

OWN MATTERS

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

No.27 March 2004

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Women Celebrate

March is one month of the year when women are actively encouraged to celebrate with confidence our many contributions to cultural and community life.

Firstly, there's International Women's Day on Monday 8 March. Actually, it's now International Women's *Day/Week* and goes from 8 March until Sunday 14 March. The IWD march and rally is on Saturday 13 March. OWN Sydney is putting on a pre-march breakfast at OWN starting at 8.30am – please see Notices for more information.

This year a large number of different events will be held across the state to celebrate women's achievements and to draw attention to issues that need more action. If you have access to the internet, you can find information at www.womens.gateway.nsw.gov.au.

In Sydney, speakers at the Hyde Park rally will include author, Ann Summers, and Ann Sampson, from the Stop the War coalition. There will also be music, entertainment, food for sale and interesting stalls.

Today, International Women's Day is a reminder that the gains we have made since 1908, when women first marched for social justice, are due to the strength, determination and courage of women who risk their lives and their reputations to make the world a better place for all women. It is an occasion to be part of a community, to recognise our experiences as common to other women, rather than simply as individuals who have to deal with our own life challenges in isolation.

By the way, do you know what the IWD colours of purple, white and green stand for? The first option is: purple stands for freedom and dignity, white for purity in private and public life and green is the colour of hope. Or if you prefer a second option, as I do, green, white and violet stands for Give Women the Vote!

The other opportunity to 'celebrate women' during March is at our Seniors Week concert – *Women Centre Stage*. The range of performers lined up for the concert is really exciting, so come along in large numbers (the Crystal Room holds up to 450 people!) to applaud and appreciate the many talents of older women.

Cate Turner

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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Contact

Older Women's Network NSW
87 Lower Fort Street
Millers Point NSW 2000
Phone: 02 9247 7046
Fax: 02 9247 4202
Email: ownnsw@zip.com.au
Web: www.own.org.au

ABN 36 992 030 904

Point of View

A Safety Net?

Let's hope Mr. Tony Abbott never has need of his safety net. He might fall through it.

A draft of the Consumer Medicare Charter, developed by the Greens, states that safety nets are unnecessary in a universal health care system. By their very existence they imply that some health care consumers will miss out on, or fall through, the 'net'. To qualify for a safety net, people have to be on a low income, have dependent children under 16 years of age, or be under 16 years of age.

This is ridiculous. For example, while a millionaire's child (under 16) can be bulk billed for a consultation with a GP under the MedicarePlus package, a woman with a low income job, no dependent children and a chronic disease, which requires periodic general practice and specialist consultations, would have to pay full fees. This is not an equitable distribution of the public health care dollar and is but one example of the many anomalies which will become obvious under MedicarePlus.

Safety nets by their very nature will always disadvantage some health care consumers. By contrast, universal health insurance and access to primary health care facilitated by the bulk billing of all service users, disadvantages no one and has been proven to be a highly cost effective and efficient health service system. Medicare has been responsible for Australians enjoying one of the highest standards of health in the world.

It is crucial that we encourage the Senate not to cave in to the government on the Medicare bill. Contact the Democrats and Independents and tell them they must oppose the government's Medicare Bill – amendments are not enough.

Andrew Bartlett senator.barnett@aph.gov.au
Tel: 07 3252 7101

Lyn Allison senator.allison@aph.gov.au
Tel: 03 416 1880

Brian Harradine senator.harradine@aph.gov.au
Tel: 03 6234 5122

Len Harris senator.harris@aph.gov.au
Tel: 07 4092 3194

Shayne Murphy senator.murphy@aph.gov.au
Tel: 03 6334 5233

Muriel Horton

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

Planning, planning, and more planning seems to have been our main activity during February.

In March, we have International Women's Day (IWD) and this year, as the 8th falls on a Monday, we'll have to wait until the following Saturday to enjoy the march and rally. Please see Notices for information about OWN Sydney's IWD breakfast on 13 March.

Then there's Seniors Week, which begins on Sunday, 14 March. This year, the OWN NSW event, *Women Centre Stage*, requires much detailed planning. (For more information, please see p.5 and the enclosed flyer.) Congratulations to all the OWN groups who have made successful funding submissions for a Seniors Week event. We know how important it is to have a strong local profile and holding a Seniors Week event provides a great opportunity to do this.

During 2004, we plan to offer regional workshops on leadership and other issues to OWN groups across the State. Unfortunately, the facilitator we had lined up is no longer available, but we are sure there are OWN members out there with the skills to run skill-based workshops – please contact us if think you might be one of them.

We hear that more and more OWN groups have been setting up (or thinking about setting up) their own small performance groups. OWN NSW is currently exploring the idea of producing a 'starter pack' of scripts and songs written by various OWN members to help get these groups on their way. Any contributions are welcome.

As we all know, insurance is a very expensive business today. At our February meeting the Management Team decided not to take out Professional Indemnity Insurance for the Management Team as we do not give advice and therefore can't be sued for giving the *wrong* advice. Makes sense, doesn't it, and saves us money.

We've had a couple of resignations this month: Judith Mustard from the *OWN Matters* Editorial Team and Peggy Hewett as one of the OWN NSW Coordinators. We thank Peggy for her efforts and are pleased that she is remaining a member of the Management Team. We also thank Judith for her nine years with the newsletter team – her skills have been greatly valued and she will be missed.

On Wednesday, 10 March, a public meeting is being held at Blacktown to explore the possibility of setting up an OWN group in the area. A group in Blacktown will bring the number of OWN groups in NSW to 21. If anyone is interested in attending, please phone 9247 7046 for details.

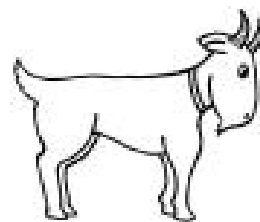
We were pleased to welcome representatives from eleven groups at the February Quarterly meeting of NSW groups. In particular, we were delighted to welcome Judith Constable from Wagga Wagga – the first time we've had a representative from that group at a Quarterly meeting. These meetings are invaluable for sharing information, planning, problem solving and inspiring each other to reach for the sky.

A note for your diary: the OWN NSW State Conference for 2004 will be on Monday 19 and Tuesday 20 July at the University of Sydney.

Anne Warren, Cate Turner and Lucy Porter

Really useful

gifts



So what do you buy the person who has everything, or doesn't need anything? If you're tired of waterproof shower radios, nail-polish dryers and dancing Elvis figurines, TEAR Australia has the answer. Purchasing from its *World's Most Useful Gift Catalogue* provides really useful and practical gifts for some of the world's poorest people.

For instance, you can buy twenty tree seedlings for \$6, a Village Medical Kit for \$20 and a goat for \$70. A gift of \$150 will assist in the establishment of a self-help group in India for around twenty women, providing them with a base to learn literacy and numeracy skills, savings and micro-finance systems, social and political skills, and provide mutual support and encouragement.

These gifts don't just help one person; they're useful for an entire community. They assist local people to develop local solutions to local problems and create innovative and sustainable projects to enable the poorest and most disadvantaged members to live fulfilling lives.

For every item you purchase, TEAR Australia sends you a gift card with a photo and description of the gift and provides a blank space for you to fill in the name of the friend or family member who will be receiving the gift, and your name. The cards can be used for any occasion - Christmas, birthdays, Weddings or Anniversaries.

More information is available from www.tear.org.au, 1800 244 986 or write to TEAR Australia, PO Box 164, Blackburn 3130.

When old euphemisms pass their youth-by date*

When “old” goes with wine, we think good vintage. With furniture, we think antiques, and might even smell the polish. With painting, we think of the great Masters. When “old” goes with money, we think upper-crust establishment. My GP father had a few “old money” patients out in the country, descendants of a squattocracy. I remember they didn’t pay their bills.

But when “old” goes with person, we’re in different terrain. We’ve arrived in the use-by-date domain. Just as the “young” and the “new” are devalued for having spent less time on the planet, so the “not young” and the “not new” are devalued. It’s a short step from devalued to demeaned.

Meanwhile, the caption alongside a new beauty product – “Age Less” – feels less like a noun or adjective than an imperative verb.

Stigmas give a boost to word numbers. Around the “old” stigma emerges a host of euphemisms. The new words hover around the core notion while painstakingly avoiding saying the word. People reach for less in-your-face alternatives, such as “mature”, “senior”, “Third Age” or even “seasoned”. They add bits on (“older”, “older person”) or invent new bits as substitutes (“the golden years”). The shelf life of a euphemism is short, as Kate Burridge’s *Blooming English* points out. Pretty soon, the stigma catches up with the label, infects it, and then the euphemism begins to break down. “New Australian” moved to “migrant”, which moved to “ethnic”, and then into the quasi-hyphenates (Italian Australians, Moslem Australians). Similarly, “crippled” went to “handicapped” to “disabled”, and then to concept plus past participle (“delayed”, “impaired” or “challenged”).

“Geriatric” arrived in 1909. It was a respectful term back then, as was “senile” in 1938. “Senior citizen” was introduced for a post-retirement person, but soon displayed the signs of general community uneasiness. “Elderly” arrived in the ‘60s and the stigma soon reattached. Recently, “senior” has re-emerged, along with special cards, discounts and a monthly newspaper. Seniors’ Week (spruiked as “the best time for ages”) is replete with activity: ballroom dancing, computers, information on arthritis, pain relief, bridge climbing and political speech-giving.

Then 1998 was the Year of the Older Person which, like the “fuller figure”, hedges the cold impact of the simple adjective by adding the “er”. It comes at the cost of imprecision. Older than whom? Well, older

than they used to be. As old as even you will be one day. Tick-tock, tick-tock.

The thing about stigmas, too, is how they interconnect in the underbelly of society. Disability is an offshoot of the demand for physical and intellectual perfection. Ageism is an offshoot of the quest for perpetual youth and cutting-edge newness, from technology to kitchens to style of jeans.

And there in the underbelly, stigmas and taboos snuggle up close. Age links in closely with our taboo on death. After all, the old are closer to the end point. Closer to death’s door. English is replete with euphemism; we insure against death, but call it “life insurance:” we “pass away”, we’re processed by “morticians” and “undertakers”. We dread the suggestion to “get your affairs in order”. King Lear said it best when the Earl of Gloucester pleaded to kiss his hand: “Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.”

Still, it’s not all bad news. Agatha Christie once said she loved being married to an archaeologist. As she got older, he appreciated her more.

Ruth Wajnryb



Surfaces

*So when we hear the gossip
And when the critics chide,
Let all of us be grateful
That we can see inside.*

*Beneath the clothes and lifestyles
To what is real and true
So we can see each other,
That’s me, and you, and you.*

*Because OWN women are quite marvellous,
We meet, enjoy and learn,
And at our every meeting
We share love and concern.*

*Unconcerned about the labels,
Unconcerned about the gear,
Unconcerned about the Lifestyles,
We’re OWN women and we’re here.*

Mary Novikoff

(first printed in Wagga Wagga OWN’s newsletter)

*From the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15.11.03, reproduced with permission of the author.

FUEL FOR THOUGHT

There was a serious fire at Port Kembla around 10am on Wednesday, 28 January. It started in a tank containing 400 million litres of ethanol at Manildra Park's petroleum storage facility. The lid blew off the steel tank and landed on a nearby shed housing the tank's in-built fire-fighting mechanisms. The resounding boom could be heard a long way away, and so fierce was the explosion that it shook houses, melted bumper bars and shattered many windows. Other damage is yet to be made known.

No one has any idea what caused this fire and it is likely it will be some months before someone comes up with a credible explanation.

Over one hundred fire-fighters fought the blaze in temperatures reported to be around forty degrees Celsius. Bringing the fire under control took twenty-one hours and used thirty million litres of water and 20,000 litres of foam. Fighting such a dangerous fire was difficult enough, but so too was the task of preventing flames from spreading to nearby tanks containing huge supplies of other dangerous chemicals. What exactly are these chemicals? Newspaper reports make it clear that one tank contained oil.

We know that Port Kembla is an industrial area but few of us really understand what is meant by the term industrial in today's world or what exactly is stored in an industrial complex. Now we might well ask how safe is the steam distillation process of ethanol? How safe is the transportation of ethanol? How safe is this blended fuel some of us are using in our cars? What, if any, legislation has been set in place for the safe storage of ethanol? And those other chemicals used in the mixing process? Do you know if there is a storage facility near you?

Ethanol is a fuel alcohol additive derived from grains and sugar and has been produced in the United States for some decades now. Many people think it's green and clean, but there has been some debate here in Australia about what percentage of ethanol is safe. You will have seen garages with banners and signs, making clear that they have no ethanol at all in their petrol. Commentators have said that up to 10% of ethanol in our tanks is perfectly safe.

I am reminded of that Cadbury's ad that told us there was a glass and a half of fresh cream milk in every block of dairy milk chocolate. At what point does ethanol get poured into the petrol? And how is that proscribed 10% kept to an exact percentage?

Pearlie McNeill

Right to refuse medical treatment

In a landmark and emotionally charged case, involving an elderly woman with severe dementia who had been kept alive for years by tube feeding, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) has found that the provision of food and hydration amounts to "medical treatment" and can therefore be legally refused. The case was instigated by the woman's family, the woman's husband having cared for his wife at home for a period of eleven years.

The legal issues in the case revolved around the appropriate categorisation of 'artificial feeding' and whether such feeding amounted to medical treatment or palliative care. This was an important distinction, as the *Medical Treatment Act 1988 (Vic)* states that palliative care is not legally able to be refused. Both the Right to Life Association and Catholic Health Australia sought to intervene in the case, each believing that the case involved issues concerning "death with dignity." The intervention applications were unsuccessful, though each was granted *amicus curiae* status.

The Right to Life Association considered, but ultimately declined to pursue, an appeal from the decision of VCAT. Read more at www.vcat.vic.gov.au.

Information for OWN Sydney members about *Women Centre Stage*

Travel by bus: A charter bus will take us from Mott Hall to Campbelltown RSL Club on Thursday 18 March. It leaves Millers Point at 11.15 and departs Campbelltown at 4pm. There are 25 seats available for non-performers, so please phone the office, 9247 7046 to book your place. The first 25 lucky members to phone will be allocated seats.

By train: The RSL Club is a 10 minute walk from the station. Cross Hurley Street at the station, walk down Railway Street, turn right into Queen Street and left into Cordeaux Street.

By car: Parking for RSL members is free. Non-members pay \$2.75 for up to 4 hours.

Lunch: You can bring a sandwich and eat it on the bus, you can buy a sandwich in the RSL Coffee Lounge (prices start at \$2.50) or you can order a hot dish at the Bistro (from \$3.50).

For more information, please see the enclosed flyer or contact Dorothy Cora, 9247 7046.

Willing, Mostly Able and a Tiny Bit Scared

I hope that this doesn't sound like a 'woe is me' story – that truly is not my intention. This is a "I'm kind of scared about my chances of getting a job" kind of story.

I'm launching myself back into the workforce after eleven months recuperating from a neck and shoulder injury. Financially, I have to go back to work, and I really want to. I've just got to be very careful not to damage myself again. I have no degrees in anything (I'll reconsider this in my next life!) except in beauty therapy...HATE waxing, love giving facials, but I'm unable to do that anymore because of my injury.

As I read the positions vacant in the newspapers, it all seems a bit daunting. You need to be extremely multi-skilled. And many of the ads don't include a phone number – just fax or email your resumé please – giving you no chance to speak to anyone and no opportunity of showing a happy and warm personality.

If I dared, my advertisement to find a job would read:

Willing, mostly able, outgoing, loves to laugh, walks with a zip in her step, conscientious, hard working lady, looking for that perfect little job, three days a week (not five days of four hours each – I have a life!), where this lovely lady doesn't get too stressed, where there's time to be trained properly, where standing for eight hours or lifting heavy items is not required, where she can feel that she's serving humanity in a positive way and where at least \$100 per hour is offered (just kidding). And, by the way, this lady is almost 62 years old.

I'm just wondering if there are other OWN members out there with a similar concern. I'm sure

there are many. My writing these few paragraphs is a response to the warm and encouraging invitation in February's newsletter to write something "that I know". In spite of this chance to rave on, I am an optimistic person and I know that I will get a lovely job, hopefully in the very near future.

Juni Smetana

Nana's Little Helper

I wanted to give my four year-old grand daughter a gift I had created ... something personal for her to remember me by. Some months before Christmas, in my U3A Creative Writing Class, we were asked to write a short story *from a child's perspective*, and suddenly I could see how to achieve my aim.

I wrote a simple story ... based on reality ... of a three-year-old girl visiting her Nana in a small country town in the 1960s. Nana had chooks in a chook house, she milked a cow every morning, she separated the milk, made butter in a churn and baked the best scones. Nana also had an orchard and grew her own vegetables. To illustrate the story, I drew large simple ink drawings of the little girl with the cows and chooks, patting the butter, and so on, and painted the pictures in pretty watercolours.

The text and drawings were then scanned into a simple 'book' format at a local shop. I was really thrilled with the results and even more thrilled at my grand daughter's delight when she received her hand-made book, *Nana's Little Helper*, for Christmas.

Encouraged, I then wrote and illustrated a story for my two-year-old grand daughter, for her birthday. It was a very simple story about three cheeky chicks living in Nana's chook house. They escaped into Nana's vegetable garden and ate all her lettuce. With much concentration, I managed to draw the cheeky chicks well enough for a two-year-old to recognise. What a lot of fun.

Helen Mitchelhill

Arthroscopy: a placebo?

Osteoarthritis of the knee, as we know, is a very painful wear and tear condition, where the bony surface of the knee joints erode and grate against each other causing pain and stiffness. The pain can be managed but no, osteoarthritis cannot be cured. In spite of this many sufferers place their hopes in an operation called an arthroscopy, a very common procedure often recommended by doctors. It involves the insertion of a fiberoptic instrument into a joint cavity and comes with a number of attachments used to irrigate, cut and remove dead tissues like ligaments and cartilage. It can be very useful for treating a tear in the meniscus (a shock absorber inside the knee joint) but as a cure for osteo, it is really no better than a placebo.

Two recent studies on this subject are documented in the *Medical Journal of Australia* (MJA 2003; 179 (4): 179-180).

Renate Watkinson

When we talk about equal pay for equal work, women in the workplace are beginning to catch up. If we keep going at this current rate, we will achieve full equality in about 475 years. I don't know about you, but I can't wait that long.

Lya Sorano

US Women's Rights activist

Writing Tips

In last month's *OWN Matters*, Dorothy Cora encouraged members to "put it in writing" – and we are delighted to say that the response has been terrific. So for those of you who didn't take the plunge, I thought I'd pass along a few tips to help you get started.

Before you actually start writing, think about what you want the reader to do, (like join *OWN*, for instance) or know, (like how you feel about getting older). Consider who will be reading what you write so you can adjust your style to meet their expectations. For example, do you want to be formal, casual, helpful?

Think back to what you learnt in school. Remember the teacher saying, "Create an outline of your major points"? Well, now you can use what you learnt. Putting your thoughts in outline form is a good first step. If you need to, gather information or resources to help support what you are trying to get across in your writing before starting your outline.

Once your outline is finished, you should be ready to map out your first draft. At this point, the idea is to just get something on paper – even if it doesn't start from the beginning. Just focus on what needs to be said, rather than how to say it. If you write as you speak, your writing should flow easily. A good rule of thumb is to use common terminology whenever possible.

Once you have finished your first draft, you'll be ready to refine your work. The four cornerstones of editing might help you now – check the content, flow, grammar and readability.

Be your own worst critic when it comes to content. Ask yourself, is what I have written correct? Logical? Relevant? When you can answer "yes" to these questions,

you'll know you have produced a readable piece of writing.

One last tip – try to keep your sentences in the 'active voice'. For example: "Cats eat fish" is in the active voice, and "Fish is eaten by cats" is in the passive voice.

Don't worry too much – it's not the end of the world if your writing isn't perfect – the main thing is that you've put time and effort into writing something interesting, funny, or relevant.

I hope these tips help you to write clearly. Your contributions to *OWN Matters* are what make our newsletter really diverse and fun to read.

Phyllis Gorman

Tea in the Library

Just before Christmas, tired and over-loaded with shopping, I longed for a quiet pot of tea. The QVB was crowded, so I went outside to York Street. There, the chatter and clatter from footpath cafes competed with screeching buses – not what I needed.

Glancing across the road, I saw a sign, *Tea in the Library*. Next door to Newton's Pharmacy and a few steps down, I found paradise! In an oasis of peace and quiet – comfortable armchairs and elegant coffee tables surrounded by shelves of beautiful books – I ordered a pot of tea and home-made toasted banana bread.

From my armchair, I took down a fine leather-bound book, *The Devils Collection: A Cynic's Dictionary*, compiled by Maggie Pinkney. My tea arrived, served on a silver platter with a huge crisp damask napkin. Oh, the luxury! I asked my hostess (waitress fantastique) if I could purchase the book without leaving the comfort of my armchair (I'd already discreetly removed my shoes) and she obliged. I felt like royalty.

I looked up 'tea' in my new *Dictionary* and found: "Something to amuse the idle, relax the studious and dilute the full meals of those who cannot use exercise and will not use abstinence. (Samuel Johnson)"

Mary Whitton



My Ribbons

I always wear rainbow ribbons and am often asked why I wear them. The story goes back to my earliest memories of walking with my Grandmother. We saw a rainbow in the sky and she said to me, "See that rainbow, it is a sign that God is blessing us. He has sent us rain so that we may live." I saw the rainbow many times with my Grandmother and each time we acknowledged God's blessing. As we left the church on the day of her funeral, a lovely rainbow appeared behind the spire of the church. So, to me, rainbows have always meant blessings from God.

Just before my sixty-sixth birthday I was very ill and attended a *Quest For Life* seminar in Bundanoon. Part of the program was a daily meditation session on the blessings from rainbows. We received and sent blessings to loved ones via a visualised rainbow. Petrea had rainbow ribbons on sale so I bought a stack of them for special friends and also started wearing them myself. My life has been full of blessings. Each morning I acknowledge those blessings by putting on my ribbons. Some of them are old and tatty now but I won't throw them away. To me they are precious. I send a rainbow message to all *OWN* members. May your day be blessed.

Barbara Malcolm

Letters to the Editor

Greater variety

In response to the request for, if not poetry or prose, contributions to the Letters Page, I am writing about a matter I have considered for some time.

In the Annual Report of OWN NSW there is a list of many government/non-government committees which have OWN representatives (for example, Council for Safety and Quality Health Care, National Clearing House for Domestic and Family Violence, NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing, Retirement Village Advisory Council to Minister for Fair Trading, Working Group on Acute Care of Older People NSW, are a small random selection). I have very rarely seen reports about these committees – such as the special focus they have, what particular type of presentations they make, which level of government they lobby, any results from their actions, etc.

On the other hand, I have heard and read criticism of the Theatre Group report, which must be provided to *OWN Matters* each month. (I am a member of the Theatre Group, but this letter is my personal viewpoint only, and may not reflect the opinion of any other member of the Theatre Group.)

I assume there are many other readers of *OWN Matters* who would be interested in knowing about these committees.

I am strongly suggesting that the report from the Theatre Group in *OWN Matters* be provided every second month. That would free space for the OWN representative on one of these committees to write about it every other month (not bi-monthly reports from each person). This would give readers greater variety and provide useful

knowledge of these organisations and the involvement of OWN. Who knows, it may even spark some greater overall support when and if needed.

Marjorie Moffat

A shared experience

While resting on a bench at my local shopping centre recently, I began chatting to a lady sitting nearby. She told me she had only gone out that day to be among people, as she was so lonely - she hadn't really needed much shopping. I told her I had joined the OWN group at Parramatta and what fun it was.

We seemed much the same age (in our 70s), so we reminisced about 'old times' and she said she had been a child in Berlin during World War II. She said, "The air raids were terrible, such heavy bombing by the Americans and the British – so frightening." I replied, "Well, I lived in the heart of London and we were bombed incessantly by the Germans night after night – it was terrible."

We both looked at one another and started to smile, realising the irony of our similar experiences. We agreed on the futility of war and were glad we had met and had an opportunity to exchange our experiences from different perspectives. We shook hands and said we hoped we would meet again. However, I have not seen her since.

In closing, I would like to commend the editorial team of this newsletter - it is always full of interest and information - one of the best I have come across. I know from my own experience that this can be very hard work at times, so well done!

Gillian Simons

Worse than doctors?

Doctors are bad, but the real villains in our suburb are the pharmacists.

There are two pharmacies, one inside and one outside my local shopping plaza, owned by a husband and wife, the latter also a registered nurse.

Their opening hours seem the least they can get away with: until 4pm on Saturday and only a few hours on Sunday. No deliveries on weekends and deliveries on Mondays and Fridays and, during school terms, Wednesdays.

If you need medicine at the weekend and do not have family or friends available to run your messages (and those of us who live long enough find ourselves with friends as disabled as we are), you must wait till Monday afternoon.

Or get yourself by ambulance to one of the overcrowded emergency wards at a hospital.

Helen Monaghan

Mind blowing

I have just read *Stupid White Men* by Michael Moore. After weeks on a waiting list at the local library, I found a copy at a garage sale for 50 cents! Like June Goss, I have found it mind blowing and frightening to see the resemblance to Australian politics, the underhanded methods of big companies and the attitudes towards public education in this country. Everyone must read this book.

I have a list of women from our Book Discussion Group waiting to borrow it. *Dude, Where Is My Country*, again by Michael Moore, is next on the list.

Nancy Brown

Letters to the Editor

Is this for real?

Sun-Herald, 17 January 2004, bottom left hand corner of front page: "Why the world just can't stop looking at Jennifer Aniston – 40-page liftout." !!!!

The world? London, Paris, Outer Mongolia, Darkest Africa, the Ukraine? Where?

The blurb on the front page was accompanied by a photograph of an almost plain girl whose hair needed combing. And it wasn't a 40-page liftout containing only information about her. There was a lot of other absolutely forgettable stuff about other 'celebrities'.

Most of the people I know in Sydney haven't even *started* looking at Jennifer Aniston. They would say, "Jennifer who?" Speaking for myself, I've heard the name, but know hardly anything about her. I suppose this is a way of filling up the pages. I do believe there are more important things (or people) for the world to look at.

Renee Simons

PM's hypocrisy

Just what are John Howard and company covering up in their attack on the lack of 'values' in public education? John Howard has obviously calculated that anything relating to children which generates angry community discussion will get good media attention – thus taking public attention away from other issues, like the value of supporting public education, or a fair Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.

Supposedly committed to promoting family values and elected on a platform of 'supporting families,' the Prime Minister has clearly shown us that only some families matter. What about the imprisonment of children behind barbed wire and what about misleading us about the children overboard? His lack of common decency and community values is hypocritical. How naïve of us to think he supports *all* families.

Nancy Brown

Hurdles

I had this letter printed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Tuesday, 13 January 2004:

"The Opera House is a wonderful building but access for some seniors is quite formidable, even more so now when no taxis or buses are allowed on to the concourse.

"Over the weekend, the Sydney Theatre was opened. The reviews were ecstatic, and yes, it is an attractive building, but certainly not user-friendly for older people. Parking is difficult and there are many steps to climb – quite a deterrent to people with any physical disabilities or those running out of energy.

"Seniors have been and are very big patrons and supporters of the arts. Is there an easier way of them attending, without so many hurdles?"

Helen Gonski

What can we do in Seniors Week?

The theme for this year's Seniors Week is The Best Time for Ages. This special week runs from 14 to 21 March. A variety of events have been organised throughout NSW, which include tea dances, tai chi, storytelling and activities provided by the Department of Sport and Recreation

Seniors Expo will be held in the Sydney Town Hall and will include stands providing information on making your money work, travel and holiday deals, personal styling and makeovers, safety and security, and new health therapies.

Techno-seniors was so popular last year that it is being held again this year. It consists of seminars and workshops and provides a perfect opportunity to learn about the rapidly changing world of computers. U3A is also adding to the week with a selection of open days, variety performances and lectures throughout the state.

There'll also be gold coin days at the movie theatres from Sunday 14 to Sunday 21 March.

If you would like a program or more information on these and other events please call the Seniors Information Service on 13 12 44.

Barbara Lorback

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney

It was a stinker of a day, transport was chaotic, but still women came to our Open Wellness Day on 11 February to taste and try gentle exercise, tai chi and drumming. Although the perspiration streamed off us, thanks to the care of our three facilitators Alex, Nora and Liz, it was not too demanding and most of us had a go at everything. A special welcome to all the newcomers; we hope to see you again.

For those who like crafty things, the group which meets in the gym at the rear of Mott Hall on Wednesdays is now painting on silk (scarves, ties, etc) with teacher, Jane Caveney. This is so pleasant and so creative. Beginners are welcome and it's free of charge.

The screen printed calico bags – with OWN Sydney's leaping ladies logo on them – were so popular and sold so well at our end-of-year party in December that we are now considering producing more. Some of you may remember Barbara Holborow emphatically saying that we should print more as she personally wanted one, and also wanted to give them as presents.

The film discussion group has its regular devotees who wouldn't miss it. We'd be glad to see others share their views with us. For March films, please see Notices.

Guest speakers are generally very popular and we try to make them a regular feature at OWN Sydney. In January, Lorna Parker spoke to us on *Well, Wise and Wonderful* and also in January, Michelle Cavanagh spoke about *The Theatre of Life and its Complexities* – with Peg Hewett and Lucy Porter giving us a 'lesson' in writing skits.

On Friday 18 March well-known Australian psychologist and

author, Dorothy Rowe, will talk on *Good women get depressed: being bad isn't the answer*. Dorothy's fine reputation will guarantee a big and appreciative attendance. Please see Notices for details.

Newsletter readers will, over the years, have relished and chuckled over Dorothy Cox's personal stories. We are pleased to announce that Dorothy has self-published her book, *A One-off Woman: Recollections of a Life Lived Full*, which OWN Sydney will launch on Thursday 11 March at Mott Hall. Please see Notices.

OWN Sydney's future directions were explored at a quarterly gathering on 20 February, but unfortunately it's too late for a report in this *OWN Matters* so we'll fill you in next month.

Louise Anike and Joy Ross

Illawarra

An initiative in Illawarra OWN was the launch in February of five special interest groups: Play Reading, Current Affairs, Book Reading, and Writing and Sketching. Our first Play Reading Group, facilitated by Jacque Skinner, was held on Thursday 12 February with six members present. It was a really stimulating and interesting session. Jacque

went to some trouble to locate plays for women's voices only and was surprised at how thin on the ground they are. Any suggestions by OWN members will be very welcome. The Current Affairs Discussion group, facilitated by Arlene Little, and held on the afternoon of 12 February was attended by eight members. This session was also very stimulating. We each brought along a cutting from a paper on an issue that interested us and after introducing the topic we all discussed it. While there were different views expressed, I was really struck by how open we were to different opinions.

To celebrate International Women's Day this year, Illawarra OWN will be holding a morning tea on Friday, March 12, 2004 at the Uniting Church Hall on Crown Street Mall. Our guest speaker will be Liz Farrar, coordinator of the Illawarra Committee for International Students at Wollongong University. Our wonderful SilvertOWNS will be entertaining with some great new songs. A special invitation is extended to OWN member from other areas to join us.

We are really looking forward to performing in and being part of the audience at the *Women Centre Stage* concert in March.

Peggy Rodden

Where have all the Grandmas Gone?

*In the dim and distant past, when life's tempo wasn't fast,
Grandma used to rock and knit, crochet, tat and baby sit.
When the kids were in a jam, you could always count on Gran.
In those days of gracious living, Grandma was the one for giving,
But today she's in the gym, exercising to keep slim.
She's off touring with the bunch, or taking clients out to lunch.
No time to knit plain and purl, all her days are in a whirl,
Nothing seems to stop or block her, now that Grandma's off her rocker.*

First published in Illawarra OWN newsletter

At and Beyond the Rocks

Macarthur

The end of 2003 saw a convivial group of 55 members partake of a splendid Christmas feast amidst one of Santa's elves dispensing gifts. We usually have a break during January, but this year we decided to keep meeting because it can be pretty lonely for many of our members around Christmas and January. It was a wise decision, as we have had really good numbers during January.

The pace never slackens. (I thought that retirement would mean reclining on a lounge by a pool or on a beach with the soft sound of the breeze wafting through palm trees and turquoise water lapping close by. Ha ha.) The pace is accelerating a notch or two now that February is so with us. We meet every Wednesday with a committee meeting on the first, a celebration of members' birthdays on the second (with catering supremos, Marge and Pat, producing a special cake), a guest speaker on the third and a bus trip on the fourth. Our motto, "When you're a member of OWN, you're never alone" is so true.

The overwhelming response to our appeal on behalf of two local women's refuges dealing with domestic violence meant beautifully wrapped gifts being distributed to mothers and grandmothers who were so happy that someone was thinking of them for a change. We hope that this venture will be continued at other appropriate times, like Mother's Day.

Campbelltown/Airds Historical Society spokesperson, Maree Holmes, was our guest speaker in February. She provided a static display and an informative video to supplement an interesting talk about the growth of our area. Our

first bus trip for the year was to the Stafford Lavender Park, with the pie shop at Robertson definitely on the agenda.

We are eagerly anticipating the Theatre Skills Workshop with Lucy Porter, Peggy Hewett and Ann Cunnyngame from OWN Sydney on Thursday, 4 March. This workshop is in preparation for OWN's *Women Centre Stage* concert at the RSL Club at 1pm on Thursday 18 March. Our group, *The Macarthur Melody Makers*, will perform in public for the first time at this event! Admission is free and there'll be afternoon tea and good company, so come along and bring your friends.

Helen Standing

Nowra

The Healthy Ageing and Peer Education submission we made to the Department for Women was unsuccessful, but Maggie Kyle, from the Department, gave us some positive feedback ("highly commended, manageable, had good partnerships and was ongoing"), which made us feel better. It was a relief to know we hadn't made any grave errors.

We are currently working on a submission for a Sport and Recreation grant, Building Active Communities. The closing date for Stage 1 is 5 March 2004 so check out their website at www.dsr.nsw.gov.au if you're interested in large grants.

We are a member of the Shoalhaven International Women's Day Working Party which is planning a week of activities in the area, including the Women's Night at Tomerong, which is an expo of women's talents throughout the Shoalhaven. There'll be a Women's Luncheon at Berry on 10

March and creative workshops at Bundanon, the historic Arthur Boyd property on the Shoalhaven.

Our group is also on a local working party planning events for Seniors Week. Gretina Norton and I will be holding a half-day seminar, *Laughter is the Best Medicine*, to promote OWN's Model of Wellness...very gently though, as there will be a mixed audience.

One small victory worth mentioning... our group got a three-line mention in the Ulladulla Community Resource Centre Newsletter, so my phone messages and letters over the past six months about forming a group in the area must have ended up on someone's desk after all!

Anne Warren

Choices

*You can shed tears that she is gone
Or you can smile because she has lived.*

*You can close your eyes and pray
that she'll come back,*

*Or you can open your eyes and see
all she's left.*

*Your heart can be empty because
you can't see her*

*Or you can be full of the love you
shared.*

*You can turn your back on
tomorrow and live yesterday*

*Or you can be happy for
tomorrow because of yesterday.*

*You can remember her and only
that she's gone*

*Or you can cherish her memory
and let it live on.*

*You can cry and close your mind,
be empty and turn your back*

*Or you can do what she'd want:
Smile, open your eyes, love and go
on.*

Anonymous

At and Beyond the Rocks

Penrith

We have attended several meetings with the Ageing and Disability Officer for Penrith Council, together with several other group representatives, to plan a Multicultural Day which will be held during Seniors Week on Monday, 15 March. Our members will be performing multicultural dances, and will also be depicting our group and our work in photographs and stories to form part of a display, which will then become a bound booklet, kept by Penrith City Council.

Our Drop-in Centre has now been operating for four years and is still very popular with visitors to the Penrith Community Health Centre as well as staff at the Centre. We are fortunate in still having use of rooms at the Health Centre, free of charge, for our Tai Chi.

Three OWN members had a stall at Penrith Markets with petitions to be signed regarding new premises for the Women's Health Centre. I have been invited to join the Management Committee of the Penrith Women's Health Centre, and can report that the Council-owned building they are in is not safe for continued operations, and repairs would be too costly. It appears that protests have proved successful and the Centre will hopefully move into new premises in April. Penrith OWN has been offered, when things settle down, the use of some space in the new premises which are in the CBD and close to the station and bus stops.

We have successfully applied for a grant of \$1,000 from Penrith City Council Community Assistance Scheme towards our 10th Anniversary Celebrations in October. We have booked the caterers and the Penrith Senior Citizens Centre for our celebrations. We are also receiving

a grant of \$500 from the Ageing and Disability Department to hold a workshop on Punch Art Card Making during Seniors Week.

Some members of our group attended a transport meeting arranged by the Transport Workers' Union with Barrie Unsworth as guest speaker. Many issues were discussed, one of which was the proposed \$2.50 pensioner fare, which we were told is a certainty. However, it is still an option to pay the half price bus fare only, which may be cheaper for some of us.

Twenty of our members are looking forward to attending the concert organised by the NSW Older Women's Network at Campbelltown on Thursday, 18 March.

Thelma Anderson

Wollondilly

We have two new members, who found OWN through word of mouth, and we are passing on old copies of *OWN Matters* to generate interest amongst local older women.

In November, we drummed at the Marconi Club for an audience of approximately 600. They loved our performance. On Australia Day, we drummed at Picton and then drove to Berrima where we performed twice. After the last

performance, we held a workshop. A photographer took pictures of us at work to use for future publicity. There are two new members in our drumming class and we have several bookings for 2004.

December was party time. We danced at Picton Masonic Abode – several of our members go to Country Dance lessons there twice a week – and performed at a Bundanoon Gathering. It was a very special day. There were many OWN members scattered through the audience – wouldn't it be nice if everyone wore their OWN badges to these types of events?

At our last meeting, Wendy Roberts, from the Community Centre, told us that she could no longer chair our meetings as she has a new job. We were very sad to see her go. Wendy has put her heart into our group, and we will miss her. However, in the long run it might be for the best, as we were becoming quite complacent.

Recently, seven of us attended a Southern Highlands OWN meeting to see how they do things. They do a great job. We came away with several ideas.

This year we plan to have a real presence at the OWN Conference in July so have begun to put plans in place to raise \$400 to pay for six of our group to attend.

Elizabeth Cottesen

Small Equipment Grants

Another round of Volunteer Small Equipment Grants has been announced as well as \$100,000 to support volunteering through other initiatives, including sponsorship for a National Conference. The closing date for applications is 5 March 2004. Application forms can be downloaded from www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/News/vseg_2004.htm or write to Volunteer Small Equipment Grants 2004, Department of Family and Community Services, Locked Bag 4177, KINGSTON ACT 2604.

At and Beyond the Rocks

Wagga Wagga

As our membership and attendances have increased over the last few months, we have approached the Greater Murray Area Health System Executive with a request to hold our meetings in the Schofield Centre, a large hall within the Wagga Base Hospital grounds. We have been successful and will be meeting there from April to June every Monday from 9am to 1pm.

We are in the process of drawing up a Wellness Activity Program, as the centre is ideal for physical activities and larger numbers. We are meeting with the Executive in February 2004 to finalise arrangements and to lobby them to secure the use of the venue on a permanent basis throughout the year.

We have formed a Management Committee (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Officer and two Committee members) and meet monthly. Matters from these meetings are conveyed to members via our newsletter and if a decision is to be made by the group on any matter it is discussed at our bi-monthly meetings. This leaves our regular meetings free for activities and guest speakers.

Transport is one of our main problems in Wagga and one that the Management Committee has been looking at ways to solve, especially once we move to the Schofield Centre. We are hopeful that the Baptist Community Transport Association will help out in the future.

We have had a number of inspirational and informative speakers in recent times. Our last meeting for 2003 was in the form of a luncheon at a local restaurant, enjoyed by all sixteen members of our group.

Although our Theatre Group is only small and new members are needed, it is very popular around Wagga and is becoming known in the small towns in the area. We have already travelled to Coolamon to perform, and have a future engagement in Gundagai.

Judith Constable

Wisemove

Last year, I participated in a program called *Wisemove*, presented by the Wagga Wagga Women's Health Centre in conjunction with the Women's Health Clinic.

Wisemove is a program to "enhance self-esteem and health through physical activity", and is designed for women over 50.

The program ran for five weeks, with two two-hourly sessions a week and one full day. Each session consisted of an education component as well as some gentle exercise. Some of the educational sessions covered were:

Goal Setting and Getting Started, in conjunction with an individual exercise program

Injury prevention and personal safety

Nutrition and body comfort, motivation and self-esteem

Stress management and relaxation, program management.

The exercise component included walking, gentle exercise to music, Dru Yoga, Aqua Aerobics, Croquet, Gym visit, Line Dancing and Tai Chi. The idea was to give participants an introduction to the various physical activities which are available in Wagga.

The final session was a day trip by bus to a working farm approximately 30 minutes out of Wagga.

We enjoyed a day of exercise and group activities as well as delicious food.

I spoke at one of the meetings on Wagga Wagga OWN's future Wellness project starting in April 2004 within the grounds of the Base Hospital. All were interested and hopefully some or all of them will come along to our various activities.

Judith Constable

Wisemove was designed by Womensport and Recreation in SA and the Office for Recreation and Sport, South Australia. If you wish to know more about *Wisemove*, a Course Organiser Kit can be obtained from the Women's Participation Workshop Program (03) 9699 1263. (Ed.)

Staying Alive

Drivers, passengers and pedestrians are at risk every time we use the roads, and as we get older, our risk of being involved in an accident increases.

Are you interested in how to stay safe as a driver, a passenger and a pedestrian?

The NRMA has a discussion-based presentation offered free of charge to groups of older people in metropolitan Sydney, Illawarra, Newcastle, Central Coast and Blue Mountains.

Many older people have participated in the program, called *Years Ahead Road Safety Awareness*, during the past four years.

If you are interested in a presentation at OWN Sydney, please let Joy Ross know (9247 7046) and a program can be organised.

An eco-friendly lifestyle

Remember Meg Bishop, who was a project worker with OWN Australia for a number years? Well, Meg has recently finished work on a project for the Local Community Services Association (LCSA) called *The Eco-friendly Communities Project*. In *The Eco-friendly Communities* kit, which Meg used as a basis for discussions across NSW, there is practical advice for individuals as well as information on sustainability for organisations.

The Kit suggests we take a moment to reflect on our everyday activities and their environmental impact. Think about a normal day. You get out of bed in the morning, go to the loo and flush the toilet. Is it dual flush? Next you shower. Have you got an energy efficient shower-head? These shower-heads save both water and energy. You have breakfast. Do you compost and recycle? Off you go to a class, to your volunteer work or to visit a friend. How do you get there? Could you walk, did you use public transport? You arrive. Has someone hosed down out the front? Where does the dirty water go? Are there sprinklers on to water the garden? Are the plants native to the area? Have they been mulched? Has the garbage been put out? Is it recycled? Composted? You have your first coffee of the day. Has the hot water been on all night?

The future is not a place we are going to, but a place we are creating.

The paths to it are not found but made.

The making of these paths changes both the maker and the destination.

(Motto of the Australian Commission for the Future)

If you want to find out more about local sustainability projects in

your area, contact your local Community or Neighbourhood Centre at www.lcsa.org.au or phone Freecall 1800 646 545.



Joy Ross

An Un-Funny Thing Happened to Me on the Way to OWN

When waiting at the bus stop outside the Queen Victoria Building for the 431 or 433, which arrive at lengthy irregular intervals, it's very annoying to have a bus swing out from the back of a queue of buses and go right past the bus stop. Not very many of our members are fit enough to go racing up to the end of the bus queue to catch a bus before it leaves. Many times I, and others, have been left standing at the bus stop waving in vain at the departing bus. This is no laughing matter.

On behalf of OWN Sydney, we wrote to the Minister of Transport, Michael Costa, protesting this incorrect practice and the subsequent inconvenience of having to wait again and fret at being late for an appointment or a meeting.

To sum up the reply we recently received, State Transit says it is policy for bus operators to pull into the allocated bus stops or within close proximity. State Transit has reminded all Millers Point bus drivers of this obligation, and State Transit is conducting trials allowing only a small number of buses to queue at bus stops.

We are also welcome to contact Brian Mander, State Transit's Leichhardt Depot Manager, on 9582 5929 for further information

or about further concerns. This could be useful if we need to make a direct comment.

It's early days to know if the correct policy will be carried out. In the meantime, what about other members of OWN, or indeed any other passengers on different routes who have experienced this kind of annoyance? Get it off your chest and complain. You never know, it might have an effect, and your complaint might make a difference.

Louise Anike

The EDNA AWARDS – recognising feminist contribution

Edna Ryan was a shrewd political strategist who inspired all who met her with her warmth, wit and optimism, great intelligence, common sense and unquenchable energy. She trained countless women in the art of politics and encouraged others to become trade union activists. Edna achieved national prominence in 1974 when she presented the WEL submission to the National Wage Case, arguing that women should receive the same minimum rate of pay as men.

When she died in 1997, it was decided to set up an event to celebrate not only her own life but also the achievements of other determined women. The **EDNA AWARDS** were established in 1998 to recognise feminist activities by women prepared to make their lives political. The awards are presented in ten categories, including media, the workforce, government, arts, mentoring, and for making it against the odds.

The date, venue and cost details of the Award night will be in the April edition of *OWN Matters*.

For more information and/or a nomination form, contact WEL NSW, 66 Albion Street, Surry Hills 2010, phone 9212.4374 or email welnsw@mail.comcen.com.au

Thirty Three Years of Adventure Holidays: *HOW THEY BEGAN*

My life has been sustained by strong friendships with women during a long career as a hospital biochemist and enriched by more than thirty years of adventure holidays with my friend and colleague, Mary Potter.

Our first adventure was in 1971. Mary was 44, strong and skilful in outdoor pursuits, as ex-hockey players are, and I was 29, the first-born of 'bushwalking' parents, although inexperienced myself.

Mary suggested a trip to the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. Since we were both working as research scientists at the time, we began to prepare for the trip by pursuing our own 'line of research'. Mary looked up all she could about geology and plants and gathered relevant maps, while I read about indigenous and European history and checked tourist information. We purchased the few reference books which were available at the time and carried them in a small suitcase under the back seat of Mary's VW station wagon. With each piece of information and growing knowledge, our excitement grew.

Those three weeks away were a stunning experience for us both. We were both so used to populated towns and lush green views along the East Coast and here were the Flinders Ranges, remote and dry and made starker by the stone ruins of abandoned properties scattered along the route up from Quorn or Carrieton. The tourist industry had not developed in the region so we felt that we were 'discovering' places like the little old pub at Blinman, where we were the only overnight guests. Further to the north-east the new owners of Arkaroola Station actively encouraged the collection of gem-stones and

minerals at The Pinnacles, and suggested day trips like the very bumpy drive out to the radio-active Paralana Hot Springs. An even bumpier circumnavigation of the mysterious Gammon Ranges saw us camping beside the station track while keeping our eyes peeled for the renowned aggressive owner. We found abandoned copper mines with elegant brick chimney stacks, flew across Lake Torrens to the opal-mining town of Andamooka and bushwalked to the top of Mt. John and along the floor of Wilpena Pound to Edeowie Gorge. On our first 4WD adventure, a Ridge Top Tour to Freeling Heights, organised by an experienced fellow from Arkaroola Station, we

were terrified when he drove up a slope of about 1 in 3. I was convinced that we'd slip backwards downhill any minute!

Both of us fell in love with the outback. That first adventure set the pattern for all the adventure trips that followed, many of them much longer. We each continued to do our 'research' beforehand and the joy of expectation and discovery has never diminished. We take our time to walk through the country to smell, listen and observe, and once home we put on slide shows for friends, extending and sharing our pleasure. How could we have guessed, in 1971, how many, many amazing adventures would follow!

Judith Hammond

(Judith has agreed to write about some of their adventures in future issues of *OWN Matters*. Ed.)

Dancing for the Mind?

Playing mental games or going ballroom dancing (and playing the drums?) may keep your mind in good shape. Older people who frequently read, do crossword puzzles, practise a musical instrument or play board games cut their risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia by nearly two-thirds, compared with people who seldom do such activities.

The research, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, stems from a long-term study of people aged over 75 and is the latest to buttress the 'use it or lose it' theory of staying mentally sharp.

Previous attempts to test this theory have met with controversy because researchers had no way of telling if people who avoided mentally challenging activities were doing so because they were already in the early stages of Alzheimer's. But neurologist, Joe Verghese, and his colleagues at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, adjusted for that potential complication by following hundreds of elderly volunteers for more than twenty years.

More research is needed to confirm the findings and better understand the influence that genetics, physical activity and mental challenges play in controlling the timing of Alzheimer's. But the suggestion that these activities, at the very least, can enhance our quality of life and might just do more than that, is certainly worth thinking about.

For more information about the study, see the *New England Journal of Medicine*, 2003:378:2508-2516 or go to www.hpr1.com/wellness.htm

Can't get to sleep?

You've turned off the light, snuggled under the doona, closed your eyes, but sleep just won't come. It's so frustrating! It always seems to happen at the wrong time, like when you need to be particularly alert and active the next day.

Insomnia, which includes restless and disturbed sleep, difficulty in falling asleep, a reduction in the

...loss of sleep impairs your ability to function well during the day

usual time spent sleeping and complete wakefulness, is a common experience in older people.

However, while most of us need the seven or eight hours sleep a night, some adults are short sleepers and function quite well on only three or four hours.

So, how do you know if you suffer from insomnia? The answer is, *if loss of sleep impairs your ability to function well during the day.*

As well as the usual causes – sleeping in a strange place, too much alcohol or coffee at night, etc. – insomnia can result from stress, medication side effects, depression, or underlying health problems such as arthritis, kidney disease, heart failure, asthma, sleep apnea, narcolepsy, restless legs syndrome, Parkinson's disease and hyperthyroidism.

Once insomnia occurs, a 'habit' or pattern can develop which can be difficult to break. However, there are some things you can try. First of all, talk to your doctor. Together you can identify possible reasons for your sleeping difficulty and eliminate health issues as a possible cause.

Getting plenty of exercise can help – the increased activity helps to increase the depth of your sleep – and avoid daytime and evening

napping. Whenever you feel sleepy, during the day or in the early evening, distract yourself by changing to a new activity. Cut out tea, coffee or chocolate after 6 pm and try to eat smaller evening meals, preferably before 8 pm. Some people find that a hot milky drink and a piece of toast before going to bed helps. Try to establish a routine at bedtime. When you go to bed, don't listen to the radio or watch TV in bed. It's important to associate your

bedroom with sleep. If after 10 to 15 minutes you cannot get off to sleep, get out of bed and leave the bedroom, go to your sitting room and watch TV or read. When you feel sleepy again, return to bed.

The last resort should be medication. Drugs for insomnia (tranquilisers) are very addictive if used regularly and quickly lose their effectiveness. Some people find herbal medications relieve insomnia and break the habit of sleeplessness, although they too shouldn't be taken regularly.

Other medications such as Sleepwell and Restavit, which are antihistamine sedatives and available without a prescription, can also be useful to break the habit or to use on rare occasions. A word of caution, though: it is very important to use these over-the-counter drugs under strict medical supervision if you suffer from asthma, narrow angle glaucoma, urinary retention, high blood pressure or cardiovascular disorders. Even if you are well, they should be used with caution.

'Curing' insomnia is much easier said than done, as many of us know. Hopefully, some of these ideas and tips will work for you. If you've found something that really works for you, let us know so we can pass the word around.

Dorothy Cora

Politicians

(Sung to the tune of *Rum and Coca Cola*)

In the House of Parliament
Grown men spray their body scent,
Each one with his male display
Struts up and down
While the public pay.

Chorus: Games, games, games

Oh, what a shame
Fighting, yelling, swearing,
What price fame?
Peter Costello leads the bunch,
Hits us with his budget crunch,
The poor and underprivileged pay,
While the rich continue
To make hay.

Chorus: Games, games, games

Johnny Howard has a tête-à-tête
With Kerry Packer, who's his mate,
Total media control is one of his
ploys,
Brainwash the public,
It's jobs for the boys.

Lucy Porter

Voice your views

The Centre for Refugee Research and the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women are coordinating a series of State Caravans, a National Human Rights Court and a National Workshop from March to June.

The idea is to provide opportunities for women from grassroots women's organisations and government organisations to voice their views on contemporary issues affecting women, and to review the achievements of the Australian Sex Discrimination Act 1984. Women's views will inform the Asia Pacific Regional Beijing Plus 10 process in Bangkok in September 2004.

For more info please telephone me on 9385 1859 or email c.shaw@unsw.edu.au

Carole Shaw

Building peace, goodwill and understanding

Servas Australia is a non-profit organisation that operates an international cooperative system of hosts and travellers. Ever since 1948, they have tried to foster world peace, goodwill and understanding by providing travellers with a way to interact with people of other cultures and backgrounds.

Here's how it works: you host (for a maximum of two nights) by offering visitors free board and accommodation, as well as sharing information about your country with them.

Travellers carry a Servas Letter of Introduction, which includes their photographs, so that you can be assured of their bona fides. You may choose to show your visitors around, but you are not obligated to do so.

Your details are printed in a host list for Australia. Here you can specify such things as minimum period of advance notice; non-smoking; total number of people you are prepared to host; men and/or women; whether you accept children or not; whether your guests need bring sleeping bags; or any other preferences. If you don't wish to have people stay overnight, you can nominate to be a day-only host.

You are not obligated to accept a traveller who contacts you, and

you may host as often as it suits you.

I can recommend this idea to you, as our experiences have been positive and enjoyable. My husband and I have been members of Servas Australia for several years and have greatly enjoyed hosting visitors from many countries.

Our last trip to Europe was greatly enhanced by the chance to stay with six different hosts in France. We had a deeper appreciation of

local issues because of the opportunity to talk with our hosts in each location.

So, if you are interested in being a Servas host, contact Marian Weston, 02 9949 3802. Or if you prefer to use the service as a traveller, contact Anne Mortel, 02 9631 9869.

For additional information, you might want to check Servas International's website:

www.servas.org.

Pat Carlton

Achieving Aboriginal Women

On Australia Day, 2004, Ivy Makintini Stewart achieved a Premier's Award for Outstanding Community Service. In her eighties, Mrs. Stewart is the eldest of the founding members of the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, a Senior Aboriginal Women's Council of Coober Pedy, formed in the 1980s to preserve traditional Aboriginal culture. Because of their previous experience of the Emu/Maralinga nuclear explosions in the 1950s, these elders have led a major national campaign in opposition to the federal government's plan to build a national nuclear waste dump in South Australia. In 2003, Mrs. Eileen Brown, of the same group, was awarded an Order of Australia, and Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Eileen Wingfield won the prestigious international Goldman Prize for environmental campaigners in the Pacific region. Hooray for older women!

But wait, there's more...

Tiwi Islander, Marion Scrymgour, Member for Arafura in the Northern Territory, is Australia's first and only female Indigenous government minister. Her portfolios include Family and Community Services, Environment and Heritage, and assisting the Chief Minister on Young Territorians, Women's Policy and Senior Territorians. Other Indigenous women parliamentarians include Carol Martin (ALP), the first Aboriginal woman to be elected to any Australian parliament (WA), in 2001; Kathryn Hay (ALP), first Aboriginal person to be elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly, in 2002; and Linda Burney (ALP), first Aboriginal person to be elected to the NSW parliament, in 2003.

Rachael Maza, well-known actor and presenter of Message Stick on ABC television, received a special award recently – the 2003 Uncle Bob Maza Memorial Award for Outstanding Contribution to Victorian Indigenous Theatre.

We'll keep you posted on the next lot of high achieving Indigenous women!

Pat Zinn

Tales My Mother Told Me

Have you got a special story about or told to you by your mother or grandmother? It might be a story of courage, endurance or love. It might be a story of wisdom or one that makes you laugh every time you think of it. If you have a story you would like to share enter it on www.ctc.nsw.gov.au/stories.

NOTICES

Bequests to the Older Women's Network

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

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

Older Women's Network NSW

or the

*Older Women's Network,
Sydney.*

Option No. 1

I devise the sum of \$
to the Older Women Network
for the general purpose of the
Older Women's Network OR
the specific purpose of
.....
such purpose being consistent
with the aims and objectives of
the Older Women's Network, to
be administered by the Older
Women's Network.

Option No 2

(for a proportional bequest)
I give to the Older Women's
Network for its general
purpose or the specific
purpose of
...% of my estate (or ...% of
the rest of my estate).

**The gift you make to the
Older Women's Network
will be an enduring record
of your generosity.**

Women in Black

Women in Black silent vigils for peace and justice take place on the first Thursday of the month, on the steps of Sydney Town Hall, 5.30 - 6.30 pm.

For some months last year we held weekly vigils. We have had some difficulty spreading the word that we have now gone back to monthly vigils, and are sorry if some women have turned up to find there was no vigil.



Women's History Month

At www.triviumpublishing.com/womenshistorymonth you can click on 'discussion' to join a discussion forum during March on topics such as medieval women in modern fiction; women in science; writing women's stories; and Indigenous women's history. Everyone is welcome to participate, but you must register on the website first.



International Women's Development Agency Annual Breakfast

13 March 2004 Lower Town Hall
8:00am for 8:30am start and
finish around 10:30 so we can join
the IWD march to Hyde Park at
11:00am.

Come and enjoy a great line-up of speakers and entertainment including author Rachael Oakes-Ash and human rights barrister Georgina Costello. The breakfast will be raising money for preventive education in communities on the Thai-Burma border to stop the trafficking of young girls. Ph: 1300 139 588 to book tickets @ \$35 each.

Centre for Refugee Research

The Centre for Refugee Research (CRR) and the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women (ANCORW) are coordinating a series of State Caravans, a National Human Rights Court and a National Workshop from March to June 2004.

The idea is to provide opportunities for women from grassroots women's organisations and government organisations to voice their views on contemporary issues effecting women, and to review the achievements of the Australian *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*. Women's views will inform input into the Asia Pacific Regional Beijing Plus 10 process in Bangkok in September 2004.

For further information about the project please email Carole Shaw at c.shaw@unsw.edu.au or telephone 9385 1859 – The Centre for Refugee Research, UNSW, Sydney 2052.



Meditation and Discussion Group for older women.

Wednesdays, 10.30am to 12.30pm,
at the Sydney Buddhist Centre, 24
Enmore Rd, Newtown close to
Newtown Railway Station. More
information, Sue Johnson.



Bus Service to Hickson Road

Bus number 430, as well as the existing 431 and 433, now runs from the QVB down George Street and through to Millers Point Post Office, down Dalgety Street and then to Hickson Road. The bus will run every 20 minutes Monday to Friday and every 30 minutes on weekends.

NOTICES

Dealing With Grief & Loss

You are invited to a series of workshops facilitated by Mim Fox, Social Worker from the Bankstown Palliative Care Team to explore the grieving process, your experiences of grief and loss, and the role it plays in your life.

The workshops, presented by the Older Women's Network Bankstown Wellness Centre and Bankstown Palliative Care Team, will also help to determine the bereavement needs that exist for the people of Bankstown.

11.15 am – 12.45 pm on Tuesday 16 March, Tuesday 23 March and Tuesday 30 March.

Bankstown OWN Wellness Centre, Bankstown Police & Community Youth Club, Cnr French Avenue and Meredith Street, Bankstown.

The workshops are open to women aged 50 years and over. You will need to book, so please phone Jan Malley on 9708 2245 by 8 March 2004.



Human Rights and Mental Health

One-day Conference with
Discussion Forums
8 March 2004, 9am -6pm
NSW Parliament House

Speakers will include The Hon. Dr. Carmen Lawrence MHR, Dr. Eileen Pittaway, Sen. Andrew Bartlett, Ms Lyn Bender, Hon. Dr. Meredith Burgmann MLC, and various experts and survivors.

Topics will include Human Rights and Mental Health, Freedom of Expression and Speech, Rights in the Workplace, Women's Rights, Anti-discrimination, Family and Children's Rights, Torture and Punishment.

More info phone 9764 1743 or 0423 227 990

Sydney OWN

Film Discussion Group

1.30pm, Monday, 8 March,

Films for discussion at the next meeting are: *The Station Agent*, *Big Fish*, and *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*.

75 Windmill Street. All welcome.

Book Launch

11.30am, Thursday, 11 March

Join us for the launch of Dorothy Cox's, *A One-off Woman: Recollections of a Life Lived Full*

Wine and cheese will be served. Bring a sandwich and stay to lunch and chat.

87 Lower Fort Street. All welcome.

IWD Breakfast at OWN

8.30am to 10.15am, Saturday, 13 March

Join us for a delicious IWD breakfast, fit for OWNers. Breakfast will be provided.

Cost: \$5 donation – more if you can, less if you can't.

Wear your best purple, green and white, and walk behind our banner, leaving Town Hall for Hyde Park at 11 am.

87 Lower Fort Street. All welcome.

Dorothy Rowe Guest Speaker

10.45am for morning tea at 11am, Friday, 19 March

The topic of Dorothy Rowe's talk is *Good Women Get Depressed, but being bad isn't the answer*.

Dorothy is an eminent clinical psychologist of world renown. Since 1986 she has devoted her time to writing, researching and teaching. Her work is concerned with how we create meaning and how we communicate. "Dorothy's appeal rests on a clarity of vision, a deep-seated rationalism, and an eye, like Jane Austen's, for satire. Her work...forces you to think for yourself, challenge received ideas and take responsibility for your own life." (*Guardian*)

Mott Hall, Argyle Street. All welcome.

DISCLAIMER

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

NEWSLETTER TEAM

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

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