Aboriginal children were taken from their parents and that Aboriginal health is not dealt with more seriously by Australian Governments. These things should not have happened and should never happen again.*

**Dr. Natalya Lusty** [nlusty@genderstudies.usyd.edu.au](mailto:nlusty@genderstudies.usyd.edu.au)

If you want to let John Howard know how you feel about his comments, go to his website, [www.pm.gov.au/email.cfm](http://www.pm.gov.au/email.cfm), fill in the boxes and leave a message for him!

## Pie in the Sky

Driving along a busy highway in the morning rush hour, I noticed some white streaks in the sky. As I watched them turning into letters, I narrowly missed bumping the car in front of me. In the wall-to-wall traffic, I had to curb my curiosity, and was left with a feeling of frustration.

On another occasion I was luckier, as I was sitting at a beach when the skywriting appeared. I was able to make out 'AGFA film'. Now, everyone who has ever dabbled in photography knows about AGFA film. It has been around for donkey's years. Why waste all that money and energy preaching to the converted? The best-served person in this exercise must have been the pilot, who no doubt got a considerable fee and hopefully a lot of fun from the exercise.

One day, I was walking along a street when I noted a letter 'B' in the sky. I slowed down, and watched as OSE followed. 'BOSE' – it didn't mean a thing to me. I asked my son, who is more conversant with 'in' things. He told me, "Bose are famous speakers." "Really?" I said, "I've never heard anyone called Bose give a speech." "Oh, mum!" with utter disdain, "*Hi-Fi* speakers!" Which confirmed my view that skywriting is preaching to the converted.

Another puzzle for me was a set of numbers. However, when that was followed by 'FM', I concluded it must refer to a radio station. I was really proud of my astuteness in this case, and decided to check it out. Alas, by the time I reached my radio later in the day, I had forgotten the numbers.

Sometimes I happen to 'tune in' to skywriting when it's already in progress. By this stage, the first letters may appear smudged or completely illegible. Then the guesswork starts as to what they may have been. It is like trying to

solve a crossword puzzle without being given a clue.

To my mind, it would make more sense for companies to reduce the price of their products rather than advertise in the sky. A plain label bearing "This price reduction was made possible by omitting advertising in the sky" would surely meet with customers' approval. Or am I living in the clouds?

**Trudy Davis**

## Computer Learners Wanted

I am a PhD student at the University of Technology, Sydney, and my research is about the experience of older adults in computer learning environments. I intend to focus on the investigation and interpretation of this experience from the perspective of individual learners. My thesis will seek to enable the voices of older adult computer learners to be heard and acknowledged.

I am seeking to interview participants who are currently undertaking learning in the non-formal community-based older adult learning environment.

The interviews will take no longer than one hour and can be held at the site of the learning environment or at a place to be determined by participants.

I can be contacted at the Education Faculty, University of Technology, Sydney, Kuring-gai Campus, PO Box 222 Lindfield 2070, by email [Helen.Russell@uts.edu.au](mailto:Helen.Russell@uts.edu.au) or by phone (02) 95604416.

**Helen Russell**

## Go GE-free!

Genetically engineered (GE) foods have found their way onto our plates. Like it or not, we are probably consuming them daily. We might think that GE foods would look different or be clearly labelled GE, but the truth is that GE foods are mostly contained as hidden ingredients in the packaged or processed foods we buy from the supermarket. GE ingredients are commonly found in items like bread, pastries, snack foods, baked goods, vegetable oils, margarine, starches, thickeners, sauces, fried foods, soy foods, lecithin, sweets, soft drinks and sausage skins. But GE food can take many forms. In fact, the majority of GE crops are used as feed for farm animals. We then eat the milk, meat and eggs from those animals. Genetically engineered food enters the food chain at various levels.

Under current laws, none of these products would have to be labelled. Although 92% of Australians want comprehensive labelling of GE foods, the laws we now have contain numerous loopholes. Foods do not have to declare any GE content on their labels when they are made from animals fed with GE feed (eg: milk, meat, eggs, honey); are highly refined (eg: cooking oils, sugars, starches); are prepared at restaurants, bakeries, and takeaways; are 'unintentionally' contaminated by up to 1% per ingredient; are processed before 7 December 2001; are processing aids or food additives using GE microbes and contain GE flavours present at less than 0.1%.

Internationally, there are concerns about the introduction of GE foods. Dr. Judy Carman of the Public Health Association of Australia, says that GE foods may pose a range of threats to human health, including the use of antibiotic-resistance genes in GE plants, which may lead to

antibiotic resistance in us. Another concern is our potential exposure to unfamiliar or unexpected proteins, toxins and allergens through eating GE food. In addition, GE agriculture may encourage a greater level of pesticides in our food. Dr. Carman says the current safety testing of GE foods is minimal.

An independent review of the reports published by ANZFA (the GE food regulatory body in Australia) has concluded that tests are inadequate; that GE foods have never been tested on humans and that some GE foods have not even been tested on animals.

Go GE-free! There are numerous steps you can take to ensure both your diet and the environment remain free of genetically engineered organisms.

Choose organic foods, as the organic standard prohibits any GE content.

Buy foods labelled 'GE-free' or 'Not Genetically Modified'.

Choose locally grown foods direct from farmers markets or local farms. Call the 1800 numbers on food packs and demand an assurance that the company is GE-free right throughout the food chain (including the feed given to animals from which they get their dairy, eggs and meat ingredients).

Speak to your supermarket manager and ask whether their home brand is GE-free.

Visit [www.truefood.org.au](http://www.truefood.org.au) to view the True Food Guide, a shopper's guide to avoiding GE foods.

Join the True Food Network at [www.truefood.org.au](http://www.truefood.org.au) – a community of people working toward a GE-free future or contact Bentleigh Bayside Gene Alert at PO BOX 2336, Moorabbin VIC 3189.

**Ellen Stuebe**

## **Self Help for Hard of Hearing People**

*"Self Help in Action Listening to and Learning from Each Other"* is a seminar presented by SHHH, Self Help for Hard of Hearing People.

The program includes talks by eight people who have considerable experience to share, and achievements to record, in coping with their own hearing loss or that of family members.

Their talks will focus on a range of different aspects of self-help, including the use of assistive technology. We will hear about the experiences of a mother and a grandmother living with hearing impaired people, coping with hearing impairment in student life, employment and social life and meeting the ultimate challenge of undergoing a cochlear implant.

There will also be a talk by Margaret White, Senior Education Officer with the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board on *Dealing with Discrimination*.

Relax in a friendly atmosphere and find fresh inspiration in these motivational personal stories.

The seminar is free and will be held at the Aquinas Academy, 141 Harrington Street, Sydney on Saturday, 8 November 2003 between 9.30am and 3.30pm.

The Academy, which is close to Wynyard Station and George Street buses, is fitted with an audio loop and a range of assistive listening devices will be on display.

Morning and afternoon tea will be provided, but please bring your own lunch.

For further information contact Joyce on 9489 3742 or Shirley on 9484 6674, or email [mas2@hotkey.net.au](mailto:mas2@hotkey.net.au).

## **Attention Book Lovers**

There is a plan to move the City of Sydney library from Town Hall to Customs House. The consequences of this move for library users have not been analysed or put up for public discussion. The move is to satisfy the needs of the buildings rather than the library service. The plans for Customs House suggest that the proposed library could rejuvenate that heritage building and also attract other users by putting it near the business and tourist areas.

The big problem is that Customs House cannot hold more than 50,000 items. The days of browsing 140,000 items on the shelf will be over, in the City of Sydney. The emphasis will be on finding what you want by computer, ordering it and coming back later.

The Annual General Meeting on 16 September is an opportunity to have your say and hear from others. The meeting will be held at 5.30 in the Southern Function Room, Level 4, Town Hall House, 456 Kent Street, Sydney. Our guest speaker, Eva Cox, author of *A truly Civil Society* and *A Safe Place To go: Libraries and Social Capital* will speak about the library's role in making a community.

Eva's attendance will be particularly appropriate, since her research has included a survey of how people use public libraries and she has reviewed a recent survey of the Town Hall House library users.

**Helen Thompson**

### ***Steppin' Out & Speakin' Up***

The Aboriginal Support Circle's book on oral histories of Aboriginal women is well under way and information about its launch at Parliament House will be in next months issue of *OWN Matters*.

## Top End Talk

Bloody Good Pub Grub, the sign read outside the Tennant Creek Pub. I was still smiling when I went into the garage next door. "Can I please have the key to the toilet?" I asked. The young woman behind the counter turned to get it, then looked back at me. "Ladies?" she enquired. I laughingly replied, "Well, I think so," looking down at my dusty boots and socks and the grubby burr protectors on my legs. "I know I look dishevelled, but yes, I think I'm a lady." She looked at me blankly, bewildered at the way the conversation was going, so I quickly grabbed the key and made for the door.

In the ladies' room, I looked at myself in the flyblown mirror. Well, my cap was at a rakish angle, I thought, and the fly veil fetchingly bunched at the side, but, "Yes, definitely a lady," I said aloud. "Could be going to Ascot."

Turning, I saw that a woman had come through the door. She looked questioningly at me, then looked around the room. I was about to explain, "Talking to myself, ha ha!" or some such flippant remark, then remembered my earlier experience. Laconic is the word up here in the Territory, "G'day," I greeted her cheerfully as I hurried out. Back at the counter, I handed in the key and made for the door, passing a bloke coming in. "Gisthekeyt'thegentslove," I heard him say, lips hardly moving. Ah! That was the way to do it. Gisthekeyt'theladieslove, and you'll be on your way.

### More Top End Talk ...

A few hundred ks further up to Sturt Highway we stopped at the Desert Roadhouse and I decided to buy us a beer. I leant against the dusty bar looking at the usual mementos hanging on the ceiling and walls, ancient Akubras, photos, and a homemade tin leg labelled "Old Bob's, his wooden

one got eaten by white ants", sexist jokes, money and relics from the past.

"Can I have two beers?" I asked the barmaid. "What sort?" she asked. "Well, I don't usually drink beer, what do you suggest?" "Two 4Xs, mate," I heard Doug, my husband, say firmly, coming to my rescue. Released from dealing with an imbecile, she happily plonked two Stubbies with the familiar label, XXXX, on the counter, "\$8.40, mate."

I tried a conversation with two sunburnt, burly chaps at the bar eating enormous sandwiches.

"How's the weather?" – always a safe subject. They looked vacant. "Any rain?" I hopefully enquired. A woman at the end of the bar drinking rum and coke piped up, "Had a bit in February at Barrowong." (It was now August.) "None at Wallagarang," someone commented. "It was dry at Alice," I offered. Silence for a while. "Where do youse come from?" asked the woman. "Sydney, the big smoke!" No comment. Was Sydney a dirty word?

Then the penny dropped. What a fool I was. This is the dry. The wet comes in the summer. The weather? No one asks about that. It's the same today and every day. The sun comes up, the sun goes down. That's it.

*Joan Johns*

### Green tea "benefits cancer prevention"

US scientists say the ability of green tea to fight cancer has been underestimated. A team from New York's University of Rochester says that chemicals contained in green tea shut down one of the key

molecules that tobacco relies upon to cause cancer. The researchers reached their conclusions after measuring the effects of the chemicals found in green tea on a molecule known as the aryl hydrocarbon (AH) receptor. They found that the chemicals shut down the AH receptor in cancerous mouse cells and early stages of their research suggest that the same may apply to human cells. The scientists do point out, however, that the precise way in which green tea is metabolised in the body is crucial to its effectiveness and laboratory results cannot necessarily be taken to assume that drinking green tea has the same effect.

"Right now we don't know if drinking the amount of green tea that a person normally drinks would make a difference, but the work is giving us insight into how the proteins work," said co-investigator Christine Palermo. [www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=3724](http://www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=3724)

### Alternative meanings

Each year readers of the *Washington Post* are asked to supply alternative meanings of various words. These are some of the 2002 winners.

Coffee (n) A person who is coughed upon

Flabbergasted (adj) Appalled over how much weight you have gained

Abdicate (v) To give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach

Esplanade (v) To attempt an explanation while drunk

Willy-nilly (ad) Impotent

Negligent (adj) Describes a condition in which you absent-mindedly answer the door in your nightgown

Lymph (v) To walk with a lisp

## Homeless

They walk along familiar city streets,  
Deafened by noise.  
The mind takes flight.  
Faces of strangers pass by  
Carefully averted,  
Intent on other destinations.  
Forever unknown  
To these lost creatures  
Foraging in garbage bins.

*I am a dark well.  
A stone is dropped.  
For a moment the remembered  
warmth of hands.  
A soft breath stirs.  
A small light flickers and is gone.  
My bags are heavy, no one  
catches my eye.*

A figure lies on the pavement  
Muffled in a rug and old coat.  
The only clue to humanity  
The humped shape of hip and  
shoulder.  
A battered bag lies close  
Two or three stems of Honesty  
stick out.  
Oh the irony of the homeless.  
Gather them up  
The lost the homeless and the  
hopeless.  
For one short day in a green place.

Would the crowd stop  
The murmur pass from mouth to  
mouth,  
The small bud of compassion  
flower  
And drop its seeds on fertile  
ground  
Or is the dollar sign too  
compelling.  
The call of the cash register still  
insistent  
In a green place?

**Judith Mustard**

## Recording Women's Activism

Helen Leonard, who was known to many OWN members, was a passionate and dedicated feminist who died in Canberra in 2001. Helen worked in many fields and for many organisations, most notably as an advisor to the NSW Department for Women and National Executive Officer of the Women's Electoral Lobby. She was an avid and gifted photographer, recording images of a vast array of activities related to the Women's Movement from the 1970s until her death.

Money donated to the National Foundation of Australian Women (NFAW) will support the Jessie Street National Women's Library (JSNWL) and Women's History Month (WHM) to archive Helen's photographic records and continue her work in promoting and recording of the role of women in Australia's history.

A link will be made available in due course from Helen's biographical entry on the Australian Women's Archive Project site [www.womenaustralia.info](http://www.womenaustralia.info) to the catalogued material at the Jessie Street National Women's Library [www.jessiestreetwomenslibrary.com](http://www.jessiestreetwomenslibrary.com).

**Mary Sexton**

## Psychology, Cancer Treatment and Medicare

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) said that cancer patients who receive psychological intervention treatment can live longer and improve their quality of life.

APS psychologist, Dr. Anthony Love said, "While physical treatments for cancer have improved, many are drastic and

can have a profound effect on one's life. Psychological intervention can improve chances of survival."

Specific findings show treatment aimed at improving psychological wellbeing and promoting positive behaviour can affect whether people develop cancer, respond to treatment, improve their quality of life and increase their survival rate.

The APS has submitted a position statement to Medicare outlining the improvement of services for cancer patients and the reduction of ongoing medical costs if psychological interventions were made available to patients and their families through Medicare.

First printed in Consumers' Health Forum of Australia's September 2003 issue of *HealthUpdate*.

## Burst bubble!

While waiting in the reception room of a new dentist, she saw his name on his certificate.

Suddenly, she remembered that a tall, handsome boy with the same name had been in her high school class some 40 years ago.

When she saw him, she quickly discarded any such thought. This balding, gray-haired man with the deeply lined face was too old to have been her classmate.

After he had examined her teeth, she asked him if he had attended the local high school.

"Yes," he replied.

"When did you graduate?" she asked.

He told her when it was.

"Well, you were in my class!" she said.

He looked at her closely and then asked, "What did you teach?"

# 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.**

### ***Arsenic & Old Lace***

Half price (\$8) matinee for seniors.

Thursday 2 October, 12pm. Fig Tree Theatre University of NSW, High Street, Kensington

For more information/bookings contact Carmel 9705 7713 email: [cmussap@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cmussap@optusnet.com.au)

### **MEDICARE'S 20th BIRTHDAY 1pm Wed October 1**

The Save Medicare Alliance invites you to celebrate outside John Howard's Office, 240 Victoria Road, Gladesville or in your office with a Birthday Cake at a Medicare Morning Tea.

If we don't stand up for Medicare now it may not reach its 21st Birthday.

To get to Gladesville by bus, catch one from near the QVB in the city.

For more information contact Combined Pensioners on 9281 3588, or check out [www.labor.net.au](http://www.labor.net.au) and click on Save Medicare.

### **Fit & Healthy Business Women's Breakfast**

In support of the Breast Cancer Network, Australia, enjoy a fabulous breakfast in the company of some of Australia's most successful women, including Olympic Gold medallists Lauren Burns and Kerri-Anne Pottharst and Olympic sporting hero Raelene Boyle

**October 8, The Westin Hotel**

\$49.50

Phone 1300 666 540 to book.

### **Consumers' Health Forum**

The website of the Consumers' Health Forum (CHF) of Australia <http://www.chf.org.au> provides information on CHF's consumer representatives program, its publications, its members and its work program.

New features include an online discussion forum, the capacity to nominate for a committee vacancy or report on a committee meeting, and a more extensive collection of links to other sites of interest to Australian health consumers.

**Cathy Savage**

### **Pine Gap Update**

Celebrate the 20th anniversary of

**PINE GAP WOMEN'S PEACE  
ACTION**

Tuesday November 11 2003

NSW Parliament House  
Macquarie Street Sydney

10 am for morning tea

10.30am for speeches songs stories  
open mic updates till 1pm

Bring a picnic lunch so we can share more memories at the nearby Botanical Gardens.

This is a free event and everyone is welcome.

Please spread the word.

Bring photos to display, come in period T-shirts and share your poems and diary reflections that contribute to our oral herstory.

For more info phone Georgina Abrahams 9557 2774 or email [jd@onepost.net](mailto:jd@onepost.net)

Maureen King 9420 0269 or email [mking@pacific.net.au](mailto:mking@pacific.net.au)

# NOTICES

## Tropo Amore

The Tall Poppeas are performing Tropo Amore at the Darlinghurst Theatre, Greenknowe Avenue, Potts Point  
November 25 to 29 at 7pm and 4pm Saturday November 29.

The show combines drama and dance with rarely performed vocal and instrumental music in a light-hearted romp guaranteed to seduce you to the beauty and wit of the baroque era.

Cost \$27 and \$21 (conc.)  
Bookings 8356 9987.

## AVIVA

International news about women and girls. Women's World-Wide Web, a free Monthly Webzine [www.aviva.org](http://www.aviva.org)

## House Swap

Is there a member or some woman you know who might like to swap a house or flat in the Newcastle area or the South Coast down as far as Wollongong for six months or more in the Blue Mountains?

I have an attractive cottage close to bush walks with two bedrooms, a study and central gas heating. It's a ten minute walk to Katoomba shops.

The six winter months would be the minimum or, if preferred, up to a year. I'm trying to determine if I really have to leave my much-loved Mountains.

Of course a trial – coming to stay for a day or two - would be a sensible start. Give me a ring on 024782 7250 or email me on [russell@hermes.net.au](mailto:russell@hermes.net.au)

**Russ Aroney**

## Public Discussion

A group of us opposed to the recent war on Iraq have organised a public discussion between Tony Abbot and Carmen Lawrence (in addition to other speakers) on Australia's involvement in this war.

It will be held at North Sydney Council Chambers, Fred Hutley Hall, 200 Miller Street, on the night of 20 October.

More info from Friends of the ABC [fabclist@fabcnsw.org.au](mailto:fabclist@fabcnsw.org.au)

## Special Giveaway

Win a free double pass to William Shakespeare's *AS YOU LIKE IT*, directed by Lindy Davies, to a matinee on either Wednesday 1 or Wednesday 8 October at 1.30pm.

To go in the draw to win the double pass, please

email [ownnsw@zip.com.au](mailto:ownnsw@zip.com.au) with your name and phone number or leave your name and phone number in person at our office. (Please don't phone it in.)

include your preference of date and answer the question –

What is the name of the female lead in Bell Shakespeare's *AS YOU LIKE IT*?

If you win, the tickets will be put in your name for collection at the Box Office.

*AS YOU LIKE IT* is at the Sydney Opera House until 8 November.

Concession Tickets are normally \$40, but have been reduced for *OWN Matters* readers to \$20 for the two Wednesday matinees.

For bookings, please phone 9250 7777 or book online at [www.bellshakespeare.com.au](http://www.bellshakespeare.com.au)

## OWN Sydney Events

### Film Discussion Group

Are you interested in discussing films?

We're proposing that interested members might choose two films each month – to be seen at your leisure, then come to the film discussion on the 2nd Monday of each month. Two more films will be then chosen for the next month.

To kick off, we have chosen *Japanese Story* and *American Splendour*.

Our first discussion will be at **1.30pm, Monday 13 October** at 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point.

More info: Yetty Windt 9660 5020 or Jan Monson 9692 9400

\* \* \*

### Celebrate Spring!

Meet at the downstairs cafe in the Royal Botanic Gardens for lunch.

**12 noon, Saturday 18 October**

Two items of interest are:

- Sydney Coastline and Waterways Exhibition
- Growing Friends' Plant Sale

\* \* \*

### What every old girl should know!

Guest speaker, Margaret Small, from the Women's Legal Resource Centre, will talk about Wills, Advance Directives, etc.

**10am Thursday 23 October**

87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Pt.

