



OWN MATTERS

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

No. 29 May 2004

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An insult to women?

In his April mini-budget, Treasurer Michael Egan, announced that the Department for Women will be replaced by an Office for Women and 'elevated' to the Premier's Department on 1 July 2004.

The savings associated with the restructure are estimated to be \$2.5 million in 2004-5 rising to \$4 million the following year. The Department for Women's current budget is \$5.7million, including funding of \$1 million for the Women's Grants Program.

Over the years, the Older Women's Network's association with the Department for Women has been mutually rewarding and extremely positive. The Theatre Group has accompanied departmental staff on two *Women on Wheels* tours in NSW and OWN has received two funding grants through the Department's innovative Women's Grants Program. The first was a large grant in 1996 for an Older Women and Decision-Making project and the second, a smaller grant, was used to develop a comprehensive database to keep track of our membership details, advocacy interests and general resources.

The Department for Women has made a considerable contribution to the women of NSW through its Women's Grants Program, which funds groups, especially those with an Indigenous or migrant focus, to undertake special projects that would not otherwise have been funded. The NSW Council of Services (NCOSS) has been seeking assurances from the Premier and the Treasurer that the \$1 million Women's Grants Program will remain intact.

The Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) is also seeking commitments from the Premier and Cabinet Office that the new arrangements will not be a downgrading but will enhance the effectiveness and centrality of the research and advisory role that has been a core function of the Department for Women. The proposed downsizing to becoming a unit in the Premier's Department could be seen as insulting to women and an indication that the government is no longer interested in listening to our voices.

If you have personal knowledge about the work of the Department, please write to women parliamentarians asking them to take a united stand on behalf of women in NSW and demanding that the same level of funding is maintained for the new Office for Women.

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

Dental health *in decay*

Few people realise that the number one health condition in Australia is not heart disease or cancer, but tooth decay, closely followed by loss of all teeth at number three, and advanced gum disease at number five.

Half a million Australians are unable to access a dentist for even basic care. With very limited public dental services on offer, by the time an appointment comes around (some have waited up to five years for the privilege) decay is often so entrenched, removal of affected teeth is the only option.

For those affected by loss of teeth, the consequences are serious:

- isolation (and therefore increased risk of mental health problems) because of embarrassment about changes to appearance
- malnutrition, as it becomes harder to eat (according to ACOSS one third of people using public dental services report avoiding eating some foods because of bad teeth or gums)
- illness such as mouth infections which can spread to the lungs, the blood and the arteries, and might even increase the risk of heart disease.

Dental services are expensive. While some services provide free or low-cost care for concession cardholders, demand for services far outstrips the supply and there are long waiting lists for basic care. Many people simply give up.

Planned changes to Medicare mean Medicare will cover dentists for the first time, but only for patients with chronic health problems like diabetes and heart disease. And it will only cover limited procedures. The new scheme relies on a doctor's referral to a dentist for up to three consultations, for which the government will refund \$220. This is unlikely to cover the normal fees charged by dentists.

The situation will get worse unless the Commonwealth Dental Health Program, which gave public patients subsidised access to private dentists, is re-introduced. For the half a million Australians awaiting services, change can't come soon enough.

Extracted from an article by Peter Lavelle. Read the full article at www.abc.net.au/health/regions/features/dental/default.htm

Note: The NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) is establishing a campaign around oral health issues for the next Federal election and is looking for people who would be interested in being on the campaign sub-committee.

The key strategies for the sub-committee will include determining the best layout for an oral health kit, deciding on the key issues to be covered in the kit and researching evidence to support these areas. A draft of the kit will be circulate to the Oral Health Alliance (OWN is represented on this committee) for feedback. The campaign will then go ahead with media releases and launch of the kit. Contact Samantha Edmonds on 9211 2599 or email her samantha@ncoss.org.au if you would like more information.

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

We are still receiving accolades for our wonderful Seniors Week concert in March. The Management Team has expressed its sincere thanks to Dorothy Cora for her coordinating skills and the tremendous effort she put into supporting the great team who collectively made this event such a success.

Our next big event, the State Conference, is scheduled for 19 and 20 July. One big headache this year is a shortage of money. In past years, two delegates from each group have had their accommodation and meals fully paid by OWN NSW, while non-delegates have been subsidised for refreshments, lunch and the evening happy hour.

Feedback from conference participants last year included a very strong preference for a conference dinner to replace the cocktail party, which we have had for many years because it was a cheaper option. At this stage, it appears that OWN NSW may have to ask groups to contribute something towards their delegates attending the conference, and we may have to withdraw the subsidy for non-delegates. We will be discussing this further with group

representatives at the NSW Quarterly meeting on Tuesday 11 May.

On a positive note, Jackie Loebe, hilarious radio and stage comedienne, has generously agreed to be our after dinner guest 'speaker' and we are currently negotiating with a couple of very interesting women to open the conference. Workshops are always popular, and once again we are asking members of all groups for their creative suggestions.

The Management Team has been exploring issues related to ownership of written material. Many OWN members, and our paid workers, write original material at OWN which is used in a variety of ways to promote our aims and objectives. Our current policy on Authorship/Intellectual Property Rights covers our paid workers, but we realise there is a need for a slightly different policy to cover material produced by members, and used by OWN. We are currently working on this policy.

Insurance is always on the agenda for non-government organisations and Kris Ferguson, our Office Manager, has agreed to investigate

OWN's responsibilities around different insurance options. She recently attended a one-day insurance workshop organised by NCOSS and will provide us with a report on the advice that participants were offered about public liability and other forms of compulsory insurance.

A troubling issue back on the agenda is the push for compulsory payment of bonds for entry to nursing homes. An article by Betty Johnson on p. 4 outlines the issues very clearly. Please let us know what your concerns are about compulsory bonds so that we can make representation to appropriate government departments and non-government agencies.

Welcome to Blacktown OWN, our twentieth OWN groups in NSW. We wish them every success as they enthusiastically set about developing an identity for themselves based on the needs and interests of older women in that area. The group is fortunate in having the active support of Pam Hawkins who is the Aged Planner with Blacktown City Council.

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

Assistant Membership Volunteer Needed

Our hardworking membership volunteer, Ermes Solari, needs another volunteer to share her ever-increasing workload. Ermes takes full responsibility for maintaining our membership and newsletter subscriptions database, as well as balancing all monies received, and preparing it for banking.

Your previous office/accounts experience would be an advantage, but is not essential. Our database is very user-friendly, so computer experience is also not essential. We are very happy to provide on the job training for any member who thinks she would be interested in learning new skills or using her existing skills.

Generally, Ermes works one day a week, but June and July are very busy months, as all our subscriptions are due for renewal. Assistance is urgently needed before then. If you are interested, or would like to discuss the job further, please call either Ermes or Kris Ferguson at the office, on 9247 7046.

AGED CARE - Who should pay?

The idea of compulsory bonds for entry into nursing homes is once again on the agenda. In 1997, the last time a substantial bond was suggested for access to high-care beds, there was a public outcry and the idea was scrapped.

Some of the concerns against a compulsory high-care accommodation bond in the past were:

- Older people should not have to pay for what is a health care service – one that would be free if it were provided in a hospital
- In the USA and the UK, older people were being dumped anonymously on nursing home doorsteps rather than have the family home sold to pay a bond.
- Bonds would not address the shortfall in capital funding for nursing homes and would result in a two-tier system with those facilities in higher socio-economic areas attracting more wealthy residents able to pay, while facilities in lower socio-economic areas would become increasingly run down.
- Older people would have to make a decision about what to do at a particularly vulnerable time in their lives.

The arguments for a compulsory bond for entry into Nursing Homes are simplistic and based on the assumption that the older, dependent population is likely to increase, while the younger population will decrease. Many research reports have questioned this argument, but have been ignored. Another argument is that the bond system we have now is not equitable. For example, if you have dementia and you are classified level five, which means you are low care, you are liable to pay a bond even if you are on modest assets. But if you have dementia and you are classified level four, one level higher, that is high care. In this case, you are not liable for a bond, even if you have a lot of assets. Some providers are not in favour of a bond because of the time taken in administering it, especially when people leave after a short stay.

There are alternatives to the 'user-pays' system. For instance, a Medicare Levy of 1% would adequately cover increased costs for buildings.

Low care facilities were allowed to charge accommodation bonds because they were originally set up as alternative housing for older people in need. Accommodation bonds were introduced on the assumption that people were replacing one form of accommodation for another, that is, they could then sell their home. A five-year accommodation charge was imposed on high care nursing homes in 1998, but for this, people do not have to sell their homes.

A nation-wide report into an innovative rehabilitation project for frail older people over the age of 70 reports a possible 50% increase in the number of older people who can go home from hospitals and from nursing homes. But what if your home has been sold?

Both sides of politics have baulked on the question of up-front fees for high-care beds, but how long before they change their minds?

Please write and let me know what your thoughts are on this complex issue so that I can put your point of view in the many consumer forums and networks with which I am involved.

Betty Johnson

Women With Disability Network NSW

The Physical Disability Council of NSW has been awarded a grant by the NSW Department For Women to establish a Women With Disability Network in NSW.

Working with its organisational partner, the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association, the Network will support participants to create and sustain an autonomous network that opens up a space for women with disability to come together as a force for change.

In New South Wales more than half of all people with disability are women, and almost 20 per cent of all women have a disability.

If you want to know more about plans to develop the Network, contact Sharon:

po@pdcnsw.org.au Freecall - 1800 688 831 Tel: 02 9552 1606

Recognising a stroke

This might be a lifesaver if we can remember the three questions!

Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. The stroke victim may suffer brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke. Now doctors say any bystander can recognise a stroke by asking three simple questions:

ask the person to smile.

ask the person to raise both arms.

ask the person to speak a simple sentence.

If he or she has trouble with any of these tasks, call 000 immediately and describe the symptoms to the operator. Widespread use of this test could result in prompt diagnosis and treatment of the stroke, and prevent brain damage.

Source: **www.truthorfiction.com/rumors/s/stroke-test.htm**

A Way of Living

I had finally obtained a copy of John le Carre's new book, *Absolute Friends*, whereupon I threw myself into my armchair to begin it. Four hours later I hurried to the kitchen, made coffee and a sandwich, went to the loo and back to my book. Two hours later reason prevailed and I put the book down. But I finished it during the night and the next day.

At coffee with a friend next morning I confessed to feeling guilty about having read for the whole day. She asked why I felt guilty. Erudite, she quoted J.L. Borges answering an interviewer who asked him if he did not regret having spent more time reading than living. The answer was, "There are many ways of living, and reading is one of them. When you are reading, you are living and when you are dreaming, you are living also."

Why shouldn't we read all day?
Why do we feel guilty about it?

Why do we feel we must fill our retirement with activities and commitments, with clubs, outings, cooking classes, making things...just keeping ourselves 'busy'? My friend and I, after a few more coffees and much philosophical meandering, have opted for doing exactly what we like, or even judiciously *Doing Nothing*.

How did it come about, this need to keep busy all the time when, if you think about it, it is just not

necessary? We are victims of the Puritan Work Ethic, a carry-over from the dreadful days of the Reformation, when God demanded that to get to Heaven life on earth had to be harsh, hard working and free of pleasure. It was an ethic that the Pilgrim Fathers took with them to the New World where it has existed ever since. In England it was quickly adopted in the Industrial Revolution by the newly emerging capitalists, who needed their factory workers sober and on the production line, not dancing round the maypole on the village green or quaffing ale. This became so firmly part of the way of life in English speaking countries that it has remained in our collective conscience to this day. Margaret Thatcher is a supreme example of the 'work, never-waste-a-minute' ethic. And look what happened to her, and the miserable legacy she left behind.

Many older women, after a long working life, retire with such a hangover about 'being useful' and 'being busy' that we can't spend a day doing nothing without feeling guilty. Well, after the kaffee klatz with my friend, I am resolved to read, dream, think, sit under a tree in my garden and watch the lorikeets and never again feel guilty about doing nothing.

In fact, I am going to have Do Nothing Days whenever I feel like it.

Muriel Hortin

Howard's Plan for Medicare

Tanya Plibersek, Federal Member for Sydney, suggests that the Liberal Government has had no commitment to Medicare and bulk-billing in the past. She quotes John Howard speaking on Radio 2GB on 1 June 1987: "We will be proposing changes to Medicare which amount to its de facto dismantling... we'll pull it right apart."

Gender and Heart Attack

According to the American Heart Association, one in two women will die of heart and blood vessel disease, compared to one in 25 dying of breast cancer.

Dr Cynthia Arslanian-Engoren, PhD and Assistant Professor of Nursing at the University of Michigan, has found that women are at equal risk of having heart attacks as men.

One of the problems she sees is that women are not good at recognising they've got heart disease and, surprisingly, nor are many nurses in emergency departments.

Some statistics show that when women do get a heart attack, they do worse than men in terms of survival rates. This is because most treatment is male-focused, that is, diagnosis is made in relation to chest pain and not geared to the non-typical symptoms of women.

The problem is that while women *may* present with chest pain, they tend not to. Women have different symptoms. They tend to be short of breath and not have crushing chest pain. They tend to be fatigued and to complain of a pressure in their chest or arms, but not a pain.

The majority of women in a study conducted by Dr Arslanian-Engoren tended to minimise their symptoms, thinking that they are related to a strained muscle or a hiatal hernia.

The big dilemma facing older women with symptoms that come out of the blue, or which become a lot worse, is whether to head for help at your nearest emergency department or wait...and see. The short answer to this dilemma is, don't wait.

**Extract from *The Health Report*,
Radio National, 15 March 2004**

Don't Hold Pain in Your Heart

One Tuesday afternoon my son picked me up from Waterloo to take me to Narrabeen Lakes, where he and his wife and three children were holidaying in their new tent. Tony and Tina went out one morning and left me with the three kids.

I said to them, "C'mon, you kids, we're going to have a little serious talk." To Michael, the 16-year old being fostered by my son and his wife, I said, "What would you say to the troubled kids at Redfern?" Michael said, "I don't know what I'd say, Auntie Betty. What could I say?"

I said, "You can tell the children that you was a wild black kid up in Dubbo when you were fourteen, runnin' wild and stealin', and bored, with no real guidance and a need for your parents to be around, and that you're very thankful for our culture where families take Koori kids and look after them, like Uncle Tony did with you. Since you've been living here for two year with Uncle Tony and Auntie Tina, it's been great for you. You have your own room, you have lots of things, like a TV, a lounge, clothes, a bike, and you

have an after-school job which Auntie Tina organised for you. And your uncle and aunt encourage you to care about your schoolwork, and you're very happy here, aren't you?"

Michael said, "Yes. Gee, Auntie Betty, I never thought about that before, and I wouldn't have known how to put it into words. Thanks for telling me. I'm glad Uncle Tony and Auntie Tina saved me from being a troubled kid like so many of the kids at Redfern."

Then I turned to my granddaughter, Chloe, of seven years, and I said, "What would you say to the troubled kids of Redfern, baby?" Chloe, pointing her finger and waving it, said, "Now look, you kids. You know what's right and you know what's wrong. Do you hear me? And you shouldn't do it. All right?" (I can see myself in my granddaughter.)

Then I turned to Jay, my grandson, who is a quiet nine-year-old, and I said, "What would you say, my little grandson, to these kids?" At first, Jay, being quite shy, said, "I don't know, Little Nanny." Then he said,

"Don't ever hold any pain in your heart. You must talk about it, otherwise you get very sick. My Little Nanny told me that."

Then I said thank you to the kids.

And all this time, Tony and Tina sat outside in the kitchen part of the tent, unseen. They heard everything. Tony said to Tina that he was pleased Mum was talking to Michael like that to remind Michael how much better off he is than a lot of the Redfern kids, and to value what he has with us compared with what he would have had in Dubbo. They laughed at what Chloe had to say, and they were teary at what Jay had to say.

On the drive home, Tony thanked me very much for how I talked to the kids. He said, "You're good, Mum, like that."

As a storyteller, I often do role-plays with my grannies (grandbabies). Even now, with my stories today, my granddaughter has to help me, and wants to finish them for me. For example, Chloe interrupts. "Now I want to say where the possum's got to." Is this a new storyteller coming up? Jay, on the other hand, is the deep thinker and likes me to finish my own stories without interruptions from his sister.

Betty Little

The story behind the place name

If you'd told me a few years ago I'd be writing a book about Australian place names, I'd have said "not likely!" But that was then. And this is now – and it's precisely what I'm doing this year.

Although as a culture we're primarily 'now-' and 'future'-oriented, we have a past. To state the obvious, people were here before us. Yet you can live all your life in Bathurst or Fremantle or Wollongong and never know why they're named as they are. I've come to see place names as a window on the world of the people who were here before us. Sometimes, the name is the most 'actively living' remnant of that world. Sometimes, it's barely all that's left and is therefore a natural place to start. And,

while it's a truism, where there are/were people, there are/were stories. The criterion for inclusion in this book is the human interest of the story behind the place name. This doesn't mean the stories have to have been conclusively verified. There are over a dozen theories, for example, about how Dee Why got its name!

Anyone with knowledge of a place name with an interesting story behind it, is invited to contact me at ruth@laraconsultancy or PO Box 8 Waverley NSW 2024. Australia.

Ruth Wajnryb

This is a shorter version of an article in *Placenames Australia* March 2004.

SKIing in the BIG CITY

“SPENDING THE KIDS INHERITANCE” they call it. Seven days in a posh two bedroom serviced apartment in the heart of Sydney with swimming pool and spa, enjoying a feast of live shows, films, ferry rides, lunches on the harbour, sightseeing tours, wonderful dinners and good wine.

We were collectively fleeing health hiccups and caring or volunteering duties (we spared a thought for you all out there). “We” were Barbara, Shirley and me.

Can't afford such reckless freedom? Neither could I – my pension didn't cover extra health and household needs or holidays. I didn't want family subsidies. So I traded equity in my unit for a loan. The family applauded. “Have a life!” they said. I obeyed.

Originally we'd thought of a waterfront idyll on the South Coast. Shirley, for whom relief from caring was most needed, said, “Anywhere, even the city.” What a good idea, we thought.

From fourth floor windows we looked out on buses, cars, trucks, throngs of scurrying youthful creatures. It was exciting, and often funny. On one bus, commuters laughed at the sight a man kneeling in a building alcove, back to us, obviously having a pee. A laughing girl looked apprehensively at me for my reaction. “He's only praying,” I suggested. More mirth.

Everything fell into place for us. We scored second row seats for *Talking Heads* and *A Servant of Two Masters* – both wonderful shows. We met friends – Renate Watkinson at the Playhouse, and a couple who had elsewhere heard from Shirley what we were doing and joyfully decided to do the same thing.

Now, I'm not encouraging recklessness (oh, no!) but why don't you think about a little SKI-ing, too?

POSTSCRIPT ... Finding Peace

On one of our SKI excursions, we decided to visit The Gap at Watsons Bay. It was the first time I had been there. When I was 14, my father jumped to his death from The Gap. He was 42, a World War 1 veteran, an intelligent but tormented man whose behaviour at times frightened us, especially when he sought oblivion in drink. I have lived ever since with guilt for the relief I felt when he died.

At The Gap, I imagined him there, on that day, sober, deciding to die. Suddenly, I knew with absolute conviction that he'd made that ultimate sacrifice to free his family, particularly my mother, from the burden of his illness. The guilt lifted and I felt an overwhelmingly sense of peace within myself.

Noreen Hewett

2004 - 2005

Subscription and Membership Renewal

Members will receive a Reminder Letter early in June

A real nightmare

In England, thousands of NHS hospital patients were offered television sets beside their beds as part of a deal with a private company. It was billed as a triumph for the government's drive towards 'patient power'.

The only problem is that the TVs were not equipped with an off switch, and cast their flickering light for a fixed 15 hours a day. The sets come on automatically at 6am or 7am and close down at 10pm. Patients pay £3.20 a day (around \$7), with reduced rates for the over-60s.

The failure to provide an off button was said to be 'an accident'. The company which installed the TVs said they could disable the system, but that meant the TV could not be turned back on again.

Guardian Health News

It's true!

“It is now known that elderly people continue to grow brain connections and may even replace cells as they age.” This was a statement by a leading researcher from the Australian Association of Gerontology, after a study undertaken in Sydney recently involving a group of people aged over 75.

The study also showed that participants who engaged in mentally stimulating activities while maintaining physical fitness had improved their quality of life and were less likely to suffer depression.

A good reason to join a couple of programs on OWN Sydney's Wellness on Wednesdays!

Creative Arts are offered as well as physical exercise, Tai Chi and drumming, not forgetting the ever popular and long-running Creative Dancing by the gorgeous Ellin. That's on Thursdays.

Letters to the Editor

A good judgment

Readers might be cheered to hear that there is at least one orthopaedic surgeon in Sydney who considers the efficacy of arthroscopy before going ahead with it. I suffered from bad left knee pain for more than two years. Cortisone injections gave only temporary relief. Daily Glucosamine tablets may or may not have helped. Moderate osteoarthritis, osteophytes and mild narrowing showed up on X-ray. I felt depressed, especially as my passion for outdoor adventures seemed doomed and I depended on Celebrex.

In desperation I consulted yet another orthopod who requested an MRI of the knee. (MRI shows up soft tissue damage with better resolution than X-rays, but it is very expensive and the waiting lists are long). There was a possible tear and evidence of 'wear changes'. Instead of arthroscopy to clean up the joint, which the surgeon said might help *but might also cause damage and make things worse*, he suggested a trial of specialised physiotherapy.

Voila! Eight weeks later I was relatively pain-free and it has not returned despite tough walking in rocky outback conditions. Maybe I was just lucky that the problem could be solved without invasive knee surgery. Certainly I bless the judgement of the surgeon!

Judith Hammond

Memories ...

Congratulations on the great concert, Women Centre Stage! We *Sole Sisters* enjoyed it all very much and appreciated the opportunity to 'strut our stuff' with all the other wonderful performers. Thank you also for your card – we have included it in our album of memories.

Gabrielle Snedden

Bus drivers!

I was interested to read the article in last month's *OWN Matters* re buses not pulling into the stop at the QVB.

There was an outrageous example of this yesterday morning about 9 am. My granddaughter and I were walking up and down the line of buses in an attempt to board a bus before it pulled out from the queue, when I noticed a Millers Point bus driving straight up the middle lane without even making an attempt to join the queue or to pull in at the stop, where there was a gap in traffic. Luckily, it had to stop at the traffic lights. A group of people who had been waiting at the stop and signalling in vain ran out into the middle of the road, banged on the door and shouted. After awhile, the driver opened the door and words were exchanged, following which he let them on and immediately closed the door against us and other people, who by then had also gone onto the roadway and were standing immediately behind the first group.

Thanks to your article, I knew where to complain (Brian Mander

has been replaced by Greg Travers). He asked if I had taken down the bus number and I told him it was nonsense to think I had had an opportunity to do that while standing in the roadway. My first thought was to get back to the kerb before we were run over. I also mentioned the Older Women's Network and the article in *OWN Matters* and he agreed to bring the matter to the attention of all Millers Point drivers.

Jean Price

Speakers wanted

I would like to ask if you have women who can do free lunchtime speaking seminars for the Attorney General's Department (AGD) Spokeswomen's Program.

The issues facing older women at work have been mentioned a few times lately and one of our staff saw an interview by an OWN member on Andrew Denton's *Enough Rope* last year.

We have several seminars each year held from 12.30 to 1.30 attended by AGD women.

Please contact me on 9374 3011 if you are interested.

Sue Woods

Congratulations from 'Above'

I just wanted to congratulate you all on a wonderful event. I had a lovely time and really enjoyed the performances. Such an inspiration - I can only hope I've got that much energy in a few years! I arrived just after the first performance, I think, and unfortunately had to leave just prior to the end but what I did catch was just fantastic.

Barbara Haines

Seniors Week Events Coordinator

I'm writing to thank you for your contribution to the Seniors Week program this year. *Women Centre Stage* was an important element in the overall Seniors Week program and a great credit to the wonderful work taking place in your area.

Your efforts towards the realisation and smooth running of the event are much appreciated. On behalf of the Seniors Week Team – thank you! We look forward to working together again in the future and wish you the best for your continuing work this year.

Pheona Arndell

Director Corporate Communications

Letters to the Editor

Just up my alley!

I am thoroughly enjoying the book, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, which Dorothy Cora passed on to me. Lynn Truss, the author, has a delicious sense of humour, and I am laughing out loud, as well as approving everything she says about punctuation and grammar. It's my favourite subject. When I read things, I find I'm paying more attention to the spelling and grammar, and to the punctuation, than I am to the content of the book. Which is perhaps rather sad.

I am reminded of my youth, when I worked for a firm of solicitors in a very historic building in the City of London. They were very old-established, having in their archives handwritten documents dated in the late 1700s – leases, conveyances, wills, contracts, etc., all having wax seals and so interesting.

Even in the late 1930s, there were very strict rules about typing legal documents (no electric typewriters, no word processors, no computers). Absolutely no punctuation was allowed, so that there could be no ambiguity. No erasing was permitted. If you made a typing mistake, you had to start the document all over again. So you didn't make mistakes. Nor did you misspell anything.

And I also recall being with my friends in a self-service café, waiting in a queue to get to the food. There was a sign hanging from above which said

KNIVES AND FORKS
DRINKING WATER

I found this quite amusing, but, sadly, no one else did.

Renee Simons

Never give up hope!

I felt so sorry for Joan Johns after reading her poem in the April newsletter – without hope one has nothing! In all the situations we face in our lifetime the one thing that keeps us all going is hope. During wars, drought, family crises, people keep themselves going with hope.

We should never give up fighting for the rights of those people we feel are being forgotten by governments. If they do not know how to help themselves then we must step in and speak for them. We must give them hope. Aboriginal people have never had a fair go in our 'modern day' society but not all of them have given up hope. We must not let them think that we too have lost hope for the future.

I think we all carry sadness and anger about the plight of the Aboriginal people but give up HOPE... NEVER!

Josie Jackson

My name is...

Following Dorothy Cox's example, "My name is ..." ... Frances, a name I don't like, but it means 'free' – so it has become important to me. (When I was young I used to prefer Louise until as a cryptic crossword enthusiast, I realised that it could be misspelt as "lousie".)

To be free, after two failed marriages and five children ranged over twenty-two years, has given me choices, a selfish indulgence and the pleasure of opening my front door to say, "Home at last!"

The other name, now my surname, was originally my second given name. I took it legally when my divorce was made absolute in 1975. That felt wonderful and I

remember being a new person ready to enjoy the life ahead of me. I praise my luck in living long enough to have so much fun.

My other campaign is to encourage my grandchildren to call me Frances. I'm a *person*, not just a relationship. It's a long road to liberation.

Frances Heathfield

Centrelink-style

In recent times there seems to be a change of tone in the wording and style of letters received from Centrelink, the agency that supports one-third of all Australians. For instance, a letter one OWN member received, after advising Centrelink that she was going overseas for a couple of months, was quite intimidating.

Although Centrelink information states that, "If you are going overseas you only need to answer a few simple questions and this can easily be done by phone", this woman received more than three pages of dictatorial instructions which implied she was hiding something, either now or in the future!

According to a recent consultant's report, Centrelink is described as a "mistake-prone organisation with a history of appalling mistakes (mostly involving payments), riddled with bureaucratic inefficiencies and staff laziness" (*The Australian*, February 14-15 2004).

We think it is important that members and their friends take note and gather examples of any letters you think are over bearing in any way. We can then approach Centrelink with these concerns.

Leaving your name and address on the letter is not important – they can be whited out – but if you do have an example of an unpleasantly worded Centrelink letter, please send me a copy.

Dorothy Cora

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney

Thank heavens for April and its holidays! It's given us a well-earned breather after the busyness of International Women's Day and Seniors Week in March, and it gave us time to make plans for the next few months.

You will have noticed that 75 Windmill Street has suddenly become more popular for a whole range of activities which were once held at Mott Hall. Council is currently replacing the floor in the Mott Hall – it's now been taken up and the white ants are being eradicated. With risk management so high on everyone's agenda, and our various physical activities being so, well, physical, the replacement floor will be a big relief to us all. Our thanks to the City of Sydney for the use of the Mott Gym (around the back of the Mott Hall), and to all participants and group leaders who have adapted to the temporary arrangements.

Many thanks to Cherie Thompson who is lining up a great variety of speakers for *Fab Fridays* – our new drop-in day at Windmill Street. Do keep an eye out for future serious and fun days.

One of the issues which the OWN Sydney domestic violence committee is pursuing, through the Police Department, is the need to improve the training of all police officers, and most importantly, Domestic Violence Liaison Officers. We are also continuing to pinpoint the inadequacy of domestic violence services which can offer support to older women and we will be writing letters to politicians to that effect. Part of our discussion at a recent meeting was the media reports on sportsmen's sexual violence. We feel that this is a manifestation of a very broad upsurge in the serious denigration of women. Many of the gains won by women in the recent past seem to have evaporated.

At our April Working Group meeting concern was expressed that the NSW State Government finances have been adversely affected by receiving a great deal less money from the Federal Government. Insufficient funding in the area of health in NSW has already led to serious reports of wrongful hospital treatment or hospital neglect. A safe efficient health system is essential not only for every OWN group in NSW but for every one. The OWN NSW Management Team will follow this up.

Another consequence of the State's mini-budget was the closure of the Department of Women, which has now been transferred to the Premier's Department. We will be writing to the Premier and the Minister for Women for clarification on its current status. One of the functions of the Department of Women was the Women's Information and Referral Service which has a very good database and was originally set up at the instigation of the Older Women's Network, and, in particular, Gwen George.

The Working Group has also written to and congratulated the City of Sydney's first elected female Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, on her team's remarkable win in the recent local government elections. We very much want to continue our long-standing and productive relationship with Council, and to be supportive of local women.

Louise Anike and Joy Ross

Sutherland

March was a 'mixed' month at Sutherland. On the one hand our Wellness Centre got off to a flying start with 130 older women registering for first term. On the other hand, plans for the launch of a domestic violence report that members of our OWN group had worked on, were cancelled because the report was not ready in time.

The thirty-three women from our Wellness Centre and OWN group thoroughly enjoyed our day trip in two Community Transport buses to Cambelltown for Women Centre Stage. Congratulations to all concerned for a great event!

Four members of the Wellness Centre took advantage of the annual Expo Information Day held annually at Sutherland during the Seniors Week free concert. Our brochures about OWN and the Wellness Centre program were widely distributed and it is now quite noticeable how many older women are aware of, and interested in, our activities.

We've had another collaborative fundraising success between our OWN group and the Wellness Centre! We accepted an invitation from the Sutherland Trade Union Club to run a white elephant stall at their annual Family Fun Day, and at short notice our members responded mightily with goods to sell and agreement to 'woman' the stall. Despite the rain and having to close shop after lunch, our contingency funds received a healthy boost.

More funds were added through the raffle for yet another of Gladys's magnificent handmade rugs, and items from the industrious and crafty hands of our women. (Continued p.11)

At and Beyond the Rocks

The Wellness Centre Management Team was enthusiastic about the two special *Life Matters* sessions in February and March. All those who attended were very appreciative of the time and expertise that Pat Brogan so generously gave, and we are now exploring options about how we can include similar sessions into our very full Wellness program. Once again, this will possibly be a joint endeavour between the OWN Group and the Wellness Centre.

The other activity that's going exceptionally well is the New Horizons discussion and lunch project. This project provides social and mentally stimulating opportunities for older women who are unable to take part in physical activities to enjoy the company and opinions of their peers in a group setting. OWN Wellness members provide the volunteer transport and assist in initiating discussions.

Other issues are arising from the continuing growth of the Centre. A lively discussion was held at this month's management meeting about issues raised by our Strengthening Exercise facilitator. We agreed that correct and necessary safety precautions need to be made more specific as we have a continuing inflow of new participants and others are advancing to higher weights and fitness levels.

The identification of possible risk areas for individuals, and concern for the protection of the facilitators, means that careful decisions need to be made and procedures put in place. We are in the process of investigating the situation and making those decisions.

Barbara Burnham

Nowra

Women Centre Stage! Those of us from Nowra OWN who travelled up to Campbelltown for the OWN concert spent a stimulating, enriching and memorable afternoon (with several hundred women – and some men) being bewitched, bedazzled and boisterously entertained by several dozen older women. The occasion was part of Seniors Week 2004 organised by the Older Women's Network NSW.

Members from eight OWN groups participated in the concert from the Sydney metropolitan area to Southern Tablelands and the coast. The amazing talent and versatility, from instrumental, voice and dance in all their wonderful variations, was quite unexpected. From the thrilling drummers of Heartbeats to the mesmerising movements of Soaring Spirits, age was definitely no barrier to performance. Australia's Indigenous heritage and multi-cultural wealth of creativity thrilled us all.

This was the first such production and has set a standard that will have us anticipating and demanding *more please*. Congratulations and well done!

Barbara Appesley

Laughter! During Seniors Week, Nowra OWN organised a half-day seminar on Laughter is the Best Medicine at the newly opened Shoalhaven City Arts Gallery. Speakers at the seminar were Kathy Taunton, a nutritionist and herbalist, who talked about *Happy Foods*; Tony Weaver and Trish Kenny whose topic was *Help Yourself to Laughter*; Karen Grimes, humourist and clown, who entertained us with her *Comedy Capers* and Margaret Sharpe whose passion is *Dancing for Health*.

Unfortunately there were some time constraints, as each speaker had given her time free and had fitted us in between professional engagements.

Attendance was good, with more than fifty present, and most stayed to dance, sing or just watch the rest of us having a good time. The noise of our laughter brought some enquiring heads around the door.

Feedback has been very good, with Gretina and me being featured in our local paper, and the Community Development Officer for the Aged suggesting we should follow the seminar up with more of the same.

All the information on Wellness, OWN NSW and OWN Nowra, plus speakers' material was well received, and all the hassles were worth it in the end. And we certainly learnt a few things.

Anne Warren

The digger! One of our recent guest speakers at Nowra was Colina Tarleton who spoke about her visit to the Island of Cyprus to participate in an archaeological dig arranged by Sydney University. Colina was one of 22 volunteers who accompanied the 'experts'.

The dig was at Paphos, the Tomb of the Kings, an ancient theatre on the side of a hill. Over hundreds of years Cyprus was 'visited' by Egyptians, Romans and Persians. One of the archaeological finds was a pebble floor arranged in a fish scale pattern, along with a Roman Vase and glass shreds. A wonderful and inspiring talk.

Norma Bastock

At and Beyond the Rocks

Illawarra

Between International Women's Day (IWD) celebrations and Seniors Week events, Illawarra OWN has been having a busy time. We held our own successful IWD Morning Tea on 12 March with Liz Farrar, Coordinator of the Illawarra Committee for International Students, our esteemed guest speaker. She was accompanied by a very interesting and interested young Kenyan woman who is currently studying in Wollongong.

Many of our members attended the final function of the South Coast International Women's Day Committee held in Wollongong on 2 March. The Committee, which first formed through the Scarborough Miners' Women's Auxiliary during the early 1930s, is

recognised as the longest-serving committee of its type in Australia. The audience was inspired by the recollections of four remarkable, yet modest, women who, with their colleagues, have worked so hard to improve the lives of women since the 1930s. One of the speakers, Monica Chalmers, is a member of Illawarra OWN.

The SilvertOWNs provided entertainment in the form of songs and jokes, to add to the occasion. In fact they have been greatly in demand as performers at quite a few IWD functions this year.

Of course, members of Illawarra all had a great time at the Women Centre Stage concert at Campbelltown on 18 March. We 'dips our lids' to all the wonderful performers – what a great reason to be proud of being older women.

Thanks to OWN NSW for making it possible.

Our new Interest Groups are bounding along. The Play-reading Group is having a truly hilarious time reading *Five One Act Plays for Ladies Only* by Ian Austin. We are in a dilemma, as we can't wait to read what happens next, but we can hardly read for laughing! There are quite a few unscheduled pauses in the action!

Meanwhile, Joan Hilton, leader of the Writing Group, has taken the bit between her teeth and has applied for a Cultural Grant from Wollongong Council so that Illawarra OWN writers can publish a book about their life experiences. Pearlle McNeill has agreed to help, so keep your fingers crossed for us. What a great project it will be if we can pull it off!

Peggy Rodden

Whose Reality?

First, let's deal with 'unreality' television. I don't watch *McLeod's Daughters* because of its unreality. There's no sign of stains or sweat of honest farmyard toil on their clothes or Akubras, and they never sport flannelette shirts. Whenever do they find time to farm with all those visits to the hairdresser and beautician, not to mention the dramatising of their love lives?

I never watch 'reality' shows either. They seem to be peculiarly contrived tests of dominance and strength, and the questionable motivations of participants appear to reflect fascist ideas of survival of the fittest, similar to those practiced in the 1930s. These impressions are gained from promotional ads, and that's about enough for me!

I watch *The Bold and the Beautiful* because it precedes the news on Channel 10 at 5pm, and I find it amusing. The characters are such ham actors. I feel that we should complain about the portrayal of women, as in one episode or another, the women come out as witches, especially the blowsy red-haired older women. The younger women deserve Oscars for their ability to produce tears; they howl with the least provocation. And the sets are so cheap and tawdry. A recent jungle scene was complete with an Australian White Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. What was it doing loose in a South American jungle?

This litany would not be complete without the ads. It would be hard

to pick the most painful. As Don and I are both partially deaf, we wear headphones (which I recommend). It makes it easier to screen out the noisiest and most objectionable. I most dislike the current funeral ad with Alan taking such a long time to be decently buried. We are implored to make contributions ahead of our time to be plonked in the dirt. Someone I know paid these instalments for umpteen years and found that they were short of the cost in the end. Another pet hate is the one where a young woman in a bad grey wig screeches like a demented parrot. I never listen long enough to find out what she is on about.

Enid Harrison

BOOK REVIEW

This simple book will lift your hopes for humanity.

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency is a series of stories about a middle-aged woman's experience as she struggles to assert her place in a man's world.

Mrs Precious Ramotswe applies her wit and wisdom to life's difficulties with dignity and understanding. The stories are set in the 21st century in Botswana, as it rises from the weight of centuries of colonialism to stake its claim to a 'modern' world, and the freedoms so dearly won. With great skill and an entertaining style, the author, surprisingly a man, eloquently expresses the historical repression of the female both in the traditional culture and in the building of the new.

The author is Alex McCall Smith, raised in Zimbabwe, and a Professor of Medicine at Edinburgh University. Two Booker Prize judges gave his books special recommendations.

So popular has this publication been, the BBC has bought the rights and is producing a soon-to-be-released TV series based on the stories. There are, to date four titles in paperback published by Abacus Fiction. Your local library, if well funded, may possibly have acquired them.

Barbara Burnham

MISSING

Has any member borrowed - and neglected to return - the following book from the OWN Library?

September 2001: A Feminist Perspective

by **Bronwyn Winton** and **Susan Hawthorne**

Being 'good' is not so good!

Psychologist, Dorothy Rowe, born in Newcastle and educated at Sydney University, is the author of many books and a lecturer with an international reputation. After a marriage break-up she went to the UK, where she had the opportunity to work with children diagnosed with depression and mood swings. Her suggestion that there was a psychological cause for the depression was an opinion not accepted by others, but Dorothy maintains her position after years of research and observation.

She explained that real depression is about impenetrable experience, when you have turned against society and hate yourself. Over many years, Dorothy has come to believe that people who are treated only with antidepressant drugs and electro-convulsive therapy are likely to experience depression for the rest of their lives. On the other hand, research shows that people who seek self-knowledge, with or without the aid of therapists, can learn how to live their lives wisely.

In her early years at the Whitewood Clinic, all Dorothy's patients appeared to be 'well brought up' and nearly all were women. Dorothy saw a parallel between her own mother's attitude – that to be 'well thought of' you have to be seen as 'good' – and the beliefs her patients had about having to be 'good'.

Depressed people, Dorothy suggested, judge themselves and others in terms of 'good' or 'bad', 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable'.

As women we are expected to cooperate, to share, and not to stand up for ourselves. To leave a man is unkind – you are bad – you should stay in the relationship. To please your self is bad. If you *are* good, you are never good enough! This attitude usually begins in early childhood.

As women we are expected to cooperate, to share, and not to stand up for ourselves.

Dorothy quoted from Betty Vivienne's book, *As Good As New: Stories from a Long Life* and also from her own experience. In her book, Betty draws comparisons between a new born babe who is entirely selfish and the attitudes which are soon learned, that is, bad behaviour may lead to the withdrawal of mother-love. The sharp word, **NO!** can continue to haunt the unconscious for a long time.

A number of instances of learned behaviour and the consequence of certain actions can lead to depression. Dorothy spoke of the prison of depression and of the use of the word 'sorry' when it may not apply. An individual may take the blame when it is not all one way, and this can lead to a build up of resentment and a sense of helplessness or anger. To counteract this, Dorothy suggests we should stop using words like 'good' and 'bad'.

Finally, she suggested we use statements such as, "If I choose..." or "If it suits me..." and use self-talk such as "I care for myself", "I value and accept myself".

Interestingly, it could be argued that Generation X operates under non-rules, which is now the norm. Family values have changed and continue to change. What may be seen as 'good' to one generation, may not have the same ring of truth to succeeding generations.

What she said struck a chord for many of us older women. It was certainly food for thought. Dorothy's book, *Depression: The Way out of Your Prison*, is now available in a new, revised third edition.

Isabel MacCallum

More Adventure Holidays . . .

three vivid memories

On our one-day camel trek in the McLaren Vale (see *OWN Matters*, April 2004), Mary and I experienced two unexpected problems – saddle-soreness and the potential danger of a ‘camel-string’ disturbed. Despite this, we were passionate about exploring the outback and knew that the ‘ships of the desert’ could take us there. Over the next few years we joined three camel expeditions – one following the Frome River out of the North Flinders Ranges (17 days), one down Sturt Stoney Desert from Birdsville to Innaminka (21 days) and one across the Simpson Desert for 29 days.

Three vivid memories surface from those three expeditions. They are not concerned with hardships like the desert chill in the morning or the severely rationed water supplies or even the heavy daily labour of loading and unloading the water containers, food boxes and luggage. Neither do they relate to pleasures like striding across the claypans, nor the warm interaction with individual camels when coaxing them back to camp, nor eating the greatest pizza ever, nor even relaxing on our rolled-up swags around a camp fire.

No, the most powerful and irreplaceable memories are about feeling free, about the subtle beauty of the desert and about Aboriginal people and their country.

We felt utterly free in the remoteness of those deserts. Imagine travelling on foot day after day without the constraint of signposts, roads or even tracks. We had only a survey map and a compass and the quiet, rhythmical pace of the camels alongside. There were no cattle

and no fences. We were free to roam, to photograph the evolving landscape, animal tracks or a flower. And at night we could look up from a snug swag to the canopy of stars and meander around the constellations until sleep came.

The subtle beauty of the desert entranced us. As we scaled each sand hill and looked down to the next valley, an array of flowers greeted us – colours and hues endlessly changing – exquisite mixtures of colours too understated for a camera to capture. Then there were the stones and rocks, again in myriad colours, and dark red gibber polished with ‘desert varnish’ shining in the afternoon sun.

These were subtle and addictive landscapes!

The most powerful and telling memory I have is connected to the wonder and sadness I felt coming across long-forgotten Aboriginal sites in the heart of the desert. We found stones for grinding seeds, work areas on the claypans where men crafted their stone tools, sources of ochre for ceremonies, engraved images on the rocks, and wide stone circles pinpointing water sources. We learned that one of our paths between the eastern edge of Lake Eyre and the Ranges took in the major Aboriginal trade route to the north, which had been used for thousands of years. I can never forget those signs of the day-to-day lives of generations of Aboriginal people. We were so privileged to have been there!

Judith Hammond

Drawing on the Right-Hand Side of the Brain

At Wellness, Chatswood, Lorna Parker talked to us on the topic, *The Muse Within*. She told us that we were to draw a chair for her. “Draw?” some of us muttered. “I can’t draw.” But we did. Lorna is like that. We used the right-hand side of our brain, as described in the book, *Drawing on the Right-Hand Side of the Brain*. It gives you a new perspective on drawing, getting rid of preconceived ideas, drawing the spaces, drawing what you see, rather than what you are supposed to see.

Well, we just got busy with crayons and felt pens, and were warmly encouraged by Lorna’s, “Good, wonderful, keep at it,” even though some of our efforts looked as far from being a chair as you can imagine. One, with Picasso scrawled in the corner, could have been sold for thousands of dollars.

Then Lorna asked us to write a poem about our chairs.

This is Marion Woof’s poem.

*She put the chair on the table,
I drew as well as I was able.
Its little legs were in the air
Which made it hard to draw the
chair.*

*Chairs were made for us to sit on,
Not to draw or poems writ on,
But it’s creative day today,
So let us all have fun and play.*

*Preconceptions down the drain,
Use the right hand side of the brain.
Write the poem, draw the picture,
All of us will then be richer.*

This is my poem.

*I’ve drawn a chair.
A kitchen chair,
A friendly chair,
Good to sit on,
A chair that’s there
My chair.*

*I didn’t measure it,
Perspective it,
Or logically draw it,
But beware if you sit on it!*

Joan Johns

A 1943 Guide to Hiring Women

The following is an excerpt from the July 1943 issue of *Transportation Magazine*. The list was written for male supervisors of women in the workforce during World War II – a mere 59 years ago! (It was not intended to be funny, but by today's standards, it's hilarious!)

1. Pick young married women. They usually have more of a sense of responsibility than their unmarried sisters. They are less likely to be flirtatious. They need the work, or they would not be doing it. They still have the pep and interest to work hard and to deal with the public efficiently.
2. When you have to use older women, try to get ones who have worked outside the home at some time in their lives. Older women who have never contacted the public have a hard time adapting themselves and are inclined to be cantankerous and fussy. It is always well to impress upon older women the importance of friendliness and courtesy.
3. General experience indicates that 'husky' girls – those who are just a little on the heavy side – are more even-tempered and efficient than their underweight sisters.
4. Retain a physician to give each woman you hire a special physical examination – one covering female conditions. This step not only protects the property against the possibilities of lawsuit, but reveals whether the employee-to-be has any female weaknesses which would make her mentally or physically unfit for the job.
5. Stress at the outset, the importance of time; the fact that a minute or two lost here and there makes serious inroads on schedules. Until this point is gotten across, service is likely to be slowed up.
6. Give the female employee a definite day-long schedule of duties so that they will keep busy without bothering the management for instructions every few minutes. Numerous properties say that women make excellent workers when they have their jobs cut out for them, but that they lack initiative in finding work themselves.
7. Whenever possible, let the inside employee change from one job to another at some time during the day. Women are inclined to be less nervous and happier with change.
8. Give every girl an adequate number of rest periods during the day. You have to make some allowances for feminine psychology. A girl has more confidence and is more efficient if she can keep her hair tidied, apply fresh lipstick and wash her hands several times a day.
9. Be tactful when issuing instructions or in making criticisms. Women are often sensitive; they cannot shrug off harsh words the way men do.
10. Be reasonably considerate about using strong language around women. Even though a girl's husband or father may swear vociferously, she will grow to dislike a place of business where she hears too much of this.
11. Get enough size variety in operator's uniforms so that each girl can have a proper fit. This point cannot be stressed too much in keeping women happy.

www.roadandtravel.com/roadhumor/1943transportation.htm

Remember when...

Monday began the week and rain, hail or shine, it was washing day! First the fuel copper was filled and the fire lit. When the water was bubbling, a cake of homemade soap was shaved into the water and dissolved. While the water heated, the beds were stripped. Whites were washed first. They were agitated with a wooden copper stick which was also used to lift them, dripping wet, out of the water into nearby tubs. The hot water would then be used to hand scrub the coloureds on a wooden washboard. If the tank water was not too low, two rinses would be done in the two cement tubs. The final rinse would be 'blueing' with Reckitt's Blue Bag. It was claimed to make whites "whiter than white".

Certain articles – tablecloths, pillow-slips, doilies, collars, anything that had to be crisp or stiff – needed starching. A packet of *Silver Star* starch pellets was put in an enamel dish and slowly dissolved in cold water. Then a kettleful of boiling water off the fuel stove would be added slowly while stirring it with a wooden spoon into a thin glue. The set-aside articles were individually put through this liquid and wrung out to join the washing basket of whites. The wringing by hand of heavy sheets, struggling to get out as much water as possible, gave mother a wet front – all right in summer, but not so welcome in winter.

When the clothes basket was full, it was down to the back yard to hang them out with wooden dolly pegs, prone to splitting at the wrong moments. Still heavy with water, it was a struggle to lift things onto lines held just high enough off the ground with sapling clothes props, praying that they

didn't slip and let the whole wash end up in the dirt. When the clothes were dry, they would be taken off the line, and every article that required ironing would be sprinkled with water and rolled up to make ironing easier.

Tuesday was ironing day. Two flat irons would be placed on the hot fuel stove, an old blanket and sheet would cover the wooden kitchen table, and the first iron, after being wiped with newspaper to clean off soot, would be used until it lost its heat and then replaced with the waiting hot one. This would continue until all the ironing was finished.

Wednesday was cleaning and mending day. It meant down on hands and knees to scrub the wooden floor and wash and polish the linoleum floor coverings. Anything that needed a stitch or two would be left on the old treadle sewing machine, and then if time allowed after mending, some dressmaking would take place. Remaking clothes from hand-me-downs was a skill most people developed.

At certain times of the year, curtains were washed and windows cleaned. A ritual when bugs began to breed was to take the wire beds into the back yard, brush with kerosene and set fire to them with tapers to kill the vermin and their eggs. Lice and nits continuously infected hair, especially of school children. Vigorous scratching of the head prompted an inspection behind the ears, where the telltale white eggs would cling on the warm hairs. An application of kerosene

and then the combing through with a fine-toothed comb, head leaning over a sheet of newspaper, would eventually fix the problem until the next time.

Thursday was for shopping. The butcher and the grocer did call and deliver, but the collection of mail, bread, milk and other daily needs was by walking a kilometre or more every day. A daily bus allowed visits to other towns and rail travel.



There were very few cars, so horses, pushbikes and walking were the main means of transport. Roads were dirt, and in wet weather galoshes were sucked off by the sticky mud. Bare feet walking in swollen

gutters would collect clinging leeches.

Friday was a cooking day to stock up with cakes and biscuits and puddings, in case of visitors. This meant many trips to the wood heap, bringing armfuls of cut wood for the hungry stove. Lack of refrigeration, with only ice chests or meat safes to store perishable food, made a monotonous diet. Plenty of corned meat, potatoes and onions, with fresh fruit and vegetables, seasonable and scarce.

Saturday was bath and hair washing day. (Body hygiene was a daily wash in a dish, and internal cleansing was a weekly dose of castor oil!) The copper would be lit and each family member would dip out a bucket of hot water and carry it into the bathtub. Sometimes the next in line would top up the water, but if too dirty, it

would be drained into a bucket and given to the struggling garden plants.

Sunday was Church day. The one and only 'good' dress came out. Hats and gloves and stockings were worn, and mother, laced up in corsets from armpit to thigh, would lead the procession to the Church. Home, and the 'good' dress was immediately hung up to finally become a hand-me-down for younger sisters.

Nights, the strong smells in summer of mosquito coils burning and citronella being rubbed on bodies. Candlelight and lamps sound romantic, but reading in bed was very difficult, if not downright dangerous. Scary trips to the outside toilet, sitting in the flickering candlelight, in fear of snakes and spiders. On a nail, squares of newspaper and mail-order catalogues, threaded with string, hung for use as toilet paper. "Ouch, was that a redback spider or a splinter from the handmade wooden seat that covered the smelly hole?"

Oh, yes, "I Remember When" but thankfully it's only a memory. I just love today's comfort.

Joan Hilton



Cumberland Women's Health Centre News

The Centre, located at 29 Campbell Street, Parrmatta, offers a variety of services to women including information and referral; support/advocacy for women who have experienced violence; counselling on any issue including crisis; Aboriginal Women's Health Worker; and a variety of groups and free workshops.

For further information, contact the Cumberland Women's Health Centre by phone, (02) 9689 3044 or email, cwhc@tig.com.au.

**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

**Commemorate Sorry Day
26 May 2004**

12.30pm A service in the crypt of St Mary's Cathedral, College Street hosted by the Cathedral and the NSW Sorry Day Committee. The NSW Governor, Marie Bashir, will attend.

5pm Sydney Opera House (The evening will be in two parts.)

Members of the stolen generations will host an evening of songs, stories and poetry. Entrance is free. Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, will be a guestspeaker, as will Senator Aden Ridgeway.

6.45pm Exhibition by Aboriginal artists from the Darling-Murray basin will be launched.

Performance will resume at 7.45.

Further information 9892 1103.
ANTaR Ph 9555 6138

**Housing Australians:
A Shelter NSW Seminar**

Wednesday 23 June 2004
9am – 5pm
University of Sydney

This seminar aims to look critically at key issues including:

The housing situation of indigenous Australians

The National Homelessness Strategy

The housing assistance dilemma – the role of public housing and rent assistance

Concession \$20

For registration information
phone: (02)9267 5733

**Pauline McLeod Memorial
Tribute Concert**

7.30 pm 29 May 2004
Sydney Town Hall

On 22 May 2003, renowned Aboriginal storyteller, actor, poet and writer, Pauline Elizabeth McLeod, passed away. In showcasing Pauline's life and legacy, this concert will also officially launch the Pauline McLeod Foundation and announce how it plans to nurture and support Aboriginal people in the arts.

More info, phone Paul Newman on 9773 3878 or 0418 440 210.

"Come to the Caravan"

*National Council Of Women of
NSW and Soroptimist
International-Region of NSW*
invite you to

"Come to the Caravan"

to review the Beijing Platform for
Action Ten Years On

Tuesday May 11, 2004
5.30pm – 8.30 pm

1st Floor, 280 Pitt Street
(near Bathurst St)

Light refreshments served

\$10 waged, \$5 unwaged

Learn how the Beijing Platform for
action is being implemented ten
years after the original document
was introduced.

The venue is wheelchair accessible
RSVP by 7 May on 9269 0433 or
email ncwnsw1@bigpond.com

OWN Sydney Notices

Fab Fridays

Demonstration of Ozecraft Dyes by Catherine Ross.
11am Friday 7, 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point

The Dye is an Australian product now used by thousands of crafters all over the world. The main use of the Dye is in 'Lace Painting', but the versatility is endless – all types of lace can be dyed with Ozecraft. Most of the colours are very strong so it's a very economical product. It's great on tassels and by following the instructions you will find 'Antiquing' lace a breeze!

Shannon Raby and Deidre Turner from 'HeadEast'.
11am, Friday 14 at '75'

HeadEast is a community based service for people with an acquired brain injury and their families, in Eastern Sydney. Shannon is the coordinator and Deidre is a client who has had a stroke!

A surprise morning.
11am Friday 28, at '75'



The Psychology of Happiness Workshops

After Robin Murray's much appreciated talk recently, requests were made for some workshops on this topic, and Robin has agreed to do two workshops in May.

Robin will help us to -

- look at our strengths and how we use them
- consider our values, goals, pleasures and assumptions
- recognise how thoughts give rise to feelings
- learn about giving and receiving encouragement and appreciation
- develop optimism for the future and develop strategies for more enjoyable living

Monday, 10 May and Monday 17 May from 10 am to 12 noon at 75 Windmill Street.

Each session will build on the other, so it is preferable that you come to both. Suggested donation \$3 or \$5.

Bring a sandwich and stay for informal discussions over lunch.

(Dr. Robin Murray is a neuropsychologist and works in pain management at a large hospital)

OWN Sydney Quarterly Members Meeting

10am Friday 21, at '87'

This month we are pleased to welcome Sister Pauline Fogarty as our guest speaker. For the past thirty years, Pauline has worked tirelessly with the *Brown Nurses Inner City Ministry* tending women and men with all kinds of illness, mental and/or alcohol problems. Pauline will tell us of the beginnings of the *Brown Nurses* plus stories of the women she has met, helped and known. Her team work without any government funding, so how about delving into your kitchen cupboard and bring along a tin of food, any sort, so that we can give these to Pauline to distribute amongst those less fortunate. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear of the quiet, dedicated work, that for the most part, goes unnoticed in our city to relieve some of the misery among disadvantaged people.

There will also be an overview of OWN Sydney's activities; your comments would be helpful for the Annual Report we will be making to the OWN NSW conference in July.



Wellness on Wednesdays will continue with the alternate venues (see 'diary page') until notice that we can return to using Mott Hall.

Film group discussion at '75'.1.30pm, Monday May 10. Our choices of films this month are *'Capturing the Friedmans'*, *'Pieces of April'*, *'Old Man Who Read Love Stories'* and *'Barbarian Invasion'*. Happy viewing!

DISCLAIMER

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

NEWSLETTER TEAM

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

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