



# OWN MATTERS

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

*No. 35 November 2004*

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## Doing something right?

OWN NSW stands at a watershed. Dorothy Cora, our highly esteemed community worker/newsletter coordinator, will retire next May after more than ten years of dedication and high achievement. Now is not the time to pay her due tribute – that will come – but it is timely, perhaps, to reflect on our organisation's development and the key roles that our staff play at Millers Point.

We have been extremely fortunate to have had Dorothy and Kris Ferguson with us for so long – Kris will have been here ten years next April. Although the ethos of equality and democracy between workers and volunteers is at the very heart of all OWN, there is no doubt that Dorothy and Kris are central to the continuity of our everyday functioning. Between them they nurture and encourage our member groups, ensure communication via the unparalleled OWN Matters, handle our finances efficiently, and respond immediately to anyone interested in forming a new group or wanting information about us.

The fact that we have been able to attract such excellent and devoted staff, despite only being able to offer community sector salaries, and the constant stress of too much to do in too little time, is a tribute to OWN and all its members. We must be doing something right!

The Management Team now has the difficult task of finding a replacement for Dorothy, and part of that process is to review all staff and volunteer roles to ensure that they fit together effectively and meet the needs of a growing organisation. It may be appropriate to make representations to government for extra funding, and the MT is currently looking at this.

The changes we face also coincide with the Management Team's current work to produce a Strategic Plan for the coming year – another process which requires deep reflection on what we're here for and where we should focus our energies and resources. We will be sharing our ideas soon, and will seek your comments, hopefully by next month. If you have a comment to offer, either on staff roles or on what the priorities of OWN NSW should be in the coming year, please do not hesitate to phone, write or email the office.

Whatever the future brings, if staff and volunteers can continue to work together so productively, OWN will grow and flourish.

**Pat Carlton**

### **OWN Matters**

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

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

### **Who Are We?**

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

OWN promotes the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women through a range of activities and resources, and advocates 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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## Point of View

### **White Ribbon Day 2004 – please get involved!**

Violent crimes committed against women and girls - like domestic violence, sexual assault and people trafficking - continue to be pervasive in Australia and throughout the world.

*White Ribbon Day* is held on 25 November each year. It is a day when people of all ages, races and religions, and in every area of life – non-government organisations, business, industry and government – wear a white ribbon to symbolise men's opposition to men's violence against women.

Violence against women and girls affects everyone in the community. Men's lives are personally affected if their girlfriends, wives, daughters, mothers, grandmothers or sisters experience violence or the threat of violence, and they have a crucial role in helping reduce violence. Harmful attitudes and beliefs in the community are also a very important part of the problem, and tackling these will assist in building a community that is safer for women and girls.

*White Ribbon Day* is the brainchild of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which has worked since 1975 to help improve the physical security of women across the world through the elimination of all forms of violence against women.

UNIFEM Australia, which was formed in 1990, is working to establish partnerships, and provide support to a wide range of men, men's organisations, business, industry and government, to achieve nationwide action and leadership to eliminate violence against women in our society. Australian research has established that more than 1 million women have experienced violence during a relationship, with 60% reporting that they lived in fear during the relationship.

OWN is supporting this wonderful initiative by holding a *White Ribbon Day* event on Monday 29 November, with a morning tea and invited guests. We will also be distributing white ribbons as widely as possible. For more information on this event, please see the enclosed flyer.

**Louise Anike**

### ***A touching story***

Throughout our lives, most of us have had female friends or relatives who have added value to our lives in one way or another. Since we all love to read inspiring stories, we are asking readers of *OWN Matters* to tell us about a woman who has touched your life in a special way. She doesn't need to be famous or even known by other readers – she just needs to have made a difference in your life.

If you have a story to tell, please tell it in around 500 words. If you feel unable to write, phone me at the office and we'll find a way of getting your story into print.

**Dorothy Cora**

# OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

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At last the fuss and flurry of the elections are over. With government coffers overflowing, and promises of largesse abounding, we must now ensure that our elected representatives keep their word. Our major concerns are in the areas of health (including dental health), housing, transport, and community care, and we urge older women to lobby for just and equitable services in these fields.

We recently became aware that funding for breast screening is to be drastically cut. The Management Team has decided that this is an appropriate time to implore our politicians to retain this service at its present level, as many women owe their lives to this method of early detection.

We are in the process of producing a strategic plan for this financial year, although we expect it will be a valuable resource in future years, and a guide for future Management Teams. We are undertaking a full discussion of the plan and the means to implement it at our next Management Team meeting on Monday 8 November.

Our representation to the Department for Ageing, Disability and Home Care, for additional Seniors Week funding to provide buses for members to attend Campbelltown for the concert, has been successful.

Barbara Burnham and Dorothy Cora attended the Quarterly Women's Peak meeting at the new premises of the Office for Women in the Premier's Department. The Hon. Sandra Nori MP attended the meeting to outline the new 'streamlined' role of the Office for Women, and the Acting Director-General, Helen Boyton, answered questions about the new structure and how well it will meet the needs of women in NSW. We were pleased to hear that the Women's Grants Program will be continued, but disappointed that there will be no further *Women on Wheels* Tours. At the meeting Deidre Mason, deputy chair, gave the feedback on the recent 2004 Women's Gathering at Coonabarabran with a glowing report of the OWN Theatre Group.

**Lucy Porter, Peg Hewett, Barbara Burnham  
and Barbara Malcolm**

## Women Centre Stage

Dust off your dancing shoes – stretch your vocal chords – practice your lines – dancers, singers and other performers, it's on again!

Our Seniors Week concert will be on Wednesday afternoon, 16 March 2005, and it's going to be bigger and better than ever!

OWN NSW can once again assist in the cost of transport to the concert, BUT, you must book your community or private bus immediately. Don't forget, it is Seniors Week and there is a lot of competition for community buses.

The concert will start at 1.30 and finish around 5pm, so make sure you book your bus for times that will allow you to eat or have a coffee at the RSL Club before the concert.

Invitations to participate in the concert will go out to groups soon, along with more general information. An invitation will also be placed in December *OWN Matters* to encourage OWN members in general to join in the high jinks.

Remember, the accolades after last year's concert? Let's make this one bigger and better.

**Dorothy Cora**

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### *Positions vacant*

If you like working with words, or illustrating words, please consider joining the Editorial Team of *OWN Matters*.

We need volunteers with:

Editing skills to work one day each week, preferably on a Tuesday or Thursday,

Proof-reading skills to work on the second last Wednesday of each month, and

Drawing skills to illustrate articles and stories any day during the third week of each month.

If you want real job satisfaction and would like to work in a friendly and supportive team, then these jobs are for you! (Pedants and other obsessives welcome to apply!)

**Contact Dorothy Cora at the office, 9247 7046 or email [ownnsw@zip.com.au](mailto:ownnsw@zip.com.au)**

# Housing and Transport for Older Women

*The Premier's Council for Women is hosting focus groups about older women and their housing and transport concerns. The information they receive will be passed on to the Premier and to the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing as background to their discussions with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care on these issues. Although OWN is not holding a focus group, the Premier's Council is very interested in members' opinions. Below are some questions we invite you to reflect upon and respond to by mid-November.*

## SECTION 1 - HOUSING

1. What are the most important things that should be available to help older women live independently?

a) *Location of housing*

i. What services and facilities is it important to live close to, or to be able to get to easily?

ii. What advice would you give about choosing a location? What are the pitfalls to avoid?

iii. What would you like to see governments doing, if anything, to make sure older women are near the facilities and services they need?

b) *Housing Design*

i. What are some of the problems of housing design?

ii. How can they be overcome?

iii. What are the most important design features that make a good house for older women?

2. How can older women be encouraged to think ahead about their housing needs, preferably *before* their health deteriorates?

3. What changes, if any, would you like to see to improve the circumstances and choices of older women?

## SECTION 2 - TRANSPORT

1. What prevents or makes it difficult for older women to get places?

2. Are there particular places that older women cannot get to, or have difficulty getting to?

What impact does this have on women's well-being?

3. What would make public transport EASIER to use? SAFER to use? BETTER for women with hearing or sight problems?

4. What alternative transport is available in your local area to improve the quality of older women's lives?

5. What would you like to see changed to make it easier or safer for older women walking in public spaces?

6. What changes would make it easier to use supports such as walking sticks or frames, pushers or motorised scooters (gofers)?

7. What changes would you like to see, that would make it easier for older women to keep driving safely for as long as possible?

8. How can older women who should stop driving, be assisted to make the transition?

*Send your comments on any or all of the questions (please make clear what number question you are commenting on) to: Housing and Transport Survey, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000.*

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## Arundhati Roy's generosity

Controversial writer and human rights activist, Arundhati Roy, has been chosen by The Sydney Peace Prize jury as the recipient of the 2004 Sydney Peace Prize. Most widely known as the author of the Booker Prize winning novel, *The God of Small Things*, she joins such luminaries as the poet-artist

and President of East Timor, Xanana Gusmao and Palestinian academic and human rights campaigner, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi.

Ms Roy says she intends to donate her \$50,000 prize money to Aboriginal political activists to further their political work within Aboriginal communities. She stressed that it wasn't an act of

charity but, "... a straightforward political fight for survival and for rights."

Ms Roy has been awarded this year's prize for her advocacy in demanding justice for the poor and people displaced by dam projects, as well as her opposition to nuclear weapons.

**Rhonda Lette**

## ***Farewell to a very special woman***

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Our dear friend, Lynn Pollock, died on Sunday 26 September after a long illness. Her many friends and relatives were joined by members of the OWN Aboriginal Support Circle in a memorial service held on the following Friday.

Lynn was widely known and loved throughout the reconciliation movement and in many Indigenous communities for her compassion, dedication, skills, generosity and sheer hard work, even as she nursed her mother through a long illness.

For more than seven years, Lynn compiled and circulated a monthly *Calendar of Reconciliation Events*

*in NSW*, which included art, dance and drama, regular meetings of reconciliation groups and special one-off events. Every month, by email, fax and letter, the *Calendar*, for which she refused any financial support, went out. Lynn also assisted in the organisation of many reconciliation events, and was a founding member of Esora, the Eastern Suburbs Organisation for Reconciling Australia. For her work with Esora, Lynn was honoured earlier this year.

What many of us did not know was that after leaving Grafton, where she grew up, Lynn travelled extensively overseas and when she returned to Australia, qualified as a librarian, studying at night. She

then studied law, qualifying as a barrister in February, 1973. Most of Lynn's professional activities, from 1976 until her retirement in 1995, were centred around the library of the Supreme Court. Through her passionate interest in music, she discovered that there were no studies on the music of Australia's Indigenous people. Once Lynn started searching for information, one thing led to another and before long she became an ardent activist for reconciliation.

Lynn was a great inspiration to our group and will be sadly missed. Go well, Lynn, and carry on sending your light of love from wherever you are. We need it more than ever!

**Pat Zinn**

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### **Who cares for the Carer?**

Did you know that the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that, in Australia, there are 2.3 million carers? Not all of them are older people, of course, but older people probably have a greater need for information about what they are entitled to and what services are available to support them in this role.

The Carer Resource Centre acts as a single point of contact for carers seeking information and advice about the full range of services and assistance available to them. Carer respite centres allow alternative care arrangements to give the primary carer a break from their usual care arrangements.

Centrelink has income support for some carers. You may be entitled to a carer's pension or allowance, including a pensioner concession card or a health care card. Financial Information Service officers at Centrelink can suggest ways to improve a person's standard of living by helping them make the best use of their resources, and social workers can help with counselling about personal or family problems. If necessary, they can make referrals to community support services for further help.

For a free booklet, *A Carers Experience*, phone the Senior's Information Service on 13 12 44

### **An Alzheimer's breakthrough?**

It is estimated that Alzheimer's disease currently affects one in four people aged over 85 and one in 15 aged over 65. Women are more at risk of the disease, known to run in families.

The good news is that Ralph Martins, a molecular biologist working with a team at Edith Cowan University in Perth, may have identified a trigger and a treatment for the mental ravages of Alzheimer's disease. Until now, no external cause of this brain disorder has been found, and existing therapies can only slow its progression.

Professor Martins and his colleagues have presented new findings showing that if a normal age-related hormonal process 'overshoots', it causes the build-up of brain-clogging substances called amyloid-beta proteins. These proteins are known to kill brain cells and cause dementia. Professor Martins claims that his research, by chance, found two existing drugs – one used to treat prostate cancer and another that boosts female fertility – that can slow, or even halt, the destruction of cells because they interfere with the protein-boosting process.

So, could early diagnosis and treatment to target this protein stop the progression of Alzheimer's in its tracks? These scientists seem to think so...

**Lee Dayton**

## Theatre Group Report

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It's been a hectic time since our last report some months ago, with travel to far-off places, erratic programming, strange beds and irregular or absent meals. But we love what we do and are always keen to do the best job that we can.

At the *Women in Business* Conference in Batemans Bay, on 30 July, we were made to feel very special by the organisers. The bus from Central transported us to the Bay in a different style to that which we have become accustomed – mixing with members of the public meant no rehearsals on the bus! A local bank sponsored the conference and its officials were in the audience, along with a local Member of Parliament. We sang our song about bank fees and bank greed, and then gave them the benefit of our newest song, *The Liar's Song*, which tells how people associate politicians with lies. Both songs were popular with the general audience, but went down like lead balloons with officials in the audience. We can't help it if they don't like the truth, can we?

In mid-August, we performed for the fourth time for the Sutherland Shire Suicide Prevention Network – there must be something about us that appeals to them! Although we had trouble with microphones on this occasion, as always, we gave it all we had and got a tremendous reception.

Next, we were booked for a performance by the Public Service Association on Friday 10 September, and although there was a mix-up with the venue and program, in the end it was all worthwhile because the women just loved our performance. Women still have to struggle for recognition, even in this day and age, and the women who are part of this association do a very fine job in helping other women find a voice.

Now, of course, it's time to talk about our latest tour. Macquarie Health Services in Dubbo invited us to be a part of a four-day health information tour, to various NSW towns, leaving on Tuesday, 14 September.

Travelling by train to Dubbo was OK – we were met by the local press, had photos taken, and were interviewed! Our bus was of miniature proportions – luggage, props and eight women did not sit well in such close proximity, so a trailer was quickly organised for future journeys.

At Warren, the next day, we performed our domestic violence show to an audience of boys and girls around 15 or 16 years at the local High School. They obviously didn't know what to expect when seven old ladies appeared before them, but we soon had their attention. After telling our stories of domestic violence, we entertained them with songs and skits on different topics. These boys and girls are definitely not strangers to domestic violence – very sad. Their teacher told us that, had she realised our focus, she would have organised a question session and a follow-up questionnaire for the students.

Wednesday we were off to Narromine for the *Girls to Grannies* women's health evening. After a wonderful introduction by the organiser, we wowed them all. Thursday saw us at Dunedoo, which we had visited with the *Women on Wheels* tour last year, so it was nice to see people who remembered us. The school we performed in was a huge ugly

place like a plane hangar, but despite the poor acoustics, we showed our skills and made use of the one available microphone to do another DV show.

Then it was off to Gulargambone. This performance took place in the local community centre; an old picture palace renamed by the community, *The 2828 Hall*, the postcode of Gulargambone. Most of you will have seen our fairy skit – it's been with us forever – and it's always so popular, that when three older women walked onto

that stage with wings and wands, the audience just erupted!

Our next stop was the 2004 Women's Gathering at

Coonabarabran. Excitement plus as we arrived at the local golf club, where 550 people had registered and 610 people had arrived! The noise! With only a fair sound system, this was one time when my big voice came into its own. We were all pumped up and the audience, many of them standing in the aisles, gave us a rousing reception. I think it was our best show in a while.

Once again there was a councillor and a local member in the audience, and again we wondered how they would receive our songs. No worries – the audience erupted into deafening cheers and prolonged clapping after our liars song and another one about the money politicians earn and what they do to earn it. But the evening ended and we had not eaten! The timetable had gone awry, the finger food did not touch our fingers, and we were being picked up and taken to our billets in Coona with not a morsel touching our lips. The breakfasts nearly made up for it though.

The next morning we travelled to the Coinda Nursing Home to do a



freebie sing-along, which we had done the previous year. These residents could not make it to the show but sang their hearts out to all those old familiar songs.

And then it was over! Altogether we had wonderful audiences, and people still mentioned seeing us on the Denton show. (We just found out that Andrew Denton won a National Media Award for his interview with the Older Women's Network Theatre Group on *Enough Rope* last year!)

But this tour was really tiring. The organisers try very hard to get

things right, but they sometimes don't take our ages into consideration. Upstairs rooms in motels with no lifts, travelling for long distances in small buses and irregular meals, do not contribute to our wellbeing. We talk about OWN, we hand out literature explaining the aims of OWN, and are very proud to do so, but please spare a thought for the toll it takes. Don't get me wrong, we love it, but there is nothing like coming home to your own bed!

**Violet (Josie) Jackson**

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### **Life in the Geriatric Fast Lane**

*Brrp...Brrrp... There's the phone, I'm running down the hall,  
Hello, hello? Yes, Darling, how nice of you to call.  
So it's cold and windy where you are? Well, I'm not one to boast,  
but here it's truly lovely on the sunny Central Coast.  
What's that...?  
Babysit Young Jeremy and Susie Friday night?  
Let me check my diary to see if that's alright.  
Now then...  
Monday's booked for Fitness Club and Woy Woy Writers' Group.  
Oh dear, you say Young Jeremy has had a bout of croup?  
Try rubbing him with camphor, dear, and give him lots of steam.  
Tuesday I'm at Gosford pool with the Aquarobics team.  
Wednesday's bowls at Wyong, and later in the day  
we're going to the Laycock to see their latest play.  
So...  
your husband has been mean to you? Perhaps he craves attention.  
On Thursday we go and collect our Seniors' Pension.  
At night we're off to Yoga, and what is that you say?  
You're running short of groceries, and you need a holiday?  
Well then...  
Friday's Bingo at the club,  
so I'll see what I can do to win you lots of meat trays, and an airline ticket too!  
Yes, dear...  
you are right, I just don't do what I used to.  
And of course dear, I am lucky, I can do just what I choose to.  
And no, I don't understand what it's like with two small kids  
and how washing piles up higher than Egyptian pyramids!  
How husbands are unfeeling, and at times are just plain boorish,  
and never praise your cooking, and expect you to be whore-ish  
when you've had it up to here with a pair of measly kids  
who have spent the whole day scratching and puking in their beds.  
Yes, I know...  
It's very hard, dear, and it surely is a bastard,  
but I cannot mind your kids, dear, for I really feel  
I'm past it!*

**Pat Lindsay**

**Jan Malley**

## **2004 Mental Health Matters Awards**

Sunday 10 October was World Mental Health Day and also the launch of Mental Health Week by the Mental Health Association of NSW. The launch was held in Centennial Park. The slogan for the day was 'Staying Healthy is a Walk in the Park', and we couldn't have wished for better weather – glorious sunshine, the sky a bright clear blue and a gentle cool breeze blowing. The aims of the day were to promote mental and physical wellbeing as well as to showcase Sydney's parks and gardens. Included in the day's program was the presentation of the annual 2004 Mental Health Matters Awards.

OWN members, Jan Monson and Nina Walton, were honoured by the Mental Health Association for ten years of dedicated work as facilitators of the Depression and Anxiety Self Help Support Group, which meets every third Sunday of the month at Friendship House in Gladesville. Participants share information, resources and positive ideas for better mental health in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

Another cause for celebration was the Award presented to one of OWN's projects, the OWN Bankstown Wellness Centre. The Centre won the Non-government or Community Organisation Award for offering a wide range of age-appropriate, health-promoting activities to more than 200 women each week, more than half of whom are from non-English speaking backgrounds. The Centre receives referrals from local GPs, Bankstown Community Health Centre, Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital (including the Anxiety Clinic), Gamblers Anonymous and Grow.

Betty Stirton, one of the volunteer Project Management Team members, accepted the award on behalf of the Centre.

# Letters to the Editor

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## Letting off steam

Everybody I know is exhausted after Saturday's election debacle.

For the last nine years the Federal Government has broken every rule in the book; torn the fabric of our society in every way possible, in health, in education, and by throwing more money than ever to private schools. It has taken money away from or under-funded many voluntary organisations that look after the disadvantaged, the sick, the frail and has stopped essential scientific and medical research in many areas. Worse, it has deceived the Australian people about the war in Iraq and has linked us to America's foreign policy. And our history of human rights abuse over the refugees has made us pariahs on the world stage.

The billions of dollars Howard threw at the electorate to buy himself back into power was money that has been filched from the public, by "good economic management" over the past nine years.

So we voted for him, well 40.6% did! Why? Because people have been encouraged to spend money on sustained private consumption, because we believed the warm and comfortable assurances of the government that we have the best economy in the world and nothing can go wrong if we continue to support our "clever and experienced" government.

Will we still think the same when our water supplies dry up, when more farmers leave the land, when we have no more forests left to woodchip? What will happen then? Some of those billions might have been spent on some forward-looking, more visionary schemes, perhaps?

**Muriel Hortin**

## Not always the 'good old days'

In response to Gabrielle Snedden's *How Did We Ever Survive* (October *OWN Matters*), the short answer is many of us did not! How well I remember the warnings from my parents, of children who had died as the result of fires, drowning and other accidents.

Before reaching school age, I had two 'accidents' which could have led to my death. Fortunately, they did not. As a teenager, several of the young men I knew were killed or seriously injured in motor accidents – helmets were not compulsory for motor cyclists, and cars were more dangerous.

It is very easy to glamorise the 'good old days'. However, we need to remember other issues. For instance, sexual and physical abuse of women and children was accepted as normal; the fact that married women could not have a career in the public service nor in many other industries; and when a woman did get a job, she was paid significantly less than a man doing the same job – and often she was more efficient!

We still have a long way to go, but in my lifetime there have been many changes that have improved the lot of women and children.

**Joan Lambert**

## Photo ID

My sympathy goes to Roleena Jennings, who wrote to the September *OWN Matters* about no longer having a driver's licence and therefore no photo ID.

I do want to let her know that a Photo ID Alliance was formed approximately two years ago, and it has been petitioning the government continually since then

about the RTA issuing Photo ID cards to individuals who have no other form of identification.

On 29 October last year, we were informed that the NSW Government intended to issue such cards during 2004. In response to the progress of our enquiry, in March we were advised that the delay was caused by the fact that Legislation and Privacy matters had to be considered, and such a scheme would require the updating of RTA Computers! Seems as though the Government is expecting to be inundated by millions!

Do write again to Tony Stewart, MP, who is handling this matter, and ask him what is happening. His address is Level 36, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place Sydney 2000. Get your friends to bombard him with letters. Think about approaching your local MP and ask for his/her assistance.

The Photo ID Alliance will be petitioning the Government again on 29 October, the anniversary of the announcement that they would issue the Photo ID cards. Here's hoping, Roleena!

**Cate Turner**

## More on Photo ID

In response to Roleena Jennings' article re IDs, I found out that you can get a Birth Card as ID (photo included) from Births, Deaths and Marriages. You must go to the office to apply and pay \$36. It is valid for one year.

If your surname is your married name, you must carry your marriage certificate. Both can be purchased as a package for \$50. This only applies in NSW.

Phone: 1300 655 236

**Rita Walker**

# Letters to the Editor

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## Who wins?

The election is over, but like so many OWN members, shock at the result has left us in fear for the future of our country. With the privatisation of Telstra – could there be timed calls? With the emergence of Family First, will we see the battles all over again for abortion rights, rights of gay couples, and non-acceptance of any difference that does not meet the approval of a strongly *religious* community?

What about low income families, older people, especially older women, the disabled and carers? None of these groups have so far benefited from the 'strong economy', a slogan so over-used by the politicians.

Mr Howard promised, if re-elected, "a fair and equitable government for all Australians." Was that a 'non-core' promise?

**Nancy Brown**

## Not Happy

The election results were devastating for some of us! They left me feeling like a stunned mullet – I didn't think there would be a landslide for either party, but expected it would be really close.

Beware, as the 'user pays' philosophy of the Howard Government will be vindicated by his mantra: "I have a mandate...the people have spoken!"

Mind you, the Prime Minister 'spoke' to me the day before the election via a recorded message on my phone, asking me to vote for Malcolm Turnbull. I was "not happy, John". I was breathing a sigh of relief because we'd been freed from electoral messages on radio and TV for the last two days, and then to be got at in my own

home on my private phone...I was fuming! Then I got a second recorded message. This time it was Malcolm Turnbull asking me to vote for him. What a cheek! Talk about dirty tricks! And then to cap it off, he has to go and win on the day.

So I guess its heads up and tails down to hold on to our hard-won gains and protect us whenever Howard's swollen head leads him to try and make us 'pay the piper' for his megalomaniac desires.

**Peggy Hewett**

## The other side of the coin

Peggy Hewett's story, *Busted* in October *OWN Matters* brought back memories.

Unlike Peg, I always had the opposite experience – NO BUST AT ALL! At least I thought so until, as a teenage trainee Nurse, a Resident Doctor grabbed my breast in passing – laughing as he went. No sexual harassment protection in the '40s.

Bras weren't so available in those days, especially in very small sizes. Then I found Dyomee. After trying several of the small sizes on me, the haughty salesgirl leaned back and roared laughing, "They look like empty paper bags," she said.

Embarrassed and insulted, feeling like cutting and running, I desperately bought one which I felt fitted near enough, and escaped. A small handkerchief in each filled the gap.

My practical mother brought it all back into perspective. "It was in the family, we couldn't rustle up a bust between us," she said. "Better not enough than too much."

**Nancy Brown**

## Number one...

I've just found out that heart disease is the number one killer of women. Then I heard about how to keep hearts healthy and strong.

First of all, give up smoking. We all been told that control of blood pressure is essential in reducing heart disease, so cut down on salt and alcohol, eat more fruit and vegetables, and only eat low fat or non-fat dairy products. I understand that this diet will also control cholesterol levels. If you have diabetes, remember to control your weight by exercising for 30 minutes every day. Then there's reducing stress levels... I'm exhausted. Having a healthy heart sounds like a full time job!

**Jane Demer**

## Our new national anthem?

Australians all let us rejoice,  
For we have tasted greed;  
Our interest rates mean more to us,  
Than mere humanity;  
Our land abounds with credit cards  
And John Howard took us there;  
Don't stop to count as your debts mount,  
Advance Australia fair!

Don't stop to count as your debts mount,  
Advance Australia fair!

While refugees from terror sail'd,  
To trace wide oceans o'er,  
To Iraq with Little John we went,  
To start a bloody war.  
The sick, the old have all been sold,  
Our children's future care;  
They're all worth nowt, so rise and shout,  
Advance Australia fair!

They're all worth nowt, so rise and shout,  
Advance Australia fair!

**Anon.**

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## Sydney

Exhausted by the federal election campaign, or did it all wash over you? It's all behind us once more: the daily barrage of charge and countercharge, the gladhanding, the letterboxing, the handing out at polling booths, and the hour-by-hour watching of election results on TV. Post-election, there are many discussions on what the outcome will mean for our future.

Please see the registration form for the OWN Australia Conference and AGM on 21-23 November. OWN Sydney's delegates are Betty Johnson and Joy Ross. Members of our group have some responsibility in organising the conference, and it would be good to have as many members helping out and participating as possible. Conference papers, and proposed amendments for debate and acceptance to the OWN Australia policies on aged care, health, income security and violence and abuse against older women are now available. Interested members can ask for a copy by ringing Joy Ross on 9251 9333. A visit to the

role as a volunteer in bush regeneration. Mary-Ann is doing a course at Padstow TAFE and came along with a heap of information about what workers in bush regeneration do – there are a lot of jobs available. From learning how to pull weeds out properly and knowing all the botanical names, to dealing with the community, it is a fascinating and quite awe-inspiring occupation, with good company. You work hard for a good cause.

Something quite different for us this month was a very interesting discussion and lunch with two visitors from New York, Gloria and Ron Lundburg. They told us about their archaeological adventures with the Earthwatch Institute. Up at the crack of dawn, digging in clay to look for King Alfred's grave in Winchester, UK, or looking for a possible fourth wall of an Indian pueblo in New Mexico, are the sort of opportunities these two spritely 70 year-olds are always looking for. Their enthusiasm for

Earthwatch and for environmental sustainability, as well a long term

Lastly, congratulations to OWN Sydney members, Jan Monson and Nina Walton, who received awards, at the launch of Mental Health Week, for their ten-year facilitation of a Mental Health Support Group, and to Betty Johnson, who has been appointed to the Home Care Board.

*Louise Anike and Joy Ross*

## Blacktown

Well, our OWN group has now been meeting at the Seniors Hall at Rooty Hill since July. Although we have something like fifty members on our books, not all of them are actively involved.

We have opened our premises every Wednesday from 10am until 2pm, for members and friends to 'drop-in' for coffee and a chat, and bus trips are now a regular feature on the last Wednesday of each month. Having the use of Council's bus, and a driver who is licensed to drive a fifteen-seater, makes planning trips so much easier. September's trip was to Mamre House, an historical building at Mulgoa.

One of the things we have been able to achieve with the help of Pam Hawkins, the Council's Aged Care worker, is interesting guest speakers at our monthly meetings. Irene Balding from Western Sydney's Sole Women's Accommodation Service, was a guest who opened our eyes to the number of cases of violence against older women. Her service is one of the few refuges that accommodate older women without children. At the time Irene visited our group, there was a woman of 80 years staying at the refuge.

Other guests, July Lababadi and Maureen Buckley from Mt Druitt

**'A sub-committee meeting has been arranged for 10am Friday 5 November to discuss OWN Sydney's responsibilities around the conference and possible amendments to the policies'**

Manly Art Gallery was a highlight in October. We were very fortunate to be introduced to three special exhibitions by director Therese Kenyon: *The Artist's Studio*, *Water Blooms* and *Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny – A brief history of the Bikini*. Being first served with morning tea, and later enjoying a stroll along the quiet, wave-lapped esplanade on a splendid spring day, made it a very pleasant day out.

Still on matters 'natural', Mary-Ann Johnson, was a quite different speaker for us, talking about her

commitment to social justice issues, made these few hours really enjoyable, like spending time with old friends. Earthwatch Institute also holds digs in Australia. Thank you to Phyllis Gorman for organising these guest speakers.

We have chosen Monday 29 November for our *White Ribbon Day* morning tea as part of the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women campaign. We urge you to join us! (please see the article on p.2 and the enclosed flyer).

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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Hospital, drew our attention to the lack of funding for home care for the elderly. Funding for home care for the elderly was also one of the concerns discussed, when Chifley candidates Ed Husic (Federal Labor), Louise Markus (Federal Liberal) and Debbie Robertson (Greens) visited on 4 August.

Our liaison with Eastern Creek Public School has commenced, and we hope it will be a very successful and lasting connection with the school. This school is one of the many underprivileged and under resourced in the area, and the Principal was very receptive to our group donating \$100, to help the children in whatever area it would be most useful. We have received a letter of thanks, and been told that our donation will help children with their dance costumes. We also donated two prizes of \$10 each, to be given to the two best posters designed by pupils advertising our market day on 6 November.

At 1pm on 17 November, we have arranged a visit from members of Southern Highlands OWN. Those of us who enjoyed the songs and skits performed by the WENCHes at the State Conference thought others would also enjoy this humorous and entertaining group of older women performers. Members from other OWN groups are invited to join us for this event (please see Notices, pp 18-19). The hall can cope with large numbers, and the WENCHes really deserve a large and appreciative audience. We are putting on lunch for our Southern Highlands visitors and a few Council people, but unfortunately can't afford to extend this to everyone! So, if you are coming, please arrive between 12 and 12.30 with a sandwich for lunch, and we'll provide the tea and coffee.

**Penny Hilton**

## **Parramatta**

We had another successful month with average attendances rising to 30 at each meeting. Our relations with Blacktown OWN are good – representatives attended their 'Meet the Candidate' meeting – and we hope to continue collaboration with other nearby groups. Of course, any OWN member, who is in the area on the fourth Monday of the month is welcome to attend our meetings.

Mary McInnes, one of our members, gave an interesting and informative talk at our September meeting on the Carers' Respite Centre and Carelink Information Centre – both cover a larger range than we had expected.

During September, seven people enjoyed their ferry trip to Balmoral, and a fish lunch under the lovely fig trees. A great success, was the verdict! Our Christmas Party will be on Monday 22 November.

**Maureen Gaudry**

## **Illawarra**

Since our last report Illawarra OWN has had some very interesting meetings. At one, a local supplier brought a selection of medical aids for members to look at and learn about. For instance, there was a wide range of items, including such things as gadgets to help ease the difficulties of arthritis sufferers. Most of us were happy to take note of the supplier's address just in case of future problems. To counterbalance this, at our next meeting we had a hilarious morning of jokes, poems and limericks.

At our last meeting three very enthusiastic volunteers, older

women like ourselves, came along to explain their work for the Coastguard at Hill 60, south of Wollongong. After a fascinating talk, some of our members went to see where these valuable volunteers do their surveillance work in an effort to keep small boat users safe along this stretch of coastline. While we were there, a call came in from a seafarer named *Seducer!* We were intrigued to learn what his particular problem might be. We were able to look through the powerful binoculars and to listen in to other calls. We came away with complete admiration for the volunteers who devote so much of their time to this good cause and who carry such heavy responsibilities.

On Thursday 18 November from 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. we are running a workshop for writers. If any OWN members would like to join us, please contact Joan Hilton on 4283 68933 for details.

**Norah Alexander**

### **Polish up your bloody-mindedness!**

According to Jeremy Laurance, *The Independent*, 12 July 2004, wilful people who insist on staying in control of their own lives live longer than compliant older people who allow themselves to be buffeted within the health system.

If you want to live a healthy old age, don't just passively await your turn and trust the system to do its best and look after your welfare: become informed, stay in command, and be thoroughly obstreperous in refusing to be fobbed off with second-rate medical care.

(Extract from an article published in the *Older Feminist Network No 150*)

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## Macarthur

After a few hiccups, the Macarthur OWN Wellness Program commenced operating from Wilma Women's Health Centre on 14 October from 1 to 3 pm. Twenty older women turned up, and we were delighted.

The Program has evolved as a natural progression of the Annual Health Day our group has held for the last two years. An enthusiastic response from those attending the Health Days led to an inaugural meeting at which it was decided to formulate a regular Wellness Program. Members thought a fortnightly meeting would be good to start with, and drew up a list of topics they wanted addressed. A coordinator was elected – aren't I the lucky one? – and after three months we overcame the stumbling block of securing a suitable venue. Now, our dream has become a reality.

We have planned an informative, humorous and entertaining schedule involving health professionals and local identities. Self-help facilitators and discussion leaders will augment our program to ensure that our theme of *Time for Self* will be a motivation in other areas of our lives. We are also exploring funding options in an effort to find leaders and facilitators for the activities that our members have chosen for the program.

As our ageing population escalates, with women surviving longer than men, our goal of of the utmost importance, not only to ourselves, but also for our local communities. If we are well, despite disability, we can become more involved in our local communities and in our OWN group. Our local Council really acknowledges those of us who work in a voluntary capacity with an annual *Gift of Time*

morning tea, and a certificate. Healthy people are regarded as important assets in any community!

All older women are welcome to attend our Wellness Program at Wilma, Bugden Place, Campbelltown.

(Congratulations to OWN NSW for organising to hold another *Women Centre Stage* concert next year!)

**Helen Standing**

## Wollondilly

Our local Council has allocated \$1,000 for us to run a Seniors event in March next year. Called *Living Longer, Growing Stronger*, it will be in the form of an Expo, show-casing the programs we've got up and running, such as the drumming group, gentle exercise, the art group, and the gym program. We intend to invite polties, council and health care workers, and anyone else who is involved in providing services to senior members of our community.

A small number of our members enjoyed a five-day group holiday to Avoca in August, while quite a few enjoyed a one-day bus trip in August to Watson's Bay for a fish and chips lunch

In September our bus trip was to Floriade in Canberra. With the Olympics' craze upon us in September, we decided to have our very OWN Wollondilly Olympics, with national costumes, a quizz on world events and a multicultural lunch. We also had an Olympic torch, but in the excitement, I forgot to light it! Everyone brought along a flag, many home-made, from their country of origin, and gold, silver and bronze 'medals' were presented to the various winners in the different 'event' categories. We had such fun!

Our drummers were very well received at the *Euphoria and Happiness* festival at Wilton, and by the time you read this we will have performed at the *Viva La Gong* festival on 27 October. To celebrate our third birthday, members of the Southern Highlands OWN and the SilvertOWNs will join us late in October for lunch.

In a letter to the editor of *OWN Matters* last month, I mentioned that Blue Circle Cement was holding community consultations (probably trying to get us on side for some scheme they are cooking up) .

Elizabeth Ottesen and I, never ones to pass up free food and drink, were warmly welcomed and introduced. We heard about the cement company's plans to address environmental issues, now and in the future. Of most interest to us is the fact that the cement works at Berrima has been turned into a dry production plant, which means much less water is drawn from our river system. The Picton plant is much bigger and will take longer to convert to a dry system. Another innovation they have introduced in the Berrima plant is burning coke, which until now has been a waste product in the manufacturing process. This coke burns much cleaner than the old coke they previously used, thus reducing air pollution. Trials are being carried out on various other materials they can burn more cleanly in the future, and one of these products is the off-cuts from disposable nappies, currently a waste product.

So, we went away very impressed and proud that the Older Women's Network was considered a group who should be told what is going on in our community.

**Barbara Malcolm**

## Care, Not Control!

My husband and I are not in good health, so when I was discharged from hospital recently and enquired about respite care in the home, it was unclear to us who was to be the carer and who the 'caree'! There was also the matter of what 'respite' actually meant. Was the official carer there to care only for the nominated 'caree', or could they also offer care to the carer – in this case, my husband?

We were told that there are 210 different organisations offering care to the frail aged on the Central Coast, and, from what I observed, all seemed to be competing for the 'honour' of providing a range of different caring roles and tasks. We found it difficult to differentiate between them at first, and I agreed to everything offered, which meant that some carers were not supposed to be there, and we were told that we could not have others. We became quite confused.

People are very vulnerable after being discharged from hospital and need time and space for recovery. Personal autonomy needs to be considered for those of us who value this, and arbitrary assumptions should not be made about what level of intervention is necessary. The primary carer – in this case my husband – also has to get over the trauma of trying to care for a critically ill partner. Mature, intelligent adults need gentle guidance to establish for themselves what they can do, and how much ability they can recover. And we do NOT appreciate being treated as potential dementia patients!

After a serious illness, it takes time to get a balance between psychologically dealing with fear of mortality, and what can be done to recover a reasonable level of physical activity.

To me it seemed that some aspects of respite care smacked of control, not care. The carers appeared to take over the running of the house, without reference to us as householders, and untrained staff were bound by multiple bureaucratic rules about what duties they could and could not do, and on what days they could do it. On one occasion, a carer threw out a favourite mug with a chip without reference to us, and rearranged objects and furniture to please her eye, which is inappropriate, to put it mildly. The problem seems to be that some carers are not trained to respect the occupants of the home, and also not trained to encourage the 'caree' to function as well as they are able. Attention should also be paid to see that authoritarian attitudes are not imposed on those being cared for, and that tact in all areas should be applied.

The political aim of home care is that the frail aged should be kept out of nursing homes, which is a much more expensive option than ensuring that care is given in the home on a part-time basis. We finally accepted an ACAT package, a Commonwealth Government package of comprehensive care. It seemed very good for the cost, and has so far proved satisfactory. Across the board, our experiences have mostly involved very caring professionals, who are very hard-working individuals. Humanity is a rare and cherished commodity in this life, and is especially appreciated when you are struck down in old age.

*Enid Harrison*

## Stress...

Retired people don't get stressed, do they? All that rest, relaxation and recreation – what could they possibly get stressed about? The reality is, of course, that the act of retiring is itself a major cause of stress for most people! And even when we have settled into the pleasures of retirement, it's often hard to stay calm and relaxed in the many roles we have as partner, mother, grandmother, caregiver, friend and voluntary worker, although these can often be short-term stresses.

Then there are the long-term stresses we face, such as a life-threatening illness or the death of someone we love. Long-term stress has been shown to increase the risk of health problems like depression, and both short and long-term stress can have negative effects on our bodies. For instance, it's fairly well accepted now that stress contributes to headache, sleep disorders, difficulty concentrating, short-temper, upset stomach, job dissatisfaction, low morale and anxiety.

As women, we tend to carry a higher burden of stress than we should, although as women it seems that we also tend to handle stress in more productive ways. One of these ways is sharing our problems and finding support from our female friends. We probably all have friends who are good listeners and who let us talk freely about our problems and feelings without judging us. Sometimes, if we're lucky, our friends will also help us to hear a different point of view.

Volunteering in our community with other like-minded women is an excellent way to reduce stress, but so is trying to set limits! There are only so many hours in the day, so don't be afraid to say NO to requests for your time and energy.

*Margaret Holmes*

## NSW Forum on Ageing

The NSW Forum on Ageing is an annual event, to which OWN members have always contributed, and many have attended with interest each year. Only one person from OWN was invited to attend this year's forum. About 150 delegates from government and non-government organisations, business, industry, universities, and the community attended the forum, although community representation was very small – around 25-30 people.

In her opening address, the Minister for Ageing, Carmel Tebbutt, stated that the purpose of the 2004 forum was “to discuss the best ways to enhance the role of older people in the community, and help to inform Government on issues relating to the ageing of the population”.

Two keynote speakers, Emeritus Professor Donald Horne, speaking on *The History of Changing Perceptions of Ageing*, and former Premier of Victoria, Joan Kirner, speaking on *Positive Living, Leadership and Mentoring*, were followed by five-minute addresses from three pre-chosen delegates. We then broke into five workshops – membership of these had been predetermined – on Mobility, Location, Gender, Community Participation and Engagement, and Age-related Discrimination. I was assigned to the Gender workshop. A senior DADHC bureaucrat chaired each workshop, and two to four (pre-chosen) people spoke on various related topics, before workshop participants were invited to comment.

The forum was very tightly structured and very top-heavy. It operated more as a conference or seminar than a forum for participants to share ideas and make recommendations. From my perspective it was interesting, but not particularly useful or informative. Nevertheless it was good for a representative of OWN NSW to be ‘seen’ and I was able to talk about OWN in my Gender workshop. I also spoke briefly during the

Plenary Session about the impact of the demise of the Department of Women.

In my opinion, the five workshops did not provide a coherent framework for an ageing policy forum as many vital issues, for example, health and community services, were completely ignored. In my workshop, and I assume the others, too much time was taken up with the designated ‘speakers’, which limited discussion time for participants. The plenary session was also disappointing in that it featured edited and, I felt, somewhat biased versions of the workshop discussions.

However, there were a few interesting ideas and stimulating moments! For example, Donald Horne suggested that the greatest single task is the need to change perceptions and stereotypes about older people, and that an essential basis of action to achieve this should include some “idealism about our common humanity and the productive capacity of human beings”.

Joan Kirner said she hates the word ‘ageing’, preferring ‘positive living’, which emphasises the importance of replacing “I can do it” with “I *will* do it”. We must, she said, be clear about our values (write them down!) and claim our entitlements. I particularly liked her comment that we earn respect by making a contribution and by celebrating, sharing and protecting our achievements, and that we need to be more radical in setting our agenda and examining other agendas.

Another speaker claimed that age equality is a human rights and social justice issue – I think we’d all agree with that – while someone else suggested that the ages 66-84 should be referred to as ‘elderhood’ and 85+ as ‘late elderhood’. Change the Old Age Pension to the Mature Age Pension, was another suggestion. In her speech, the NSW Governor, Marie Bashir, used the term ‘elder’ instead of older. The strong emphasis on using names other than ‘older’ suggests it may be worth OWN considering (once again!) the pros and cons of continuing to use ‘older’.

**Pat Carlton**

## Needle in a haystack?

On their way to get married, a young couple is involved in a fatal car accident. They find themselves sitting outside the Pearly Gates waiting for St. Peter to process them into Heaven.

While waiting, they begin to wonder: Could they possibly get married in Heaven?

When St. Peter showed up, they asked him. St. Peter said, “I don’t know. This is the first time anyone has asked. Let me go and find out,” and he left.

The couple sat and waited for an answer...for a couple of months. While they waited, they discussed that if they were allowed to get married in Heaven, *should* they get married, what with the eternal aspect of it all.

“What if it doesn’t work?” they wondered, “Are we stuck together forever?”

St. Peter finally returned, looking exhausted “Yes,” he informed them, “you can get married in Heaven.”

“Great!” said the couple, “But we were just wondering, what if things don’t work out? Could we also get a divorce in Heaven?”

St. Peter, red-faced with anger, slammed his clipboard onto the ground. “What’s wrong?” asked the frightened couple. “OH, COME ON!” St. Peter shouted, “It took me three months to find a priest up here! Do you have ANY idea how long it’ll take me to find a lawyer?”

# Spot On for Me!

*In September OWN Matters, Pat Carlton urged any OWN members with an experience of the Compack Programme to let the Advocacy Group know how it performed – on the ground. Compacks is a case-managed package of care for up to six-weeks after discharge from hospital.*

*In response to Pat's request, Jean Braithwaite wrote a long and interesting letter about her personal experience of Compack, and her satisfaction with it. Unfortunately, we could not print all her comments, due to space, but they have been forwarded to Pat, and an edited version follows (Ed.)*

"I was discharged from hospital late on a Thursday, after sixteen days fighting double pneumonia. I had signed a contract for the programme in hospital, so on the Saturday my Compack worker arrived at my home, ready to start. She was everything I needed in order to recover my strength. My hospital flowers, dumped in a bucket, were rearranged, my bed was made, and a cup of morning tea poured so that I could sit in the sun and enjoy it. The fridge contents were sorted, and she ensured that there was sufficient food available to see me out until she returned on the Tuesday morning.

"My needs changed over the six weeks. My husband came down with a nasty flu in the first week I was home, so he could not do the shopping, or hang out the laundry. She picked up these tasks. At the end of the fourth week, she drove me to the fruit market so I could actually choose my fruit and veges. She picked up my meat order on the way to my house, and then made a lasagne, a messy thing to make. On another day, when I had washed my hair and was expecting visitors, she brushed up my hair just as if I had been to a salon.

"Over the six weeks, not only did my Compack worker ease my return to coping with daily living, she did it in a way that made it less likely that a recipient would develop reliance on the support given. It will only work if the worker and the recipient understand that changes in services will occur as one's strength returns. I had it explained to me that if my needs warranted it, then it could be extended, or an alternate package negotiated.

"I urge all OWN members to utilise this service – if you happen to survive your hospital experience! I think we should seek its maintenance and sustainability, and indeed its extension, to areas where it does not currently operate."

**Jean Braithwaite**



## Immigrant Women's Speak Out

I represented OWN NSW at the opening of the new premises for the Immigrant Women's Speakout Association at Harris Park.

The Association is a peak advocacy, information and research body representing the idea and issues of immigrant and refugee women. It is community based and managed by women of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Workers provides direct services in Domestic Violence support, employment, education and training.

The Families First Community Development Project provides outreach services in Auburn supporting parents and carers. The project will help families to link up with services, organise activities with other families, advocate for families and provide information on child development, health and other relevant topics.

Parramatta OWN has become a member of the Immigrant Women's Speakout. We feel as 'Elders' that we want to support a local organisation whose aims and goals are so important and who are our next door neighbours. Their premises are a few doors away from our meeting place.

**Mollie Smith**

### Who?

Yesterday morning, a nice, fat Indian man came to take a blood test from me. He noticed my piano. "Could you give me lessons?" he asked, jokingly. He said he could read music, and I said, "Oh, I'll have you playing Bach in no time." "Who?" he said. I spelt it out, "B-A-C-H..." "Oh," he said, "You mean Batch..."

**Renee Simons**

## Remembering Thea Astley

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Thea Astley has died, an older woman who did not become old; she was seventy-eight. Thea graduated from Queensland University in 1947 and became a teacher. She also became one of the many female teachers in our country who have been distinguished writers, among whom were Amy Witting, Kylie Tennant and Christina Stead. Most of her teaching life was spent in north Queensland where her novels are set.

From *Girl with a Monkey*, published in 1958 to her last novel *Drylands* in 2000 and winner of her fourth Miles Franklin award, she reminds her readers of social

injustices. Issues like the oppression of women and their marginalisation in old age, of the terrible injustices to our indigenous people inflicted by a monstrous bureaucracy, and unthinking indifference of the general population, claimed her attention.

Though the early novels as in *The Slow Natives* and *The Well Dressed Explorer* show women as weak, despised and barely noticed, they become the fabric holding society together in *It's Raining in Mango*. In *Coda* they are allowed independent thinking. The protagonist, Kathleen, reflects on marriage as a pagan mockery, a

worm dangled before the eyes of women to hook them, enslaved by their own biology. Her two children, Shamrock (Sham), and Brian, are increasingly irritated by her eccentricities, and embarrassed about their pretentious lifestyles. The Big Developer is derided, along with all the other Big Things which disfigure our tourist towns. Kathleen is shuffled, Lear-like, between these two who contrive to sell her house, and use some of the proceeds to buy her a place in a nursing home. Their use of her faltering memory and incontinence to achieve this is Kathleen's ultimate humiliation. She makes her own arrangements with herself, and escapes to we know not where.

Above all, Thea Astley was an ironist; irony is there in most of her novels. Her characters are destroyed by their own virtues. Even Queensland's beauty is destroyed by over development. Astley herself spoke of irony helping when the voice is lost in the shrieking of the wind.

**Helen Monaghan**

### **WRAP WITH LOVE – enriching lives**

As we age, we tend to enrich our lives in different ways. Older women contribute much to the community because we tend to be the ones who volunteer to help others less fortunate. We are also the ones who have not lost the satisfying craft of knitting and crocheting.

WRAP WITH LOVE is an organisation run entirely by volunteers, the majority being women in their senior years. It started with a single person, Sonia Gidley-King, who believed that one person *could* make a difference. In 1992, aware of people throughout the world dying of starvation and hypothermia, she set out to knit her first rug or 'wrap' to warm and comfort one of them. Immediately, others joined her, knitting, crocheting and crafting the 'Wraps'. Now, 12 years later, more than 25,000 volunteers throughout Australia enthusiastically send WRAP WITH LOVE their hand-crafted 'Wraps' for worldwide distribution by Aid Agencies. So far more than 86,000 'Wraps' have been sent to 71 countries where people are in dire need, including Australia.

No money changes hands – 'Wraps' cannot be bought, sold or traded – they are purely gifts of love.

It is well accepted that knitting and crocheting is like a meditation. It relaxes and calms the mind. When it is combined to help ease the suffering of another, it also enriches the life of the volunteer, providing an inner glow, a feeling of wellbeing. No doubt this is why thousands of women gather together all over Australia on a weekly basis to craft 'Wraps' over a cup of tea and a piece of cake. For many, this is their only social contact, something to look forward to with a group of friends or within a Community Centre. There is no stress associated with knitting and crocheting 'Wraps', as they all start out as a simple ten-inch (25 cm) square.

If you would like further information on WRAP WITH LOVE, please telephone 8399.3000 on Wednesdays or Fridays.

**Pamela Cass**

### **More money for HACC programs**

The Home and Community Care (HACC) program is a joint State-Commonwealth initiative which provides a range of services to assist more than 120,000 frail aged and people with a disability in NSW to live independently in their local communities. Approximately \$13.56 million recurrent and \$2.03 million non-recurrent additional funds have been allocated to 85 HACC services in NSW. This increase will take the total funding for Home and Community Care services in New South Wales to more than \$382 million - an increase of more than nine per cent over the previous financial year.

## The Rabbit Strategy

The CIA, the FBI and the LA Police Dept. are each asked to prove their capability of apprehending terrorists. President Bush releases a white rabbit into a forest and tells each agency to catch it.

The CIA goes first. It sends animal informants into the forest. They question all plant and material witnesses. After three months of intensive investigations the CIA concludes rabbits do not exist.

The FBI goes in. After two weeks with no leads, it bombs the forest, killing everything, including the rabbit. It makes no apologies; the rabbit had it coming, it insists.

The LAPD go in. They come out after just two hours, with a badly beaten bear. The bear is sobbing, "OK, OK, I'm a rabbit, I'm a rabbit!"

John Howard hears about George Jnr's idea and decides to test Australian law enforcement agencies. He releases a white rabbit into what's left of Stromlo Forest, near Canberra.

The National Crime Authority can't catch it but promises that if it gets a budget increase, it can recover \$90 million in unpaid rabbit taxes and proceeds of crime.

The Victorian police go in. They're gone only 15 minutes, returning with a koala, a kangaroo and a tree fern, all three shot to pieces. "They looked like dangerous rabbits and we acted in self-defence," they explain.

The NSW police go in. Surveillance tapes later reveal top-ranking officers and rabbits dancing around a gum tree stoned out their minds.

The Queensland police go in. They reappear driving a brand new Mercedes, scantily clad rabbits draped all over it.

The WA police actually catch the white rabbit, but it inexplicably hangs itself when the attending officer "slipped out momentarily" for a cup of tea.

The SA and NT police join forces and beat the s\*\*t out of every rabbit in the forest, except the white one. They know it is the black ones who cause all the trouble.

The Australian Federal Police refuse to go in. It examines the issues, particularly cost, and decides that because of low priority, high overtime, and the projected expense to the AFP as a whole, the matter should be returned to the referring authority for further analysis.

and ... ASIO goes into the wrong forest.

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## Close Shave

As an adolescent I began to grow body hair. That, I was told, was a natural result of growing up. I accepted it, but oh horror!

My legs attained a growth of such luxuriance I began to doubt my gender. The only hairy legs in the family were those of my father and brother. "Do you think I'm turning into a boy?" I asked my mother. "Certainly not." The brevity of her answer precluded further questioning.

At school I was dubbed 'hairy legs'. What to do? Summer was too hot for stockings and what little pocket money I had did not stretch to depilatory creams. During early childhood I had longed for Shirley Temple curls. Now, it seemed, I

might achieve them, but on my legs. In moments of despair I imagined a future as 'the hairiest legs' in a circus.

I consulted my brother. "Shave," he said and, in a couple of days presented me with a shaving kit of brush, razor and shaving cream. My first sorties into this new art resulted in many bloody nicks which needed to be swabbed with pieces of toilet paper. I could have been the precursor of 'the little Aussie bleeder.'

In time I settled into a philosophic acceptance of this unsightly garnish to my legs. Later I ventured into various methods of depilation, most of them painful and expensive and found that a

regular shave was the most satisfactory method of keeping my legs looking human.

Now in my seventies, most of my body hair has made a belated but quiet exit. My legs however, continue to sport a superfluity of hair and I continue to shave.

The problem now is not the nicks but the difficulty of getting my arthritic limbs into an approachable position in which to attack them with the razor.

"Why bother?" say certain friends. Yes, why? Because I consider those hairs unsightly and cannot give up a lifetime battle. I hope that they will finally disappear.

*Judith Mustard*

# NOTIC

## 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.**

## Planning for your Future

**Wednesday 10 November 2004**

*Seminar topics are:  
Planning for your future with  
enduring guardianship or  
enduring power of attorney*

*Making an application for  
guardianship or financial  
management on behalf of  
someone else*

*Information about the  
Guardianship Tribunal  
and what they do.*

Salvation Army Conference  
Centre, Level 4, 140 Elizabeth  
Street, Sydney.  
For registration forms 9555 8500

The afternoon session (2.30 to  
4.00pm) is for carers, family  
members and/or friends of people  
with a disability. There is no fee  
for this session.



## Women's Health Conference

Carlton Crest Hotel,  
Melbourne, 20-22 April, 2005

*Key issues for discussion at the  
conference will be mental health  
and violence, gender equity in  
policy, health financing, changing  
maternity care, women and social  
disadvantage, including  
homelessness, and the latest  
findings from the Australian  
Longitudinal Study on Women's  
Health.*

Registration for the conference is  
now open at:  
[www.womenshealth2005.com.au](http://www.womenshealth2005.com.au)

## Anxiety Disorders Alliance Symposium

Tuesday 9 November, 9am to 5pm  
Ionic Room, Sydney Masonic  
Centre, 279 Castlereagh Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000.

More info and to register contact:  
Anxiety Disorders Alliance, PO Box  
166, Penshurst NSW 2222 .  
PH: 9570 4519 fax: 9579 3672  
website: [www.ada.mentalhealth.asn.au](http://www.ada.mentalhealth.asn.au)  
email: [ada@ada.mentalhealth.asn.au](mailto:ada@ada.mentalhealth.asn.au)



## WOY WOY Older Women's Network

presents

### Older Women on Show

The OWN Theatre Group's show  
includes a critique of economic  
rationalism, a plea for peace and  
loads of laughter!

**11.00 Wednesday  
3 November 2004**

## WOY WOY LEAGUES CLUB Blackall Road Woy Woy

\$12 includes a two course meal  
and the show - \$2 show only

Put this date in your diary now!

Bookings and info, contact Coral  
4343 1079 - Denise 4341 6685



## Visit the Guardianship Tribunal's new website

The new GT website is designed  
for easy accessibility, including for  
people with a range of disabilities.

Guardianship Tribunal  
publications and all of the  
application forms are available for  
download: [www.gt.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gt.nsw.gov.au)

# ES

## **Blacktown Older Women's Network**

Afternoon Tea & Entertainment

**1 pm Wednesday, 17 November**

Rooty Hill Senior Citizens Centre,  
Rooty Hill Road South, Rooty Hill

Performance by the Southern  
Highlands Older Women's  
Network (aka "The Wenches")

Please RSVP by 31 October to  
Penny Hilton on 9688 3780 or  
Coral Littlewood on 9631 3289



## **Jessie Street National Women's Library**

### **Lunch Hour Talk**

Level 1, Town Hall House  
465 Kent Street, Sydney

Thursday 18 November  
12 Noon to 1.30pm

### **Goldie Alexander *Intimacy and Intrigue***



### **Self Esteem Course**

This program is designed to  
enhance your self-esteem,  
confidence and wellbeing

Commencing Tuesday 9 November  
at The Deli Women & Children's  
Centre 72 Maloney Street,  
Eastlakes

**2 hours 10-12 noon for 5 weeks  
- costs \$15 for 5 week program.**

Bookings essential.

Phone Rachel or Sarah: 9667 4664

# OWN Sydney Notices

## **Discussion Group**

**10.30 am Monday 1 November - 75 Windmill Street**

'The Pod' (those interested in the psychology of happiness)

All welcome.

## **Film Discussion**

**12.30pm Monday 8 November - 75 Windmill Street**

The films to be discussed are: *A Touch of Spice*, *Weeping Camel*, *Spring-Summer-Fall-Winter and Spring*, *My Architect*.

Join us to have an interesting discussion. Bring lunch.

## **Video Showing and Discussion Group**

**10.30am, Friday November 19, - 75 Windmill Street**

Film maker Sarah Gibson will show, and talk about, her recent film *The Hundredth Room* (see flyer)

## **OWN (Australia) Annual Conference and AGM**

**Monday/Tuesday 22-23 November**

Women's College, University of Sydney (see flyer).

## **Commemoration**

**10.30am Monday 29 November - 87 Lower Fort Street**

A morning tea will be held to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (see flyer).

## **More Mind Stretching...**

We are happy to let you know that we are continuing the memory-training course we began earlier this year.

December 7 and December 14 (Tuesdays) 10.30 to 12.30

Joan Gemmelli is offering two more sessions  
Cost will be \$3 per session.