



OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales

Vol.3 No.9 – October 2006

Endowing Opportunity in a Compassionate Society

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Having just added another birthday to my ageing portfolio, those closest to me have smiled knowingly and explained that perhaps my cynical questioning of government initiatives aimed at 'social planning' to 'strengthen the economy', and 'defeat the enemy', are simply a reflection of my inevitable move towards my crone status as a *grumpy older woman*.

I'm not shying away from my 'crone crown'. I am a firm believer in the 'why wait to be a grumpy older woman philosophy'. But I refuse to have my anger, our anger, diminished, disarmed or invalidated. Older women have much to celebrate, yes, but, unfortunately there are many things that give us good cause for fury.

In this issue we touch the surface of a couple of these. Take for example, the recent changes in the Welfare to Work program. Lucy Porter's story on page 16, details the government's recent mission to convert our severely disabled into 'Useful Taxpayers'. This government has awarded itself the accolade "Australia's Economic Miracle" and has taken the moniker literally.

This is not to say that I believe we should encourage national pessimism, but we must question the damage being done to so many people, particularly youth, who are constantly hearing the message "you can be anything if you just believe," or "just want it badly enough".

For some, life in Australia's current climate will be manifestly unfair. Their inability to 'succeed' will not be due to any personal lack, but to the failure of our society to provide an environment capable of endowing them, as unique individuals, opportunities to cultivate their potential. The state of Aboriginal health is a prime example. Were you aware that on average, a person from Nigeria or Bangladesh have a life expectancy about 10 years longer than an Indigenous Australian? On page 5, Lorraine Inglis, lets you know how you can take action on this issue. And if you feel you need to sharpen your skills, check out the Notices, page 18 – there are workshops being run to give you the skills to take on parliament.

Best get the skills now. You may find you need them soon: if you find you can't access Home Care in your area; can't afford housing or aged care; find that your mail is being tampered with; that your power has been cut. Or you've simply given up going out because you can't find a bench seat to rest on, or a toilet that isn't locked. The skills may come in handy when the "hot-line" ten-stage push-button, leave-a-message complaints robot has no option for your difficulty – or should you finally get through they tell you they're aware of your problem, but they're unable to offer any assistance; your name, and complaint will be added to a list. Ask yourself, how badly did you want it? Maybe you just didn't *wish hard enough* for that public toilet, the electricity subsidy, or that NSW Elder Abuse Line?

Perhaps for you it's not a matter of life and death, but for some people living in Australia it is. It doesn't need an economic miracle, it needs social, political and economic management that is compassionate and realistic. Just maybe then we'd all see the light.

Beth Eldridge

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Produced with the assistance of the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

with project funding from the NSW Department of Health and assistance from the City of Sydney

Who Are We?

The Older Women's Network (OWN) NSW is the peak body for 20 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 interest and concern to older women.

OWN Matters is the newsletter of the Older Women's Network NSW. It is published 11 times a year. The annual subscription for individuals is \$22 and \$40 for organisations & includes GST.

Members of 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 Tuesday of each month.

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ABN 36 992 030 904

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POINT of VIEW

Helping Older People Stay in their Own Homes

Last year I was ill. I had uncontrolled hypertension and arrhythmias. A friend was staying with me and she had just had an emergency bowel cancer operation. My friend was told she could do no housework for six months and I didn't know when I would be well enough to do anything. On one of my many admissions to hospital I was given a glossy brochure printed by the Federal Government advising how they provided subsidised services to help older people stay in their own homes.

Back home again I rang the listed phone number and was directed by voice mail to various agencies. One agency said they did provide assistance but all their subsidised government services had been filled though they would happily provide private domestic help for \$40.00 an hour. As I am on an old age pension I declined their offer. On applying to Home and Community Care I was told there was a waiting list and three months later I received the required help. Oh, why didn't I apply before I got sick, silly me!

I have lived in the same house for over 45 years, it's a house with a big yard and the grass grows quickly so I then tried to access the same government service to see if there were any lawn mowing services available. Eventually I was put through to such a service who advised me the subsidised service was full but I was eligible to go on their waiting list if I provided medical evidence to say that I couldn't manage to cut it myself. I supplied the necessities and was then informed I was in 86th position on their list. After waiting 12 months I rang again and was told I am now in 84th position. At this rate I had better look after myself as it looks like I'll have to live to 116 years of age to access this service.

My question is, why bother to print an expensive brochure to advise people of services, which are to say the least, very hard to access? Wouldn't the money be better spent not advertising but providing the required services?

Lucy Porter

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in OWN Matters are not necessarily those of the Older Women's Network NSW, and we do not guarantee the accuracy of the facts in articles supplied by members. The Older Women's Network NSW accepts no responsibility for any loss occasioned to any person acting, or not acting, upon any material in OWN Matters.

OWN NSW

Coordinators' Report

The big advantage in being an OWN member is that we have a vast network we can tap into.

This network gives us access to the knowledge of strategies that are in place to make our lives as comfortable and fulfilling as possible. The importance of wellness and wellbeing are among the core values of our organization. It is important for the success of our groups to be able to be of service their members, so they understand the full extent of the network that is available to them.

With this in mind OWN NSW has made a commitment at the first of the new Management team meetings that a member of the management team would be made available to visit all the groups throughout NSW. Some of the groups may not feel the need for a visit and this is understandable.

However, for the groups who would like to have a closer connection with the NSW body, the opportunity is now available for you to invite a management team member to visit your area and attend one of your meetings. This is a big undertaking on behalf of the MT so the communication between both parties would have to be very clear.

May I suggest to group leaders that this proposal be discussed at a future meeting to find out the group's interest and report back to NSW on what their feelings are. For those who think a visit would be appropriate or productive, or both, a timetable could be established so that the visits may begin.

While on the subject of the MT, I must start by thanking our three visitors to the September meeting. Brenda Hodgkinson made a welcome return after suffering health problems and has again stepped up to take her place on the team. Welcome back Brenda, we did miss you. Barbara Apperley and Olwyn Cambourne from Nowra OWN also made the trip to The Rocks. They were also made welcome, and I hope, got some insight into what the

aims and difficulties of running an organization such as ours.

Unfortunately, due to ill health, some members were unable to attend and we were unable to form a quorum at this meeting. This meant that business had to be curtailed to a certain extent, nonetheless it was a lively meeting with several points being debated.

Betty Johnson continues to be one of our most dedicated advocates on all issues that affect our members. Her report on Aged Care was inspirational. She has tendered a response to the NSW State Plan on our behalf and we thank those who supported her with information on behalf of OWN members. She has also agreed to prepare a paper on Women as Consumer Advocates to be presented at the International Council on Women's Health Issues Congress, to be held in November.

We all continue to be in awe of the tremendous amount of work Betty manages to get through each month. Aged Care Alliance, NSW Home Advisory Board, Nurses and Midwives Advisory Board and the Sydney West Area Health Service Higher Education Academic Board are just some of the Boards and services that value her input. OWN members are asked to support Betty in her work on our behalf, by supplying her with ideas, stories of experiences and any other information that she could use in her work.

We have had several members with health issues lately and one by one they seem to be making progress. We especially miss Ermes and Joy's smiling faces about the office and look forward to the day they are able to rejoin us.

And last of all, the Management Team look forward to having you visit us at one of our meetings or to visiting your group should an invitation be forthcoming.

Barbara Malcolm

In Search of Vera Figna Stories

Joyce Stevens and Susanne Bellamy, nominated as Movers and Shakers in the Sydney Women's Liberation House Movement of the early seventies, are helping me with stories to make a documentary called "Authorised by Vera Figna", the story of the wave of Feminism that hit back then.

A real Mover and Shaker, but a rather enigmatic figure, Vera Figna was never backward in sticking her neck out for the "Cause."

Anyone with a Vera story to tell? I would love to hear it. Nominations for Movers and Shakers of Sydney, the book, please fax Dee Peters 9569 3060 or telephone Jan Wood 9810 7016 or email:

coffeebreak@woodlandproductions.com.au

Free Speakers - Royal Flying Doctor Service

The Royal Flying Doctor Service provides speakers to community groups in many areas free of charge. Talks include:

- The history of the Service
- Current Operations, primary and emergency health care
- Aviation, from the 1928 de Havilland DH50 made of wood and cloth, to the medically fitted state of the art King Airs in 2006
- Medicine, the dedicated doctors and nurses who treat more than 600 patients each day

To learn more about this valuable community service, please call Steven Schubert on 02 9299 5766 on Mondays or Fridays, or email steven.schubert@rfdsse.org.au

Contributed by Josie Jackson

Aboriginal Support Circle Report

Chronic Otitis Media in Aboriginal Children - a Disease of Poverty?

On Monday, 4th September, the Aboriginal Support Circle welcomed several new members, including Sharon Page, who spoke to us about her work in audiology (including 25 years working with indigenous people). Audiology is the study of hearing and sound, etc.

Sharon started her audiological career in 1972 working with the then Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratories. Two years later she was seconded for a short period by the NSW Department of Health (Aboriginal Health Section). During this time she was part of a large health team that included Dr. Fred Hollows. The team was sent to Walgett to carry out baseline Health Assessments of Aboriginal children attending the local primary school. Her "job" was to assess the hearing status and rehabilitation needs of the children taking part in the study.

In May of 1976 she transferred from Sydney Hearing Centre to Darwin to set up the first permanent Hearing Centre in the Northern Territory. Previously, audiologists had only flown into the NT's major towns periodically. They usually came from Adelaide Hearing Centre (part of the newly named National Acoustic Laboratories - NAL - network of hearing centres). May 1976 was only 17 months after Cyclone Tracey. Accommodation, facilities and all services (including medical services) were still very "thin on the ground" in Darwin. When Sharon arrived she was the first and only audiologist in the entire NT.

With an Aboriginal population of approximately 35,000 people spread throughout the NT, Sharon knew she had to develop a service delivery model that would at least make it possible for these people to have some access to hearing services. The only possible way of doing this was to work with the Rural Health Branch of the NT Health Department to develop an "outreach" program using Primary Health Care (PHC) practitioners. These were predominantly Aboriginal Health Workers (AHWs) and Nurses. This program had to reach not only towns like Alice Springs, Katherine and Nhulunbuy but also remote Aboriginal communities. Sharon used 4-wheel drive vehicles and liaised with the NT Medical Service (the NT Government's "flying doctors") to hitch rides on their planes for herself and the nurses working with her. Specially

trained (see below) AHWs became the first point of contact for people in remote communities.

It is a well known medical fact that the middle ear infection called Otitis Media (OM) is initially acute and recurrent among Aboriginal children. It is also very widespread. If untreated, OM can lead to long term hearing problems that can affect speech and learning. OM can become chronic and suppurating (CSOM or "runny ear"). This condition has a constantly running/discharging ear drum perforation. Sharon saw this problem often, particularly in remote Aboriginal communities. NB: Professor Fiona Stanley, Australian of the year in 2003, has released statistics from a survey conducted over 5 years in Western Australia, by the Western Australia Aboriginal Child Health Survey, which found that approximately 70% of Aboriginal children aged 5-9 months suffer from otitis media. 29% Aboriginal children and 5% non-Aboriginal children have perforated eardrums. The figures for the Northern Territory would be comparable.

Sharon knew that if ear disease problems could not be prevented or treated, she would have to work out programs to manage the resulting hearing losses. Detection, prevention and treatment must be the first priority so she commenced training AHWs to become "hearing" workers. She devised her own teaching methods taking into account that although the AHWs were very skilled, some had very low literacy levels. After much work, a three tier referral program emerged that worked very well in the circumstances. First the AHWs would detect any problems (by doing basic audiometric screening tests and using otoscopes). Then they would treat the children with ear problems. If treatment failed the children would be referred to community nurses for further assessment and treatment. Finally they would be referred to the audiologist (originally Sharon) and to an ENT specialist if this was needed.

Sharon told us that Aboriginal people have always wanted to have input into their own health care. The first community controlled Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) was set up in Redfern, NSW in the early 1970s. This was followed soon after by Alice Springs AMS (The Aboriginal Congress). Today there are over 100 community



Aboriginal Community Issues

controlled AMSs throughout Australia. They almost always follow a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. There is now also an organisation called the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). These AMSs train and employ many AHWs as well as doctors, etc. throughout Australia, including in major capital inner cities.

In the 1990s the office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, which is part of the Commonwealth government, developed several strategies targeting chronic diseases such as diabetes and otitis media. Australia wide many hundreds of AHWs have been trained in Hearing Health Skills by Australian Hearing (previously NAL) using funding from these strategies. Sharon had oversight of the development and implementation of this training program before she retired.

Children with discharging ears cannot use standard hearing aids. The early bone conduction hearing aids (needed for people with discharging ears) were too heavy and clumsy to wear, especially in tropical and desert climates. As a result, Australian Hearing developed FM soundfield amplification systems originally specifically for use in large Aboriginal classrooms.

Over a period of ten years, in collaboration with other services deliverers including AHWs, Australian Hearing has also developed (under Sharon's supervision) service delivery protocols for working with Indigenous people. The protocols were published in 2004. Sharon has promised to tell us more about her wealth of experience in Aboriginal Health, as she was only able to present us with a broad outline in the time available, and we look forward to hearing from her again.

Sharon Page and Pat Zinn

What can I do about Aboriginal health?

Commissioner Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, wrote the Social Justice Report 2005 and you can find it on the internet.

Much of what he reported about the difference between the health of our indigenous and non-indigenous peoples you will have heard or read before. He also reported on the various initiatives that are working and making a difference, and those practices that are not working. One very important section of his report was entitled "Key Elements of the Right to Health" (chapter 2 pages 30 to 32) and this was looking at it from a human rights perspective (the right to health, not the right to be healthy). The most important section was Commissioner Calma's recommendations; you might like to read them (pages 59-60).

Basically, he recommended that the governments of Australia commit to achieving equality of health status and life expectation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-indigenous people within 25 years.

This is it. He is asking Federal and State Governments to put a time frame on it.

What can we do about it?

Please contact... write to, call, e-mail Federal Health Minister Tony Abbot and State Health Minister John Hatzistergos, and your local MPs.

Ask them to commit to the deadlines and actions proposed by Commissioner Calma in his report.

Also if you are connected to Getup, (www.getup.org.au) e-mail them and suggest that this would make a great possible campaign for Getup to take on.

Let's do it.

Lorraine Inglis

OWN NSW quarterly meeting of NSW OWN groups is on Tuesday 10 October 2006

Quarterly meetings are an important way for representatives from groups to connect with each other and share their views.

Those of you who participated in our last quarterly meeting may remember how much fun it was. For those of you who missed it, basically we had a mini OWN Expo, where we sang, danced, read, drummed, demonstrated and talked about what we did in our various groups. The meeting starts at 10 am. A splendid sandwich lunch is provided (free!) at around 1 pm and we try to finish by 2 pm.

Please let me know by **Thursday 5 October** how many from each group will be coming from your group so that I can order plenty of food for lunch. Call Beth on 9247 7046.



At and Beyond the Rocks

Sydney

Our Working Group had its first meeting on Friday September 1 and we were pleased to welcome our new members, who show suitable enthusiasm. Yetty Windt and Judith Mustard have been appointed joint coordinators for Sydney OWN until new members have been broken in.

We were delighted to see Joy Ross back for gentle exercise and again at our Age Discrimination meeting. Louise Anike is back on deck for meetings and contributions to our newsletter. Those still on sick leave are improving and we send them our best wishes and hope to see them back with us soon.

Sean Kidney, who is conducting a Social Issues Campaign for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, held a focus group at OWN which was attended by ten women. The topic for discussion was "Age Discrimination", aimed at arousing community awareness of this issue. Similar groups are being conducted throughout Sydney and Melbourne. Articles in the media, posters and brochures are being planned, ultimately aimed at changing the law where necessary.

Each person present gave their opinions on ageism and how to challenge it. For some, discrimination was experienced in certain ways within the family. Ageism was seen by some as a global problem; society becoming a blaming society totally driven by money. People's usefulness was gauged in an economic sense, age and economics being incompatible. Age and gender were seen as a cause of

discrimination in retirement. Society tends to value people for what they have, rather than what they are, and fails to recognise older people's continued contribution to society. The campaign is also aimed at making people aware that they can complain directly to the Human Rights Commission. The discussion was quite lively and many interesting points were made; too many to be reported here.

Much to our delight we have received a grant of \$10,000 from the Sydney City Council. We plan a Laughter Workshop for November. These workshops have been very successful in the past and enjoyed by participants, so do come along and join us in a hearty laugh.

Our Inner West group meets every second Saturday at 2 pm in the Community Room at Leichhardt Market Place. We have 30 members and on average about twelve attend the meetings each time. We catch up on news about activities and have discussions on such topics as retirement, the 'move to the right' and feminism today. Our activities are mentioned in *OWN Matters* on the Diary Page and OWN Sydney Notices.

Through networking we have surveyed the interests of members and encouraged the formation of special interest groups. We formed a book club which meets monthly to discuss books and poetry; we have listed trades people, services and practitioners recommended by members and mostly in our area, and we have done this

also in regard to physical activities. Monthly dinners at local restaurants or a member's home are a popular feature. On Tuesday of each week we have the option to 'meet' on a casual basis at a coffee shop in Leichhardt for a chat.

Development of a Mutual Support Network is currently underway; the seed of this idea came from Eva Cox's "Point of View" Reinventing Ageing (*OWN Matters*, October 2005) which encouraged women to think about the notion of mutual support in this changing world. The group offers support in both practical and social aspects, in a way we think will work for our particular group. We took as a starting point the issues each member had previously nominated as being relevant to her particular needs. These included sharing transport, knowledge of and assistance in "sorting out the maze" of local and other Government services when one comes to 'a brick wall', skills in basic home maintenance (including changing a light bulb), support at medical and other appointments, and in times of illness or hospitalisation.

The underlying principle of this network is that of supporting and helping each other, depending on our differing abilities and needs at any given time. There is no tally of give and take...it is purely about the lending of a hand in friendship. It doesn't aim to replace or take on the responsibilities of professional, trade or community services, although it may, in various ways, supplement these.

If newcomers turn up at our meetings and they are not members of OWN we encourage

At and Beyond the Rocks

them to join. Women living outside the Inner West are welcome at our meetings - the October meeting will be on Saturday 14.

On Saturday 28 October the Theatre Group will be giving a public performance at the Abraham Mott Hall. Everyone is welcome and it is something you should not miss. Our Theatre Group is widely known and appreciated, so join us at 2pm for great performance.

*Judith Mustard and
Jan Monson*



**OWN Sydney
End of Year Party
Friday, 8 Dec, 11am
87 Lower Fort St.**

OWN NSW MT visits Shellharbour

The monthly meeting was well attended; the lunch was fit for a king, though he would not have been welcome. I think it went well although I was unable to persuade anyone to join our OWN NSW Management Team (MT).

Here are the suggestions that came out of the meeting:

- All said they were too busy

to join the MT.

· They suggested that there were too many meetings. I asked which were the ones they would like to drop:

· Regional? No. Quarterly? No. M.T. meetings? No again.

· Do you feel the conference should be dropped from the calendar? No.

They all agreed that for the organisation to run smoothly, all these matters need to be addressed.

In order to build a closer relationship with the MT, some members would like to see:

· a roster set up for the groups to send a representative to sit in on MT meetings, so that they could learn more about how our organization works;

· MT meetings held, on a roster basis, in the various group areas.

To foster closer relationships it was suggested that groups extend invitations to distant groups to visit for a few days, during which they could attend the monthly meeting, do a little sightseeing and get to know their hosts, who would offer billets to the visitors. This would enhance quarterly and regional meetings as well as the conference, as these acquaintances could be renewed.

Re the conference:

· members liked the AGM being held on the first day;

· they would like longer time for open discussion and talk at the end of the second day;

· they felt the workshops were too rushed;

· the entertainment over the two whole days was much enjoyed.

Barbara Malcolm

Ashfield Greek

Hi everyone, here is some news from Ashfield Greek OWN.

We have celebrated the beginning of Spring on the 4th September by going to the city. Our group met at Circular Quay and went to the Royal Botanic Gardens; we had a morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea and we walked throughout the Gardens all day. It was a wonderful excursion for our members.

Last Tuesday I went to a seminar organised by MIP (Medicine Information Project). For the first part of the seminar we had a guest speaker, Mr Steve Russell, Station Commander based at Redfern fire station. The topic was about house safety and smoke alarms. As everyone should know, smoke alarms are compulsory in every house. If you need to buy some alarms, make sure that they comply with the Australian Standard (AS3786) and they should be tested regularly.

On October 8 the Ashfield Council is inviting us to take part in their Spring Carnival at the Ashfield Park. Our group will be performing exercises for seniors. We are all looking forward to this day.

On November 11 the Ashfield Council invites all the groups in the Town Hall for a mini-market and bric-a-brac and cakes sale. The profit will go to our group.

At our next meeting we will discuss the possibility of a bus trip, the location has to be discussed, and we will also plan our end of the year Christmas party.

All the best to all the OWN groups; have a wonderful time!

Maria Camelin

At and Beyond the Rocks

Blacktown OWN Wellness

As stated at the conference we now have two classes of Tai Chi going, our Gentle Exercises, Drumming and Creative Writing Classes are progressing well and our Cancer and Depression Support Groups are doing well. Some of our Creative Writing Group also attend the depression support group, almost every woman we talk to has depression of some sort but the Creative Writing I feel, has some therapeutic advantages because it teaches one how to express suppressed feelings. Our bus trips are very popular each month and one of our members has got her bus license so we don't have to look for a driver.

We will also have some more self esteem classes this term conducted by the counselor as these proved very popular in the past.

Our Wednesday drop in centre is very popular and we don't even close during school holidays now because the women enjoy it so much. Almost every week new members turn up, yesterday we had two.

We also have our book/video/DVD library up and running thanks to the generosity of members.

We have found that asking women to join OWN prior to doing the activities motivates them to take advantage of ALL the activities and benefits of belonging. I would say that about two thirds of the members attend more than two activities and our welfare fund has been accessed by some of the women.

We had a speaker out yesterday

from Millennium. What an interesting talk. It's amazing what they are doing with DNA now. If anyone is interested in having this speaker email me and I will send his number.

In closing, I would like to extend an invitation to any of you who would like to visit some time (Can't be Mondays or Thursdays) to visit us at Rooty Hill. We have facilities there that would enable a conference, so if we can help you at any time please ask. Have a nice day all of you.

Penny Hilton

Southern Highlands

We have had another good month in the Highlands.

The first of our Senior First Aid Courses started last Saturday and will finish this coming Saturday. The first day was very good - a mix of discussion and practical work where we assessed an "emergency", practiced CPR on a dummy and bandaged each other's "injured" limbs.

Because we have so many new members, there seemed to be a lot of people who did not know anyone. Also the busy meetings we have been having have not left enough time for important socialising. So, last Thursday, we addressed the issue by having a getting-to-know-you afternoon. Members were divided into groups of six to answer a series of eight questions that gave each person the chance to talk. The groups changed after each question to enable more mixing. After that, people were placed in pairs, sitting back to back, and

had to answer several questions about each other. The afternoon, which was full of talking and laughter, finished with a cuppa, cake, and lots of chatting. While we were having our cuppa everyone was invited to examine several oddly wrapped parcels and try to guess the contents - this led to much discussion and laughter when all was revealed.

The Southern Region Get-Together, hosted by Shellharbour was a great day. It is good to meet up with the other groups in this way and it is lovely to recognise more and more women from the various groups. At these meetings everyone seems happy to see each other and find out has been happening throughout the region. The Shellharbour members put on an amazing lunch with so much food that the table was groaning and by the time we had finished we were groaning too! Mind you, there was still enough left to feed the multitudes.

Plans are well underway for our October bus trip to Canberra to see the "Anzacs in France, 1916" Exhibition at the Australian War Memorial.

Robyn Smith

HOME MODIFICATION SERVICE

The Home Modification & Maintenance (HMM) program, run by the Wesley Community Support Services, delivers an important service to enable frail older people, people with a disability and their carers to remain at home. There are approximately 90 HMM Service outlets in NSW. There are three levels of service providers, varying according to the size and cost of projects that they can manage. Phone 92635555 for information

It's a Long Way to Tipperary – and just as far to Port Macquarie!

After a seven hour train trip from Central Station we finally arrived in Wauchope to receive a warm welcome from Ann Lang, Hastings OWN Coordinator. Since the publication of OWN's Tips Book this was our first invitation to help an OWN group set up an entertainment unit using the information contained in the book. The three of us Peg Hewett, Lucy Porter and our pianist Ann Cunynghame were looking forward to the task.

The next day we fronted Hastings OWN group and were extremely pleased by the enthusiastic reception we received. As Peg and Lucy dusted off their performance skills Ann welcomed the women with a bright rendition of popular songs. What a day we had, everyone happily joined in with their contribution. There was our performance, hauntingly beautiful poetry, limericks, jokes, songs, diction and breathing exercises and of course the food!!! We were even interviewed by the ABC and had our picture printed in the local paper.

The next day Ann Lang took us to the local growers market and laden with healthy produce we were taken on a memorable scenic tour of the Hastings district. The warm hospitality and kindness we received from the group made us feel very much at home and we especially wish to thank Ann Lang, Phyll McPhee and Patricia White for our billets.

The latent talent of the Hastings group was evident and with encouragement we are sure they will be successful in establishing a very entertaining theatre group. If there are other OWN groups who wish to do the same please contact Peg Hewett or Lucy Porter on 9247 7046 and we will be only too willing to help.

Lucy Porter & Peg Hewett

Jubilation

On the third Friday of the month, a group of us meet. Most of us are newly retired, or about to be retired.

During the year several “younger” OWN members discussed the possibility of a forum within the wider OWN in which to explore issues pertinent to the lives of women who may still be in employed work or have just finished their formal working lives and are looking for fellow voyagers on the journey into, through and beyond retirement.

At the October meeting of *Jubilation*, I will present some thoughts on the journey into retirement from the psychological/emotional/intellectual perspective rather than the practical issues of financial planning, mortgages, pensions etc, although the two aspects are inevitably interwoven. Members of the group will be invited to explore their own questions and share wisdom drawn from life experience. The aim of this *Jubilation* meeting, as with all *Jubilation* meetings, is twofold: to learn from each other and to build and strengthen friendships.

All members of OWN are welcome to the meeting on 20 October at 6 p.m. at 87 Lower Fort Street.

Bev Cameron

OWN-UPS

Did You Know?

1. Did you know that the statistics of who runs aged care homes in Australia is as follows:

10% government sponsored,

30% Church run (Uniting church figures largely in that statistic) and,

60% are privately run?

2. Did you know that Doris Owens, 69, a resident in the Shoalhaven area of NSW, labelled an environmental crusader in some newspaper reports, is believed to have been murdered? She was found slumped in the bedroom of her home 8.30pm Tuesday 12th September. A neighbour interviewed by the press commented that Doris was known to ‘ruffle feathers’. Her home had already been vandalised and she was receiving anonymous, threatening phone calls and letters.

3. Did you know that there is a growing trend amongst those motorists caught on RTA speed cameras, to pay the fine but to pass on the points lost to older, usually female relatives? We might well ask how will this skew the statistics for older female drivers?

Compiled by OWN-UPS.

Our meetings continue to be well attended. Our next meeting is at Windmill Street, 13th October. We meet from 10.30am until 1pm. Bring a sandwich or something for your morning tea.

Theatre Group Report

Alas, I missed most of the NSW Conference and AGM because I was detained by a Domestic Situation at home (the painter announced that he'd be "coming on Monday", and when a tradesman says he's coming, you want to BE THERE or you'll not see him again for months). Reports of this year's conference, however, gave it high marks and certainly the Theatre Group was impressed and grateful for the meticulous timing, only sorry to have had to keep our wonderful audience waiting while we set the stage. Perhaps it proved a useful pit-stop?

How good it always is to be home in our OWN setting, performing to such a responsive, appreciative audience; good to see so many familiar faces, too,

and have so many buddies singing along to "Whoopee!"

We are starting work on our domestic violence show, expanding it to violence in general, so topical in this period of tension and terrorist hype that we are subjected to by governments and media.

By the time this report goes into print the Theatre Group will be at full strength again, with me back from a superlative month in England, Monique Reiher from an exciting visit to Canada, and Jo Allon returning from travel in Europe. There are ten performers and one musician par excellence, who would dearly like to pass on the baton so that she can join us on stage. Isn't there anyone out there, free on Tuesdays, who can play the

guitar? Or the keyboard? Or ANYTHING (suitable)?

We are also looking ahead to our Christmas gathering, deciding on a venue and hoping that as many friends as possible will join us then still a good way off, but forward planning and booking is essential these days.

Last and Best and a note for your diary: on October 28th the Theatre Group will put on a mega-show in Mott Hall for family, friends, special guests, and the general public. We are putting it together right now, with a few interruptions for performances to NCOSS, Leichhardt, the Mountains, between now and then.

Brigid Sen

OWN NSW Theatre Group Performance

In full public view, for the first time ever, in a *superb, funny, satirical* musical review that's not to be missed!

MOTT HALL
at the foot of Observatory Hill
2pm Sat 28 October, 2006

If you're a happy 50, older than 50, or refuse to be 50, be there!

Kids and nice men are welcome

CONTACT: Joan Modder, 9922 5916

FRIENDS OF THE THEATRE GROUP

You are cordially invited to join the Theatre Group members for their Annual Christmas Luncheon on Thursday 14 December 2006 at "The Hughendon" Queen Street, Paddington. Bookings close on 1 December.



Menu

Wild Barramundi Fillet on a Potato Gratin
With Grilled Lime and Béarnaise Sauce

Or

Roast Turkey with Cranberry Pears,
Seasonal Vegetables and Veal Jus

Individual Sticky Date Pudding with Brandy Crème
Anglaise

Freshly brewed Coffee and a selection of Teas
\$35.00 per person (includes a glass of wine)

Please make cheques payable to OWN NSW

(Please indicate which Main Course you would like)

Creature Comforts

Important aspects of our need for creature comforts increase as we age. Those seats we marked as a rest for our behinds have increasingly become rarer as we pass along. Is it because nobody walks anywhere any more? Or is it because slatted seats are used by the homeless, and we don't want to service their needs do we? Nor for those terrorists who leave bags of bombs about under seats. Surely in this technological age vandal-proof seats could be provided. In any case, it seems inhumane not to provide seats to keep the homeless from sleeping on damp ground. Even in supermarkets there seem to be less seats than in days of yore - perhaps they provide havens for useless consumers not there to buy but just to spend time or to seek company amongst real live people. I noticed recently in the supermarket I haunt that there are square, boxlike seats with no backs, and nobody lingers on these for long. The reason for their existence escapes me. Are they a sort of modern design motif?

'Bladders uber alles', and most women suffer from the need to go like NOW! This could be because of damage in childbirth, poor toiletry habits, or loosening of muscles as we age. Often women's toilets are in the minority, and you'll find the disabled ones are "locked for cleaning", perhaps to keep out the homeless or the ill-intentioned. There is occasionally a notice saying that the keys are available from . . . but one hasn't the time to read the rest, so the more difficult-to-negotiate ones have to suffice. Then there are the cheap paper dispensers with paper that is very difficult to persuade to come out, or is of thin twisty substance. Or just all used up.

Woy Woy OWN provides community bus trips to places of historical and educational interest, as well as to beauty spots which abound in this Central Coast. We stop at parks, where the toilets are provided by Councils and are aged and dank, and where paper has either been pinched or is not available. Convenience stores have toilets at the side of the buildings; these toilets are not much better, reached by rough and broken paths and seldom provided with paper. Better not to drink anything before or during the trip, as an alternative to wet pants.

What can we do to better comforts for all? With our percentage in the population, maybe we could start a campaign.

Enid Harrison

Medicines that Might Trip You Up

Many medicines can make you more likely to have falls. The table below lists some of the medicines most commonly associated with falls. However, while they may contribute to falls in some people, they don't cause falls in everyone.

The purpose of the list is to make you more aware of the medicines that may predispose you to falls. You can be alert for signs that the medicine may be affecting you, and discuss this with your doctor.

Drowsiness

- Medicines for anxiety
- Sleeping tablets
- Some antidepressants
- Some medicines for mental illness
- Medicines for epilepsy
- Medicines for allergies and many antihistamines
- Cold and flu medicines containing antihistamines
- Medicines for nausea, vomiting and travel sickness
- Strong painkillers

Dizziness

- Medicines for blood pressure
- Fluid or water tablets taken to lower blood pressure
- Medicines for Parkinson's disease
- Some antidepressants
- Some medicines for mental illness
- Medicines for epilepsy
- Medicines for diabetes
- Some antibiotics

Blurred vision

- Some antidepressants
- Medicines for urinary incontinence and/or abdominal cramps
- Some pain killers
- Occasionally, eye drops and eye ointment

By causing you to rush to the toilet

- Fluid tablets
- Laxatives

*(Source: Medicines Talk No 18 Winter '06)
Contributed by Betty Johnson*

Letters to the Editor

Generation Gap

I am fascinated and intrigued by Lorraine Inglis' letter (July OWN Matters). Like Lorraine I also need to be with people who share my interests, but over the years I have found that they don't necessarily come out of my own age group.

So I find I have friends spanning quite a wide age group. My love of walking, camping and skiing was not always shared by my contemporaries and when I was still skiing at 78, I had to look for younger companions. In later years my adventure type travel often elicited comments about acting my age. Although I sometimes stick out like a sore thumb, I find that my value system is shared by people in all age groups.

I first came across a group of older women when I was employed to run several health related workshops, one of which was about sexuality. These women came from the Combined Pensioners and later joined together to become OWN Inc. I had never struck such a feisty bunch of women willing to talk about sexuality, most were older than I was and definitely did not fit my stereotype of older women and they were impressive.

During my many years in OWN I have struck women with widely differing interests and priorities and have been impressed by the fact that we have mostly been able to accept difference and made room for women to further explore their passions. If they struck a chord with others a regular event would begin. There have been walking groups, music groups, art classes, discussion groups, they have come and gone. The Aboriginal Support Group is a case in point, started by a few passionate women it has continued and grown stronger over the years.

It seems to me that in OWN we do allow different needs, different passions, different viewpoints and we

don't make assumptions about other women's ideas and interests. Also often we learn from each other.

We are happy to embrace you and your cohorts Lorraine, and we hope you will find room to interact with each other and those of us who have been there longer, and that you will find plenty of acceptance and welcome from all of us.

Renate Watkinson

Thank You

I would like to thank everyone who has been so kind and thoughtful to me while I have been sick. I have received many beautiful cards and messages from so many OWN women and I really appreciated receiving them all.



Ermes Solari

Laughter Workshop 6th November

Laughter is the shortest distance between two people. It is also good for your body and your mind, so come and join me at 10.30 on Monday 6th November at 87 Lower Fort Street. We'll have a good old laugh together.

Regards Renate

Call the office on 9247 7046 to register.

Something in the Water?

Our media is full of stories about the current epidemic of obesity, with most of the commentary focussed on diet, exercise, personal responsibility, advertising of junk food to children, etc. None of the factors called upon seem to explain adequately the suddenness with which the epidemic has hit. Ten years ago we seldom saw overweight people in the street, on public transport, amongst our friends. Now they (we) are everywhere.

Recently I heard a report that this problem is not confined to the "West", but has manifested in various other countries, including China, where there has been an "alarming surge" in obesity in the past ten years.

What is going on here? Can it all be due to the rapid adoption of fast food diets? A friend of mine has been saying cynically for ages, "It's something in the water supply." She might be close to the truth. According to Rosalie Bertell, an internationally recognised expert on the effects of radiation, there is another cause of obesity: "It's not just junk food. It's well-known that radioactive iodine in North America's atmosphere slows down the thyroid gland and that contributes to (being) overweight." (Toronto Star, May 3 1998).

Of this explanation we have heard not a whisper from popular media, politicians and other leaders of public opinion (even though we are being barraged with propaganda in favour of expanded uranium mining and the use of nuclear power). And yet, given the dispersion of radiation around the world, including from the use of depleted uranium in the war against Iraq, Rosalie Bertell's observation makes sense.

I think my friend is right to be cynical.

Janet Grevillea, Wangi Wangi

ARK

In the year 2006, the Lord came unto Noah, who was now living in Earlwood, and said, "Once again, the earth has become wicked and over-populated, and I see the end of all flesh before me. Build another Ark and save two of every living thing along with a few good humans." He gave Noah the drawings, saying, "You have 6 months to build the Ark before I will start the unending rain for 40 days and 40 nights."

Six months later, the Lord looked down and saw Noah weeping in his yard - but no Ark. "Noah!" He roared, "I'm about to start the rain! Where is the Ark?" "Forgive me, Lord," begged Noah, "but things have changed. I needed Building Regulations Approval. I've been arguing with the Fire Brigade about the need for a sprinkler system. My neighbours claim that I should have obtained planning permission for building the Ark in my garden because it's development of the site - even though in my view it's only a temporary structure. We've got a hearing date set in the district court in 18 months time, but they may challenge any decision in the Supreme Court and that could further delay the outcome. Also the Department of Transport demanded a bond be posted for the future costs of moving power lines and other overhead obstructions, to clear the passage for the Ark's move to the sea. I told them that the sea would be coming to us, but they would hear nothing of it. Getting the wood was another problem. All the decent trees have been shredded into woodchips for paper the ones left have Tree Preservation Orders on them and apparently we live in a Site of Special Scientific Interest set up in order to protect the banded woodlouse. I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the logs to save the woodlouse - but no go!

When I started gathering the animals, the RSPCA sued me. They insisted that I was confining wild animals against their will. They argued the accommodation was too restrictive, and it was cruel and inhumane to put so many animals in a confined space. Then the local Council, the Environmental Protection Authority and the Water Board ruled that I couldn't build the Ark until they'd done an environmental impact study on your proposed flood.

I'm still trying to resolve a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission on how many BMEs I'm supposed to hire for my building team. The trades unions say I can't use my sons. They insist I have to hire only CSCS accredited workers with Ark-building experience. I thought my/our ship may just have come in with Howard's changes to Industrial Relations, but then Customs seized all my

assets, claiming I was trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species. So, forgive me, Lord, but it would take at least 10 years for me to finish this Ark." Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine, and a rainbow stretched across the sky. Noah looked up in wonder and asked, "You mean you're not going to destroy the world?" "No," said the Lord. "Your government beat me to it."

Contributed from the net by Barbara Malcolm

Just say "No"

I am doing a personal survey. How many of you are still saying No? I am talking about neither propositions nor proposals. I am talking about saying No when someone at a register asks to look in your bag.

I, myself, have been saying No to the searches for 25 years, and I have every intention of continuing to wage my No campaign, but I am beginning to think I am one of a small minority.

I remember when supermarkets first started the practice, and we got the union directive to resist because it was just a way for supermarkets to save on their wages bill by getting rid of shop-walkers, (these were not oldies doing their shopping on a walking frame... they were the original version of SECURITY). At my local supermarket one of the checkout madams, (too many wrinkles and grey hair to be called a chick) really took it to heart that I said No. It became a regular skirmish. I took an empty bag to go shopping and insisted on going to her register. My daughter was totally embarrassed by her mother's behaviour, because she knew it was me going, "Nyah, nyah, No, No". Maybe this beginning put iron in my soul.

While many checkout persons don't really care, I have had some get quite annoyed. I have had security and store managers summoned. I have had managers tell me I am not welcome. I have had many signs pointed out to me that say they reserve the right to search bags. I still reserve the right to say No.

As far as I know the law has not changed on this one, Customers still have the right to refuse. Stores can either refuse to sell you goods, tell you not to return, or call the police. I even had this happen once. After I tipped the contents of my bag onto the counter for the policeman to look at, I packed up my bag and left the shop person to deal with the policeman.

This 'search your bag' thing seemed to have faded out, since those electronic gadgets were installed at doorways, but in the last week I was asked twice at my local Woolworths.

Maybe they have a new manager? Maybe it is the fact that I carry a backpack?

I am still saying No. What do you do? Are there any fellow diehards among our members? How many of us are still saying No?

Lorraine Inglis

Our OWN Stories

What Fills My Week — A Ragged Verse

*'Tis on a Monday morning, I join the Bushcare group.
We dig and plant and tend the land, stretch and bend and
stoop
As we dig the weeds and sew the seeds
To make the bushland grow.
'Tis on a Tuesday morning, I'm off to U.3.A.
Learning history, philosophy, to write and paint and cook.
But best of all is "Curtain Call" as from our comfy chairs
We're actors with so many parts. It's easy from a book.
'Tis on a Wednesday morning, it's time now for a walk,
With boots and pack we hike the track.
Up mountain sides and down the creek...
The fresh air and the exercise keeps me fit all week.
'Tis on a Thursday morning, I go to Noah's Ark,
Helping little ones to walk, play and dance and maybe talk.
And Thursday night it's time for singing.
We raise our voices, the rafters are ringing.
'Tis on a Friday morning, what's on at OWN today?
Visitors with tales to tell, news to share on keeping well.
With a network of friends there's lots of caring,
And fun and friendship all part of the sharing.
On Saturday and Sunday I potter round the house
With vacuum, broom and mops.
Leisure time out in the garden
Or buying things in shops.
And what do I do in my spare time? Well...
There's books to read and friends for tea,
Swimming, talking, sewing and walking.
Planning trips and family to see.
Life's full of joy and I just suits me.*

Barbara Robertson

MEMORY LANE

Memory Lane is about living at the Cross. Join this monthly program of informal discussions about the pursuit of happiness in Kings Cross. Listen to 'insiders' tell their stories and present their memorabilia. Then have your say. Join us between 2.00-4.00pm on the first Wednesday of each month at The Community Rooms, The Rex Centre, 50-58 Macleay Street (near the Potts Point Post Office). No bookings required. Gold coin donation.

Wed 4 October :Hats n' Spats (Henriette Lamotte in Rowe Street, June Millinery, Akubras etc The Australia Hotel).

Wed 1 November : Sydney's Arcades (The Strand, The Imperial etc.

Wed 6 December : Memory Lane Christmas Party.

Flashback

Recently I was convalescing, just hanging around, thinking about what needed doing, but too languid to do anything about it I started to think about my lovely daughters, and my mind flashed back to a Sunday over forty years ago. We were sitting in church when another family arrived and they had a little boy of about five. He was all decked out in his obviously very new soccer gear, which included a magnificent pair of red and white long socks.

At that time the children were invited to sit at the foot of the altar and he marched straight to the front, turned and faced the congregation and with an immense look of pride on his face, took his seat on the altar step.

Having ascertained that we were all enthralled with his new uniform, he then proceeded to inspect it himself. Noticing a looped thread hanging from his sock just below his knee, he decided to break it off. Unfortunately it was a very strong nylon so instead of breaking off the loop just got bigger. I could see his mother sending facial messages for him to "Stop That", which he did, but a few minutes later the hand and fingers started to worry the thread again and by this time it was inches long... mother getting more and more frustrated as she tried to tell him to stop it.

Eventually, after working on the problem for nearly an hour, his sock was nearly cutting his leg in half, but with an almighty pull he managed to snap off the thread and with a look of supreme satisfaction he started to ease the sock back into shape. Alas, it was now in two halves. The look was amazing, the face flitting from one expression to another, relief, disbelief, grief and then tears. Running back to mum, he was inconsolable as his mum kept murmuring, "I tried to tell you not to do that."

Where do flashbacks come from? Who knows? I just know they are great when they happen. This particular one ended as I left the church wondering what the sermon was about and was anything said that I should have been paying attention to. If there was I completely missed it as I watched the real life drama unfolding before me.

Barbara Malcolm

Oenpelli Visit

Recently Doug and I stayed with our daughter Glyn in Oenpelli an Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land, home of the Yolngu people. She is a doctor in the clinic, a busy and challenging job, but she loves it. She will never go back and work in the city and attend to the 'worried well', as she calls us. In Oenpelli and in other Aboriginal communities she deals with cases that she has never seen outside a text book.

We were taken to see some sacred sites, all of them with fascinating legends and rock paintings telling the story.

We went fishing with two wonderful women, Ivy and Eileen, their daughters and two little nieces. Eileen is the most accomplished thrower of a fishing net in the community. She made the net herself from pandanus leaves and as she threw the net into the lagoon with an elegant sweep of her arms, I could understand her fame.

They told us a little of their culture. To avoid incest there is a strong rule for the boys. After they reach puberty they must not touch or come close to their mother and sisters. Eileen told us that she sat on hot sand to prevent pregnancy! A rather uncomfortable contraceptive.

Ivy asked us if we would become skin mother and father to her. She is skin sister to Glynis. We were delighted and there was much hugging. Ivy has had half her foot removed because of diabetes and Eileen has no toes due to a nasty tropical disease – but they are cheerful women.

We met three famous artists, their initiation scars prominent on their chests, and saw their paintings at the Art Centre. They had travelled the world but home was best, sitting cross legged on the ground surrounded by family, friends and dogs. The women are fantastic weavers and we saw their work in the Arts Centre. They paint and weave in traditional style, digging colors from the earth and gathering pandanus leaves from the trees.

I watched an old man as he

carefully drew a line on his canvas. He was using the cross hatching style which is the Yolngu way, the desert painters use dots. The brush he used was no ordinary brush. "I'm Dr Glyn's mother", I said, hoping that was a good way of introducing myself. It was. A young man came to me from a nearby group.

"You are Dr Glyn's mother? Pleased to meet you. I'm Paul". He smiled his welcome and I asked him about the brush.

"Come and I'll show you", he invited. He took me to a clump of grass and picked a thin, dried out leaf.

"See, you chew this until it is soft, then sharpen it carefully until it is thin and curls back towards you. There's your brush."

We went back to the old man and watched as he dipped his piece of dried grass into the ochre paint on the cement beside him and meticulously, with a steady hand, drew a line on his painting. Wow! I was most impressed and told him so. He acknowledged my praise with a nod of his head.

As I looked at the old man sitting cross-legged, straight-backed on the concrete, I marveled that Aboriginal people have been painting like this for thousands of years, keeping this tradition alive.

Joan Johns

Book Chat

· *The Ha Ha Man*: Sandy McCutcheon, Harper Collins 2005

· *A Short History of Progress*: Ronald Wright, Text 2005

· *Imperial Ambitions*, Noam Chomsky, Hamish Hamilton 2005

These books, one from a remainder table and two from the local library all deal with the perilous state of our world.

Sandy McCutcheon's *The Ha Ha Man*, a story of terror/horror in Afghanistan and theories of

conspiracies in this country, takes place in 2001, the time of the Tampa, Children Overboard, the sinking of the *SievX*, the year of 9/11.

A survivor of the perpetual war in Afghanistan comes here with the help of the *Ha Ha Man*, a political journalist turned under cover activist on behalf of refugees.

The action moves between Canberra, Brisbane, and an un-named detention center. There is a scene of high comedy when a number of high ranking bureaucrats are upstaged by a few Aboriginal women. One wonders why this imaginative contemporary novel should be remaindered, maybe because the first 30 pages, taking place in Afghanistan are of unrelieved horror.

There is a peaceful resolution with the protagonist planting trees back in his homeland. I read this epilogue with a sense of irony on the very morning of the day when two war lords of the West planted trees in Washington.

Ronald Wright's short history could well be sub titled *Apocalypse Now*. The 200 or so pages can be read at a sitting if you are so inclined. Here is a succinct account of civilizations from the beginning of time ultimately destroying themselves, none more so than our own, increasing exponentially till we are left to wonder what our descendants will get to eat and drink.

Noam Chomsky's *Imperial Ambitions*, follows the same format as previous conversations with David Barsaman. He examines the doctrine of the United States, in its desire to achieve in imposing its version of democracy everywhere, particularly where oil is found. He emphasizes the responsibility of the educated classes to curb this ambition, a responsibility those classes are slow to recognize.

Chomsky concludes his book with much the same observation as that made by Beth in her editorial for the April issue of *OWN Matters*.

None of these three books is a heavy political essay. They are meant for general readers, that's us.

Helen Monaghan



Whistle Blowing Vs the Domination of Silence

Whistle blowing is generally regarded with contempt by fellow workers and mates. The whistle blowers are usually males and whistle blowing is considered an act of betrayal of mateship. There are whistle blowers who need to accept safe housing because of threats of retaliation, including violence. Mateship requires loyalty as a priority before that of revealing truth.

The domination of silence when it comes to male violence is obvious. By violent actions and threats, men show clearly that women have to remain silent because they could even be killed. Slogans for anti-violence measures such as the campaign “Break the Silence” show how silence was known as an important factor in the power of the silence of domination.

When seeking help from religion, the answer was often along the lines of, “offer your suffering to God”. In past years, women experiencing domestic violence were strongly conditioned to be quiet in case the neighbors might hear. If told, family often held the opinion that, “she made her bed, now she must lie in it.”

Children suffering sexual assault by male family members or males known to the family, were told never to speak of it — it was a special secret — often accompanied by threats especially if mothers were told. The imposed silence was an additional trauma.

Priests and Christian clergy continued sexual assault on children under the tyranny of silence, for years. Their superiors in the establishments went to great lengths not to be whistleblowers to their congregations and to the public.

Older women who have lived for many years with violent men have found it extraordinarily difficult to tell anyone because it is an extremely embarrassing experience. The long silence of older women survivors is proof of the power of fear.

Lack of knowledge of the few existing resources for older women is mainly due to the fact very little accessible information exists. There is inadequate or little response by those who have the responsibility of providing appropriate and practical alternatives to older women who want to leave their miserable living circumstances.

Those responsible for the essential funding are not forthcoming with concrete support. Older women’s problems with violence are apparently not serious enough.

Domestic Violence Hotline 800 787 3224 Website www.survivors.org.au

Louise Anike

Disability or Disservice

I have a 30 year old grandson named Jason who had bacterial meningitis when he was two years of age. He was in a coma for six weeks before he recovered. During this time he had a stroke which left him partially paralyzed down the right side and he has also suffered from uncontrolled grand mal seizures ever since. He has the mental capacity of an eight year old child.

My daughter, his mother, Margaret lovingly cared for him at home until he turned 24, but the constant worry and supervision took its toll on her health and as he is over 180cms tall and weighs over 100 kilos she found she couldn’t cope any longer. She then had the task of finding him a suitable home and with great patience and much difficulty she finally managed to get him into a local Department of Community Care (DOCC) house with two other people with similar disabilities and providing 24 hours a day care.

My daughter has not relinquished her relationship with her son and monitors him daily with phone calls or visits. Eighteen months ago there was a letter from DOCC requesting an interview with Jason. This was arranged and, as either my daughter or myself always accompany Jason to any meeting, I went along as well. The meeting comprised of Jason, me, Jason’s carer, a DOCC interviewer and two other DOCC workers.

The first question Jason was asked was whether he would like to have a job and what type of work he would like to do. I sat open-mouthed; Jason’s file was in front of the interviewer, noting he has been on a disability pension from the age of 16. He has had many admissions to hospital due to injuries from his seizures, bronchial asthma and attacks of paranoia. All of this has been well documented by the department.

Jason smiled happily and said yes, he would love to have a job. I then intervened and asked the interviewer if she had read Jason’s file. She replied she had glanced through it. She was very surprised though when I told her Jason had uncontrolled grand mal seizures and he would never be able to work as no employer could get insurance to cover him. She continued to ask Jason questions and I continued to answer them until the meeting was disbanded. As we left she enquired if Jason had fallen recently as he seemed to be limping badly. She seemed quite shocked when I informed her he had had a stroke. Six people were involved in this completely irrelevant exercise. What a waste of time!

In Jason’s case the plan to take him off the disability pension and put him on Job Search was abandoned but I wonder how many other Jasons with similar disabilities have been discarded by our caring society.

Lucy Porter

OWN ADVOCACY

Friends of Tranby Reactivated

Tranby Aboriginal College was set up as an alternative and independent learning environment for Aboriginal people in 1958. Two lovely old homes were acquired in Mansfield Street, Glebe. These became classrooms and living areas for children brought in from country areas to spend one week seven times a year for two years.

In 1989 Tranby became a tertiary college. Friends of Tranby (FOT) was set up with a number of aims: As a pathway for reconciliation and a way for the broader community to assist in fundraising; new learning environments were built and computers and security systems installed in 1997. FOT helped the college with funds to keep it independent. This year the college hopes to have 185 people attend their courses.

There are four fully accredited courses running. Students are now accommodated outside the college. They attend for one week six times a year and do not all attend at the same time.

The facilities now reflect the spirit of self-determination and cultural appropriateness needed to achieve greater outcomes in the 21st century.

In 2007 Tranby want to celebrate 50 years of providing education for Aboriginal people in Glebe. The hope is we can reinvigorate FOT to assist them in the planning, organizing, promotion and celebration starting now, onwards and during 2007 and further.

An initial meeting was held on 13 September 2006. Another meeting will occur soon, so please join us. Maurice Shipp is Director of Operations at the College. He would welcome contact and enquiries. Phone 9660 3444. E-mail maurice.shipp@tranby.edu.au.

Elaine Cohen

Water, Water Everywhere, and Still a Bill to Pay.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) has approached Sydney Water with a proposal that they make Centrepay available for, particularly, older customers. This option is currently available for the payment of other service bills, and is an option that makes understanding accounts, budget balancing, and paying on time easier for many people in receipt of Commonwealth Benefit payments.

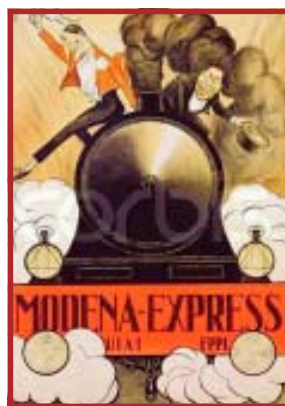
This proposal has been endorsed by PIAC and such organisations as NSW Council of Social Services, Combined Pensioners' Association, NSW Advisory Committee on the Ageing and Alzheimer's Association.

It should be noted that some older people would not be eligible to participate in arrangements with Centrepay. Self-funded retirees are one such group. Providers of financial counselling

and the Alzheimer's Association believe their clients clearly fall within the group of customers who would benefit from this service.

If you feel that this option is a good idea, whether for yourself or others, please support it either by a phone call to Sydney Water to tell them so, or by an email to jwellsmore@piac.asn.au.

Fare Go!



Recently Ann Cunynghame, Lucy Porter and myself were invited to the Hastings OWN group at Port Macquarie to help set up an OWN entertainment group. On going to Bondi Junction Rail Station to book our tickets I was told the Countrylink computer was down and I'd have to come back another day. On returning the next day I found out that many Countrylink offices have been made redundant, Bondi Junction

among them, so I lined up at the ordinary ticket booth to get our return tickets. The ticket seller asked if I had registered with CountryLink as I could do the transaction over the phone. I replied that I hadn't, but I had the three pension tickets with me and could give him all the necessary details. He then told me he could book the tickets but I would have to pay by credit card over the phone.

I indicated, "Fair Go mate" and, after much grumbling and pushing of papers and the queue behind me getting longer, he produced the three tickets. To add insult to injury, I had to pay \$93.00 for the privilege of a so-called booking fee.

Last year pensioners had two free travel tickets a year within the state, travelling first class. Now we have to pay a percentage of the full ticket price, and to Port Macquarie it is \$31.00 first class or \$21.00 economy class, so we have two different classes of pensioners. On the return journey we had to go by bus from Taree, all in together, though there was no mention of a refund for the pensioners who had paid the higher rate.

This is another "swifty" the Federal Government has pulled on the disadvantaged in our society. I therefore urge everyone to demand a Fair Go not a Fare Go by writing to The Hon. John Watkins, Minister for Transport, Level 30 Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney NSW 2000, or e-mail dp.office@watkins.minister.nsw.gov.au demanding that the free travel service be re-established.

Peg Hewett

NOTICES

CITIZEN WRITES

An invitation to participate in a discussion and action circle to foster the use of letter writing as a tool for civic action

Are you always wanting to write that letter to a Member of Parliament but never getting around to it?

Join us in a discussion and action circle aimed at motivating you to 'write out' on the civic issues you care about. We will meet at Parliament House over four two-hour sessions where you will have the opportunity to discuss – and to hear from Members of Parliament and others - the best ways of communicating with elected representatives. Understand the role of Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and Members; discuss and research contemporary civic issues; draft and write letters, faxes and emails individually or with others; and find out what resources are available from the Parliament of NSW to assist.

Location

Parliament House is in Macquarie Street, almost opposite Martin Place. Public transport is recommended as parking at the Parliament is not available. The nearest train stations are Martin Place and St James. Participants should enter Parliament via the Macquarie Street entrance and make their way to the Legislative Assembly reception desk.

Course Information

Venue:Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney

Course Sessions: Four sessions, each of two hours duration

Contact Daniela Giorgi for the next session times, and to list for future courses.

Cost:No Charge

Course Convenors:Graham Spindler, Manager Parliamentary Education and Community Relations

Daniela Giorgi, Parliamentary Education Officer

**To book a place in this course contact the
Education and Community Relations Section
of the NSW Parliament
on 9230 2047**

or email education@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Bequests to the Older Women's Network

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

Please specify which Older Women's Network you wish to be the recipient of your gift: Older Women's Network NSW or the *Older Women's Network, Sydney.*

Option No. 1

I devise the sum of \$
..... to the Older Women's 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% of my estate to the Older Women's Network for its general purpose or the specific purpose of
.....

**The gift you make to OWN
will be an enduring record of
your generosity.**

Free theatre for the lucky ones!

Are you an Eastern Suburbs-ite? Do you have an Aged Pension card or a Pension Health Care card?

If you can answer yes to the above, you should come to the FREE MATINEE at the Belvoir Theatre on THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER !

Randwick/Waverley Community Transport will pick you up at your home, take you to the theatre, and deliver you home afterwards. The transport cost is modest, and hey, the show is free! The play "It Just Stopped" is billed as a comedy. Starting time 2pm, but we must be there by 1pm. The refurbished Belvoir now has a lift.

You should act NOW for transport. Phone Sharon or Darren at Randwick/Waverley Community Transport on 9369 5366.

Contributed by Helen McMaugh

City of Sydney Podiatry Clinic

We have moved the clinic from the Darlington Activity Centre to the Kepos St Activity Centre. We changed the day from Tuesday to Wednesday. The price has increased from \$10 to \$11 per treatment.

Venue: Ron Williams Activity Centre 5 –11 Kepos St, Redfern Referrals

Ph: 9288 5601

Day: Wednesday

Cost: \$11 (2006/07)

Podiatrist: Tracey Crissford

OWN Sydney Notices

Subscribe NOW!

Subscription to *OWN Matters* is \$22 per year, these are due every JULY.

Payment method

I enclose a cheque/money order for \$22 made payable to OWN NSW
OR

Please debit the following credit card for \$22

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Mastercard

Bankcard

Card no.

____ / ____ / ____

Exp. date __/__/__

Name on card (please print)

Signature _____

Address _____

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I need the audio version

I'd love it on email

Email only - don't post

Email address: _____

What are friends for?

Please send the above subscription to:

Name: _____

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Address _____

State & PC _____

Members and friends are welcome to attend all activities.

Wellness on Wednesdays

9.30am-11.45am every Wednesday

Held in Mott Hall, Argyle St., Millers Point at the terminus of 343, 339, 308, 431 and 433. Our program of gentle exercise and tai chi, at \$4 per session, are lead by accredited facilitators. Early cuppas and morning tea are free, why not bring a sandwich and stay for lunch and a chat?

Film Discussion group

Tuesday, 17 October

You are invited to join with us to see *The Devil Wears Prada*, and then have something to eat. Please ring Yetty on 9665 2050 to check the session time. Other films recommended for viewing are *An Inconvenient Truth* and *The Wind That Shakes The Barley*.

Creative Movement

Every Thursday at Mott Hall, 10.15am. Call office 9247 7046

OWN UP — Unashamedly Political Discussion Group

10.30am-1pm, Friday, 13 October & 17 November.

The group will meet again at 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point.

Have an early cuppa with us and bring a sandwich for lunch. Contact Pearlle on 02 4285 5373 or e-mail pearliej@bigpond.net.au

Inner-West Networking group

- Every 2nd Saturday from 2-4pm **IWNG Meeting** - Leichhardt Market Place, Cnr Marion & Flood Streets, (Community Room ground floor behind Tandy), Networking, mutual support, sharing interests, social activities.

Buses serving the area are: 470, 435, 436, 437, and 438

All OWN members are welcome. Just turn up, or contact the OWN office on 9247 7046 or Jan on 9692 9400 OWN Members from other areas are welcome! See diary pages for dates.

Laughter Workshop - 6 Nov, see page 12 for details.

Jubilation - reaching out to retirees, all OWN members welcome 6pm-8.30pm, Friday, 20 October, at 87 Lower Fort St. Bring food & drink to share, a gold coin donation is appreciated. RSVP essential. Leave a message for Terry on 9247 7046.

**IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO:
Older Women's Network NSW Inc.
87 Lower Fort Street
Millers Point NSW 2000**

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OWN Matters

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