



OWN MATTERS

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

No. 33 September 2004

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Another successful State Conference!

This year we were back at Women's College, which, according to the evaluations received, is a winner on all counts – the conference room, food, entertainment and accommodation. It's such a pleasure to be one of more than ninety friendly chattering women happily greeting each other as we register and prepare for our annual Conference and AGM.

Nominated to chair the first day, I was delighted to welcome delegates and members from sixteen OWN groups across NSW, plus Yorta Yorta woman, Betty Little, who welcomed us to country, and our very special guest speaker, Pat O'Shane. As most of you would know, Pat is a NSW Magistrate who was also the first Aboriginal female teacher in Queensland, the first Aboriginal person in the country to graduate in law, and the first woman to head a government department.

She began by saying that she had never addressed an audience where the average age was so high! Her speech ranged over issues related to increases in the world's ageing population, the social impact of this phenomenon, the appearance of large concentrations of older people in such places as retirement villages leading to ghetto-like environments, and the vital importance of maintaining our health as we age. She reminded us of the need to be concerned for our fellow Australians, the older Indigenous women of this country, and to not forget their many health problems. Unfortunately, Pat was unable to stay for the brief but interesting discussion which followed her talk.

Following another brilliant performance by the OWN NSW Theatre Group – just loved their two new numbers – we moved to the dining room for lunch. Then it was into workshop mode! This year, we planned two workshop sessions, each of one and a half-hour's duration, with afternoon tea in between, which seemed to work really well.

The focus of a number of the workshops was on various aspects of 'healthy ageing'. This focus not only provided opportunities for participants to explore issues and factors involved in their personal experience of ageing (health, identity, volunteering, etc.), but also enabled the formulation of policy frameworks that can be used during the forthcoming federal election. (If you would like more details of the workshops, please contact the office for a Conference Report.)

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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

The issues that matter...

In our 1500 word submission to the NSW Forum on Ageing (the invitation was on the front page of *OWN Matters* last month) we noted how discouraging it is that governments always emphasise the frail aged when the majority of women under 75 are not frail.

The main issue we focused on was health and wellbeing for older women, recommending that the healthy ageing strategies promoted by OWN be recognised in government policy and expenditure. Going further, we suggested that the emphasis in *all* government programs and services for older *people* should be on promoting healthy lifestyle, independence and wellbeing, and that all these activities, including physical exercises, must be affordable and, if necessary, receive government subsidies.

In explaining why OWN's healthy ageing strategies are so important, we used research findings which show that major determinants of ill health include social factors such as low income, poor housing, low self-esteem, isolation and lack of exercise. Research also shows that older women are more disadvantaged than older men in respect to these determinants, since they live longer and have fewer financial and other resources.

We also suggested that well-funded Wellness Centres combining social support, education and training, advocacy and entertainment, combined with a wide range of physical activities, provide inestimable benefits to participants.

Research has proven that individuals with a strong support network cope better with the inevitable hardships that happen in life... A good support network can reduce stress, help us move on and prevent us from feeling overwhelmed and helpless in times of grief. (The Weekend Australian, 27/9/03.)

The second issue raised in our submission is the need for affordable and accessible community support services which promote older women's independence, and provide more choices. The Government *must* ensure services are available seven days a week, particularly for those in greatest need, and be offered free to those who cannot afford to pay.

Our third recommendation was for affordable, accessible and reliable public transport. Older women also need community transport to maintain independence and alleviate social isolation, both of which can lead to improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

We also called on the State Government to ensure that older women are represented, as consumers of services, on all relevant government committees and advisory groups, and requested that public liability insurance be made more affordable for non-government organisations.

Based on the submission written by Pat Carlton

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

Well, another conference and AGM over for another year. And what a success! *Older and Bolder* was the theme, and it lived up to its name with energetic and enthusiastic members from sixteen groups approaching the two days with vim, vigour and vitality.

An eleven-member Management Team was elected with four women from OWN Sydney and seven from other NSW groups – Southern Highlands, Newcastle, Nowra and Sutherland. Our constitution requires that no more than six members can be elected from Sydney and seven from outside Sydney. We always stress that the members elected to the MT don't actually represent their particular group, but are there to manage the affairs of OWN NSW. The members of the Management Team are Cate Turner, Anne Warren, Lucy Porter, Peggy Hewett, Ermes Solari, Pat Carlton, Barbara Malcolm, Barbara Burnham, Margaret Holland, Lesley Kane and Alicia Edwards. And Lucy Porter, Peggy Hewett, Barbara Burnham and Barbara Malcolm are your new Coordinators.

At our first business meeting on Monday 9 August, we also had a special lunch to welcome the new Team, and to celebrate Joy Ross's 70th birthday. Joy is one of OWN's founding 'mothers' and has contributed to our success non-stop since 1987. Her dedication, energy and warmth has helped to make OWN what it is today – thank you, Joy.

We have appointed two members to a Constitutional Review Team, which will begin the process of consulting with member groups about updating the OWN NSW constitution in time for next year's State conference. Members of OWN groups with knowledge of constitutional matters and/or an interest in contributing to this important document, should contact the office for details about how to join the Review Team. We would also like groups to bring any suggestions they have for changes to the constitution to the November Quarterly Meeting.

Although the Advocacy Coordination Group is currently inactive, advocacy is still a major concern for OWN NSW and many individual members of groups. Pat Carlton has agreed to keep a watching brief on advocacy issues, so we urge everyone to keep active in this important area and to let Pat know what you are doing.

We warmly congratulate the OWN Wellness Centre at Sutherland for its successful submission to NSW Department of Health for funding to further develop their program. The \$40,000 is a well-deserved result achieved by strong lobbying of local politicians and making a personal deputation to the Minister. Could this be a template for other groups to follow?

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

.....
• The OWN NSW Annual Report is now available, so if
• you would like a copy, please contact the office. Also
• available is the Conference Report, which includes an
• overview of Pat O'Shane's keynote address and
• reports from each workshop.
•
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State Conference

Continued from page 1

During the one-hour plenary session, all groups reported on the key issues arising from their workshops, with participants from the skits and songs workshop *performing* their creative accomplishments.

Following the conference dinner, around fifty women settled in for 'a nice night's entertainment' with comedienne, Jackie Loeb and singer-songwriter, Betty Little. They were followed by an assortment of self-styled story and joke-tellers. Some members were still putting the world to rights well after ten pm!

The next morning was devoted to the Annual General Meeting, chaired by Anne Warren. A new Management Team was elected and the retiring team thanked for its past work. Highlights of each group's activities were presented. As a grand finale, we were thoroughly entertained by the Southern Highlands WENCHes, an acronym for *Women Embracing New Challenges in Health*. The conference closed on a really high note!

Cate Turner

Grants Program NSW Seniors Week 2005

Seniors Week 2005 will be held between 13 and 20 March. There are two funding categories: the first is up to \$500 and the second is for \$1,000 – but this amount must be matched in cash or in-kind. (Not difficult when volunteers are doing all the work!)

Application close at 5pm on 24 September 2004, with all applicants informed of a decision in early December 2004.

If you require any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact the Project Manager on (02) 9338 5536.

A Woman of Valour

Auntie Ali Golding, well known and loved elder, was guest speaker to an enthusiastic group of Aboriginal Support Circle members and friends on Monday, 2 August.

Ali described growing up as a Biripi woman at Purfleet Mission at Taree. Her father was a Digger in World War 1, and her mother was one of the Stolen Generation, taken as a young child and reared at Cootamundra Girls Home. Ali felt that her parents had a lot of sadness in their lives, particularly her mother. There were eight in the family, four girls and four boys, and she was second youngest. As a child she was very observant, always watching people and reading people's emotional states from their faces. Her parents would shoo her out of the room saying 'little pigs have big ears'.

Her father, whom she loved and respected, encouraged her to be proud of being Aboriginal. He was a great strength to her mother and the whole family. He worked on local farms where he was paid with seasonal produce. To earn the only income they had, he did some piano tuning. Her mum baked scones and dampers, and sewed their clothing from flour bags which had been boiled to soften them. Their doonas were chaff bags, sewn with needles filed from the keys of oval herring tins.

Although Ali was a happy child, she had limited schooling because of the discrimination she experienced from white children and teachers. She remembers that the worst punishment teachers could think of for a white child was to make them sit next to a black child!

Ali's mother died when she was eleven and everyone on the mission turned up to the funeral to pay their respects. In the distance, Ali noticed three black cars: one belonged to the mission manager and his wife, another to the police, and, as she later found out, the third car belonged to welfare officers who planned to take her and her sister to an institution. Suddenly the children were grabbed by uncles and cousins and

shepherded away, into the bush. When it was dark they were taken to Taree, where they hid until the train came and their father, with the help of a guard, hid them on the train. They were covered in old chaff bags and in the morning arrived in Dubbo.

Ali managed to return to Taree a few years later, and with very little education and skills, she took to seasonal fruit and vegetable picking with three other girls. They slept under the stars in fine weather and under bridges in bad; lived hard, rough lives with the sky as their roof and the ground their bed, and washed in chilly rivers. On campfires they cooked potatoes and whatever vegetables were in season. When they had money, they bought tins of Irish Stew, using the empty tin as a billycan and a mug. When desperate they would break into bakeries for stale bread or steal fruit from orchards.

To help support her younger sister and father, Ali sent any spare cash she had home. Ali's younger sister was eventually able to go to University and later become a teacher. Her older sister was able to go to Bible College and became a lecturer.

When she was 20, Ali returned to Taree and married Englishman, Peter Golding, who was a station assistant. They have been married for 40 years, have seven children and many grandchildren. During the years they lived on The Block at Redfern, Peter became known affectionately as a 'pomorigine'.

Two years ago, Ali suffered a great tragedy when her youngest daughter, Linda, a radiant, beautiful and gifted young woman, died. After her death, Ali was inspired to spend two years in Darwin at Nungalinya College, graduating with a diploma in theology. These days, bible colleges encourage Koori culture, in contrast to the 1960s, when all mention of Koori beliefs was suppressed. St. Vincent's, in Regent Street, is going to support Ali in establishing her own Koori ministry, where there will be a dirt floor and an open fire.

Pat Zinn and Lucy Porter

Aboriginal Women's Books

The Aboriginal Women's series of books can be seen at www.npws.nsw.gov.au (go to Cultural Heritage and then to publications). The next (and last) book in the series is Aboriginal Women's Heritage – Port Stephens, which was launched in August. They have another book coming out in September, called *Talk to Print*, a guide to publishing oral histories.

For more information, contact Kath Schilling, Aboriginal Women's Heritage Coordinator, 9585 6506 or email Kathleen.Schilling@npws.nsw.gov.au.

The *ComPacks* Project

NSW Health has developed a strategy called *ComPacks*, which is being piloted across a number of Area Health Services this year. *ComPacks* is a community care case management model which addresses the issue of post-hospital care. Trude Kallir, a member of OWN Sydney, has been monitoring the development of this project – an issue that OWN has been vocal about for some time.

We urge OWN members who have had any experiences with this project to let us know how well your needs were met. It seems like a good idea – but let's see how it performs on the ground.

The following information on the strategy is taken from a NSW Health brochure *ComPacks Project – Guidelines and Information*.

“*ComPacks* is a case-managed package of care for up to six weeks after discharge from hospital. This service has been established for people who need two or more community services to ensure that people can return home safely with appropriate care in place. The concept is to case manage community support jointly with a multi-disciplinary hospital team, starting before discharge and continuing for a short time after discharge, with the aim of facilitating access to mainstream community services.

“The following groups are not eligible for *ComPacks*: current recipients of Community Aged Care Packages (except where additional short term support is required), people needing more than 56 hours of service per calendar month, people waiting for nursing home placement, people waiting for Attendant Care funding.

“Funding allows case managers to purchase services and/or equipment which are not available from existing government-funded services. During the course of the *ComPack*, as clients start to use mainstream services, they will pay a contribution or fee for most services, subject to standard income test criteria.

“Participating hospitals are Liverpool, Westmead, Prince of Wales, St George, RPA, Balmain, Royal North Shore, Manly, Mona Vale, Gosford, Woy Woy, Wyong, John Hunter, Nepean, Springwood, Wollongong, Lismore and Tamworth. In addition, Community Options Projects participating in the project are at Liverpool, Penrith, Springwood, Redfern, Hurstville, Balmain, Greenwich, Mona Vale, Waitara, Gosford, Wyong, Wallsend, Wollongong, Tamworth, Tweed Heads and Lismore.”

Further information is available from Trude Kallir 9816 1891 or Pat Carlton 4988 6026.

Pat Carlton

Friends of Tranby

Friends of Tranby and the College are holding a festival during the first three weekends in September. **All events other than the opening on Friday 17 September are free, although donations will be welcome.**

Tickets to the opening on the 17th are \$30.

Artworks, performing, crafts, stalls, and much more.

More information from Paul Knight, phone 9660 3444 or email fot@tranby.com.au.

Who cares about Community Care?

Combined Federal and State expenditure for Home and Community Care last year totalled approximately \$1 billion. Over 46,919 HACC clients aged 65 and over received personal care assistance, *averaging 50 minutes per week*. At least 60,000 older Australians with very high care needs were formally assessed by Aged Care Assessment Teams in 2001-2002 as needing more community care than they were getting.

In 2001 it was estimated there were 534,500 people aged 65 and over with a profound or severe activity restriction and a further 241,000 with a moderate restriction.

Community Care is funded and administered by Commonwealth and State Governments. Each level of Government has created a range of community programs to assist those who require it. While this funding and commitment is vital, the result is a complex care system which is difficult and confusing for people to access and is administratively inefficient for Governments and service providers to operate. Currently, there are 17 separate Commonwealth funded programs providing community based care services. In addition, each state funds many more separate programs, all requiring separate reporting and administrative arrangements.

Without the provision of community care services many people would have to leave their own homes to live in residential aged care facilities. This is not what most older people want to do!

If you would like to join the National Community Care Coalition (CCC) in making community care an election issue, please contact the OWN office for the *CCC Action Kit*.

Vote for:

Health, Housing and Human Services

Regardless of your political affiliation, there are ways you can inform those running for office in the upcoming Federal election about the importance of improving health care, housing and human services. Here are some issues to think about.

Affordable health-care is out of reach!

“We will be proposing changes to Medicare which amount to its de facto dismantling...we will pull it right apart. The second thing we’ll do is get rid of the bulk-billing system. It’s an absolute roort.” John Howard, June 1987, Radio 2GB.

Tooth decay is now the most common health condition in Australia and 500,000 Australians are now on waiting lists for public dental care.

The Federal Government spends 2.3 billion on the private health insurance industry, leaving public hospitals grossly under-resourced.

VOTE for *bulk-billed medical and dental services, decent public hospitals and affordable medicines for all Australians.*

No public housing in ten years time!

Over 105,000 Australians (one in every 200) are homeless. People on the lowest 20% of incomes pay on average 64% of that income on housing costs. 208,056 Australian households are on waiting lists for public housing. If current trends continue, experts warn there will be no public housing in ten years.

Low-income earners are forced to sell their homes due

to mass closures of caravan parks, escalating council rates, strata title levies and the rising cost of home repairs.

VOTE for a *National Housing Strategy that recognises the basic human right to affordable housing and security of tenure.*

The gap between rich and poor is rising

2.5 million Australians are living below the poverty line, including 750,000 children.

Pensioners are living on \$235 per week, which is 25% of average male weekly earnings.

Experts estimate the real unemployment rate across Australia is 11.3%. Approximately 50% of 50-64 year olds have no paid employment at all.

Over 20,000 people in NSW and the ACT are waiting for a place in a nursing home or hostel. The average waiting time for nursing homes is six months. The average waiting time for hostels is nine months.

There are currently 6,000 young people with disabilities living in old age nursing homes.

VOTE to *eradicate poverty; to improve home, community and residential care for aged and disabled; and job opportunities for all.*

What to do?

WRITE letters to Mr Howard and Mr Latham, Australian Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600 to voice your discontent. Send your local MP and candidates the same message and ask for a response.

MAKE an appointment to see your local MP and candidates. Ask how they intend to promote and protect access to affordable health, housing and human services.

CONVENE a meeting in your community to discuss the importance of maintaining a decent basic income and affordable access to essential services.

SEND a Letter to the Editor of your local/national paper voicing your concerns about the lack of services, and cost of living, including where possible some personal experiences.

CALL talk-back radio and encourage everyone you know to do the same.

(From NSW Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association.)

What do **WE** want?

Even though John Howard hasn't announced the Federal Election date yet, in Sutherland we feel its time we let prospective candidates in our area know that older women have concerns which they would do well to consider.

We have designed and displayed a petition in our Centre which reads—

To candidates contesting electorates in the Sutherland Shire in the 2004 Federal Election:

We, the undersigned, members of the Older Women's Network Wellness Centre, Sutherland, and/or of the Older Women's Network Group, Sutherland, seek the following information from you.

Will you support the priority status of older women in the National Women's Health Policy by:

- ◆ *seeking provision of earmarked national funds for the expansion and coordination of preventative health programs for older women, particularly NSW Older Women's Network models of wellness?*
- ◆ *seeking revision of restrictive guidelines for funding submissions which prevent recurrent funding of successful innovative projects?*
- ◆ *seeking additional federal funds for aged care including more nursing home beds and community services in NSW?*

We expect to get many signatures! Hopefully, candidates will feel obliged to respond to each person who signs (as has happened here in the past) and even arrange personal contact.

Noreen Hewett

Affordable computers – \$299

WorkVentures Connect IT has found a way to bring affordable computers to households and not-for-profit organisations by recycling computer hardware from Westpac, and providing licensed software through Microsoft. Every computer comes with a three-month guarantee and is capable of running mainstream applications, including those for browsing the internet, just like many new PCs.

You must have a current Centrelink Benefits Card or Healthcare Card.

Delivery time is three weeks. Free Call 1800 112 205.

Free Computer

Pam Ledden's son, Quinn, would like someone to have Pam's computer (a PC) and printer. It comes with a modem and Windows 2000. Although it's slow, it works well.

If you would like to know more, please phone Dorothy Cora at the OWN office, 9247 7046.

Boning up on calcium

Following my last tour with the Theatre Group (two weeks with *Women on Wheels*), I developed a painful hip problem from getting up and down to so many venues. Finally, I sought medical advice and discovered that, because I was over 75, I was eligible to take advantage of the government's generous body checks. So, after x-rays, an ultrasound, a cat scan, and a bone density scan....shock, horror! More pills to take!

A pill for blood pressure, a pill for cholesterol and, what really rocked me, was a pill for osteoporosis. My bone density level was 2.4 — fragile bone level is 2.5! I was so shocked. I'm a sturdy woman who eats very well. It never occurred to me that I'd ever have fragile bones. This news, then, had me exercising, lectured at, and motivated to learn some facts about CALCIUM.

Do you know that women at and after menopause need 1000 -1200 mg of calcium each day? Have you

ever tried eating enough calcium-rich foods to make that total? It's not easy. Here's a sample of what you would need to eat:

Three serves of calcium-rich foods every day - eg a cup of yoghurt (358 mg), a small tin of salmon with bones (310 mg) and a glass of calcium-fortified milk - dairy or soy (300+mg) plus an English muffin (120 mg), and a handful of almonds (110mg).

In addition to your food intake, you need to do weight-bearing exercise at least three times a week, eg walking, yoga, Tai Chi, or dancing.

So don't be like three quarters of Australian women who don't get the basic amount of calcium they need in their diet or who do very little weight bearing exercise. For the sake of your bones, try to work calcium rich foods into your diet each day, find some time to exercise and do have a bone density test.

Peggy Hewett

Letters to the Editor

Inspired

After listening to Anne Deveson read from her recent book, *Resilience*, on ABC *Life Matters*, I decided to buy the book. Her inspiration of hope over adversity deeply touched me. When she speaks of her father, it reminds me of the range of interesting, feisty women who are members of OWN.

He was diagnosed with lung cancer at age seventy and began to challenge his previous acerbic attitude to life – climbed the Swiss Alps, drove an old London cab wearing a variety of assorted head gear, recited poetry and sang Victorian music hall ballads.

The power and understanding of this wonderful book is very uplifting. Her message that spirituality is the process of making meaning out of life links so strongly with resilience. She sees resilience as the life force that flows and connects every living thing, continually prompting regeneration and renewal. Of course you will need lots of tissues when you read this book, but at the same time you will feel renewed.

I wrote and thanked this great Australian for her beautiful 'gift' and she responded with a letter that I will always treasure.

Anne Collins

The mind is important too

The submission that the Management Team wrote to NSW Forum on Ageing was excellent.

However, I would also have liked us to ask for more funding for educational and interesting courses, like those offered by the Community Colleges, to keep us stimulated and in touch with others of like mind. Theatres also could be subsidised so they could reduce the price of seats a little

more. Even at a pensioner's rate, seats are still often well out of reach without serious sacrifice on our part. After all, older women have been providing bums on seats for many, many years.

Muriel Hortin

Politics is...

Politics (power) is present in every relationship, personal or otherwise: between buyer and seller, employer and employee, between members of committees, husband and wife, mother and child, father and son/daughter, and between friends.

Party politics is something else entirely and I can't help wishing people would get to know the difference.

Moira McGuiness

Starvation or excess salt?

Because there was too much for my husband to do after I was recently discharged from Hospital after being critically ill with heart trouble, we decided to get Meals on Wheels. The quality of the food was appalling! It comes from Parramatta and although it is packaged ok, when we tried the soup, we couldn't even tell what it was made from! The cottage pie was so tasteless and greasy it was inedible, and the vegetables were all frozen and tasted of nothing.

We are going to complain about it, but in the meantime, we are going to buy ready-made food from the supermarket, which as you all know, is mostly loaded down with salt. Not good for hearts!

Is this the experience of other OWN members who have tried Meals on Wheels?

Enid Harrison

Pleasure all round

The *WENCHes* (*Women Embracing New Challenges in Health*), thoroughly enjoyed the experience of entertaining at the OWN NSW Conference. We thank the Conference organisers for giving us the opportunity to perform after the AGM on the Thursday, and we particularly thank the audience for the very warm reception they gave us. It was the culmination of a big week in which we had done two other performances.

We are now busy working on some new material for a performance we're doing in November and for our Christmas get-together. Another week or so of writing and re-writing and we'll be into practicing. It's a lot of work, but oh, so much fun!

My eight-year-old granddaughter, Emma, takes a keen interest in the Southern Highlands OWN, especially the *WENCHes* and our songs.

A few weeks ago she came to a *WENCHes*' practice and one of them asked her to write a little story about us for *OWN Matters*, which she did as soon as we got home.

Each week she asks have I sent it in, and I have to disappoint her by saying, "Not yet."

Procrastination is my downfall, but here it is at last!

Robyn Smith



WENCHes do not just knit all day.

They are CRAZY!! They Party,

Dance, Sing & Play!!!

My Gran is a WENCH.

Emma Kelly, Age 8

Still in despair

Thanks to all those members who responded to the call to stop the passage of the Free Trade Agreement, which presented such a threat to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Thank you to the many who sent emails, letters and faxes, and those worthy souls who came out to Mark Latham's office at Ingleburn to hold up our banner and assist the APSF with their presentation of the cheque to the American Drug Companies from the pensioners of Australia.

Amendments that were supposed to protect the PBS were indeed debated in the House by the Labor Party after Australia-wide concern and thousands of protests. The amendments proposed by Latham were accepted by the Government and the Bill was passed quickly, just as John Howard wanted, all signed and sealed before the elections!

BUT these legislative amendments are totally useless and will not ameliorate any of the negative effects of the agreement regarding the PBS or the local content rules in the media, which are the two areas we were particularly anxious about.

I have no space here, or indeed any heart, to go in to the reasons for this, but I have read much about it and so indeed can anyone who desires. All the details of the new Trade Agreement, now law, are in the public domain and available from many sources if you wish to be better informed.

I keep my eye on a very good source of information called *Global Trade Watch* which puts out a regular e-newsletter. Email them at info@tradewatchoz.org and they will send you a copy with a regular update on what's going on here and overseas.

Muriel Hortin

Ageism can make you sick

Well, now we know! If we feel good about ourselves, we live longer! This is not just someone's opinion, it is backed up by research undertaken by Dr. Becca Levy from Yale University. She found that older people who feel positive about themselves live seven years longer than those who have negative feelings about getting older.

Dr Levy began her research in 1975 and, over a twenty year period, interviewed 660 participants six times to find out whether negative stereotypes affect people as they age. She recently published her findings in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. (Visit www.innovations-report.com/html/reports/medicine_health/report-11635.html for the full text.)

In the study, she found that when older people were presented with negative age stereotypes, they showed a significant increase in blood pressure and heart rate. In contrast, when positive age stereotypes were activated, participants showed a significant decline in cardiovascular stress. In other studies, Dr Levy's team found that when older individuals were presented with negative age stereotypes, they also showed a decline in memory performance, self-confidence, will to live, and handwriting. In contrast, when the researchers activated positive age stereotypes, they tended to find beneficial changes in these same areas.

It is not surprising that older people, particularly older women, experience a negative impact on the quality of their health and wellbeing when they are exposed to stereotypes of ageing. Although not all older people recognise how ageist our society is, readers of *OWN Matters* will be aware that cultural stereotypes around women and ageing are rampant, and that many times they are so 'normalised' that they go unnoticed. How many of us cringe when we hear someone being called "granny" or "dear old lady"? Or when we receive birthday cards that depict poor mental and physical functioning? If we react, we're told to "lighten up" or "get a sense of humour" which can make us vulnerable to internalising age stereotypes.

The question is, of course, whether older people can 'think' themselves healthier by changing their core beliefs. Dr Levy thinks it is quite difficult to reverse negative beliefs once they have 'set in' but her research suggests that when positive age stereotypes are activated, older people *can* experience beneficial changes, such as a reduction in cardiovascular stress and better performance in memory tasks.

I reckon that if we can accept that we're getting older (and accept our mortality), and also confront ageism whenever, wherever, we come across it, we'll be OK.

Dorothy Cora



Lonely Hearts Advertisement (*it's true!*)

SERENITY NOW: I am into solitude, long walks, sunrises, the ocean, yoga and meditation. If you are the silent type, let's get together, take our hearing aids out and enjoy quiet times.

At and Beyond the Rocks

Sydney

Hasn't the Spring rain around Sydney been wonderful?

Like most organisations, our Annual General Meeting is an important event, not just because we review the past year, but because we elect new members of the Working Group who accept responsibility for the management and future welfare of OWN Sydney.

Our guest speaker this year is Dorothy McRae-McMahon. Dorothy will address some of the issues that, as an older woman, she feels strongly about as we move into federal election mode.

Wellness on Wednesdays is back in the Mott Hall and made even more pleasurable by the smooth blonde floorboards. Margery Hillman has agreed to teach a Feldenkrais class as part of *Wellness on Wednesdays*, and we are negotiating to start on 13 October in the Youth Centre at the rear of the Mott Hall.

On the funding front, we were not successful in getting NSW Sport and Recreation funding and our City of Sydney funds have run out. We are currently working overtime to try and locate more support funding to enable us to keep charges down.

Many thanks to Muriel Hortin for arranging the *Stretching Your Mind* workshops which proved popular. We hoped to have them extended later in the year. We'll keep you informed.

The film buffs are back, so see *OWN Sydney Notices* for the next thrilling selection of films for discussion.

Some of our members will remember Gwen George, one of the founding members of OWN, a great social reform advocate, and

initiator of the former Women's Information and Referral Service. We have learned that Gwen has now entered a nursing home in Stanmore.

(As Joy is back from her 'grand tour', Louise is no longer flying solo. Joy thanks everyone for the warm 'welcome home' and for all those lovely 70th birthday wishes.)

Louise Anike and Joy Ross

Bellingen

Our vibrant town is small, very diverse and everyone seems to be madly busy, Bellingen OWN is alive and thriving. We've had a stalwart core of about eight members for years now, with occasional triers-out, drop-ins and passers-through. Members have some disabilities and limitations of energy, but with enough aims and attitudes in common we support each other in lots of ways.

In the last while we've had a wedding, an eightieth birthday party and the much mourned death of one of our occasional participants. Our regular activities are monthly meetings and monthly social outings. We've had a few letter-writing binges, with some of us dealing with a local controversy over enforced fluoridation of our water and we've cheered improvements to our previously polarised local council. All in all, we are kept stimulated and BUSY.

Jude Roseth

Parramatta

Parramatta OWN has turned one! We celebrated with a party at our 'home' at Harris Park Community Centre, and what a time we had! Thirty-odd of our membership of 50 were joined by the Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Councillor Julia

Finn, who spoke of her interest in our group. Cate Turner, Sydney OWN, and visitors from Blacktown and Penrith groups also graced us with their presence. The food was plentiful and delicious, décor was stunning, with colourful streamers and napkins enhanced by enormous vases of home-grown Strelitzias – thank you, Brenda.

The first year has been a triumph – we are obviously meeting a need. All thanks to Mollie Smith, whose baby it has been, and a dedicated working party. We have had interesting speakers on Law and Herbalism to name a few, and demonstrations on art, as well as several outings, more of which are planned for this year.

Our AGM will be held on 23 August at 10am. All financial members may vote (subscriptions will be accepted on the day) and nominations for positions on the working party will be welcomed.

Federal Parliamentary candidates have been invited to join us, and light refreshments will be served. Do come!

Maureen Gaudry

Kiama

Our first meeting at Kiama with delegates from other groups in the region was quite successful. A lot of issues were discussed and it was enjoyable to meet members from other OWN groups in our area. We are looking forward to another regional meeting in the new year, this time to be organised by Wollondilly OWN.

I hope everyone enjoyed the OWN Conference as much as Marie Reid and I did; it gave us a great deal to think about. We particularly found the diversity of women from all walks of life very stimulating.

Dorothy Powitt

At and Beyond the Rocks

Illawarra

Currently our group is very involved in our various Interest Groups which all have a regular and dedicated following, thanks to the efforts of the group leaders.

Our Playreading Group is preparing a performance for our Christmas Party in December and perhaps, too, for a function on International Women's Day next March. Our drama enthusiast, Jacque Skinner, is planning to include all members in this March performance, if possible. We are also planning for our regular IWD Morning Tea next March.

We are examining a range of suggestions for a Seniors Week function and are about to apply for a grant to facilitate this.

The SilvertOWNs are still much in demand and have an exciting range of gigs lined up until the end of the year.

Quite a number of our members are becoming very enthusiastic about square dancing - perhaps they will perform for us later in the year as well!

As we are the only electorate in Australia to have a member from the Greens Party in the House of Representatives in Canberra, members are looking forward with interest to welcoming a speaker from the Greens at our next meeting. We have been following closely the passage of the Free Trade Agreement, particularly in relation to the preservation of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and have been writing letters and sending emails accordingly.

Our Co-ordinator Norah Alexander, and Secretary Jean McKay, attended the Regional Meeting in Kiama organised by OWN NSW Coordinator, Anne Warren, and found it extremely

interesting and useful. Anne is to be congratulated and thanked for organising this so quickly and so well.

Our representatives at the NSW OWN Conference gave it glowing reports – congratulations to the organisers and participants. We are looking forward to receiving the Conference Report and hearing more about the workshops that were held.

Peggy Rodden

Wollondilly

Our group continues to grow and become better known in the local area. By being involved in most community events, we have managed to raise our profile, ensuring that more people are becoming aware of us.

International Women's Day in March was used to promote OWN, and though the event was washed out by heavy rain (in the middle of a drought!), we were able to hand out our welcome kits. Two new members joined from that promotion. Planning for next year's IWD is under way.

Council gave us a grant of \$1000 this year to hold an event for Seniors Week, and plans for that are shaping up as this goes to press. We did intend to hold only one event, but have now decided to hold two: one for the active older women and one for the frail aged. The first will be an Expo on what programs we have set up and how active we all are. We will invite our local polities, plus council and health workers, as well as members of the community to the Expo. The second will be in the form of an afternoon Tea Dance, which will be held in the Shire Hall, with guests invited to dress up in ball gowns. A group of dancers will demonstrate their

ballroom dancing skills to the strains of live music. Afternoon tea will be served.

Something interesting that has recently evolved is the Wollondilly's Drumming Group, teaching a group of local young people with a disability to become a performance group. The participants practise every week and enjoy it immensely. Their carers are particularly pleased with how it is going and say they hope to give their first performance at their Christmas party.

Barbara Malcolm

Sutherland

You didn't hear from us in August, perhaps because we were having such an exciting time at the end of June. We were all flat-chat celebrating the third anniversary of our Wellness Centre... AND... the second anniversary of the formation of a Sutherland OWN group. As this celebration was our fourth big Open Day in three years, they are starting to run like clockwork. The Centre was filled to capacity with OWN members, Wellness participants, supporters, guest performers and visitors. The enthusiasm and high level of contributions to the entertainment and proceedings surpassed all expectations.

A major highlight was the launch of our very own performance group, *The Sutherland Strutters*, who all but brought the house down. You will no doubt be hearing more of these very talented women.

Now to the pièce de résistance. A few days earlier our coordinators had been informed of the success of their persistent and vigorous pursuit for State Government
(Continued on page 12)

At and Beyond the Rocks

(Continued from page 11)

Health funding to further develop our OWN Sutherland program of health maintenance for older women. It was agreed that the announcement and presentation of a cheque for \$40,000 would very appropriately be made at our Open Day celebration.

Enter an entourage of three members of the NSW Parliament, together with local press photographers and others, bearing a giant size blow up of The Cheque which was duly presented with congratulations, thank you speeches, all round hugs and hand shakes, and many photographs. The politicians representing the three electorates our members come from were all very happy to be seen bearing such glad tidings to their constituents. They had each responded positively to petitioning, deputations and correspondence from the women attending our program.

And, to top it off, we also received, for the third year, a \$5,000 donation from the Sutherland Trade Union Club!

Our members and visitors then joined in the magnificent lunch organised by our many willing and skilled volunteers. The day concluded on a very high note with volunteers ready for a well-earned term break, and keen to reassemble for the commencement of the fourth year of wellness activities. During the break, volunteers who form the management team held a workshop to undertake the weighty responsibility of managing the \$40,000 grant that is earmarked, as our submission requested, for a paid worker. We have designed the job description and advertisement so the process of finding a three-day-a-week worker has really begun.

Meanwhile our Wellness Centre continues and our OWN group is already planning an end of year function. Both are still trying to find a time slot in our programs for a regular discussion session. Can anybody out there tell us the secret of how to stretch the days in the week?

Barbara Burnham

Blacktown

At our recent *Meet the Candidates* meeting, we welcomed Ed Husic, Federal Labor Candidate for Greenway, Louise Markus, Federal Liberal Candidate for Greenway and Debbie Robertson, Federal Green Candidate for Chifley. Many local workers also attended.

The candidates introduced themselves and spoke about the policies of their respective Parties before inviting us to ask questions. Many of the questions were about HACC funding. We pointed out that there are waiting lists for all HACC services in our area – housework, personal care, showering, respite care, shopping services, home maintenance, and therapy services such as podiatry.

Workers within the health system have to discharge patients from hospital without any community support available to them when they arrive home, which often results in re-admission to hospital and also results in a much longer stay in hospital.

We talked to the polities about the distress experienced by older people when they cannot gain access to services. As well as causing stress to older people themselves, the situation creates anguish and distress to workers in the field, who are constantly having to advise people that services are not available.

The question of waiting lists was raised – there is no coherent and/or consistent method employed by organisations for keeping track of how many people are waiting for services.

The candidates listened to our concerns, and before they left, were asked to take them up with their Parties as a matter of urgency.

We also had a guest speaker, Rosalene Jones, from The Aged-care Rights Service (TARS). The role of TARS is to provide advocacy, legal advice and support for frail elderly residents in residential care – nursing homes, hostels and retirement villages. The service is funded by Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, the Attorney General's Department, the NSW Office of Fair Trading and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC). TARS workers will advocate on behalf of anyone living in residential care. They can be contacted at 9281 3600 or email tars@tars.com.au.

Two of our members attended the NSW State Conference, which they found a worthwhile and valuable experience. They thought the performance of the Southern Highlands WENCHes was wonderful and have invited them to visit us soon.

Two of our members visited a local school to discuss OWN Blacktown helping a financially disadvantaged pupil. The Principal explained that as the whole school was disadvantaged, it would be more appropriate if we made a donation to a special fund, with money going towards the cost of having an educational or entertainment group come to the school. We have agreed to do this.

Penny Hilton

Lost Ladies of History – A Tribute to my Grandmother

My grandmother was married in 1892, in an arranged marriage, as was the custom. She proceeded to bear four sons in quick succession, and there was quite an interval before she bore a fifth son. My uncle told me her story.

His mother, my grandmother, had inherited a yearly income of one hundred pounds (the equivalent of a curate's salary) from someone on her side of the family. On several occasions, she had run away from home, hiding in different towns in England. Not only her husband, but also her father, reported her to the police, and she was always found, arrested and taken back to her husband's home. Trying a new tactic, she went to her local doctor and told him a story about her husband – we can only assume it was along the lines of child abuse – which horrified the doctor, not for her situation and plight, but that it would ruin his good name and his career.

He immediately called in another doctor, as there had to be two doctors to certify a person. They certified her, and she was taken to an asylum, fortunately one that had a good library, where she spent most of her time. Through research, she found that if she could exist for a month outside the asylum, she could not be legally re-certified.

Probably because it was a private asylum, the inmates were given pocket money of a few pence per week. So that they could spend their money, they were taken to the local village shop where, by arrangement, they entered by a

rear door. My grandmother noted that outside the shop was the main road, and opposite, was a bus stop. She began to save her pocket money. One afternoon, on such an excursion, she walked through the shop, crossed the road, caught the first bus, and disappeared. Of course, it was reported to the police, but to no avail.



From the Roger Vaughan Picture Library

My uncle was warned by his father that should his mother try to contact him, he was to tell his father immediately. Without fully understanding how or why, he sensed that it would be to his mother's disadvantage.

One afternoon, coming home from school, my uncle saw an 'urchin' by the gate, who handed him a small scribbled note that said she would be waiting for him under the shade of the trees in the local park. He put the note in his mouth, chewed and swallowed it, then rushed upstairs to his room and hid under his bed, where he stayed for hours. At nine years of

age, he was petrified. He didn't tell his father, nor did he meet his mother.

Some time after the month had expired, my grandmother duly reappeared. She had found the address of a distant relative in Wales, who did not report her, and accommodated her for as long as she wanted to stay. In due course, a separation was arranged, and she lived frugally but independently on her stipend.

Years later, when my uncle became a family man, he bought a house in Banstead, a suburb in outer London. He acquired a cottage for her in this locality, where she spent the rest of her days breeding Pomeranian dogs.

Some years later I saw my uncle again, in a nursing home. I took his hand and told him I had found a photo of my grandmother (his mother) as a young woman, in a family album. I asked him if I looked a little like her. He raised his head and looked intently at my face for quite a while. Slowly, he smiled and said, "Do you know, I think you do, but you are a much happier woman."

Happier? God knows I have had my full share of heartaches, marriage trauma and separation. I wished I could have thanked my grandmother for paving the way, not only for myself, but for all the women of my generation who have reclaimed their lives, without suffering the same indignities and humiliation.

Roleena Jennings

A rare gift

You can still buy *Tell Me More: Voices of Older Women*, a collection of stories vividly written by members of OWN. Their stories contain arresting observations on major and minor triumphs and disappointments, and on moments of pleasure, enlightenment and disillusionment in their lives.

Tell Me More is \$10 including postage or \$5 in person from the office. Please send your cheque/money order to OWN, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000.

We aren't the burden on society!

A National Welfare Fund was established in the 1940s by the Menzies Government in response to international concerns about the mass poverty and social unrest which occurred during the 1929-1933 Depression.

This social security scheme provided payments for invalid pensions, maternity allowances, child endowment, widows' pensions, unemployment and sickness benefits. Funding for these benefits came from a 7% tax on incomes over 104 pounds per week (around \$300 today). This tax has never been revoked, and is still a component of our tax system today even though the National Welfare Fund was subsumed by the Consolidated Revenue Fund in 1985.

The 7% tax collected from our wages each week over 40 or 50 years, and the compound interest that would have generated, should easily cover income support for those in need, including older people. The problem is that because it's no longer targeted to those most in need, it can be cynically used to sweeten certain sections of our population, eg, the baby bonus.

If our pensions came from the 7% tax, as they once did, then the assumption that older people are a burden on society would be revealed as arrant nonsense.

A Policy Discussion Paper put out by Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW (CPSA) recommends the re-establishment of the National Welfare Fund, which would have a separate pool of revenue outside consolidated revenue (general tax), for the specific purpose of funding social welfare. *What do you think?*

A copy of the discussion paper is posted on the board at OWN NSW, or call the office for a copy.

Peg Hewett



What's really important?

George Carlin, a comedian of the 70s and 80s, wrote eloquently about the paradoxes of our time. Following is a short extract from his writings.

"We have taller buildings but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less. We buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, yet more

problems; more medicine, but less wellness. We drink too much, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little and watch TV too much.

"Remember – spend some time with the people you care about, because they are not going to be around forever. Give time to love, give time to speak, and give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind."

Diana Webb

A FAIR AUSTRALIA?

Now We the People is a coalition of individuals from community, faith, environmental, social justice and union organisations. They have initiated a *Campaign for a Fairer Australia* in the lead up to the federal election.

Now We the People is NOT a political party and nor will it stand any candidates at the Federal election.

The *Campaign for a Fairer Australia* calls on all Australians to carefully consider the policies of each party and only vote for those which promote fairness and justice.

The *Campaign* will target four marginal electorates in NSW (Dobell, Paterson, Parramatta and Lowe) using street stalls, public forums and the media to spread their message.

If you would like to make a donation or support them in other ways, please phone 9211 4164, www.nowwethepeople.org

Public Toilet Map

In case you think we are resorting to 'toilet humour' on this page, you might find the following information helpful.

Incontinence can be an isolating condition, which makes travelling difficult.

The National Public Toilet Map was designed to assist people having difficulty with travel and daily living arrangements. Using the map can assist people living with incontinence, or their carers, by helping plan toilet locations for short or long trips, as well as people with disabilities to access appropriate facilities.

If you have access to the Internet, go to www.toiletmap.gov.au, or phone 9708 2245 .

HRT: a big mistake?

Many women hoped that Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) would not only help their health, but also their youthful appearance and energy levels. Unfortunately, the idea that HRT is a long-term 'fountain of youth' has been slowly dissolving over the past few years.

It seems that science sometimes makes big mistakes, as it appears to have done with HRT. Major studies, including one by the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) in the USA suggest that HRT should not be recommended at all for long-term use. The WHI study was actually halted before its completion date when it was found that a combination of estrogen and progesterin increased the risk of invasive breast cancer, heart disease, stroke, and pulmonary embolisms (blood clots).

However, they also found that HRT reduced the incidence of

colon cancer, and bone fractures caused by osteoporosis.

Other researchers believe that HRT should not be written off so quickly as it may have a role to play in preventing heart problems if it is given to women who are only just beginning their menopause. They believe that the design of the WHI study was such that it could not come to any conclusions on the benefits to women who were just beginning menopause, as most of the women the study looked at had been menopausal for some years, and most were in their 60s.

The convenor of the Australian Women's Health Network, Helen Keleher, believes that Australian women should heed the World Health Organisation warning that HRT is not the wonder drug it was first claimed to be, and that it should always be used carefully and selectively.

Dorothy Cora

HRT: a personal experience

I began menopause quite early, at the age of 48, and was offered HRT straight away at my local Family Planning Association (FPA) clinic.

At each subsequent check-up/pap smear visit, I was assured that the medication had numerous preventive benefits, and as I had never experienced any adverse side effects, I just carried on – year after year. It just became part of my life. And yes, I'll admit it, I was reinforced by the comment from one FPA doctor that I wouldn't look as good as I did if I stopped!

Last year, when the publicity hit the media about adverse effects and long-term use, I stopped taking HRT immediately (having then clocked up 12 years!), and went through the symptoms of menopause for most of the following year (pretty unpleasant, but I coped).

I don't think it did any harm to go onto HRT when I first started menopause, but there's no doubt I shouldn't have taken it for anywhere near as long as I did. But we have to remember that the research for a long time was touting lots of benefits.

My advice was coming from thoughtful women doctors at FPA – a pretty reliable source, I would have thought. I certainly wouldn't write HRT off, but, as Dorothy quotes above, use it "carefully and selectively" and I'd add "and not for too long"!

Pat Carlton

A Vital Issue

Given that tooth decay is the number one health condition in Australia – not heart disease or cancer – oral health has got to be a hot election issue!

Dental services are unaffordable for many people and, whilst there are some free or low-cost services available for concession cardholders, there are long waiting lists for basic care. Planned changes to Medicare will cover dentists for the first time, for limited procedures, and only for patients with chronic problems like diabetes and heart disease. The new scheme relies on a doctor's referral to a dentist for up to three consultations, for which the government will refund \$220. It is unlikely that this will cover normal dentists' fees.

OWN has been represented on the Oral Health Alliance for a number of years. The work of the OHA will now be undertaken by the Health Policy Advice Group and there will be two consultations, later this year, to respond to the State Oral Health Promotion Plan and the National Oral Health Promotion Plan.

Because oral health is a vital issue for older women, it is really important for us to have some input into these consultations. If anyone is interested, please phone the office for more information.

June West

Tax

If you need to lodge a tax return, you must lodge it by 31 October. The Seniors Information Service, phone 13 12 44, has a free Retirees Tax Pack.



That letter

A mother enters her daughter's bedroom and sees a letter on the bed. With the worst premonition, she reads it, with trembling hands.

Dear Mum...

It is with great regret and sorrow that I'm telling you that I eloped with my new boyfriend. I've found real passion and he is so nice, with all his piercings and tattoos and his big motorcycle. But it's not only that Mum, I'm pregnant and Ahmed said that we will be very happy in his trailer in the woods. He wants to have many more children with me and that's one of my dreams. I've learned that marijuana doesn't hurt anyone and we'll be growing it for us and his friends, who are providing us with all the cocaine and ecstasy we want. In the meantime, we'll pray for science to find a cure for AIDS so Ahmed can get better; he deserves it.

Don't worry Mum, I'm 15 now and I know how to take care of myself. Some day I'll visit so you can get to know your grandchildren.

Your daughter, Judith

PS: Mum, it's not true. I'm at the neighbour's house. I just wanted to show you that there are worse things in life than the school's report card that's in my desk drawer...I love you.

*Contributed by **Sheila Mason***

A cuppa could lower cholesterol



Researchers in China have shown that men with mildly elevated cholesterol using a daily capsule of green tea extract found that their cholesterol had dropped by 11%.

Reprinted from *Health Reader* Vol 8 No 10 December 2003

Outback Travel - A Cautionary Tale

A feverish cold had been doing the rounds of our tour group since we had left Cairns for the Gulf Country, and Bill had eaten very little breakfast and lunch, and had dozed in the coach most of the afternoon. The tour group arrived at its destination after a long drive, and were busy setting up camp for a two-day stay. Bill took two Paracetamol, but they didn't help much. After dinner, he was quite feverish, and couldn't keep his eyes open. He manages his own diabetes, but had had little to eat or drink for the past twenty-four hours, and by now was almost incoherent. Maybe it's low blood sugar, I thought, and persuaded him to drink some water and lemonade. Or maybe bronchitis, considering the group's respiratory infection, and Bill's fast and wheezy breathing?

The tour leader rang the local Medical Centre, and then drove us in after breakfast. Sister appeared. "I always begin at the beginning," she said, as we both began to speak at once. Name, age, address, current medication, and then blood pressure. "Roll up your sleeve. What's that scratch?"

"I got it smelling the roses at Croydon."

"When did you have your last tetanus needle? You need it every five years in this part of the country!" Temperature, blood sugar, urine sample. "Have you been taking readings of your blood sugar?"

"It's usually OK, and I didn't bring my glucometer. I don't need insulin, only tablets."

"Did you take your medication? What did you eat and drink in the last twenty-four hours? Your blood sugar is high, which is less dangerous than too low. You must eat small amounts regularly. And drink at least three litres of water as well and keep drinking water until your urine is pale yellow, not that dark stuff you just produced. Your kidneys aren't doing too well, you know. And no alcohol – it produces further dehydration. Does your GP know where you are and what you are doing?"

A small silence. "I thought not. What inhalants are you using?" Bill showed her his Ventolin puffer.

"Don't you use a nebuliser?"

"Yes, I do at home, but I brought the puffer to use here."

"Not nearly as effective. Let me show you how to use it properly. We have a nebuliser here for you to use. What antibiotics have you had?"

While Bill used the nebuliser and had an ECG, Sister called the Flying Doctor to check on her diagnosis and treatment and get an OK for the antibiotics. She told us a little about outback medicine, how she is on call 24/7, has trouble getting supplies, and how medical people burn out regularly and eventually have to leave.

She looked at his ECG. "You have the heart of a racehorse. I must see you again tomorrow and we will decide then whether you can continue your trip or if the Flying Doctor should take you into Mt Isa Hospital."

She turned to me. "Ring me this evening and tell me how he is doing, and what he eats, and ring me again during the night if he becomes confused or can't be aroused. I'll see you tomorrow."

In the morning, after testing Bill again and consulting the Flying Doctor, it was decided that a wiser and more health-aware Bill could continue his trip. Thank heavens for outback nurses!

Marion Woolf

Conferences and Annual General Meetings...groan!

Every year the OWN conference and AGM turn up, regular as clockwork. You feel you have to go whether you want to or not. Usually the word 'meeting' sends me frantically searching for something I just have to do instead. This year I could not think up a plausible excuse so I dutifully went along, as I always do.

Well I was so glad I went. I just had the best time! Firstly, because I was given a job on the registration desk, so I had the great pleasure of meeting members from our groups that I had not met before, as well as seeing old friends. And secondly, because the conference organisation was so seamless, with everything running so smoothly, no hitches and everybody so well looked after.

Betty Little, a Yorta Yorta woman and an OWN member, opened the Conference by welcoming us to country and reminding us all that we were on Eora land – something we should never forget when we gather together. Betty sang a song for us after dinner and I, for one, would have been happy if she had gone on singing all evening. (*She did, Muriel. You left too early! Ed.*)

Our guest speaker, the wonderful Pat O'Shane, urged us to continue to be active, to exercise and to maintain our connections to each other. She extolled the virtues of weight-lifting as we age, as it helps prevent osteoporosis and other ills the body is heir to. As a regular weight-lifter herself, she is a great example of its benefits, both mental and physical. She's some woman and we were so lucky to have her speak.

Everybody seemed to enjoy the workshops, which were varied, stimulating and well planned. The two workshops on writing songs and skits, led by those experienced and clever old troupers, Lucy Porter and Peggy Hewett, were a great hit. As their 'report', one group sang two amusingly wicked songs they had composed about Mr Costa and transport problems, and the other, about older and bolder us.

Then dinner at night – drinks, laughter and passable food with much good talk and discussion. We reassembled in the lovely Common Room and settled down to be entertained by stand-up comedian, Jackie Loeb, whose rapier wit so swiftly turns the audience reaction to her own advantage, even if it means slight discomfiture for the 'victim'.

The serious business of the Conference went ahead next day with the appointment of a new Management Team and reports from fifteen of our twenty groups in NSW. Representatives each spoke briefly, adding interesting bits to the full reports that were already printed in the attractive Annual Report.

The planning committee and our two workers, Dorothy Cora and Kris Ferguson, did a fantastic job making these two days so happy and profitable for me, the reluctant meeting-attendee, and everyone else.

Muriel Hortin

How to contact Senators and MPs

With an election fast approaching, you might want to contact a Senator or MP about an issue that you think is important.

OWN has a list of Senators and MPs on file, their proper forms of address, and contact details. Please call the office if you would like a copy.

Running hot and cold

I was fifteen and I had a new white dress. I was so excited – a new dress was an occasion in those days and I thought I looked great. The dress was soft cotton with a sweetheart neck, short sleeves and flared skirt with nipped-in waist. I felt like a film star. My mother asked me to go on a message into town, so I swanned away, self-centred and delighting in the effect I thought I was achieving.

I sat up straight in the tram on the return journey, confident and cocky in my pristine white dress until I felt a small warmth between me and the seat. What's this? What's happening? Oh, no, I had started my periods. I had been a late starter in the menstruation stakes and up till now they had been very irregular. This was a full onslaught and I could feel myself flooding. I was too terrified to move. It was unusual in those days to discuss periods, let alone be seated on a crowded tram in a white dress in a pool of blood.

I pressed hard against the seat trying to staunch the flow, hoping nobody got off the tram at my stop. I was lucky. I flew off that tram and passed Marjorie Jackson's racing record in getting home. I quickly changed and put the dress in a bucket of water. Sadly, that dress never held the same allure from that time on.

Lucy Porter

Falls Prevention

The National Falls Prevention for Older People Initiative, *An Analysis of Research on Preventing Falls and Falls Injury in Older People: Community, Residential Care and Hospital Settings*, can be accessed online at www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/publicat/document/falls_community.pdf

NOTICE

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.**

Help for bladder control problems

Many women suffer from incontinence (diminished bladder control). Pauline E. Chiarelli, PhD, has written a book to help women overcome this embarrassing problem. *Women's Waterworks* provides advice on regaining control through following a simple pelvic floor exercise program.

The book costs \$15 and may be ordered directly from Dr. Chiarelli's publisher:
George Parry, 14 Magin Crescent,
Wallsend 2287 or by fax (02) 4950
0402.

Post breast cancer exercise program

YWCA Encore NSW offers a specifically designed program of gentle floor and hydrotherapy exercises for women who have had breast cancer surgery. The eight week program, offered free of charge, aims to improve upper body mobility and flexibility, boost self esteem and help prevent or manage lymphoedema.

For more information, contact YWCA Encore by email at lisap@wycansw.com.au, by phone 9285 6249 or Freecall: 1800 305 150.

Human rights education kit

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre has launched a new community education kit on Protecting Human Rights in Australia. The kit contains fact sheets, including one on health rights, which illustrate international human rights standards and how human rights protection in Australia could be improved. Further information from 9299 7833 or check their website www.piac.asn.au.

Jessie Street National Women's Library

invites you and your friends to the
Annual Fundraising Luncheon

Monday 20 September 2004

12 noon for 12.15 start

The Strangers' Lounge, Parliament
House, Macquarie Street, Sydney

Guest Speaker: Her Excellency
Professor Marie Bashir AC,
Governor of New South Wales

\$70 financial members

\$75 non-member guests

Indigenous Health & the Treaty Debate: Rights Governance & Responsibility

University of NSW

Saturday 11 September 2004

Keynote speakers include Patrick
Dodson, Chair, Lingiari
Foundation, Professor Stephen
Cornell, Harvard Project on
American Indian Economic
Development (US), Ms Ria Earp,
Deputy Director General-Maori
Health, Ministry of Health (NZ).

Cost: \$99, concession \$49. Both
rates include lunch and morning
and afternoon tea. See brochure at
[www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au](http://www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au/outbind:/53/www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au)
/53/www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au,
email Belinda McDonald at
gtcentre@unsw.edu.au or phone
9385 2257.

Australian Philharmonic Orchestra concert

Best of British

\$15 off full price tickets

Saturday 16 October

2pm and 8pm

Quote "Bulldog Offer" when you
call the Box Office on 9250 7777

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OWN Sydney Notices

Osteoporosis research

The Roberts Research Group has been commissioned by a pharmaceutical company to undertake research into osteoporosis, and want to talk to women over the age of 60 who have been diagnosed with osteoporosis.

The research involves a consultant coming meeting individuals somewhere convenient and having an informal chat about their experiences with osteoporosis, and in particular, any treatments that they have undergone.

There would be a payment of \$50.

For more information, go to www.robertsresearch.com.au, email Heidi Clarris at heidi@robertsresearch.com.au or phone (03) 9614 3000.

National Mental Health Week 10-16 October 2004

The focus this year will be on the elderly population of NSW, aged 65 years and over. Mental Health Week is an opportunity to learn more about how your mental health affects your standard of day-to-day living. It is a time for all of us to acknowledge, be aware and celebrate a healthy mind and body - across all ages.

Contact the Mental Health Association for more information: www.mentalhealth.asn.au

Community Care Public Meeting

Thursday 16 September
9.30 - 12.30

Nirim a Room, Blacktown City Council. RSVP:9839 6203

Discussion Group 10.30am Monday 6 September at 75 Windmill Street.

'The Pod' meets monthly to talk about the psychology of happiness. Other OWN members are welcome to join us. Ring Jan 9692 9400 for details.

Film Discussion 12.30am Monday 13 September at 75 Windmill Street

The films for discussion are *I Robot*; *Carla and Connie*; *Before Sunset* and *Corporation*.

Spring is Sprung Luncheon 11.00am Friday 17 September at 87 Lower Fort Street

OWN Sydney welcomes the season's regeneration with Maryanne Johnson, bush regeneration volunteer, telling us of how she is learning about the preservation and revitalising of pockets of urban bush and bushlands. Bring lunch dish to share.

Visit Manly Gallery 11.30am Tuesday 21 September

Catch 10.30 am Manly ferry. Meet at West Esplanade Reserve (left of ferry exit) to view a collaboration of Australian artists paintings, and an underwater photo exhibition.

At 11.30am, the Gallery Director will show us around exhibitions. Morning tea included. We could go off and have lunch together afterwards.

Sth Sydney Group 10.00 am Thursday 16 September

Northcott Dept. of Housing Centre at Northcott, Belvoir Sreet, Surry Hills - just beyond and opposite the Belvoir Street Theatre.

This group has been meeting for some years. Its members meet every six-weeks. Ring Joy 9251 9333 for details.

Lane Cove Group Meets fortnightly, on a Saturday at 10.30am, in the Thrive Plant Nursery Café, 165 Burns Bay Road, Lane Cove West.

This group has been meeting for some years to share information, activities and support, and always welcomes new local OWN members and friends. Ring Nina for details on 9438 5540.

Eastern Sydney Are there any members in the area who would like to get together regularly for a coffee, support, share local interests? Peg Hewett would like to hear from you – phone 9398 2428.

Feldenkrais We look like starting this new group on October 13, so check the October diary page for details.

If you would like to participate, please phone Joy on 9251 9333.

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, Phyllis Gorman, Polly Gow, Muriel Hortin, Jacqueline Schofer, Renee Simons, Ermes Solari, Wilhelmina van Dorp and June West.

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