

# OWN MATTERS

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

*No. 34 October 2004*

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## To boldly go...

How many members of the Older Women's Network know how different our organisation is from other non-government organisations? What makes us different is that it's us, the older women, who manage the day-to-day functions of our organisation and plan for the Network's future, instead of following instructions from 'above'. Some of us have been managing and directing OWN since it began in 1987, and many, many others have joined us along the way.

It was us who grew our organisation into what we have today, with the same tenacity and resourcefulness we used in our earlier years.

We have not reached our older years unscathed. Many of us have suffered pain, delusion, illegal abortions in backyards, breakdowns, disorientation, loss and depression. We have tenaciously and resourcefully lived through many of the experiences which younger women go through today, without the help of therapies now available for incest, rape, addiction, violence and relationship breakdown. We had no legal aid, no supporting mother's benefit, and little or no community sympathy or understanding.

Age provides no immunity against some of these issues. Older women are still experiencing the pain of domestic violence, rape, addiction and the end of relationships.

Since the very beginning of OWN, we set our own agenda around these issues and much more. We sought the opportunities and funding, we worked steadily, strongly determined to create a better understanding of the realities of the lives of older women, to overthrow negative stereotypes and to make our voices heard on many issues.

With our abilities and energies, we have initiated many valuable and relevant reports and publications, developed Wellness Centres, and worked to make our Theatre Group a force for education and change in the wider community, to name just a few of our achievements.

We truly boldly went where older women never went before. May the older women's force be with us as we continue growing.

**Louise Anike**

### **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

## **Patient Rights or PATENT Rights?**

Imagine a visit to your doctor's office. You learn you have a life threatening disease, and the doctor says a treatment exists. How would you feel if the doctor then told you that the medicine that would cure you is no longer available because the company that produced it had decided there wasn't enough profit in selling it to people like you?

This is happening to people who have a disease called Leishmaniasis, which is a parasitic disease endemic in eighty-eight of the world's poorest countries. The commonest variant, called Kala-azar, is usually fatal if not treated, but the production of a promising new antibiotic drug, aminosidine, has been abandoned at the moment because no company has found its marketing potential worthwhile.

In contrast, the drug laboratories are busy developing innovative up-market cures for non life-threatening ailments such as baldness. The distressing fact is that there are almost no new medicines in the pipeline for many of the common illnesses that afflict millions of people in the third world like sleeping sickness, malaria and TB, and research into tropical diseases has ground to a virtual halt.

The need for cheaper quality generic drugs is essential but patent barriers block access to good first-line regimes in poor countries, and may also do the same in Australia, now that the Free Trade Act has been passed (in spite of the amendments of Mark Latham).

I find all this extremely depressing, but then I remember the organisations like Médecins Sans Frontières, Care Australia and other aid agencies who are campaigning internationally to ensure patient rights against patent rights; who are urging patent holders to offer affordable prices in the developing world. They restore my faith in human beings a little.

It's the politicians who have really failed us. I think they must be made, somehow, to grant enough public funding for the development of quality generic drugs and funding for research into diseases affecting the world's poorest.

**Muriel Hortin**

## **Stop Press**

### **Women Centre Stage – again!**

We have it on good authority that the Older Women's Network *Women Centre Stage* Concert will be going ahead as planned on the afternoon of **Wednesday 16 March 2005**.

So all you budding thespians, singers, poets and dancers, start practising now! There'll be more details in next month's *OWN Matters*, but in the meantime, spread the word to older women vocalists, instrumentalists or dancers who might want to be 'star for a day'.

# OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

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The new Management Team is off to an enthusiastic start to the year. At our last meeting a decision was made to use the submission to the NSW Forum on Ageing written by Pat Carlton for the Management Team to form the basis of our planning for 2004-2005. Our areas of concern are mainly health and wellbeing, affordable and accessible community support services and affordable, accessible and reliable public transport. At a special meeting in September (too late for this report), we will formulate a plan of action around these issues. How we are operating as a statewide network will also be explored at this meeting.

As you know we are also taking a fresh look at our constitution, which reminds us of what OWN stands for, and guides us as we make decisions around the functions of OWN NSW. In our last report we put out an SOS asking members who have some expertise with constitutions to join us in reviewing ours. Please get in touch if you feel you have something to contribute.

At the August Management Team meeting, the OWN Aboriginal Support Circle circulated a statement of Apology and Reconciliation addressed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and asked the MT to endorse it. We unanimously adopted the statement and will place a copy on the office wall. If you would like a copy, please contact the office and we'll send it out.

Remember the amazing Women Centre Stage concert we held during Seniors Week 2004? Well, Seniors Week has offered us a grant to stage another one! We are currently negotiating with the Campbelltown RSL Club to provide us with the same facilities and are hopeful that another scintillating showcase of older women's talents will entrance and entertain in 2005.

For many years the Premier's Forum on Ageing was open to anyone who wanted to attend. Then a few years ago it became selective but was still open to those who really wanted to attend.

This year the Premier's Forum, held on 28 September, was by invitation only. And there was one invitation per organisation! The local forums, which were held in a number of regions (presumably to compensate for not getting invited to the main Forum), focused primarily on issues of importance to the frail aged.

The only opportunity for the well aged to have a say this year was at a 'focus group' event organised by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care at Parliament House. Forty older people, including eight from OWN, were separated into small groups, placed in a row in front of microphones and asked to answer two questions: What were the important issues for addressing the wellbeing of older people and how older people felt about working till seventy. The discussions were videotaped and, we understand, will be shown to delegates at the Premier's Forum. In our opinion, this alienating and non-inclusive way of involving older people in explorations of ageing and wellbeing was extremely disappointing. We strongly believe that a large and diverse audience listening to one or more keynote speakers and then sharing ideas in different workshops is the best way to explore the concepts and practicalities of healthy ageing.

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

## ***ELECTION FATIGUE***

Can election campaign fatigue be cured? I'm sure I have it. I am so sick of hearing the catch phrases about 'trust' and 'ease the squeeze' on every news bulletin.

No one seems to be addressing what I care about. Important things, like restoring 100% bulk billing, with no caveats; providing public transport that is safe and dependable; affordable housing for older people; clean, well-staffed nursing homes that don't require giving away your first born male child in order to get in; real and ongoing commitment to Aboriginal health and welfare; and total support of public education. When polities talk about 'family values', these are the things they should be addressing but don't, because they are too busy throwing around budget surpluses in an endless game of, "can you top this?"

The participants in the 'Great Debate' didn't even begin to address these issues. Each candidate stayed gloriously 'on message', spouting the same old platitudes we hear each time an election rolls around.

So, I have a suggestion. When backbone transplant surgery becomes possible, let's test it first on politicians. Maybe, if it works, someone will have the courage to take on the issues that matter to battlers like me. And my campaign fatigue will be permanently cured!



***Phyllis Gorman***

## **Ageism: then and now**

Reflecting on the article, *Ageism Can Make You Sick*, in last month's *OWN Matters*, coupled with a request to speak on ageism to a group of older women in November, I made a quick review of whether my analysis of ageism has changed over the past decade.

I have come to the conclusion that more lip-service is being paid to ageism today, but I feel that deep-seated ageist attitudes are just as strong and as harmful to us as ever. I thought readers might be interested in an edited version of an article I wrote twelve years ago, when I was 65.

**Louise Anike**

## **Ageing is Women's Business**

As each decade passes, women often groan fearfully, regretting their birthdays because of bodily changes. Even now, when I look in the mirror, I wonder at how I look. I don't feel the way the woman in the mirror looks. I feel a lot younger, and the woman in the mirror seems almost like a stranger.

Why do I want to deny my appearance as I become old? The very word 'old' is often accompanied with a shudder. Old is equated with being sickly, having a poor memory and being cranky. Being old is awful, sickly, forgetful, ugly and querulous, plus other derogatory adjectives such as pathetic, powerless, fearful and asexual. 'Old' is horror coming at the end of our lives.

Ageing is what we personally experience as we grow from day one, each of us experiencing it differently. Ageism, however, is a bias against older people by the (temporarily) young. Ageism is social ageing, the negative response with its accompanying segregation, discrimination and prejudice against the natural process of ageing.

A great deal of ageism is directed towards women. Woman-focussed ageism cannot be extricated from sexism. From the time our mothers put little pink bows in our newborn hair, we were socialised into believing our chief value was to be attractive and useful to men. Constructed by cramping and inconvenient clothes and shoes, we painted, plucked, shaved and modified our faces and bodies. We crippled our minds into accepting male definitions of beauty and service. We often stifled our own reason when illogicalities, contradictions and unrealistic standards were so apparent and unjust, because we were brainwashed by endless pressure to conform.

To be beautiful is to be young. You only have to consider the frenetic endless search some women engage in to try to erase signs of ageing. The last

arrow in the quiver of sexism is the ageism loosed against ageing women.

Claiming to reflect the world, the media selectively interprets the 'truth'. Older women, as a rule, are just not there – when we make an exceptional appearance we are bitches, witches, dithering dills, asexual housewives or naive, dependent women. Or we can be the fantastic granny, tap dancing to celebrate her 50th solo balloon flight – isn't she good for her age?

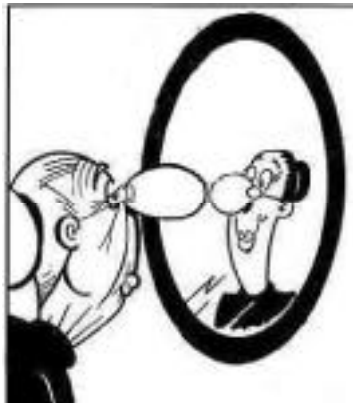
The older woman who subscribes to the idea that sexual desirability centres on being more physically attractive will have to invest extraordinary amounts of effort, money and emotion in striving for beauty by dieting, having constant hairdos, cosmetic surgery, lying about her age and agonising over wrinkles and drooping stomach.

The ending of our fertility does not end our sexuality, nor does it mysteriously sever us from our acquired skills and experience. Our sexual feelings may, in fact, increase after menopause. Older women are the butt of jokes about menopause and cruel jokes about mothers-in-law. There are no equivalent jokes about domineering, interfering fathers-in-law.

What can be done? We can make a start not to cut ourselves off from the natural process of our age. That phrase, "You're as young as you feel", is a self-alienating defence.

Age is a fact. In Australia, there are older women in all kinds of protests, working for peace, the environment, better social conditions and issues in the women's movement. Aboriginal women are fighting for land rights and the survival of their people. And there are older women active for older women – older women's speak-outs, festivals and, next International Women's Day. Look around you, we will be there, as we have always been.

**Louise Anike**



# Busted

My over-generous mammary glands have been the bane of my existence. Food was scarce when I was young, and I was skinny and flat chested until the age of twelve. At thirteen I started work in a doctor's residence, and with a better food intake my bust size increased dramatically. (That's my story, anyhow!)

I became very conscious of their greater size when a young lad at the swimming pool jeered, "Get a load of the tits on that." My answer was to hurl a hard rock at him, which connected just above his left eye. When his parents angrily arrived on our doorstep, my mother asked me to explain such a vicious act. I incurred her wrath when, with head downcast, I muttered, "He shouldn't have said, 'Get a load of the tits on that'."

Buying clothes was always difficult – what fitted up top was miles too big down the bottom. During WWII underwear required coupons and was very plain, except for one marvellous shop that I discovered called Dyomee. Soft satin material, glorious pastel shades. I was hooked, until I tried to buy a bra and was told by the haughty salesgirl, "Sorry, we don't have your depth." Blushing furiously, I and my boobs departed.

When my first child was born I could have given Dairy Farmers Milk a run for their money. With swollen breasts and dripping everywhere, I could have fed the whole nursery. Now that I've grown older I'm still having trouble, especially with mammograms. At the clinic, the nurse has to use two hands to drag my droopy boobs and squash them between the cold metal plates. She then tucks them in around the edges. Flesh escapes and she has to keep tucking. Ouch, the pain of it all!

At one stage I started to think about downsizing them, but soon changed my mind, after spending time in a hospital ward with women who were having plastic surgery on their breasts. One was having an enhancement, one a reduction, and one was having a repair operation to correct an earlier enhancement! When I saw the pain that those women were going through I decided I could learn to accept my droopy boobs!

**Peg Hewett**

(This is an edited version of a story I wrote in a Pearlie McNeill's Life Writing class.)

## Moderation works well for old bones!

In a study of the effects of drinking on bone density in women in over 75, it appears that a moderate amount of alcohol might actually help maintain bone density! Compared with non-drinkers in the French study, women over 75 who drank the equivalent of 1.3 standard alcoholic drink per day had higher bone mineral density. Surprisingly, the positive effects existed even in women who were smokers, who took hormone replacements therapy, who were inactive, who had a low educational status and who had otherwise poor health.

On the other hand, where alcohol intake was more than 30g per day (eg, 2-3 standard drinks) there was an actual decrease in bone mineral density, suggesting, as with other health benefits from alcohol, that while a moderate intake is good, too much can have an opposite effect.

*American Journal of Epidemiology, 2000;151 (8):773-80*

## Lurking dangers

The patient arrived in the middle of the night and was put in the bed next to mine. Some time later, I was woken by a bulky figure in white. My first thought was, "This is not a nurse." Then a masculine voice said, "I'm here to help you with your bladder, darling." Before I had time to react, a nurse bustled in and took him back to bed. Sleep is hard to come by in hospitals and I was *extremely* annoyed at being woken.

It didn't take long for me to realise how other older women might feel, so I 'walked' to the reception area to tell the nurses on duty what he had said. Those hard-bitten nurses laughed heartily, "It must be your lucky day. He only does this at night time." This gave me a clue that he had probably been kicked out of another ward that night. Then they led me back to bed. I stopped and told them, "But other old women would have screamed and woken the whole ward."

Around six the next morning a loud male voice woke me again. This time I didn't catch what he said, but I was fed up, so I shouted, "ARRGH, SHUDDUP" and he did. I glared at him later, but he asked the nurse, "Tell all my callers I will not be available until 4.30, as I will be working down the mine till then." She answered, "Yes. I'll do that." I realised that glaring would be totally wasted on him.

That day I was moved to the all-women ward, where I got a good night's sleep. Many women refuse to go into a mixed ward, as is their right.

Later, I was in a mixed ward again, but the men there were gentlemen. In this ward a nurse asked me to complain to the local Member about screening curtains not meeting and other matters in need of refurbishing, which I did.

**Enid Harrison**

## More than a crown!

A few months back, Helen Craig wrote an interesting 'crown' story in *OWN Matters*, which prompted me to share my own recent dental experience with readers.

Last year, just before moving to Sydney's Inner West, my newly ex-husband said he would pay for me to have two teeth crowned.

The first dentist I saw charged me \$110 to quote for two crowns, at \$1,100 each. Trying to economise, I sought out another dentist. Bingo! He was kindness and charm personified, and cheaper too. However, he said I needed *three* crowns. I asked if one could be deferred till next year, as I could only claim two crowns per year on my health insurance. No, he said, delay might cause more damage.

So, six weeks of drilling and root canal therapy later, I was in his surgery being fitted for the three crowns. During the procedure, my alarm bells rang loudly when he casually remarked, "And by the

way, the price went up over Christmas." To my horror, he then told me the crowns were all joined together! At that point, I should have jumped out of the chair and sprinted for the door.

I had a bill for \$5500, a terrible feeling of being ripped off, a too-tight, ugly bridge and a throbbing, infected, inflamed mouth. The bridge was too small for the space, the front stuck out, and my teeth rattled and grated horribly when I ate. I also had a raging temperature.

After a miserable week away on a family holiday, I went back to him and he offered to do the teeth again – if I gave him a further \$3,600!

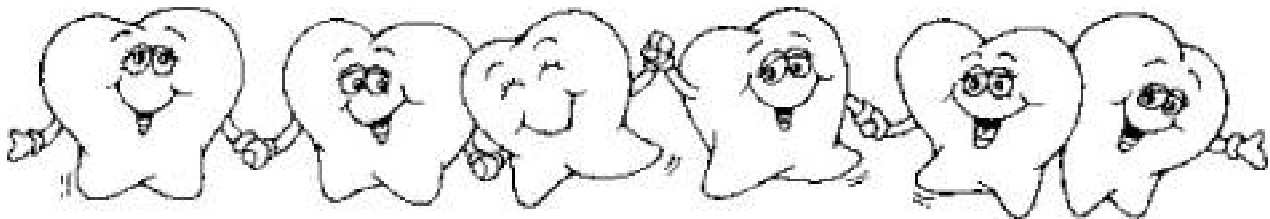
In despair, I consulted a Macquarie Street dentist who said that, because there was no way of cleaning the teeth, they would be rotten in five years. He sent me back to have them redone, and after paying another \$3,600, I reported that 'charming' dentist to the Dental Board.

Financially devastated, and feeling very angry about allowing myself to be taken in by someone so incompetent and dishonest, I returned to my old dentist, who replaced the crowns using the laser technology that Helen Craig had described. (I agree with her – it's wonderful.)

Then something lovely happened to turn my life around. One of my daughters asked if I would edit a novel. I accepted, and had the most marvellous fun. Five o'clock each morning had me totally absorbed for hours, immersed in the plot and characters of this murder mystery. Suddenly I felt useful again; there were interesting chats with the author, and even a little money coming in.

The teeth are forgotten, the money has been scraped up to pay for the replacement crowns, and suddenly I am enjoying the very best years of my life with Creative Movement, computer lessons, and exploring my new district with a different walk each day.

**Helen Maguire**



## To radiate or not?

Researchers are looking at the benefits of radiation treatment after breast cancer lumpectomies, for women over 70 who are taking the drug tamoxifen.

A recent Canadian study of 769 women ages 50 and older, found that fifteen percent developed a second growth after eight years, compared with four percent who received radiation treatment. Those who did not receive radiation therapy were no more likely to die than those who had the radiation treatment.

So, older women with small, localised breast tumours may want to watch and wait, since radiation can cause considerable breast pain and disfigurement.

Another study seems to support this approach. This study looked at women 70 and older with tumours no more than two centimetres wide. This study also found that radiation improved women's odds of living for five years without a new tumour, but the difference was small.

In an editorial, Ian Smith and Gillian Ross, of the Royal Marsden Hospital in London, suggest that women under 70 continue to receive radiation treatments if they are also taking tamoxifen, although there is a good chance the radiation treatments may not be necessary.

Read more at [www.my.webmd.com/content/Article/93/102379.htm](http://www.my.webmd.com/content/Article/93/102379.htm)

# What do we want from the Federal Government?

OWN NSW supports the recommendations included in the 2004 Federal Election Kit produced by the NSW Aged Care Alliance, and the Draft Federal Election paper produced by OWN Australia. In addition, OWN NSW makes the following specific recommendations.

## TAXATION and INCOME

- OWN NSW wants a more equitable taxation system, incorporating lower taxation rates for low-income earners and higher taxation rates for high-income earners.
- An increase in both the basic pension and supplementary benefits

## HEALTH

- A larger proportion of the total Federal Budget to be allocated to the Health portfolio.
- More emphasis on programs for the maintenance of good health and wellbeing and the prevention of illness and disease.
- Continuing support for programs which provide physical exercises for older women, and more funding to establish and maintain new physical exercise programs.
- More funding for research into gender and health and, in particular, ensuring that treatment trials involve women.
- More funding for research into the best care of the aged.
- More funding for preventive screening tests for all women aged 50 years and over, to prevent cervical cancer, breast cancer and osteoporosis.
- The continuation of, and more funding for, the National Women's Health Program, with priority assigned to the needs of older women.

## MEDICARE

- A universal, free, Medicare scheme, restored to its original coverage and standard.

## PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS SCHEME (PBS)

- The PBS to be protected and maintained as it was on 1 July 2004. We do not want to see the USA influence or change the scheme in any way, which is detrimental to the people of Australia.

## WORKFORCE ISSUES

- Pay rates and conditions for older women workers employed on a casual basis to be protected.

## DENTAL CARE

- Funding for adequate dental care services to be available locally for pensioners and other low income earners.

## RESIDENTIAL CARE

- Equity in pay and conditions between aged care workers and hospital based workers.
- An increase in the ratio of staff to residents in aged care facilities.

## COMMUNITY CARE

- A 20% increase in the budget for Home and Community Care services.
- Funding for a range of transitional care opportunities, so that older women are not discharged from hospital to unliveable home situations.
- Where common assessment tools are available (e.g. CIARR), funding bodies must ensure that these are used by service providers, so that older women needing a range of services are not required to complete numerous assessment forms. Where such tools are not yet available, funding bodies must expedite their introduction.
- More funding for Home Modification/Home Maintenance programs to assist older women to remain in their own homes for as long as they wish.
- Funding for the coordination and promotion of neighbourhood support groups.

## CARERS

- More funding for respite services, so that this service is readily available to carers.

## ATSI ISSUES

- People from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds to be represented in the management of all organisations that provide services to this group.

**Pat Carlton**

(on behalf of the OWN NSW Management Team)

### *Trust the Women*

The Women's Electoral Lobby is asking women voters to think WEL (L) before they vote in this year's federal election. They suggest policy priorities should include better rates of pay for low paid workers in industries such as nursing and child care, where women are concentrated. Importantly also, there must be a committed approach to preventing violence against women, and to the restoring of women's voice by supporting non-government advocacy organisations. For more information, visit [www.wel.org.au](http://www.wel.org.au)

# Letters to the Editor

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## Different Agendas

In your last *OWN Matters*, on page 15 there is a report headed, *A Vital Issue* by June West, which discussed the problem of tooth decay in Australia, and suggested that oral health should be a hot election issue. OWN is represented (and has been for a number of years) on the Oral Health Alliance, now to be replaced by a Health Policy Advice Group which will have the responsibility to respond to both the State and National Oral Health Promotion Plan.

One would imagine that the hot topic of fluoridation of public water supplies would be on the agenda.

On page 10 there is a report from Jude Roseth in which she informs us that some members of her branch have been busy writing letters about the "enforced fluoridation" of the Bellingen public water supply. One infers that they are opposed to this cost-effective and safe preventative public health initiative.

Given that the population of the Mid North Coast (with the exception of the Nambucca Shire which has enjoyed the benefits of fluoridated water for many years)

is among the worst, so far as oral health is concerned in NSW, I am getting some mixed messages here. C'est bizarre, n'est ce pas? Has OWN had any formal discussion on this topic recently?

**Olwyn Mackenzie**

## The lasting effect of Resilience

After listening to Anne Deveson read her recent book *Resilience* on ABC's Life Matters, I decided to buy the book. I was not disappointed as her inspiration of hope over adversity deeply touched me.

When she speaks of her father, I was reminded 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 this beautiful gift and she responded with a letter I will treasure.

**Anne M Collins**

## Should we be suspicious?

Wollondilly OWN has begun to be noticed, and treated with some respect. Our local Council consults us on some matters and now we have received an invitation which I think is significant. It's from Blue Circle Southern Cement at Maldon, which has invited a member of our group to "a drinks evening and briefing from Blue Circle Management at Picton".

The invitation came via a firm of 'community consultants', so Blue Circle is probably trying to get us on side for some scheme they are cooking up. I still think it a good thing that we are being consulted, though.

**Barbara Malcolm**

## And the award goes to....

Each year the *Ernie Awards*, organised by Meredith Burgmann, MLC, are presented in NSW to those people (men or women) who have made the most outrageous sexist or politically incorrect remarks during the year.

Two that caught my eye were:

The Gold *Ernie*, awarded to Tooheys for an advertisement showing a bunch of Wallaby supporters holding up a banner, which says, "Boys, if you win you can have our sisters". The banner has arrows pointing to their 'sisters' in the seats beside them.

The Media *Ernie* went to P P McGuinness for these enlightened comments: "The crude abuse coming from many of the ageing feminists and their ideological children who have for years repeated the tired stuff about women having the sole rights over their own bodies, as if there were no moral or ethical issue beyond that, merely shows that they have devoted no serious thought to the issue since the 1970s."

**Margaret Allen**

# Letters to the Editor

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## Word of Mouth

Telstra customers were recently informed that they would be charged a fee for paying their accounts by credit card. Although pensioners are exempted from this fee, they must register with Telstra for the exemption. Have you?

It is well known that there is a Centrelink pensioner phone allowance, but did you know that there are Telstra Pensioner discounts available to eligible Homeline customers, that is, people who have Telstra as their service provider?

When I enquired about this discount, and asked why I'd never heard about it until recently, the Telstra operator told me that most eligible pensioners hear about these discounts by word of mouth! What a way for our 'communications giant' to do business!

So, I've decided to not only pass on Telstra's discount secret to my pensioner friends, but also to readers of *OWN Matters*. Call Telstra on 13 2200 for more information.

**June West**

## Memories

Having just read Dorothy Cox's letter about her experiences in the WAAAF, during the Second World War, I was energised to relate some of my time in the service. We had similar experiences in the tin huts, and straw pallies and thick grey blankets. My Dad made my sleeping bag from a blanket folded three times, hem stitched in the top and drawn in by a pyjama cord. I was the envy of all.

I was fortunate enough to be asked to join a Concert Party, so I spent most of my time at rehearsals for concerts. I had some very

enjoyable times being involved in taking our Concert Parties to many country towns in NSW, while making a profit for the RAAF Welfare League.

My husband was in New Guinea at the time, and was a bit miffed when he came home to find his wife had been promoted to Corporal and he was still a private. No, it wasn't my voice that earned my stripes, I had re-mustered (changed jobs).

**Jean (Nickki) Grosse**

## The Un-driver ID

Regarding the article *Are You a Safe Older Driver?*, in the August issue of *OWN Matters*, you may be interested in my experience. When I retired in 1984, I had to sell my car and I have never driven since. But I kept my driving licence going as my ID. Every time I go into a bank, every time I step on a plane, I need an ID. I am now approaching 80, and my driving licence is due for renewal. The compulsory driving test is at 85, but one needs a yearly medical report from a GP after the age of 80.

Until I get my cataracts removed, I won't pass. I rang Seniors Information, the local Motor Registry and the office of the Minister for Transport, explaining I didn't need a driving licence, but I do need a photo ID. They each said that no such thing exists at the moment, but it should come up in the next session of Parliament.

Strangely enough, if your age is between 18 and 24, you can get a photo ID to prove eligibility for entering pubs and gambling establishments, but not if you are at the other end of the stick. I hope it comes up and passes, but even

so, it will take time to come into effect.

The only advice I got, from each of the offices I rang, was that I should carry my passport around as my ID, which I feel will expose it to being lost or stolen. Am I the only one with this problem?

**Roleena Jennings**

## If you are visiting the USA...

In June, I visited a friend in California. We have known one another since we were seventeen years old, and decided to celebrate our lives and friendship by going on a road trip.

The focus of the journey was to return to the Grand Canyon, which we had visited together 40 years ago. The Canyon looked even larger!

I then spent ten days in her glorious house, almost on the beach. She has a wonderful old purring pussy cat, and great friends who took me out and about. One of her friends is part of an older women's group called The White Caps. She has recently started renting a room in her home. Here are the details if anyone is interested – I give this a ten out of ten recommendation!

Stinson Beach, California – guest room for one person – quite private home on a tidal lagoon half a block to the ocean and sandy beach, (I saw sea lions as I walked along this beach), cosy room with private bath – easy walk to town – 45 minutes from Golden Gate, San Francisco. Cost in US dollars is \$40 per night with a minimum two nights' stay which includes continental breakfast. \$265 per week! Contact Marilyn Schauf PO Box 485 Stinson Beach California 94970, telephone 1 415 868 2509.

**Noel Carpenter**

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## Sydney

The high spot of OWN Sydney's Annual General Meeting was the address by Dorothy McRae-McMahon, a social justice activist well known to many of our members. Dorothy spoke enthusiastically about issues for older women, particularly connecting them to the forthcoming elections. Many present shared her concern that we now live in a very tough, dark world dominated by huge global forces.

At 70, Dorothy says she intends to live till she dies, to keep engaged with the nation and the world, to be inclusive, just and compassionate, and to be able to say, "I cared". She feels we need to maintain our faithfulness to social change, even to the point of stuffing envelopes (boring though it might be!), and to keep our passion for responsibility and human values alive. She went on to say that we have to hang on to one another, go out onto the streets, mingle in our local communities, the nation, wherever and whenever, in the best way we can.

A lively discussion followed, covering issues such as older people being demonised by politicians as a burden on the community; the proposal that people will have to work until they are 70; and the need for churches to *earn* respect.

Following Dorothy's talk, various reports were presented and accepted by the group. A new Working Group was elected, and a range of proposals were put forward, including ideas for interesting workshops, and ways to publicise OWN Sydney.

The past year was reviewed at the newly elected Working Group's

first meeting. We agreed that it was a good year, in which we have maintained regular activities as well as offering interesting speakers, and conducting some excellent workshops. The loyalty and goodwill of OWN Sydney members is as strong as ever.

The funding problem for our Wellness on Wednesdays program has been solved, for which we are very grateful. And we are now excited to offer Feldenkrais classes, which involve awareness of the body through movement. Details about the program are posted on the Noticeboard.

We took pleasure recently in nominating Cate Turner for an Australian Senior of the Year Award. Cate is an OWN Sydney member, a member of the OWN NSW Management Team, and the Treasurer of OWN Australia. We will know by January if our nomination has been successful.

We are looking forward to seeing you at some of OWN Sydney's upcoming events. Please check the Notice Page page for details.

**Louise Anike and Joy Ross**

## Macarthur

As usual, things have been hectic in Macarthur since our last report. Our AGM in July saw new faces elected to different positions, which bodes very well for the coming year. Congratulations to all these brave souls who have offered their time and energy.

I had the privilege of being elected a delegate, along with Pat Carter, to the Annual State Conference. The last State Conference was an interesting, professional and diverse experience. I loved every minute, networked like crazy, and

had a wonderful time co-facilitating a workshop on *Older and Bolder* with a beautiful woman from Parramatta OWN, Mollie Smith. The entertainment we enjoyed during the conference has set in motion some ideas for another concert, should we be victorious in obtaining funding. (See Stop Press notice page 2) What an inspiration Betty Little is – our thoughts and prayers are with her as she struggles with ill health.

Our Birthday Meetings continue to be very popular. Catering supremo, Marge Bosley, has been unwell and resting, so in her absence, her offsider, Pat Carter, has done a marvellous job with support from other members. We hope to see Marge, who is one of our founding members, fully recovered and back in action soon.

It is with deep regret that we record the passing of a lovely woman, Denise Peatman, who had fought a protracted battle with cancer. The memorial service, held on 9 September, was well attended by her friends from OWN.

Guest speakers, as always, have entertained and educated our group on diverse subjects, including one on *Colonial Ladies: lively, lovely and lamentably loose* with Judith Dunne, which was hilarious. We also had a very useful session on *Gardening in the Drought* and another on *Health and Ageing* with Carelink.

Our bus trips continue to be a most popular activity, with organiser, Sue Walters, doing an incredible job providing our group with a well-balanced and interesting program.

In July we enjoyed a visit to *Margaret's Music Room* at Punchbowl, which holds around 100 beautiful old organs,

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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previously used in theatres like the State and the Prince Edward Theatre. This wonderful venue has now closed its doors, but what memories! Last month, we journeyed to the Wollongong area, taking in *Jeanette's Royalty Rooms*. Quite a contrast to the August Blue Mountains visit on a most glorious day when the blue haze was at its best. The *House of Plates* was an overwhelming experience. In September, it was a colonial historic walking tour exploring our local area, which I'm sure will lead to further insight about local history.

**Helen Standing**

## Nowra

On a Friday in August, members of Nowra OWN caught the early train for a trip to the 'world of opera', at the Opera Centre in Surry Hills. To say we were fascinated is no exaggeration. We found out everything we ever wanted to know, not what we were afraid to ask and more than we had ever thought to ask, about opera production. The tour took two hours, including a cuppa. We saw and learnt it all, the production of opera, that is.

From the huge set construction area to the making of wigs, we were unprepared for the delights we were to see and learn about. The size of the construction area is the same as the stage area of the Opera House, even allowing for the sprinklers. We saw where the designers' ideas were drafted onto plans, and then made into scale models. Costumes, jewellery, make-up and hair styling for each opera are photographed and kept in thick folders for future productions. Swatches of material and details of their availability are kept in others.

The large costume-making area was full of light, with workers busy at various jobs, including machining, pinning, ironing, measuring, and fitting. Everyone was quietly engrossed. We would have liked to linger, fascinated by the restrained excitement that seemed to fill the air, but we had to move on. We peeked into the store cupboard that held rolls and rolls of material of every description. Then we had a look at rows of hundreds of costumes and hats, marvelling at how the headdresses were secured, so that the performers could sing and move about without fear of losing them. The wig-making department was even more fascinating. We learned how wigs were constructed and how their high cost is due to the need to use certain imported materials. We saw hundreds of hanging wigs, displaying shining curls of every description.

Another detail that caught our imagination was that where costumes can be reused for productions, shoes cannot. Performers provide their own shoes. Thanks to a generous benefactor, Opera Australia now owns all of Joan Sutherland's costumes. Three at a time are displayed in a glass-fronted case. These magnificent costumes have to be seen to be believed – the aura of the diva is quite apparent.

The icing on the cake was when we looked through the viewing window into the rehearsal rooms to see Yvonne Kenny under instruction from a director, and another performer, surrounded by beautiful props, learning the space restrictions on the studio floor as if it was the Opera House.

Did you know Opera Australia is the third only behind the Met and the Vienna in the numbers of productions each year, and that

two-thirds of their costs are covered by ticket sales?

For more information about The Opera Centre, phone 9699 1099.

**Barbara Appesley**

## Parramatta

Nine of our members attended the OWN State Conference and enjoyed meeting women from other OWN groups. We found the conference interesting and stimulating, with excellent speakers. We particularly enjoyed the keynote speaker, Pat O'Shane, who pointed out the lack of services for underprivileged people in Australia, especially in rural areas. The Parramatta group thought the workshops were educational and well presented, and performances from the Theatre group and theatrical performances from other groups added a dash of spice to the proceedings.

In July, we celebrated the group's first birthday with a special lunch at the Harris Park Community Centre, attended by 35 members and supporters. Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Julia Finn, was an honoured guest.

In August, we held our first AGM and elections for the working party. Mollie Smith was re-elected as Coordinator, with Josephine Bellis Assistant Coordinator. The team is much the same as last year, with the addition of two new members warmly welcomed to the working party. Appreciation was expressed to members of the working party, who produced the monthly newsletter and an interesting and fun program for our first year.

Our guests at the AGM were three

*(Continued page 12)*

# At and Beyond the Rocks

politicians who will be candidates in the next election for the seat of Parramatta: Ross Cameron from the Liberal Party, Julie Owens from the ALP and Nina Burridge from the Democrats. We're not sure we learned a great deal about their respective policies, but it gave our members a chance to meet them and form opinions. At the same time, the politicians had an opportunity to meet older women, who had plenty to say and who asked many incisive questions from their prospective Federal candidates. We hope they will remember the importance of issues affecting older people.

**Mollie Smith**

## Wagga Wagga

During Seniors Week 2004 (yes, it is quite a long time since we last reported in *OWN Matters!*) our Theatre Group performed for two great audiences, one in Wagga Wagga, and the other a hundred kilometres away in Gundagai. Audiences in both locations were really enthusiastic. We also held a small information display, promoting OWN in a local shopping centre.

The next few months saw a range of guest speakers including local health professionals, an

optometrist and a naturopath. In May we held a seminar with a guest speaker from The Aged Care Rights Service (TARS), which was well attended by members and friends. We followed this up with a talk by June Price, a social worker with the Forrest Centre Aged Care Centre. Monica Clapp, Outreach Officer with Riverina TAFE, came along to speak about the courses they presently run for seniors, eg *Computing for Seniors*, and asked us for ideas about more courses they could run for seniors. On 6 September, a retired pharmacist, John Mueller, conducted a seminar on medication management, which was a very relevant and enlightening talk, enjoyed by all.

Our management committee has continued working with local, state and federal officials, as well as other community organisations, to improve the availability of transport in Wagga Wagga.

Members who attended the State Conference this year found the *Songs and Skits* workshop, run by Peggy Hewett and Lucy Porter, extremely motivational and very helpful. Our Theatre Group was 'on leave' for the earlier part of this year, but now we are busy retrieving old favourites, creating new songs and skits, and preparing

to *travel*. It's fun to be 'working' together again.

The Narrandera Community Health Centre has asked us to perform at their *Older Person, Grey Power Expo* in Narrandera (100 kilometres away!) during Mental Health Week in October. The Centre's Adult Mental Health worker has also asked us to speak more generally about OWN, with a view to start, an OWN group in the area.

We have also agreed to do a show at the Wagga Regional Conference of Domestic Violence Workers in November, and one in December for a recently formed group of people with Parkinson's Disease.

Then, of course, there's the excitement of receiving a Small Equipment Grant of \$1600, from the Federal Department of Family and Community Services, to purchase portable equipment for our Theatre Group. We plan to buy an amplifier and some microphones, which will make a considerable difference to our performances.

So as you can see, Wagga Wagga OWN has had a busy year. We've accomplished a lot, and 2004/2005 is looking to be even busier.

**Judith Constable and  
Muriel Waddell**

## Seniors Week Achievement Awards 2005

Do you know women who have made an outstanding contribution to your community? Why not nominate them for a Seniors Week Achievement Award?

You may nominate a group or individual in one of the following categories: education/life-long learning; health and wellbeing; intergenerational understanding; community service/volunteering; environment/science or business mentoring.

Nomination forms are available from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) website at [www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au) or call the Seniors Information Service on 13 12 44. Nominations must be received by 5.00pm, Friday 5 November 2004.

Send to: Project Manager, Corporate Communications, DADHC, Level 5, 83 Clarence Street, Sydney 2000.

## The Power of Print

*“The world seemed to roar in pain as the floors detonated in quick succession, debris sprayed into the streets and great sheets of flying steel slashed into the surrounding buildings.”*

Thus, in a few sentences, Paul McGeough in his book *Manhattan to Baghdad*, published one year ago, gives us his eyewitness account of those scenes, more gut wrenching and heart ripping than the repeated visions of smoking, flaming towers seen on television. The solitary reader is taken through acres of concrete rubble and fallen masonry, dust and twisted steel. There are rows of ambulances with their paramedics waiting for survivors; there is nothing to do. Dogs with bandages on paws, injured from scratching in the rubble searching for those survivors. There are none. Eyes dampen and throats tighten reading of firemen who pause and remove helmets while their comrades in body bags are taken away by brother firemen.

Frightened New Yorkers stumble away and back again in their futile search. And then come the photos, the flowers and the messages asking for news of the missing. The place, now called Ground Zero, has become a shrine. The reader does not say to herself that ‘they are overdoing it’, but feels with them that whoever did this must be made to pay.

One year on and McGeough returns to that ‘mad jumble that is the iconic image of New York.’ There is a memorial ceremony at Ground Zero with bells, candles, doves released, and poems read. He finds the population weary of grief and talking of it, and ambivalent about another war. He has spent the year travelling where that war is taking place, where there are no bells or candles symbolising hope reborn, where widows and orphans and mothers mourn loss too.

The reader now is weary and, though remote, shares that grief and ambivalence.

**Helen Monaghan**



### BOOK REVIEW

*Bel Canto* by Anne Patchett is about hostages, terrorists, diplomacy and good and evil. It tells of a diverse group of people in a palatial European Embassy, somewhere in South America, herded together, locked up and terrorised for several months.

The characters are vividly drawn, hateful and lovable, always interesting, as the author tells how they change and develop as a result of the awful circumstance in which they have found themselves.

It is a love story, too, as well as an exciting thriller – a book that makes you think, giving an insight into the minds of both terrorist and victim.

The horrific ending shocked me profoundly and remained in my memory for some time.

**Joan Johns**

### ***How did we ever survive?***

According to today’s regulators and bureaucrats, those of us who were kids in the ‘40s, ‘50s and ‘60s probably shouldn’t have survived.

Our baby cots were covered with bright coloured lead-based paint. We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets.

When we rode our bikes, we had no helmets. We rode in cars with no seatbelts or air bags. Riding in the back of a ute or truck on a warm day was always a special treat.

We ate cakes, bread and butter, and drank soft drinks with sugar in them, but we were never overweight because we were always outside playing.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then rode down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We made up games with sticks and tennis balls, and cubbys with bits of tin and cardboard. We rode bikes or walked to a friend’s home and knocked on the door, or rang the bell or just walked in and talked to them.

We fell out of trees, got cut and broke bones and teeth. They were accidents. No one was to blame but us. Remember accidents?

Our generation has produced some of the best risktakers, problem solvers and inventors, ever. The past 50 years have seen an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all. We had the luck to grow up as kids, before lawyers and government regulated our lives – for our own good!

**Gabrielle Snedden**



**razor wire**

number 82176 is two  
no toys

adults make kites  
coloured rubbish bags  
guards confiscate them  
number 82176 is in tears

plays with garbage bags  
wailing waddling  
little hands waving

ahead of UN inspection  
detainees are to be referred to  
by name not number  
have their rooms repainted  
trees planted  
razor wire removed

red dust swirls  
heat no fans  
Fatimah (number 82176) stays  
locked away

**jenni nixon**

*From Café Boogie Interactive  
Press.2004*

**A Toast for Lovers**

Drink the wine when it is new  
Sweet and heady is the brew  
Sweet and hot the body's fire  
When young lovers taste desire  
So slake your thirst but joy renew  
And pleasure take the whole night through.

May love's wine last your whole life through  
Nor sour nor spoil. Matured and true  
Gain in subtlety and strength  
And quiet enjoyment, till at length  
That good old wine warms heart and head  
And so, goodnight, it's time for bed.

**Marion Woof**

**Transported!**

If a taste of danger's what you want  
With a minimum of fuss,  
Just venture down the nearest street

And catch a Sydney bus.  
The driver sits in bored disdain  
But do not be deceived,  
He's carefully noting all who board,  
Their number, age and breed.

Lest some forgetful passenger  
Should fail to pop a ticket.  
And then he'll bring one to task  
In language quite explicit.

The young and nimble push their way  
To every empty seat,  
While those less able stumble on  
And try to keep their feet.

Meanwhile the charioteer leans o'er,  
His foot forsakes the brake,  
The mighty engine comes to life,  
The roads beneath us quake.

With deafening roar, emitting clouds  
Of air-polluting fumes,  
This lumbering Leviathan  
The threatening miles consumes

And then (my God, who had the gall?)  
A little "pi-i-ing" is heard.  
And one or two intrepid souls  
From out the bus are hurled.

The driver, long frustrated  
Of the Grand Prix racing track  
Accelerates. While passengers collapse into  
A wildly heaving pack.

Heartfelt orisons ascend  
Unto the heavens above,  
As each soul begs reunion  
With all it dearly loves.

With trembling limbs and rolling eyes,  
They reach their destination.  
The driver sits and quietly smiles,  
"O glorious 'fustigation' "

**Judith Mustard**

\*fustigation – a form of corporal punishment.

## **Images of Sussex, England**

Isn't it strange  
How a memory returns?  
A name from the past  
appears on the screen  
and conjures up recollections  
of a house in Sussex;  
An old, warm, honey coloured house,  
a keeper of secrets,  
past lives,  
past griefs  
permeating those stout  
and warm old walls.

I remember sitting alone one night –  
in the room above  
I heard footsteps –  
A slow and measured tread  
of a man deep in thought  
who lived there when?  
Fifty, a hundred,  
two hundred years ago?  
Who he was and  
what he sought  
I will never know.

I remember a night in June  
When the moon shone  
on Sussex fields and  
on that old stone house.  
Shone on the ancient yew –  
A sentinel corseted with an iron band,  
a soft and balmy night,  
filled with honeysuckle and roses,  
silhouettes, shadows and  
whispered rustles.  
Across the fields, a nightingale sang  
a perfect aria,  
the music encompassing the night.

I remember a soft Sussex voice,  
our neighbour, Bert Funnell,  
who asked, "Did I ever hear tell  
of Jessie the second?"  
A famous Sussex cow.  
He told of a time  
when horses pulled the plough,  
and gently tilled the soil.  
He spoke of raspberry canes,  
and strawberry beds,  
peas and runner beans,  
of a peach tree espaliered  
on a honey coloured wall.

Images of Sussex  
In a slow and ordered time.  
I remember, I remember,  
and will until I die,  
The peaceful Sussex  
Landscape, and a  
Honey coloured stone house  
with part of me still there.

**Mollie Smith**

## **a clinical exposure**

prodded  
squeezed  
squashed  
in ultrasound seek within  
vast cosmos each breast  
swirling seas black orbs  
cysts  
waiting to be discovered  
aspirated sent for biopsy  
grey movement  
flows  
black holes  
appear  
vanish  
uneven rocks  
a lunar landscape  
unfamiliar terrain  
within soft curves  
magnets of pleasure  
after probe  
joy to discover  
upon exploration  
nothing unusual to report

**jenni nixon**

*From Café Boogie, Interactive  
Press 2004*

## **No One Home**

The old woman sits with empty eyes and does not speak  
The storehouse of her mind is likewise empty now  
Its shelves are bare of treasured memories, her substance spent  
Kind and cruel actions equally leave no trace  
Only the small rustling movements of her restless fingers  
Betray the remnants of a busy futile life  
Worn away by never-ceasing small demands  
Till naught remains of soul or self  
As when a fish is taken from the waters of a stream  
There remains but tiny ripples diminishing to nothingness  
The fish's space closes over, the stream flows as before.

**Marion Woof**

## **A common antibiotic can trigger cardiac arrest**

Erythromycin, a commonly prescribed antibiotic which has always been considered safe, has been on the market for 50 years and is prescribed for everything from strep throat to syphilis.

However, a recent study of over 4,000 patients found that when erythromycin is taken with some popular drugs for infections and high blood pressure, it can dramatically increase the risk of cardiac arrest.

Taken alone, erythromycin has a very low risk of sudden cardiac death among patients. In people taking other drugs — those that increase erythromycin's concentration in the blood — the risk of cardiac death was more than five times greater, and is an unacceptably high risk.

Although cardiologists would know erythromycin carries a risk of cardiac arrest, general practitioners are less likely to know about it. This research shows why it's important for people to keep a list of their medications and to take it with them when they visit a general practitioner.

**Linda Johnson**

## **Controlling Diabetes through low GI diets**

According to an article in *Choice* magazine's *Health Reader* (October 2003), diabetes was once thought to be a disease of high blood sugar and the best way to control it was a diet low in sugars and carbohydrates. These days it is thought that not all carbohydrates are equal, and many people with diabetes have begun eating carbohydrates again.

The type of carbohydrate is what's important. Researchers have investigated the impact of the glycemic index (GI) on health. (The GI measures how fast a carbohydrate is digested and absorbed.) The theory is that a low GI food, which is absorbed slowly and releases smaller amounts of insulin, can help in the management of diabetes. Many low GI foods, such as grains, legumes and cereals, promote a slow and sustained rise in blood sugar. Studies in which people with diabetes were treated with a lower GI diet showed a clear improvement in blood sugar control.

Of course it goes without saying that anyone with diabetes thinking about trying a low GI diet should consult a GP or health worker before making any changes to your diet.

**Dorothy Cora**

## **Biscuits suitable for people with diabetes**

### **Ingredients**

1 cup wholemeal flour \* 1 teaspoon baking powder \* 1 egg  
1 cup skim milk \* 1 teaspoon liquid artificial sweetener  
1 teaspoon vanilla essence \* 80gm polyunsaturated margarine  
3 crushed Weet-Bix \* 1 cup rolled oats

### **Method**

Sift together flour, baking powder and spice. In a small bowl beat together egg, milk, sweetener and vanilla. In a mixing bowl beat margarine with one tablespoon of the flour mixture until creamy. Add the remaining dry ingredients alternatively with the egg mixture, stirring until blended. Stir in Weet-Bix and oats, mixing to a stiff dough. Place teaspoonfuls of the mixture on lightly greased scone trays. Bake at 200 degrees for 15 to 20 mins or until crisp and golden. Cool completely on tray and store in an airtight container.

**Thelma Anderson**

## **Adverse drug reactions**

Consumer reporting of adverse drug reactions has now become a reality in Australia. The service was launched in October 2003 and is funded by the Australian Council of Safety and Quality in Health Care.

The objectives of the Adverse Medicines Events Line include:

- creating a system for consumers to report adverse experiences with medicines
- promoting openness and accuracy regarding adverse medicine events
- identifying trends in adverse medical events to know when, where and how things go wrong; and
- integrating such information into health systems to improve their safety and quality.

People can now report adverse events about medicines anonymously, and we can do it in a way that acknowledges the value of our experience. Reporting in this way will result in an updated understanding of the safety and serious side effects of medicines beyond clinical trials and help us understand the best way to use medicines effectively.

However, the service is only funded for eighteen months. If it is meeting consumer needs, a permanent service should be encouraged.

The AME Line number is 1 300 134 237. Write it down. Put on the fridge, in the medicine cupboard, in your diary. USE it.  
[www.safetyandquality.org.au](http://www.safetyandquality.org.au)

From *The Australian Health Consumer*

*Ever notice, the older we get,  
the more we're like computers?*

*We start out with lots of  
memory and drive, then we  
eventually become outdated,  
crash at odd moments, acquire  
errors in our systems and have  
to have our parts replaced.*

**Ermes Solari**

## Brown Betty

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Brown Betty, I called her. Snub-nosed and unpretentious in her brown china chunkyness, Brown Betty is a teapot, a legacy from a dear friend who had recently died. A legacy that caused some surprise from Christine, when her still tear-trembling voice requested that I choose a memento from her mum's possessions. "She had some lovely things, Pat," she reminded me. Indeed, Peg did have some treasures, but my request to her grieving daughter was for Brown Betty.

Peg and I enjoyed a special relationship with Brown Betty. Over the fifty or more years of our friendship, we had shared cups of tea from that teapot along with the joys and sorrows and frustrations that sprinkled our lives. There were several sea-changes when a spout was lost after a collision with a tap, or the time when she was tipped into the sink along with the tealeaves. Always though, she was replaced with another Brown Betty; just as chunky and warmly brown as her predecessor, perhaps with a different identity stamp on her bottom. Once decently covered in one of Peg's tea cosies, she became part of the family. Brown Betty's tea cosies were legendary, some bought from charity stalls and fetes and some I, in my more home-spun days, knitted with love and affection in every stitch.

Peg and Cliff were the most openly loving couple I have ever known. She called him 'Cliffy' and he always addressed her as 'Lovie', which may sound farcical to the sophisticated, but to coin a phrase, you had to be there! Peg loved to sing, and in her soft almost girlish soprano, she accompanied her household chores with songs from the fifties and sixties.

She had a way with words that always made me laugh. When giving me her ophthalmologist's

verdict that she was going blind, she told us it was because of her "roving retina". And when a mutual friend died, she remarked that his wife had "always kept him lovely".

For Cliffy's funeral, she wore a scarlet suit, because, "Cliffy always loved me to wear it." That suit was testimony of her love, as was her red hair that she kept dyed, just as bright as their love for each other.

Cliffy too, went to his funeral dressed like a film star at an opening night. I, too, can say, "She always kept him lovely."

**Pat Lindsay**

## Promoting fairness and justice

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 the *Campaign*, please phone (02) 9211 4164, email [info@nowwethepeople.org](mailto:info@nowwethepeople.org) or check [www.nowwethepeople.org](http://www.nowwethepeople.org).

## Self-funded Retirees

Contrary to popular belief, it's not true that Australia's self-funded retirees can easily afford inflation, increased health and transport costs, and low interest rates. In fact, many older people who fund their own retirement by superannuation, income from investments and casual employment, can have financial problems

The Association of Independent Retirees is an advocate for self-funded retirees. It is a non-party political, non-profit organisation, representing fully and partly self-funded retirees of all ages. A.I.R says it has already achieved some changes to government policy. Through professional representation at Federal, State and Local Government levels, it seeks more equity and a fair go for self-funded retirees. It recommends a taxation environment that recognises and compensates for inflation, and addresses the special problems of the retired, regardless of source of income. It also recommends benefits, rebates and concessions for its members, equivalent to those granted to pensioners, from government, health organisations, business and commerce.

For further information, go to [www.independentretirees.com](http://www.independentretirees.com)

**June West**

## Telling tales

My daughter asked her class of six-year olds, "What does it mean to take the Lord's name in vain?" One little boy's hand shot up and he answered, "It means you can't tell anyone to hurry up."

To her question, "And *why* do you say that?" he replied, "Because Dad always says, "For Christ sake, hurry up," and Mum always says, "Don't take the Lord's name in vain."

**Barbara Malcolm**

# NOTIC

## Bequests to the Older Women's Network

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

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

*Older Women's Network NSW*  
or the  
*Older Women's Network,  
Sydney.*

### Option No. 1

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

### Option No 2

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

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

### Lunch Hour Talks

Jessie Street National Women's  
Library  
Level 1, Town Hall House  
465 Kent Street, Sydney

**Thursday 21 October  
12 Noon to 1.30pm**

Pam Liell – *Pictures and  
Messages from the Past*

Pam is writing a book about events and fashions from 1860-1960, working from information gleaned from old family photographs. She talks about the research she has undertaken for this, and for her two self-published books on the social and military messages contained on the backs of old postcards.

### Discussion Group Free Invitation

COTA invites you to discuss what our community needs to help keep older people healthy in mind and body.

Seniors, future seniors and carers are all welcome.

**Wednesday 13 October  
10.00 to 12 pm**

Level 1, 280 Pitt St. Sydney (near  
Town Hall Station, Bathurst St.)  
Phone: 9286 3860

Presenter: Peter Trebilco, Mental  
Health Association.

### Farewell, Betty.

Betty Pybus, feisty feminist and founding member of OWN Tasmania, died on Thursday 23 September, aged 81.

Throughout her life, Betty was a wonderful role model for women of all ages. She will be missed by many.

### Ageing issues?

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has produced a brochure that provides information about who they are, what they do, how they operate and how you can contact them.

They are available under the News and Events section of the DADHC website at [www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au) or you can request a hard copy by calling 8270 2000.

### Bursting at the Seams?

A Shelter & NCOSS Conference on Social Sustainability and Sydney's Future

**1-2 November  
Crowne Plaza, Parramatta.**

For more information, please call (02) 9267 5733 or email [flora@shelternsw.org.au](mailto:flora@shelternsw.org.au). For a program and registration details go to [www.shelternsw.org.au](http://www.shelternsw.org.au)

### Meditation group for older women

Wednesdays 10.30 to 12.30  
Sydney Buddhist Centre,  
Newtown.

Facilitated by Sue Johnson. A donation is requested.

The Centre is very pleasant and the group is small and friendly. It is for women wishing to learn how to meditate and include it in their daily lives, and who are interested in an introduction to Buddhist philosophy. Members find that meditation helps them in various ways – they feel more peaceful and contented, enjoy improved concentration, and are better able to deal with anxiety and worries.

Some street parking is available.

Phone 9519 0440 for more information.

# ES

## **Guardianship Tribunal Planning for your Future**

Wednesday 10 November 2004

Salvation Army Conference Centre  
Level 4, 140 Elizabeth Street,  
Sydney.

The Seminar may provide answers to questions such as:

Planning for your future with enduring guardianship or enduring power of attorney

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

Information about the Guardianship Tribunal and what they do.

You will be able to ask the presenter about any of your concerns or issues.

For registration forms ring  
9555 8500

The afternoon session (2.30 to 4.00pm) is for carers, family members and/or friends of people with a disability.

There is no fee for this session.

### **Listen up!**

Did you know that *OWN Matters* is available for the sight-impaired at no charge? Just contact the office if you would like a cassette. If you know of someone who is sight impaired, please let them know of the availability of audio cassette versions of the newsletter.

### **ENCORE: Celebrating Life Again**

Portraits of Courage  
Voices of Wisdom

Women who have lived with  
Breast Cancer

A powerful and moving exhibition  
by photographer Lisa Page

**Thursday 28 October 6.30pm**

Andrew (Boy) Charlton Pool,  
The Domain, Sydney

# OWN Sydney Notices

## **Discussion Group**

10.30am Monday 11 October (we normally meet on the first Monday of month) "The Pod" (those interested in the psychology of happiness), at 75 Windmill Street. All welcome.

## **Film Discussion**

1.30pm Monday, 11 October Film discussion group, at 75 Windmill Street. Join us to have an interesting discussion. Bring lunch. The films to be discussed are: *Tom White, Somersault, Life and Death of Peter Sellers, Zatoichi.*

## **Feldenkrais**

10.45am-11.45: Wednesday 13 October, a new class *Bones for Life* (Feldenkrais) will commence, with leaders Margery Hellman and Alexander Tyrrell, in the Youth Centre at the rear of Mott Hall. Participants will learn gradually and safely how to stimulate bone strength; coordinate a springy and dynamic walk; align your posture; develop skills in restoring balance and enhance the pleasure of moving.

Wear loose comfortable clothing. Cost is \$5 per session.

## **Wellness Morning Coffee and Luncheon**

Drop in for a morning coffee with the rest of the Wellness on Wednesday women at 10.30am in the Mott Hall, and bring a sandwich and stay for lunch at 12md.

## **Join members of Nowra OWN**

10.30am Friday, 15 October: Visit the old GPO in Martin Place. Cost \$33 includes a Morning Tea/Lunch. Please advise Anne Warren by 6 October if you would like to come. Phone 4422 9353.

## **Meet Earthwatch Volunteers**

11am Friday, 15 October: Meet American volunteers, Gloria and Ron Lundberg, who are visiting Australia for the first time. Because they feel it is important to give back to the community, they look for opportunities to volunteer whenever they travel. Gloria and Ron have taken several tours with the Earthwatch Institute, an organisation that engages people worldwide in scientific field research and education, through short-term volunteer opportunities directly assisting scientists. Earthwatch conducts expeditions all over the world, including here in Australia, where they explore climate change in the rainforest. Gloria and Ron will talk about the exciting volunteer work they did while on Earthwatch expeditions in New Mexico and England.

Bring a lunch dish to share, 87 Lower Fort Street.

**PARKFEST** - Celebrate the launch of Mental Health Week

**Sunday 10 October from 10am - 3pm**

**A day of free music and fun in beautiful Centennial Park**

Jimmy Little, Café at the Gate of Salvation and Abby Dobson

Join in the free Tai Chi \* Qi Gong \* Yoga

or relax in the Stress Less Lounge with a free massage