



OWN MATTERS

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

No. 26 February 2004

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Put It In Writing!

In the last *OWN Matters* for 2003, we invited subscribers to "spread the word" about OWN by giving gift subscriptions to friends and family. Many of you responded to the invitation – thank you.

Now, in the first issue for 2004, we want something more from you. This year our aim is to expand the number of contributors to *OWN Matters*. While there's a core group of writers who regularly have their work published – thank you so much – this year we invite all our subscribers to also become contributors.

"I can't write," I hear you say. Well, it's true that writing articles and poetry is not for everyone, but how about writing short snippets or stories about the things you personally experience as an older woman or the things that matter a lot to you? If they are important or interesting to you, they'll also resonate with many of our readers.

Or how about contributing to the Letters Page? Letters can be in the form of a question (one or more readers will undoubtedly have an answer!) or, if you have a strong opinion about something, make a bold statement to provoke discussion. Keep your letters short, and keep them focused on one or two key points. Letters are a great way to let your insight, sense of humour and irony shine through.

While "write what you know" is generally good advice, researching what you *don't* know and then writing about it can also be fun. What have you always been interested in? Now could be the time to explore it. You could also give your amateur historian/anthropologist/psychologist a chance to shine by searching out interesting information and then writing a short article on the topic. Remember, though, if you can make your facts, figures and quotes interesting, or even funny, as well as informative, they will be more attractive to readers.

Try your hand at writing poetry. Although this form of writing is very personal and, for many of us (me included), quite mysterious, there are stylistic conventions and rhythmic patterns in poetry that, once understood and learned, can make it a very powerful form of communication. Like all writing, poetry can be learned.

Finally, remember that we have a team of talented editors who are willing to *work with you* to refine and strengthen your writing. If you are willing to listen to suggestions with an open mind you may discover a greater sense of enjoyment in writing, and the pleasure of being published. Give it a go!

Dorothy Cora

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

Your views on fare increases ... and other transport issues

In December, I wrote to the Minister for Transport, Michael Costa, telling him how concerned many of our members are about the proposed changes to transport regulations and fare increases.

I outlined the ways that the Older Women's Network, as an organisation, could be affected, and detailed some of the ways individual members could be affected. Below are some of the points I made.

The reality is that OWN is totally dependent on volunteers who manage and run our organisation and the increases in fares could lead to members being unable to afford to come in because of the cost involved. At present OWN subsidises rostered volunteers who perform coordination and other roles at the rate of one dollar per day for transport, and it would be impossible for us to increase this subsidy to \$2.50 unless our funding body, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, also increased out core funding.

And, if volunteers were restricted to non-peak hour travel, there would be another reason for volunteers to give up their valuable work. Travelling in peak hour is often necessary for older women who have early medical appointments or who take their grandchildren to school.

I also mentioned the effect of the price rise on older women who attend OWN activities. Some could be forced to give up attending activities which are beneficial to physical and mental health, because of the extra costs involved. Pensioners living on \$220 per week would find the increase a very severe burden.

The following is a breakdown of your opinions taken from the questionnaire so many of you filled out last November.

1. *Abolition of access to the pensioner excursion ticket to Seniors Card holders who are not pensioners* – 70% of respondents disagreed, 15% agreed
2. *Increase of the metropolitan pensioner excursion ticket from \$1.10 to \$2.50* – 50% did not agree, 25% would agree to an increase to \$2.00
3. *That the pensioner excursion ticket be extended to cover private buses* – 90% agreed on an extension to private buses.
4. *Pensioner excursion tickets may only be used in non-peak-hour periods* – 97% disagreed with the proposed curfew on travel during peak hours.
5. *The replacement of most Country Link trains with buses* – 95% did not want trains replaced by buses.

Let's hope they listen to us!

Cate Turner

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

Welcome to the New Year. We hope it's a peaceful and healthy one.

We're now back at work from our four-week summer holiday feeling relaxed and re-invigorated, and absolutely convinced that 2004 will be a positive and productive year for OWN NSW.

It's our job as coordinators to manage things in the office on a day-to-day basis and to bring to the attention of the Management Team all the issues, tasks and challenges that are part and parcel of running a small under-funded non-government organisation. Every week, each of us spends one day in the office, so if there are any issues you'd like to raise, please phone or come in and talk to us.

One change this year will be to Dorothy Cora's work hours. With a view to Dorothy enjoying a better mix of work and leisure in her life, the Management Team has agreed to reduce her employment from four to three days per week. We are happy to report that Phyllis Gorman has agreed to work one day a week on a casual basis to assist Dorothy in the production of *OWN Matters*. Phyllis has a professional background in writing and editing, and a wide range of computer skills, which make her a valuable addition to our small team of paid workers.

Unhappily, we have to report that we did not attract funding from the Department for Women's Grants Program for our *Who's There For Me?* project. We had hoped to get funding to map services across NSW to improve access to information and support for older women who are victims of violence and abuse within the family. Given that the Department received 272 grant applications and only 17 were successful, perhaps we shouldn't feel too despondent.

The issue of support services for older women has also been on the agenda of the Advocacy Coordination Group. Margaret Sargent, a member of that group, undertook a survey of refuges to find out which ones cater for older women. We have now sent out the report of the OWN Survey of Women's Refuges in NSW to a wide range of government and non-government organisations. The primary recommendation in the Report is that "the Department of Community Services reconsider its policy on emergency accommodation to cater better for the needs of older women".

Your concerns regarding the proposed changes to fares and other statewide transport issues were collated and sent off to Michael Costa before Christmas. (See Point of View, opposite page.)

Congratulations to the Aboriginal Support Circle for its splendid publication, *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up*. The launch was a brilliant success and the book is already selling strongly throughout Australia.

Seniors Week is fast approaching. With funding to hold a regional event this year, OWN NSW will be holding a variety concert, *Women Centre Stage*, at Campbelltown RSL Club on Thursday 18 March. Mark the date in your diary now! For those of you who think that Campbelltown might be too far to go, the train's a breeze, there's parking for cars, and we'll have a few extra seats in the Theatre Group bus we are hiring. There'll be more details in March *OWN Matters*.

Anne Warren, Cate Turner, Lucy Porter and Peggy Hewett

Will the new MedicarePlus be a Minus?

The Howard Government's MedicarePlus package is clearly a strategy to undermine the current Medicare system, which is simple and equitable.

The new MedicarePlus package is complicated, unfair and difficult for Australians to understand.

The package provides \$500 or \$1,000 'safety nets' for health care costs, which will still put health care services out of reach for many Australians.

The package doesn't ensure equitable health services for all. MedicarePlus is designed to create a two-tier health system where low-income patients are faced with increasing out of pocket health costs. These patients will be forced either to forego timely health care, do without other essentials in order to see a doctor, or, as looks quite likely, they will use emergency departments of public hospitals as their source of basic health care.

The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) made a submission to the Senate outlining a comprehensive health care solution. They want a new Commonwealth Dental Health Scheme set up for low income Australians, the expansion of health care programs for Indigenous communities and better public support for ancillary health care - physiotherapy, podiatry and counselling services.

Health Minister Tony Abbott is desperate for his bill to be passed in the Senate.

Write to the Democrats: Senator Lyn Allison, Level 1, 62 Wellington Parade, E. Melbourne 3002 - **senator.allison@aph.gov.au** - and ask them not to do a deal with him.

Renate Watkinson

Theatre Group Report

This report will be a sort of *tour de force* as it contains an overview of events and performances for two months plus!

November began with a performance at the Elder Suicide Prevention Conference organised by South Western Sydney Area Health Service. Our presentation appeared to have a powerful effect on the audience, many of whom worked in areas where suicide is increasingly prevalent. Next, we performed at the Marian Street Women's Refuge where the audience was much smaller, but no less appreciative, especially the little boy who *assisted us* during some of our numbers. Of course everyone loved *The Fairies*. On this occasion we also got to be the audience when three African women danced for us all. November ended with an early train – and car trip for those of us lugging the sound system – to Lawson for a performance at a *Celebration of the Older Woman* Health Forum organised by the Blue Mountains Women's Health Centre. We had a really good response from the audience, which the organiser's feedback sheet confirmed.

December did not slow up for us at all. On 5 December we set off with our director, Louise Anike, to perform at a retirement village staff lunch at Woolwich. Our program included *The Pills* skit, which obviously resonated with them. The shine was taken off the day, however, when the STA bus did not materialise in time to meet the ferry, and this was after most of us had missed out on the pavlova to ensure we got there on time! We waited an hour in a chilly wind for the next ferry and one of the cast, who lives outside Sydney, didn't get home till mid-evening!

Four days later we had our next 'performance' at our very successful annual Christmas lunch on the South Steyne ferry at Darling Harbour. Thanks to the good organisation by Norma Bastock and attendance by lots of *Friends of the Theatre Group*, we had a wonderful time. (Incidentally, you can become a *Friend* for \$20 a year – contact the office for details.)

Unfortunately, our coordinator, Josie Jackson, was too ill to make it to the lunch.

OWN Sydney's End-of-Year Party was our second last commitment for 2003. Several of us introduced a little cultural activity to the food-and-talk-fest with a repeat performance of our opera, *Antonio*. While costuming was timely, scenery had to go by the board this time, and our pianist, Ann Cunynghame, was unexpectedly called on to perform the role of Friar *whilst at the piano*, as public transport had severely let down the original cast member. The audience was obviously moved to 'great heights' by our performance!

Heading for the straight, we gave our last performance for 2003 at the Canterbury City Community Centre in Lakemba. We had only a small area in which to work – in fact those cast members at each end of the line were almost on some listeners' toes. Still, the audience was very appreciative, although we thought the four or five men seemed quite bemused seeing ten feisty older women being so 'up front'. We had every one of them with us, though, when our pianist, Ann, struck the chords for *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*. A good note on which to finish.



In case anyone missed it, Josie and Louise and the cast were featured prominently in TV advertisements for Andrew Denton's book, *Enough Rope*, which contains transcripts of 20 interviews, including Josie's and Louise's. We also got a valuable mention in a *Sunday Telegraph* Arts Page story which covered the Older People Speak Out Award that Andrew received for his interview with Louise and Josie. Will this celebrity *never* cease?

By the time you read this we will be well rested after a very full year and looking forward with enthusiasm to another successful year in 2004. From all of us in the Theatre Group, Happy New Year!

Marjorie Moffat

Women Centre Stage – coming soon!

OWN's Seniors Week event this year is a variety concert at Campbelltown RSL Club on Thursday 18 March from 1.30 to 3.45 pm. There'll be an exciting line-up of performance groups, comedienne, tap dancers, drummers and lots more. More details in March *OWN Matters*.

If you are, or know of, older women solo vocalists, instrumentalists or dancers, who might want to be 'a star for a day', please contact Dorothy Cora 9247 7046.

The True Spirit of Reconciliation

The room was alive with the buzz of excited chatter as nearly two hundred Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal guests met and mingled at the launch of *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up* on Friday, 21 November 2003. The Strangers' Lounge (love that name!) at Parliament House was the venue chosen, courtesy of The Hon. Lee Rhiannon.

Steppin' Up and Speakin' Out is a book of fifteen life stories of Aboriginal women and community workers, compiled from oral histories recorded by members of the Aboriginal Support Circle. The stories, mostly by unknown women, are remarkable. They tell of survivors who have surmounted great odds in the struggle for recognition of Aboriginal rights and a better life for people in their communities.

Michelle Blanchard, from the Koori Centre at Sydney University, chaired the launch with great skill and warmth. Betty Little welcomed us to Country, acknowledging the original owners, the EORA Nation. Betty then sang her own composition, the hauntingly beautiful song, *I Come From a Line of Strong Koori Women*. Many tears were shed as women recalled the roles that their own mothers had played in their lives.

The Hon. Linda Burney, Member for Canterbury, and the first Aboriginal woman elected to parliament, was our guest speaker. In launching the book, Linda spoke with great sincerity about how impressed and moved she was, reading the stories in *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up*. She applauded the courage and tenacity of Aboriginal women who have worked to overcome tremendous personal traumas to establish essential services for

Aboriginal people. Linda reminded us that many hurdles had still to be overcome – dispossession, poverty and racism – but the answer was never to give up. Finally, Linda congratulated the Aboriginal Support Circle for its achievement, and expressed her warm appreciation for OWN's commitment to supporting older women to make a better society for all.

I spoke about how the publication of *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up* took two and a half years from conception to birth, and how all the work was undertaken by volunteers, from taping, transcribing and editing to design and layout. I mentioned how impressive it is to see older women achieving their goals through hard work, friendship, caring and

support. I acknowledged the generous financial support we had received from the Search Foundation, the Rona Tranby Trust, the NSW Reconciliation Council, the Mercy Foundation, the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs and from a wide range of individuals. All income from the sale of *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up* will go to Tranby College to provide scholarships for women to undertake study at the College.

Following the presentation of an attractively framed certificate of thanks to story-tellers and a lovely bouquet of flowers to Jacqueline Schofer, the book's designer, it was time for individual writers to sign copies of the book and for the morning to wind up. It was a splendid day, with many people declaring it the best book launch they had ever attended.

Lucy Porter

Here and There

It is three weeks before Christmas, warm and sunny, the first sun for almost a week. I take my book to a corner of our veranda to enjoy a quiet read.

I am reading Iris Makler's book, *Our Woman In Kabul*, an account of her time reporting in Afghanistan in September 2001. She is describing the tens of thousands of refugees she saw on a sandy island on a river bordering Afghanistan and Tajikistan. "They are dying of starvation. In a drought, even the grass has been eaten."

It's difficult to concentrate. I'm wondering about my Afghan student, whose English I correct online. It's weeks since Abdul sent me some work and my emails to him have been returned. Has he been sent back? That has been a worry for him for some time.

The refugees on that island are dying and mothers sit by little graves and sob. The Tajiks have had enough. They are the poorest of the Central Asian countries, independent since the break up of the Soviet Union. A Tajiks official tells Iris: "A rich country like Australia won't have them – why should we, who are so poor we cannot feed our own people."

As a foreign journalist, Iris is offered traditional hospitality: "Everywhere people offer me meals and clothes. Girls take off their headbands to give them to me. Even in refugee camps where people are starving, they offer me their precious bread, bread baked with the first flour they have seen for months. I'm overwhelmed."

I put my head on my knees.

Helen Monaghan

Up, Up and Away!

Off we go into the wide blue yonder, flying high into the sky! So went the World War 2 song, and after a few quick steps to the edge of Bald Hill so went I, (and my instructor), up, up and away!

At last I was redeeming the gift voucher I had received for my 75th birthday for a tandem hang-gliding flight! At last I was fulfilling a long-standing ambition – to fly like a bird! And that was exactly what it was like on that Sunday in early December. As we left the edge of the cliff the wind beneath our wings lifted us up, and suddenly we were flying. Below us lay the blue-green sea with its fringe of white breakers crashing on the rocks, the cliffs of the National Park rising from the rocks, and as we climbed higher and higher in the distance, the grey misty outline of our city of Sydney.

We flew up the coast a short way with the ribbon of the road visible below and the toy cars speeding along. Then we circled back, and losing height were able to wave gaily to the people assembled on Bald Hill – anxious friends, spectators and hang-gliders preparing for flights. After some forty minutes of this magical experience of flying, hovering and swooping my instructor headed toward Stanwell Park beach to bring us down.

Another hang-glider was just landing on the small strip of sand allocated to the gliders, so off we zoomed across the tree tops and circled again until that hang-glider had been packed up and removed.

George, my instructor, asked me if I wanted a roller coaster (communication is easy as there is no sound as you fly). I didn't know what this was, so he explained that he would take the glider down quickly and then zoom up just as quickly. He warned I would leave my stomach behind! Need I say I declined gracefully? The swoop

around to land was quite enough and quite spectacular. The ground and the sand seemed to be rushing past at a great pace, but George manoeuvred so expertly that next minute it was touch-down and after a few quick steps I was back safely on *terra firma*, though still feeling on cloud nine.

Very good friends who were there to witness my flight took me off to the birthday gift-givers, and we broke open the traditional bottle of champagne. What a birthday gift!

Cate Turner

The underwear and the priest

During the fifties, I was working as a cashier at a drive-in movie theatre. In winter I used to arrive home on Saturday night, well past midnight, to a very cold old house whose sole heating system was a very tiny one-bar radiator.

My husband used to place my nightgown in front of the heater before he went to bed and when I got home I would crouch in front of it and change into my nightie. My theatre uniform was dark and I wore black underwear, so as bra, stockings and suspenders came off – in those days we still wore suspender belts to keep our stocking up – they were tossed all over the lounge room as I hastily climbed into my warm nightie.

One Sunday morning at around six there was a knock on the door and I found a priest on my doorstep. He had been called out in an emergency and his car had broken down so he wanted to use our phone to get help. Without a thought I showed him into the lounge room to use the phone. Too late, I saw my black stockings hanging off a chair, a bra off another, suspenders and panties on the floor – evidence of what looked like a very exciting night. My, oh my, was my face red.

Barbara Malcolm

Health Info Online

The Internet is a great tool for health information, but not all of it is reliable. But some dependable, independent websites aimed at consumers have done the weeding for you.

Perhaps the best of these is the Commonwealth Government's Healthinsite

www.healthinsite.gov.au

It provides a staggering array of information – both its own and links to the best of other people's sites. It's mostly Australian info, so it relates well to our health system.

There's also the Victorian government-sponsored Better Health Channel

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

It, too, is a comprehensive and creditable source of health information on how to understand your condition and get the best out of the health system.

Many good health sites are aimed mainly at doctors, but consumers can get a lot out of some of them, too. The Cochrane Collaboration sifts the scientific evidence surrounding treatments for all sorts of conditions, and publishes the results. It runs a free site aimed at consumers at

www.cochraneconsumer.com

And the prestigious Mayo Clinic in the United States has a comprehensive and consumer-friendly information site on medicines and disease management:

www.mayoclinic.com

The site has independent editorial content, but does carry some advertising.

If you go to

www.choiceextra.com.au

and click on "Surviving the health system" in the index, you'll find links to all these websites.

Choice, October 2003

More on feminism...

The Feminist Debate

The principles of feminism are inherent in OWN's pro-active aim "to promote the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women". I recognise the feminism implicit in our efforts to improve our lot in life, and am insulted when it is assumed that I am not a feminist.

There are those who are comfortable with the status quo, who reject change, and will even demonise ideas if they threaten to their cherished beliefs. Thus feminism has been given a bad name. But because most women are rich in the quality of compassion, we do not reject women who don't share our beliefs and values.

I will no longer call myself a feminist when:

Women have equity in representation – politically, financially and socially.

Women's bodies are not used as commodities for sale.

We are not second class citizens who "wait here". (Thanks, Henry Lawson.)

We are not regarded as sex objects first and persons second, even in advanced age.

Wise older women are revered, not ridiculed.

As Anne Summers declares in her newly published book, *The End of Equality* – "Don't get mad, get justice!"

Enid Harrison

Issues for Australian women

The Women's Rights Action Network Australia (WRANA) is embarking on an exciting new project – The Women's Report Card: A Community and UN Report on the Status of Women in Australia. This process will document the experiences of

women in relation to human rights and gender equality in Australia. The Community Report will focus on seven key areas: health, political participation, housing and utilities, education, employment and economic security, violence against women and legal status.

The Community Report is intended to reflect the diversity and complexity of a wide range of issues for women in Australia. We believe it will be a very useful resource for the community and a range of women's organisations, as well as State and Federal Government Departments. It can be used for advocacy and lobbying efforts, issue-based campaigns, and movement building amongst and between sectors and women's NGOs across Australia. To read more go to home.vicnet.net.au/~wrana/

Pretty old hat now

We are a group of very diverse women. We aren't a group to be labeled feminist or otherwise. And why would we want, or need, to be labeled? Personally, I think the term 'feminist' is pretty old hat now. It served its purpose – time to move on.

Surely, our diversity is the best part of being a member of OWN. We can be women networking together but still retain our individuality.

As for what people would think, surely we have reached the age when we don't have to give a damn what people think. There is no one word to encompass the diversity of all the incredible women in the Older Women's Network and no chance that we would all agree on any of the topics mentioned in the article, *Are We Or Aren't We?* And that's what makes it so good.

Gwen Knipe

The end of a dream?

In Anne Summer's new book, *The End of Equality: Work, Babies and Women's Choices in 21st Century Australia*, she paints a frightening picture of the present and the future for our daughters and granddaughters.

Here are some of the issues she focuses on ...

More than 160,000 Australian women are prevented from working because they can't get childcare

Women's total average earnings are just 66% of men's – less than they were ten years ago

Fully 25% of Australian women today will never have children

At least 200 women are sexually assaulted every day in Australia

Less than 10% of senior executives in Australian companies are women

In the book, Anne blows these issues wide open and offers an unsettling reflection of our country in the 21st Century. Threaded through the narrative are the voices and experiences of Australian women, from all ages and backgrounds, discussing their lives and their choices.

For those of us who spent decades working for women's personal safety and professional equality, the stories and statistics in this book are dispiriting and alarming, to say the least.

Russ Aroney

A sting in the tail

*All men are bastards.
We will fight for equality
Until
All women are bastards.*

Reprinted from *Poems 1972-2000*
by Michael Leunig

Letters to the Editor

Are prescription drugs really safe?

I wonder if Enid Harrison knows that 40,000 patients a year are admitted to hospitals in Australia because of bad reactions from prescription drugs and 900 die? I have contacted the NSW Government for statistics on herbal medication reactions and/or deaths. No reply.

In Japan, vaccinations have been banned for young babies, and the incidence of SIDS has dropped. In the USA, Congress passed the National Child Vaccine Injury Act and a fund was established which has paid out millions of dollars in compensation to parents of children who have been adversely affected by immunisation or died. Yes, there are a number of cases like this in Australia, too. There are also cases of bad reactions to flu shots. So who can say if prescription drugs are really safe?

No wonder then that 60% of Australian people have decided to look after their own bodies with herbal medications. At least the labels on the containers reveal what is in them.

I would like to suggest that OWN members, if they really must visit their doctors, ask for a *written* form telling them what is in the prescribed drug and if there are side effects.

Josephine Conway

I smell a smoke screen

Has anyone found out when this ridiculous myth about ageing became the 'in thing'? Is it some sort of sinister plot to make older people feel guilty and depressed that we are now living longer?

It is my humble opinion that the Howard Government is

responsible for the increased amount of media coverage given to ageing. I smell a smoke screen. I want to know what is behind it and what it is covering up? Is it more cuts to hard-won working conditions, health care, education, future pension plans?

How is it that at one stage we had free education, free hospitals, our Australian-owned bank, airlines, transport system, etc? It was because we had strong Trade Unions and dedicated members of political parties prepared to stand up for better working and living conditions. True, not all Australian citizens received these benefits – sadly. Aboriginal people did not.

Remember the pigs from *Animal Farm*? They'll push you out of the way to get their (and our) share at the trough! They're bullies, and if we stand up to them they will quickly back down, but we have to do it together. Talk to your friends, write letters and weigh up your next vote!

June Goss

Medical 'goddesses'?

In her article, Designer Drugs for Oldies, *OM* November 2003, Enid Harrison expressed her hope that things will improve when there are more female medical practitioners. Well, Enid you may be disappointed, the medical 'goddesses' who have already arrived seem more anxious for the 'health' of Medicare than for us.

My local GP questions renewal of prescriptions needing 'authority from Canberra' with, "Can't you do without this?", or does not ask for authority until pressed by the patient who has learned of its availability elsewhere. Elevated blood pressure or blood glucose remains undiagnosed. Another, a specialist, told me she cannot

afford to see me each month to renew a prescription for some expensive stuff only she can prescribe. She gives the script to her secretary for me to collect each month. This is done at our regional hospital. I understand such an arrangement would not be possible outside.

But we do not need to be reminded that we are regarded by many as a lot of old freeloaders. Have they forgotten that years ago we were told that our PAYE taxes would provide us with our pensions and all our lovely concessions?

Helen Monaghan

Perfume sufferers, you are not alone

I'm glad to know that I am not the only one who can't stand being within a metre of anyone, male or female, wearing a strong scent – be it perfume or after-shave. In my case, instant migraine is the response I have to heavy perfume or cologne. I once endured a long flight next to a man who must have bathed in *Aramis*. It was pure torture.

Most people are considerate if you tell them in a not-too-demanding way about your allergy, as *Ermes* found. However, there is always that insensitive or arrogant person who will ignore polite requests to maybe dab on the scent instead of letting the perfume bottle explode in the powder room. May they be attacked by a swarm of pollen-seeking bees! (Just kidding.)

Phyllis Gorman



Letters to the Editor

New Directory for Shoppers

The NSW Seniors Card has launched a new service to help make shopping cheaper and easier for members. Senior Shopper is a free buyer's service that aims to find the best possible price for various household goods on behalf of the NSW Seniors Card holders.

To use Senior Shopper, Seniors Card holders telephone the service after they have decided on the product they require, giving the make, model maker, and best price they can obtain. Callers will also need to supply their Seniors Card number and contact details.

For more information about Senior Shopper phone 1300 366 265, visit the Seniors Card website, www.seniorcard.nsw.gov.au or email the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, marketing@seniorcard.nsw.gov.au

Barbara Lorbach

Women's Work More Valuable

In the latest *New Scientist* I read an interesting article, *Fruits of the Forest*. It tells of Patricia Shanley, an ethnobotanist, and her efforts to write books for people who can't read.

After the poorest people of the Amazon allowed her to study their land and its ecology, Patricia co-edited a picture book that tells the local people how to get a good return on their trees without succumbing to the lure of a quick buck from a logging company. It has been a very successful project. She doesn't want the book to end up on coffee tables, firmly stating, "It's a book to be used. It's supposed to get dirty and ripped up!"

The results confirm that women's

fruit collecting is much more lucrative than logging. It has been an empowerment to the women that their work is more valuable.

"Now that women have proof that forest products and their role as collectors really matter they have become much more courageous. They have learned to say no to the loggers."

Norma Anet

What does a senior look like?

I'm an old girl now, but evidently don't look as old or feeble as I should in the supermarket. I've been advised by other customers, "not to shop on a Thursday as the place is full of pensioners," and I always reply with, "Well, we too have to shop some time," to their embarrassment.

When collecting my ticket for a flight, I was told, "You don't look like a pensioner," and countered with, "What does a pensioner look like?" It had the desired effect.

The epitome of rudeness was directed my way by the mature taxi driver who ferried me and my groceries home. In the course of general conversation, she said, "Pensioners don't have the right to their opinions, as they don't work for their money."

EM

First printed in *Age Pension News for Seniors*, Summer 2003

More on One Track

Some months ago, Norma Anet wrote about the wonderful track in Ulladulla that was designed and built by a local Aboriginal artist and his family. She didn't know his name, and I've been meaning to write to the readers of *OWN Matters* to tell you a bit more

about Noel Butler, for he is the wonderful artist whose work you see on *One Track for All*.

I agree with Norma wholeheartedly. I encourage anybody visiting that neck of the woods to seek out and walk this most interesting and educational area. It covers the region both prior to the arrival of the European settlers, when Indigenous people lived a fruitful, peaceful existence, and following the advent of the loggers, fishermen and farmers. The lives of Aboriginal people changed then, but this is presented honestly and without sentimentality. Perhaps because of this, you will find yourself understanding more about the difficulties and challenges the Indigenous people faced then and now, as they succumbed to disease and loss of habitat, gradually growing dependent on the European settlers.

Noel Butler is presently leading tours that take people "on a cultural experience tour from Ulladulla to Fraser Island via the outback (where) you will meet traditional owners and experience the real Australia". The next tour date is in May 2004. Anyone interested could make enquiries through Budawang Tours on 4477-9305 or 0410-567-988. Another option is to write to info@budawang.com.

Anna Logan

Most of the answers

Whatever you do, beg, borrow or buy *Stupid White Men* and *Dude – Where is my country?*, by Michael Moore. You will have most of the answers to what is being done to our world and how it is affecting your life. You'll never regret reading these books.

June Goss

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney

When we were kids how many of us ever thought that we'd be here for 2000, let alone 2004?

We finished 2003 with a good variety of activities and this one promises to be equally varied. Guest speaker, Robin Murray, spoke on the *Psychology of Happiness* in November, which drew a big crowd. We are hoping that Robin will be available for a series of workshops during 2004.

Dorothy Rowe, an Australian psychologist and the author of many books and articles, some of them related to older women, has contacted us with news that she is returning to Australia for a couple of months in early 2004. Some years ago Dorothy ran a workshop for us and is interested in again meeting with OWN members, this time to talk about her ideas and the work she is currently involved in. We have agreed on Friday 19 March for the workshop – more details in March *OWN Matters*.

Some things never change. When Louise Anike recently addressed two groups of professional women on issues of concern about violence against older women, she learned that the pilot project, Western Sydney Sole Women's Accommodation Services, which offered refuge and other support services to older women experiencing violence, will not receive permanent funding. We have written a letter expressing our disappointment and re-stating the need for projects of this kind to the Minister for Women, Sandra Nori, and to Clare Vernon in the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

We are pleased to report that the City of Sydney has funded our Wellness on Wednesday activities with \$2900, which will take us through to June 2004. There will be no charge now, due to the grant and several generous donations, but a gold coin donation is still welcome to help with extra running costs. To start the new year, we have arranged a Free Wellness Open Day in February for local older women to taste and try the various activities we offer. (Please see the enclosed flyer which we would like you to distribute widely.) The activities come highly recommended by those of us who no longer have falls and whose joints are now less painful.

Our Summer Solstice party at the end of the year was held on a very pleasant day, the weather allowing about forty of us to spill out under the Robinia tree to eat, drink, gossip and buy from the stalls – we made a very acceptable \$320. Many thanks to the Theatre Group for re-presenting their gripping operetta *Antonio*; to the women who crafted the calico bags and cards, and to all who worked hard to make the day a great success.

Please don't miss OWN Sydney's Quarterly Gathering on 20 February – your ideas and feedback are really important.

Our very best wishes to all our members. We hope that 2004 brings global peace, and good health and happiness to us all.

Louise Anike and Joy Ross

Come to a party!

*Come to a party
At Abraham Mott Hall,
It happens each Thursday
You'll sure have a ball.*

*The moment you enter
You'll get a few hugs,
Friendly calls greet you
While filling our mugs.*

*Dear Ellin's the hostess
Surprises galore,
Balloons, scarves or ribbons –
What else is in store?*

*It's dancing, it's fun
It's creative too,
The music's inspiring
There's so much to do.*

*We flex and relax
Our bodies are eased,
We melt into tangos
Feel youthful and pleased.*

*Learning with Ellin
Forgetting our pain,
It's laughter and love
And growth without strain.*

*Our balance improves
Our muscle tone too,
Look after your body
It's easy to do.*

*So how about coming
To Abraham Mott Hall,
Join in the laughter –
We'll all have a ball!*

Trudy Davis

Please Note

Ellin Krinsley's
Creative Movement
class is held on
Thursdays at 10am.
Contact 9439-5803.

At and Beyond the Rocks

Newcastle

Following our Birthday Celebration in September we held a weekly Gentle Exercise class for five weeks, but could not continue because of the cost of hiring the Church Hall.

Gwenda Fulford organised a submission to Club Nova (the old Workers Club, now part of the Panthers empire), and we've been offered a room free-of-charge for weekly Gentle Exercise classes.

Please see the enclosed flyer for our Myuna Bay Weekend. It's going out early because we need to get an idea of numbers coming by the end of February, so that we can book the most appropriate lodge.

The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has recently commenced the development of a Positive Ageing Strategy for the Hunter – PASH! OWN Newcastle is represented on the PASH Advisory Committee and members have been involved in a focus group which has provided valuable input to the process. We have made a submission about the need for an OWN Wellness Centre, as part of the Ageing Strategy. It will be interesting to see the response. It is disappointing that the Project to develop the Strategy is only six months, and will cease in February 2004 – we hope this doesn't mean that it's a flash in the pan.

Some of you may be aware that in April 2003, Minister Costa established a Lower Hunter Transport Working Group to review bus and rail services in the Hunter. In July, OWN Newcastle made a submission outlining our concerns and recommendations. The Working Group issued its First Report in September, its Second Report in October and promised a Third, and final,

Report in December. The speed with which these reports are issued gives a clear indication that public response to Reports 1 and 2 is not welcome. It's obvious to us that decisions have already been made. Doubtless we will lose the rail line into Newcastle City, and an interchange will be built at Broadmeadow. It remains to be seen whether we can achieve a user-friendly transport corridor from Broadmeadow to the City.

We recently received a response from Minister Costa to our concerns about the lack of luggage space on trains. In his letter the Minister assures us there is no problem! We beg to differ and will continue to pursue this issue.

We have made a funding submission for a Seniors Week event and await a response. Even if we receive no grant this time, we shall at least participate in the Newcastle/Lake Macquarie Information Festival.

Pat Carlton

Woy Woy

Lashed by gale force winds and driving rain, around fifteen members of our group enjoyed the first guided tour of Mount Penang Gardens at Kariong, up behind Woy Woy. The Gardens are an initiative of the State Government with the winning design being chosen from an Australia-wide competition.

Despite the weather, (our tour guide also became sodden, like the rest of us), we were entranced by what has already been achieved. It is truly a uniquely Australian park. Seventy percent of the plants are Australian, with complimentary plants from elsewhere. There are sandstone and coloured rocks, timber and tree trunks, and

designs such as waves and white caps – a triumph of landscaping architectural art.

The Gardens have many theme areas, which unfold like a picture book. There's the Dragon Garden with cacti and a Desert Garden. And a lovely feature of the Gardens is its appeal to adventurous children with theme areas such as Puddle Park for splashing in and Barefoot Fissure where shoes can be removed for walking on smooth stones. Winding paths with strategically placed walls offer fissures for viewing different vistas of these theme areas. One wall has peepholes to frame old original Queensland Box trees with smooth red trunks. The massed flowerings of flannel flowers, Christmas Bush and Waratahs were magnificent. Also on display was a specimen of the famed Wollomi Pine.

Local fauna have already been attracted by the lakes, with many native ducks and birds, even a possum, which had taken up residence in the charming female guide's office. Unfortunately, two other species have also arrived – bush flies and black snakes – but the last are not evident, being, we were told, shy creatures. It was a fascinating experience seeing the Gardens at this early stage; later, it will undoubtedly be a 'vision splendid' and a National treasure.

Wheelchairs were on offer for those of us with disabilities, and there is a café on site for refreshments. We followed the Gardens inspection with a BBQ at Somersby Falls and a further visit to the Japanese Gardens at Caroline Bay.

Thanks to Heather McKenzie for her excellent organisation of our visit.

Enid Harrison

At and Beyond the Rocks

Sutherland

Thirty of us from Sutherland embarked on a Christmas ferry trip and luncheon around Sydney Harbour on the *James McCabe* in mid-December. As usual, the harbour was busy with yachts preparing for the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and ferries full of tourists sightseeing while waiting for the final day of the World Cup. There was an air of excitement about.

Dorothy Bulcock got the Raffle underway – she kindly donated the prize herself – and a member of the crew drew the lucky ticket – no skulduggery there! And I was the lucky winner. Thanks to Dorothy's efforts, \$70 was added to OWN funds.

I lost count of all the bays and inlets we entered and at one stage thought we might be heading for the open seas with New Zealand in our sights! Morning tea was served, and something more adventurous for those who dared approach the somewhat disreputable looking drinks waiter, who I'm sure was a dinky-di pirate – minus his parrot, of course!

At lunch I noticed that other guests had homely sausages while OWN members sat down to either chicken or fish dinners. It obviously pays to belong! Seriously though, the crew did a good job considering the very limited space they had to cook and serve the meal. After lunch it was joke time...will the person who gave the Captain the *Male Chauvinist Joke Book of the Year* please stand up? Everyone was in the mood for a sing-song of WW2 tunes and even a few from WW1. Then there was dancing on the deck.

Gradually the blue of the Jacarandas faded into the distance and the familiar Harbour Bridge came into view. The trip was over with just one highlight to come. I'm still filled with admiration for the way Enid organised the spectacular fly-past that zoomed overhead, planes dipping their wings, as we set foot on the jetty. How she did it I'll never know, but it was a fitting tribute to 30 feisty older women at the end of a very enjoyable day.

Now to something more serious... In 2001, the Sutherland District's rates of domestic violence against older women were the second highest in the State. This earned the title, *The Silent Epidemic*, in a research report into this issue from Caringbah Women's Health & Information Centre. A submission has been made to Sutherland Council Seniors for a funding grant to launch the report on 12 March 2004 at Sutherland United Services Club. The Older Women's Network was involved in the research project, and the OWN Theatre Group will perform at the launch. For further information contact Noreen Hewett, 9523 9158.

We've planned a brain-teaser for our first monthly luncheon/discussion on Friday 30 January. The topic was advertised as: "Men are often threatened by the word! Women often don't understand it! Others are proud to call themselves one. The word is FEMINIST." The idea for this discussion came from November *OWN Matters*, where different versions of feminism were identified and questions asked about whether feminism applies to OWN as an organisation.

Barbara Whiteman

Ashfield Greek

When older Greek women party, they certainly do it in style! On a hot and steamy Wednesday before Christmas, Cate Turner, Yetty Windt and I joined members of Greek OWN, their menfolk, local councillors and assorted workers for a Christmas 2003 Gathering "to celebrate the season that brings everybody together." Maria Camelin, Greek OWN Coordinator, assisted by her ever-willing husband, John, and a talented team of Greek feast-makers, created a warm and welcoming environment in the Polish Club with a mixture of ritual, sumptuous food, singing, energetic conversations and Greek dancing.

The ceremonies began with Maria commissioning a number of guests, including Cate Turner, to present certificates to each member of Greek OWN to honour their achievements in 2003. Maria says that for some Greek women who along come each week, it's a real achievement to get out of the house to experience quality time with their peers.

Following a delicious lunch of home-cooked Greek food – talk about tables groaning – guests took the microphone to acknowledge the wonderful work of Ashfield Greek OWN, and Maria's commitment to its ongoing success. One speaker, an Ashfield Council worker, delighted the audience by announcing a successful application for funding for Ashfield Greek OWN. Congratulations!

Maria thanks everyone involved in this fabulous event and wishes all OWN members a healthy and harmonious 2004.

Dorothy Cora

Making facts come alive

It all started just after my mother died. While she was alive, Mum told me that she was born in Cleveland, Ohio. After she died, I found a locked metal box that contained a document – a naturalisation certificate saying that she had been born in Palestine, not in the United States. I was shocked.

Why didn't she tell me the truth about where she was born? How come she was born in Palestine? How did she get to the United States?

I thought about these questions on and off over ten years. Then, inspired by a friend, I took a basic genealogy course to help me find answers to my questions. Delving into my family history, I discovered so much about my family. I learned to interview as many of my family members as possible. I searched the national archives to find that my mother's family had a Jewish Ukrainian and Romanian background and that my father's family came from Sicily.

I was fascinated, but, in the end, all I had was a jumble of facts and anecdotes.

Wanting more, I entered all the information into a computer program, *Family Tree Maker*, so that I could better visualise my family tree. This program gave me a way to organise my information and the ability to print out endless reports showing who begat whom. But still, I wasn't satisfied.

I wanted the story of my family to come alive, especially since I'm now an Australian citizen, living near my son and my grandchildren in Sydney; and I have a daughter, a German son-in-law and grandchildren in Stuttgart, Germany. How could I make the origins of this multi-cultured family interesting for my children and grandchildren?

Then, two years ago, flipping through a catalogue from Sydney Uni, I found a course in life writing. Problem solved! Through this course, I learned how to write stories in a way that brought my family to life. The instructor, a published life writer, opened up a new world for me. Through her gentle but honest feedback, I learned how to turn a bunch of facts about my family into stories of interest and intrigue.

I'm now a member of a life writing group. There are challenges, like writing on a regular basis and giving each other honest feedback. I now know that it's important to critique the writing, not the subject matter; and to offer suggestions for improvement while pointing out the positives in the style, structure and form in the writing.

In two years, with guidance from my writing group, I have written more than twenty stories about my family. I have discovered a bit about *my* identity; some secrets of good writing; some new friends, and, most of all, that writing can be fun.

Phyllis Gorman

About *Lost Ladies*

Former teacher and chief *Lost Lady*, Annette Butterfield, came into our lives about five years ago. Annette has friends and contacts everywhere. She organised a visit to State Parliament House, where her MP treated us to morning tea overlooking the Domain, to numerous art galleries and the crypt at St Mary's Cathedral. We've taken the ferry to Parramatta to tour their historic houses, another to Pinchgut and we've visited many other interesting places.

At our home in Windmill Street discussion has flowed on a

multitude of fascinating and informative topics including the efforts of women from 1880 to 1920 to provide real education and to gain the franchise.

Lost Ladies came into being to allow us to discover and understand the lives of outstanding early Australian women, but over the years has expanded, with Annette organising many interesting people to talk to us on a variety of topics.

There are currently two places available in our group. Please phone Annette on 9665 5369 for more information.

Nancy Currie and Carol Chirlian

In Pursuit of Poesy

*There she sits at half past three
Inspired by a cup of tea.
How many times this happy leaf
Has quieted care and brought relief.
Now in her solitary older age
It serves to fill the virgin page,
It prompts the ever-active brain
Ideas and words, like grateful rain,
Lubricate the ready pen
To inscribe its happy benison.
Around her breathes the quiet night
All distractions put to flight.
Good steady folk are lost in sleep
Whilst some a visionary harvest reap.
Some thoughts form a lively thread,
Some fall and join the living dead.
Some float in airy semanteme
Elusive as a haunting dream.
To weave their pattern is an art,
Desired by this faltering heart.
When in time, the muse has fled,
She totters back to sleep and bed.*

Judith Mustard

As one older woman to another!

As a second year TAFE Welfare Student, I arrived at OWN in September, very nervous, to commence my first ever placement. Fourteen weeks later, I left feeling completely overawed by what members accomplish and their dedication to OWN.

My primary task was to design a questionnaire to find out what the 19 groups in NSW do and how groups are organised. I have learnt a lot. And I am so impressed. Attending the quarterly meeting of representatives of NSW Groups reinforced what hardworking, enterprising women belong to OWN. I have come to understand that each of you is a woman in her own right, and yet is also a dedicated member of the organisation.

Now, having a good idea of what you achieve and of how your numbers are growing, I appreciate the thoroughness that goes into organising group activities and processes. Despite not always being in the best of health, coordinators show a tremendous dedication to the continuing good health of their groups.

To me, the range of programs offered demonstrates a great energy and enthusiasm for life. Because I have had most contact with OWN Sydney members, I was lucky enough to attend two of their discussion groups, one given by the Women's Legal Resource Service, which I used as a resource for my TAFE advocacy assessment – I got 96 per cent! So, my time has been very beneficial in more than one way.

The launch of *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up* at Parliament House was an exciting and moving event,

which I was so pleased I could attend. There were tears in my eyes when Betty Little sang.

Thanks to all those I met in person at 87 and thank you to all those I met on the phone. Your acceptance and encouragement was invaluable. Next year, although I will be busy continuing my course, I hope there's time to drop in for the occasional visit. Anyway, I can keep up to date with what's going on at OWN because I've now subscribed to *OWN Matters*.

Carol Barr

Zainab's Friends

In 2002, if you remember, members of the OWN Current Affairs Group raised \$135 to help a young refugee Afghan girl complete her HSC at Holroyd High School. As you probably know, genuine refugees are not given citizenship rights immediately but are given Temporary Protection Visas.

Zainab turned 18 during the year, a few months before her HSC, and the social benefits her family received for her ceased. (The present policies of the Federal Government do not support education for children over 18 and denies them access to university-funded places.)

Faced with losing this gifted and hard-working student, the Principal of Holroyd High, Dorothy Hoddinott, immediately set about finding money to enable her to continue and finish the year. A trust fund was set up and donations began to flow in.

Zainab was able to finish the year, passed her HSC (even though she had been learning English for only

two years) and in 2003 enrolled at Macquarie Uni, successfully completing first year in Medical Sciences. Macquarie generously waived all tuition fees for her entire degree course. (You will be pleased to know that in 2004, the University of Technology and Charles Sturt University have also waived fees for Temporary Protection Visa holders eligible for tertiary education.)

The Friends of Zainab Fund has now become the Holroyd High Refugee Education Fund and is a Preferred Donor Fund of the National Foundation for Australian Women. Initially, the fund is focusing on girls at Holroyd High School in Western Sydney where there are more refugee students needing assistance.

This Christmas we received a letter from Zainab telling us about her achievements and thanking all her generous and compassionate supporters and friends.

I feel like sending a copy to John Howard...indeed I think I will do it right now!

Muriel Hortin

Terror

*The terror of terror
Hunting a prey
Holding to ransom
The free world at play.*

*The raw power of terror
Haunting the meek
Twisting the minds of
Children who seek*

*The heart has an answer
Let compassion, love
Heal the way.*

*Terror builds terror
Have a good day.*

Molly Kennealy

A dog and a rocker

Ross and I moved into our retirement home set on five acres at Seaham, fifteen minutes north of Raymond Terrace, in 1997. At that time I looked at the wide verandahs and said, "This house needs a border collie and a rocking chair."

The border collie, Joe, duly arrived some three years later, but the rocking chair proved more difficult. My forays into secondhand shops in various places yielded prices which practically gave me a heart attack. I sort-of gave up the idea. Then, on a recent drive north we paused at Karuah to buy a paper and I noticed a new secondhand shop on the highway. A casual sweep of what was on offer and lo and behold, a Bentwood rocker, in amazingly good condition. Feeling pessimistic about the price, I approached the owner and was astounded when he said \$40! Done!



Now the rocker sits on my front verandah and with Joe at my feet, I now observe the garden, the ducks on the dam and the ramshackle barn at the farm opposite ("rustic", said the estate agent, not "rusty"), all to a gentle rhythm.

Why does rocking convey such comfort, I wonder? We rock babies to sooth their pains – people in extreme distress will often rock themselves automatically. For me, it slows me down, when the temptation is to go and do the next thing on my never-ending list of things to do. It's too early to say that it's stopped me doing things, but maybe in time I'll decide they really never needed doing at all!

My advice to all those women too busy for their own good – buy a rocker!

Pat Carlton

protested that I was nearly home but he insisted that I take the gift and sped off unprotected in the deluge. How embarrassing. He must have thought I was a bag lady who had retrieved an abandoned umbrella from a garbage can.

Helen McMaugh

BOOK REVIEW **The Baghdad Blog** **by Salam Pax**

Late in 2002, a young man in Iraq began a web diary about the life of people preparing for a war to liberate them. He chose as his pseudonym, Salam Pax, which are the Arabic and Latin words for peace.

Far from being war-like, he describes himself as a coward, though surely not one. He admits to being glad about being released from tyranny of the sort that the Iraq people had suffered, but have now exchanged for something else. By August 2003, three months after 'peace' was declared, he is fed up and using four letter words. Though intended for a young readership, this timely book, which one reviewer has described as a gift to the free world, should be read by anyone who can read. It is to be hoped that its author survives. We need him.

Helen Monaghan

Creative Writers' **Christmas Cuisine**

We had a record roll-call of nine for our Christmas lunch. As befitting the festive season, we dined in style at *The Tea Room* in the Queen Victoria Building. A jumbo jet would fit comfortably under that high ceiling. Some of us were unimpressed with the high cost of a glass of wine (\$7, and only half full). Denyse, a good scout, shouted delicious dessert for some partakers. The teapots looked impressive, but the tea was a very enfeebled liquid. However, we enjoyed our food and celebrated our first year of dining together as a group.

Bon Vivant

Surprise Gift

The spirit of Christmas was alive and well in Waverley in mid-December. Returning from the flicks at Randwick Ritz, I was caught in an unexpected downpour a short distance from home. I retrieved my emergency folding umbrella from the bottom of my backpack and paddled on through the precipitation. The ratty old umbrella, with ribs protruding like a carcass in the drought, was of little use.

Suddenly a gent bounded to my side. Thinking he was a bag-snatcher, I prepared to jab him with my umbrella weapon. Graciously, he handed me a huge and impressive umbrella. I

Who Can't Win ?

Remember the four "rogue" National Australia Bank dealers who lost \$180m of NAB's money by betting on international markets that our dollar would go down?

Well, according to a report in **crikey.com.au**, the failure of NAB to prevent this unauthorised gambling is going to cost Australian taxpayers around \$54 million as the Banks can claim their losses as tax deductions! Imagine how many doctors, university places or new hospital equipment \$54 million could pay for ...

Ministering to Wellness – OWN’s model needs it! !

From its beginnings, the Older Women’s Network initiated wellness programs for older women. At an OWN conference in 1993, we explored older women’s health issues which were taken to innovative people in the Health Department. They responded with the offer of \$10,000 for in-depth research into wellbeing for older women and followed it up with a grant of \$50,000 for a Bankstown Older Women’s Wellness Centre pilot project.

So successful was the Bankstown Centre pilot that the National Women’s Health Program agreed to provide ongoing funding.

“The moral of this tale is: don’t give up plugging OWN’s shining achievements in wellness”

Northside Wellness Centre was successful in getting an establishment grant and a small non-recurrent operating grant which they continued to receive for a number of years. The third Wellness Centre to receive an operating grant, this time through local Council, was Sutherland. Despite Bankstown’s funding security, both Northside and Sutherland are continually ‘on the edge’ of having no funds. Strong annual lobbying has been necessary to ensure our survival.

Until recently, no state Minister for Health has granted OWN members a personal interview to discuss the need for recurrent and expansionist funds. Departmental officers have been kinder, and on a number of occasions we have been able to put our case for secure funding, but there’s nothing like a meeting with the Minister.

Last November, Pat Donaghy and I (from the Sutherland Wellness Centre), along with three sympathetic Labor parliamentarians, had the opportunity to promote the OWN

model of wellness to Morris Iemma, the Minister for Health in person. The MP’s, all from local electorates, arranged the meeting. Sad to say, the meeting was disrupted by divisions in parliament which required frequent departures of the MP’s. We left rather concerned as to whether there would be any further progress.

However, Sutherland Shire Councillors have since written a splendid letter of support, and Barry Collier, MP for Miranda, has advised us that the three Labor MP’s have made formal representations on our behalf to

the Minister seeking \$40,500 to fund a Project Officer. It’s not what our submission sought, but we certainly appreciate their support.

The moral of this tale is: don’t give up plugging OWN’s shining achievements in wellness and other activities which meet the needs of older women.

Governments *should* support programs which promote wellbeing and encourage less dependence on the medical model. And they should not exploit older women by relying on our willingness to volunteer. A Wellness Centre works best with a paid worker at the helm, and a strong team of volunteers to manage it.

We hear of terrible current crises in the general health system. These will grow unless Ministers and Governments truly minister to community needs and fund the infrastructure and worker support of successful OWN models of preventative health.

Noreen Hewett

Complementary Medicines Report Released

The Expert Committee on Complementary Medicines in the Health System, commissioned by the Parliamentary Secretary for Health after the Pan Pharmaceuticals recall earlier this year, has released its findings.

One of the key areas of concern, the need for greater access to information about complementary medicines for consumers, has been addressed in the report. Other issues covered by the 49 recommendations include; proposed changes to regulatory controls; adverse reactions reporting; information provision and advertising including specific needs for consumers and health professionals; complementary healthcare practitioners and the complementary medicines industry; and administrative and advisory mechanisms.

The Review can be found at www.tga.gov.au/docs/html/cmreport.htm

Sole Sisters strut their stuff

It’s time now, are you ready? A quick look around at the excited and confident faces assured me that we were indeed ready, with scarves on! The ‘we’ here are the delightful and entertaining *Sole Sisters* who were about to strut their stuff for the first time at the Padstow Chinese Congregational Church.

Introducing the group and our dances took quite some time. My instructions had to be translated first into Cantonese and then into Mandarin. Then, scarves waving, faces beaming and hearts beating, the ‘sisters’ danced their little shoes off.

And then the audience joined us. Many jumped up instantly, some hesitated. Anh, one of our dancers,

spoke in whatever language was needed – Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and English ... phew! Smiles of recognition appeared and everyone joined in our *Greek dancing!*

Lunch was traditional: hot and mouth-watering. It was during lunch that the real bonding took place with members of the Church communicating with us non-verbally. It was exciting and rewarding when we were able to understand one another. Did everyone have fun? Yes, we felt it in our hearts.

Gabrielle Sneddon
Bankstown OWN Wellness Centre

In praise of wellness

The following is an extract from a letter sent to the Minister for Health, The Hon. Morris Lemma, MP, from J.W. Rayner, General Manager, Sutherland Shire, to support ongoing funding for the Older Women's Network Wellness Centre:

“The Older Women's Network Wellness Centre has established itself beyond all community expectations and is meeting an unprecedented need in the Shire. Unfortunately, due to its ongoing popularity and growth, without some professional support and recurrent financial assistance, the future sustainability for this unique service is limited.

“The overwhelming success of this Centre is largely due to it meeting a clear need in the community. This is combined with the hard work of its founders and volunteer coordinators, Noreen Hewett, Barbara Burnham and Pat Donaghy, as well as the ordinary members of the Wellness Centre itself. These members have built up self-esteem through this program and are now taking leadership roles within the program, fostering models of preventative health which build capital and community resilience.”

OWN's Model of Wellness

The OWN Model of Wellness is a concept of health promotion designed by older women to increase and develop our wellbeing.

The aim of wellness activities is to give back to each older woman a sense that she can live with fullness and richness in her life. Wellness emphasises lifestyle and wellbeing rather than illness. Wellness is about having a balance between the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of life. It implies a positive attitude, strength of mind and captures the essence of women participating, playing, acting, working, contributing to and enjoying life.

Wellness activities:

- Involve older women in choosing and designing activities
- Recognise the issues and attitudes that affect older women's health, including social, physical, emotional and intellectual factors
- Acknowledge and utilise the rich diversity of older women's skills, experience and culture
- Acknowledge the value of continued learning and community contributions.

The important difference between OWN's model and others is that older women make decisions about what we need, not what we are told we need.

Community Aged Care: should we be concerned?

In 2001 there were an estimated 833,419 older people in NSW, 65 years and over. By 2021, it is estimated the number will be 1,346,300. This means there will be a significant increase in the numbers of older people suffering long-standing disabilities and forms of dementia, and an increase in demand for community care.

Many older women who don't have the financial resources that baby boomers have are wondering what community care services will be available to them in the next decade or so. Should we be concerned, especially those of us on low incomes?

Recently, the Community Care Industry Council launched its *Policy Position Papers** which called on Federal and State Governments to rethink, invest and improve policies to deal with the ageing population. Keith Suter, a consultant who launched the *Papers*, signalled challenges for a new era: Australians are living longer, demanding higher standards of care and wanting choices. In the *Papers*, the Council suggests that there is scope for fundamental reform of the sector, with providers, industry and government being required to find new ways of looking at problems and solutions. So too, consumers.

New partnerships with carers and consumers will be critical in solving the complex and challenging issues that face us in the future. But, individuals and their organisations, especially those like OWN that have very little discretionary income and require support to participate in such partnerships; for example, reimbursement of costs, training support and research to enable informed discussion.

Over the years, OWN has been innovative around previous government policies: can we do so again?

Joy Ross

* A copy of the *Policy Position Papers* is available for perusal in the OWN library, or you can email dinesh@ncoss.org.au for a copy.

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.**

NOTICES

Indigenous poems and images

BLACK INK PRESS is a small new community-based Indigenous publishing venture based in Townsville in far North Queensland, Australia. They have just published their first book, *Crow Feathers*, an Indigenous collection of poems and images, which has quality writing and interesting line drawings by Indigenous writers and artists from several Australian states. The book has just won the 2003 Townsville Arts, Culture and Entertainment Award for Literature.

It's a great resource for educational and reconciliation groups. The price is \$25.

To order, contact **blackinkybi@ozemail.com.au** or write to Jeanie Adams, BLACK INK PRESS, Yalga-binbi Institute for Community Development, PO Box 217 Thuringowa, Queensland 4817. Phone 07 4773 5077 or fax 07 4773 5307.



Videos to increase fitness

A series of exercise videos for the elderly is now available through Elder Care Services of Carlingford.

The exercise videos are useful for improving strength, endurance, flexibility, posture, stability and balance. The increased fitness can make day-to-day activities safer and lead to an improved quality of life. Chairobics 1 and 2 are exercise videos for chair-bound people to help them exercise all their muscle groups and gain mobility.

The videos may be ordered from Elder Care Services (02 9630 5283).

Aqua Fitness for over 55s

Are you interested in attending low-cost Aqua Fitness classes at Victoria Park Pool, corner of Parramatta Road and City Road, Chippendale run by the City of Sydney?

Please contact Bronwyn Elborn 9298 3103 to discuss dates and times.



An OWN group at Blacktown?

A Public Meeting will be held at Bowman Hall, next to Blacktown City Council, on Wednesday 10 March from 10 to 12.30 to talk about setting up a new group in Blacktown. Morning tea and a light lunch will be provided.

If you are interested, or know of someone in the area who may be interested, please contact Pam Hawkins on 9839 6287.



Gleebooks and ANTaR proudly present ...

Kevin Keefe, author of *Paddy's Road: Life Stories of Patrick Dodson* in conversation with PATRICK DODSON

Thursday, February 19

Valhalla Cinema 1, 166 Glebe Point Road, Glebe \$8/\$5 conc.

To book, please phone 9660 2333 or email books@gleebooks.com.au

Paddy's Road: Life Stories of Patrick Dodson is the biography of one of the most influential Aboriginal voices in Australia of the past three decades.

NOTICES

Riding the System

I am a professional visual artist and am seeking the support of OWN members for an art installation I am planning for Seniors Week 2004.

I would like OWN members to save all their travel concession tickets – until the beginning of May 2004 – and leave them at the OWN office for me to collect.

Provisionally called *Riding the System*, my artwork will involve hundreds of concession tickets being stuck in lines on the steps and walls of the Town Hall Station exit sites. I am writing to the Stationmaster to get permission to put up the work.

Initially, the project was to celebrate the \$1.10 Transport Concession ticket. Recently, the State Government has given us a taste of the planned changes to our concession travel costs. This will make the work even more appropriate and relevant.

Brenda Saunders

(Please leave your tickets in the red tin on the sign-in table at 87 or post them in and we'll pass them on to Brenda. Ed.)

Raffle Draw

The Aboriginal Support Circle Raffle was drawn on 1 December. Congratulations to the following people who won prizes:

1st Prize Betty Little
Charles Perkins book

2nd Prize Michael Zinn
Original Painting by Betty Little

3rd Prize Eileen White
T-shirt

OWN Sydney

Film discussion group

Monday 9 February, 1.30pm at 75 Windmill Street. Our selection of films for discussion this month will be *The Spanish Apartment*, *Goodbye Lenin*, and *Dogville*.

Wellness OPEN DAY

Wednesday 11 February, 10 am to 12 noon. Special 'taste and try' activities of – gentle exercise, tai chi and drumming, led by facilitators Alex, Nora and Liz. Morning tea. Free. Mott Hall, Argyle Street, Millers Point.

New Art Class

Would you like to learn how to hand print your own silk scarves, or maybe a silk top?

A new and interesting art class will be held at the Mott Hall Gym from 10.30 to 12.30 on each Wednesday in February, commencing Wednesday 4 February.

We can supply some materials. Our teacher is artist Jane Caveney from the Pine Street Art Collective. For more information phone the office on 9247 7046.

OWN Sydney MEMBERS QUARTERLY GATHERING,

Friday February 20, 10am at '87', Members' input is vital to the success of our organisation. Please participate – have a say about last year and join in discussions about what you'd like to see happen in the year ahead.

PLEASE HELP!

A Just Australia has been working through Christmas and New Year to support the 191 adults and 93 children held on Nauru since 2001. We need financial contributions to continue our campaign to close the Nauru detention centre.

Any funds we raise will be used:

for an effective campaign to end the Pacific solution

to get children out of detention

to work for a better deal for those on temporary protection visas, and lasting change to the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

Cheques should be made out to A Just Australia and sent to PO Box 559 Surry Hills NSW 2010 Credit Card Donations can be made by downloading an authorisation form from www.ajustaustralia.com or by phoning 9310 3900. You can also make donations at any Branch of the Commonwealth Bank: Australians for Just Refugee Programs Inc. Commonwealth Bank BSB 062005 Account No 1045 3815

Thank you, Howard Glenn, National Director, A Just Australia

DISCLAIMER

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

NEWSLETTER TEAM

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

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