



OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales
Vol.4 No.2 – March 2007

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Domestic Terrorism

The theme of this year's International Women's Day celebrations is: *Women's Right to Safety in the Home, the Workplace and the World.*

As a network championing the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women, OWN can be proud of the role we've played – and continue to play - in both initiating debate, and informing policy at all levels of government. Yet one of the hardest battles is bringing many of these issues to the consciousness of the average citizen, whose life experience has spared them active duty in the timeless, and often underground war, of domestic violence.

The latest 2006 figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, on the surface show an encouraging fall from the 1996 figures, yet a closer examination reveals a rise in the number of women aged 45 years and over experiencing physical violence increased in 2005, to 25% (92,100) from 15% (60,500) in 1996. Curiously, statistically, this expanded group is not broken down any further, however, what has emerged, is a new phenomenon now known as: Elder Abuse. This term encompasses a wide range of behaviours, including physical, sexual, financial and psychological abuse and neglect of the elderly by family members, and/or their carers. Tragically, it took the delayed discovery of the repeated sexual assault by a male staff member of five women in their nineties, living in a Victorian nursing home – and their subsequent traumatic deaths - to bring about the recent introduction of federal laws relating to mandatory reporting of elder abuse.

However in the home, elder abuse most frequently takes the form of financial exploitation or psychological abuse by family members. A Curtin University of Technology study found that material/financial abuse represented 81% of known incidents, next was psychological (55%) and physical (32%) abuse (Boldy, Webb, Horner, Davey, & Kingsley, 2002).

Many forms of this violence are invisible, yet they are debilitating and scarring. The tactics used by the perpetrators bear all the hallmarks of terrorist operatives: from manipulation and mind control, to imprisonment, neglect, deprivation, ransom, blackmail torture and even murder. However when these crimes occur in the home, they are recorded as incidents of domestic violence. Now imagine for a moment that the perpetrators were classified as domestic terrorists? Envisage a world that took seriously the liberation and safety of all of its citizens. Consider the resources available to women both in terms of defence and rehabilitation if this war were named, and the enemy identified and engaged by the entire community?

This year's Defence Budget is \$19.6 billion - an increase of a \$1.9 billion on last year and an increase of \$9.0 billion (about 37% in real terms) from 1995-96. This extra \$1.9 billion builds on the additional money provided in recent budgets for operations, logistics, military people and better accommodation - "to protect our people, interests and values."

In 1994, a national census to investigate the demand for women's refuges and other accommodation services funded by the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) found that on average, 2,149 women escaping domestic violence were accommodated each night. Over the two weeks, 1,956 women seeking refuge could not be accommodated. No new figures? The Howard Government abolished the Women's Statistics Unit in the Australian Bureau of Statistics. They also cut funding to Office for the Status of Women. Perhaps this explains the delay in reporting to the United Nations regarding its commitment under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Last Budget saw no new funding for emergency accommodation and affordable housing; but I await with interest the promise of each new day.

On Saturday March 10, I urge you to join us, to put and end to this war on women, and remember that some women are literally marching for their lives.

Beth Eldridge

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Who Are We?

The Older Women's Network (OWN) NSW is the peak body for 19 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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POINT of VIEW

Musings of a Coordinator

After just three years as a member of OWN, I found myself unexpectedly, surprisingly, coordinator. At the time no one else put their hand up, and, as at that time I had visions of the group folding, and as I was having so much fun as a member, I didn't want that to happen. Shows how, even after three years, I didn't appreciate the tenacity of OWN members, because now I know it wouldn't have been allowed to happen. For a brief time however, I felt a saviour!

And then my education began. From the beginning I was the recipient of offers of help, encouragement, suggestions, hints, tips, the best being "delegate". I realized this was going to be fun if I didn't let responsibility sit heavily. Taking initiative had never been my strong suit, sitting on the fence more like, an anathema for a red-blooded OWN member, so my blood had to quickly become deep red.

After nearly two years as co-ordinator it is still fun, but so much better. The very best is the personal relationship with every member, something I think would not have developed if I were still just sitting on the side. I love the acceptance and respect we all have one for another because we are women who respond to OWN's philosophy, the rights, dignity and well-being of the older woman.

The varied programme of activities and events provide interest and stimulation to everyone, from book reviews, updates on education, travel stories and experiences, updates on education providers, health avenues and community concerns, and the occasional outing. And the more than occasional meal together. Life would be unimaginable without OWN. Much as the group provides for itself in every way meeting after meeting the marvellous team at OWN NSW keeps us on track with all that should concern us. Meeting the people behind the names in *OWN Matters* brings realization of the outstanding organization we enjoy being part of. Attendance at the annual conference brings its own rewards.

For about 35 years, my life was consumed as a wife, and mother of four sons. When the last son left home I quickly realized my life which had been so male oriented was now blank. When sons leave home, they leave, and I was left with a distinct lack of female input. Thank goodness for OWN which has brought me so much, taught me confidence and especially the dignity due to me and pride in all that is possible to achieve.

Being a coordinator for OWN is grand, and so easy with unexpected rewards. Thank you, every one.

Barbara Apperley, Nowra OWN

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.

Coordinators' Report

It may seem a little early to be talking about our yearly conference (July 16-17 2007), but please read on.

The big news is that we have been forced into a change of venue. The Women's College, which has been exceptionally good to us, can no longer cater for one night stays. Their governing board has ruled a minimum of two nights stay, which doesn't work for us. A bit of a blow, as we have grown rather fond of the Women's college and its very helpful and welcoming staff. Much research has gone on trying to find a suitable alternative venue. We have net-surfed, thumbed the white and yellow pages, hit the phones, other NGO's, friends and foot slogged the pavement viewing other places.

This year our budget is less due to grant cut backs, which means we have to skip the pools, the spas, the gyms, and the makeovers. In the long run, considering funding, conference facilities, overnight accommodation, performances, dining room, ease of transport, inclement weather possibilities and overall uplifting atmosphere we have chosen and booked Sancta Sophia. A Sydney University residential college, Sancta Sophia is situated within Sydney University grounds just up Missenden Road 10 minutes from the Women's College. Transport from Central is easy, as a bus goes past the door. Otherwise, get out at Missenden Road on a Parramatta Road bus and walk 7 minutes to the gate. Sancta Sophia's location is much the same as the Women's College but at the other end of the street. There are also lovely gardens and grounds.

The cost is about the same as the Women's College last year. The dining room is delightful and more user friendly than the Women's College. Accommodation rooms are very similar, with the same heaters, and shared bathrooms. However, Sancta Sophia does not have lifts. All conference facilities are on the ground floor level, as is the dining room, library and disabled toilet. Accommodation rooms are upstairs, so we'll all have to help each other just as we did on the stairs at the Women's College. The parking is **very**

limited, but it's there at \$7 per day. There is also parking across the road and at the university.

Many will remember past conferences at Sancta Sophia. It is a lovely place and we feel sure there are many positives that you will enjoy and feel that wonderful goodwill and togetherness which fuels our conferences. Do try and be there.

Still on the conference! Do you or does your group have any constitutional matters you wish to put before the Annual General Meeting? Please start working on them and get them to Beth really soon if you do. Also if you have any topic for a workshop you would like considered please let the Conference Committee know immediately. We won't be sending out long lists, as we have almost completed the workshop lists from the previously wonderful lists we collected from you.

An idea for your group: We have two very important elections coming up. Many of you have been advocating strongly on health, aged care, transport and local issues by writing and talking to various candidates. When we vote, **DO WE KNOW WHERE THEIR PREFERENCES GO?**

One may vote for a chosen candidate and actually be giving one's vote to the very candidate one DOES NOT want. Get someone into your group, maybe from your local electoral office, to explain our Australian system of preferential voting. Good luck. It's complicated, but hey, let's be able to explain it to the kids. Maybe we can find someone to write an easy-to-follow article for the next *OWN Matters*. How about it?

The rain has been beautiful. Hope the geraniums are thriving.

Brenda Hodgkinson

Centrelink Crisis Payment

For those experiencing domestic or family violence-when the perpetrator leaves, or has been removed, Centrelink has announced that from 1 January 2007, people who remain in their home are now eligible for the crisis payment.

For more information and to download copies of the brochure see www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/publications/ch002.htm

Telstra Directory Assistance

For anyone contemplating using the Sensis directory service number, 1234, DON'T!

Sensis, as you may or may not know, is a subsidiary of Telstra. The 1234 number is replacing the Telstra 12456 directory assistance number, but this time with outrageous costs attached: 40c to call the number, then 4c A SECOND!

By law, Telstra has to provide a FREE directory assistance number. What's the number?... **1223**

Maureen King

My Contemporaries

Salutations to our nine Life Members. May you be with us for a long time yet. Your imagination, creative energy and sheer hard work have sustained and strengthened our Network throughout its existence here.

You inspire us and we salute you.

Lately some media have begun to call us, the age group 75+, the Frugals – less offensive than ‘Battlers’ perhaps, yet has overtones of condescension and patronage. I repudiate them. Little old ladies clutching shabby purses buying mincemeat ‘for the cat’ departed from the scene long ago. That’s not us. We do dread debt but pay off our credit cards regularly. After all did we not train in the hard school of HP – the ‘never never’, or simply the “I didn’t buy it, I put it on the lay-by”, all buy now pay later attitude now so deplored by commentators. And did we not pioneer the pokies and to our credit got rid of the ‘ladies parlors’ in pubs. As parents of the ‘baby boomers’ we must recognize that we spoil them, but Khalil Gibran in *The Prophet* allowed us ‘healthy neglect’: wrong at the time and a stick to beat mum with later.

But we coped with males who dragged their war neuroses about with the ‘don’t mention the war’ mind set. We shared their mortgages and held sheets of fibro while they sawed them. And we are still alive.

We had survived the hard school of the 1940s and 50s, and all of suburbia’s pious prejudices. Our social life most likely began in the manless desert of wartime, sitting on our beds drinking cooking sherry out of tooth mugs. Later we might enjoy a pub crawl over to the Manly and were sick on the ferry coming back.

‘Date rape’, was called ‘the hard word and you had to watch for ‘Mickey Finns’. Dymphna Cusack revealed it all in her novel *Come in Spinner*.

You had the job of placating a moralising husband when your daughter threw a Tampax into the garbage and/or his outrage when she ‘shacked up’ with the perpetrator of her pregnancy. You envied her independence. Not for her the tumbler of gin and a hot bath.

Then a Labor government made all the difference. You could head for the family court and the nearest university and be free of the shackles placed upon you by conservatism. We became free to demonstrate, to protest wherever our inclinations took us. Now those means of dissent are denied us due to increasing decrepitude but it can be done online. And if we silently envy our granddaughters, we are delighted that the days are gone when educating females was deemed to be extravagant.

Helen Monaghan

What it is to be Old

I am well qualified and can speak of my experience validated by 80 years of living. I have been wondering whether some older women have ageism within themselves.

Expressions I hear quite often are about the aches and pains, illnesses, the disadvantages and so on of being old. While true, nevertheless, young people often have all of the above and furthermore many die young. Lots of complaining and voicing worries do not make for a contented life, nor make fascinating, interesting company. We are actually fortunate to have, with its flaws, a health system that is the envy of many countries in the world. Our pensions, while small, are enough to have food, and to clothe us however plainly and humbly.

Every day at 80 years is a bonus. In summer, life is even better for me. I delight in my back yard to see the frangipani blossom, my callistemon full of flowers and – joy! my ginger blossom has started to flower.

Bernice, the ex-guitarist for the theatre group, when asked how she was, would always say, “I’m getting there”. I decided to say the same thing, thinking of it as being nicely neutral. On second and third thoughts, the words mean that I have a goal, and I am walking on. My goal? Is to live as independently as long as I can, to live without going into the sad life of an Alzheimer’s patient and to do what I can, when I can and do my bit.

Perhaps we might do well to remember OWN was founded on the effects of ageism intrinsically mixed with sexism.

The attitudes stemming from ageism affect many social areas such as health care, employment, housing-status, and nursing homes – holding bays for the inevitable dying and death. The lack of sufficient beds and staff are only the start. Perhaps, worst of all, is the lack of contact with family members, friends and known friendly faces.

We do not grow old gracefully: years of experience are all too rarely valued. Instead of using whatever wisdom of age we have, to help solve some of our problems, we have turned age itself into a problem. For some of us older women the preoccupation of being old leads us to forget that often people who are old have some great ideas.



As only one example, Grandma Moses, an American woman, started painting in her 70’s and at 101 painted a charming picture of a farm, with people, animals, trees and arching over all, a rainbow. This picture gave her pleasure to paint, and she delighted many people who have seen it.

Louise Anike

A SENIOR MOMENT

A 98 year old woman wrote this to her bank. The bank manager thought it amusing enough to have it published in the *New York Times*.

Dear Sir:

I am writing to thank you for bouncing my check with which I endeavored to pay my plumber last month.

By my calculations, three 'nanoseconds' must have elapsed between his presenting the check and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honor it. I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my Social Security check, an arrangement which, I admit, has been in place for only eight years.

You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity, and also for debiting my account \$30 by way of penalty for the inconvenience caused to your bank.

My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to rethink my errant financial ways.

I noticed that whereas I personally attend to your telephone calls and letters, when I try to contact you, I am confronted by the impersonal, overcharging, pre-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become.

From now on, I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh-and-blood person. My mortgage and loan payments will therefore and hereafter no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank by check, addressed personally and confidentially to an employee at your bank whom you must nominate.

Be aware that it is an offense under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope. Please find attached an Application Contact Status which I require your chosen employee to complete.

I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative.

Please note that all copies of his or her medical history must be countersigned by a Notary Public, and the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof.

In due course, I will issue your employee with a PIN number which he/she must quote in dealings with me.

I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modeled it on the number of button presses required of me to access my

account balance on your phone bank service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further. When you call me, press buttons as follows:

- 1— To make an appointment to see me.
- 2— To query a missing payment.
- 3— To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there.
- 4— To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am sleeping.
- 5— To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature.
- 6— To transfer the call to my mobile phone if I am not at home.
- 7— To leave a message on my computer (a password to access my computer is required. A password will be communicated to you at a later date to the Authorised Contact.)
- 8— To return to the main menu and to listen to options 1 through 7.
- 9— To make a general complaint or inquiry, the contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service.

While this may, on occasion, involve a lengthy wait, uplifting music will play for the duration of the call.

Regrettably, but again following your example, I must also levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement.

May I wish you a happy, if ever so slightly less prosperous, New Year.

Your Humble Client

(Remember: This was written by a 98 year old woman) JUST GOTTA LOVE SENIORS!

Contributed by Josie Jackson from the net

Fearless - New Documentary on Ovation Channel

Funny, engaging and thoroughly entertaining, a new documentary, "Fearless", tells the extraordinary story of 92 year-old playwright, Julia Britton who at the age of 70, started a new life as a playwright. Now, at 92, she's taking her latest play to London.

Screening Details: Ovation Channel, March 21 at 6.00 pm followed by repeats

Preview Screening at ACMI, Fed Square Melbourne March 13th at 7.30

Theatre Group Report

Gearing Up

January 23 was the first get together of the year for the Theatre Group. In fact it was a talk-together about who and what and how the group would work as a team this year. We each appreciate that some members not only turn up regularly for rehearsals and performances but also do the hard slog of keeping the group going.

Marie Williams will have some extra help this year in keeping us refreshed and setting out chairs for rehearsal. Norma Bastock, thankfully, was persuaded to take on our finances. Marjorie Moffat will again be in charge of props and is our efficient admin co-ordinator, while Monique Reiher undertook to keep each member happy on her birthday. Publicity leader is again Joan Modder. Jo Allon continues as Liason Co-ordinator and, in her spare time, creative costume designer. Brigid Sen continues as

Director and Brenda Hardwick as Choreographer, two key roles. Musically, we are accompanied by Ann Cunyghame and a new team member, Rhona Nicolson, who is most welcome and gives Ann a chance to have a little time off.

In March, our feet will hardly touch the floor. Three separate performances in Wyong, Concord and Cockle Bay followed by a three day tour in the Shire of the wonderful Warrumbungles. Here we will be performing two long shows each day.

Rehearsals are going on in earnest, with the usual difficulties of catering for shows of differing lengths and the absence of some performers due to illness or other commitments. It's a great life when you can catch your breath!

Joan Modder



Time and Motion Study

Brigid Sen had delighted OWN members when she delivered this report at the Christmas Party in December.

This is a report on a Time and Motion study carried out in 1948 during a performance of a symphony orchestra playing at the Royal Festival Hall, London:

'For considerable periods the four oboe players had nothing to do. The numbers should be reduced and the work spread more evenly over the whole of the concert, thus eliminating peaks of non-activity.

All the twelve first violins were playing identical notes; this seems unnecessary duplication. The staff of this section should be drastically cut. If a large volume of sound is required it could be obtained by means of electronic amplifier apparatus.

Much effort was absorbed in the playing of demi-semi-quavers; this seems an excessive refinement. It is recommended that all notes should be rounded off to the nearest semi-quaver. If this were done it would be possible to use trainees and lower grade operatives more extensively.

There seems too much repetition of some

musical passages. Scores should be drastically pruned. No useful purpose is served by repeating on the horns a passage which has already been handled by the strings. It is estimated that if all the redundant passages were eliminated the whole concert time of 2 hours could be reduced to 20 minutes and there would be no need for an interval.'

Pianists

Pianists from all over the world will descend on the Southern Highlands from September 29th to 6th October for the International Piano Competition

This will be held at Cavalair College– Moss Vale and also Clubb Hall at Frenshaw in Mittagong.

The Final Concerto will have a 65 piece Orchestra from Wollongong

Ring Mr Yell 4862 2683 or Mr Oaks-Ash 4862 4145

Ring Robyn Smith on: 4872 3955 if more details required.

What's On in March

FESTIVALS



March 3 – Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade

March 3 to March 18 – National Trust Festival – Over 400 events all over Sydney

Sydney Harbour Bridge 75th Anniversary Celebrations Join the 250,000 expected to walk across the bridge

March 31 – Ultimo Pyrmont Festival

TALKS AND SQUAWKS

Fridays from 5.00pm Politics in the Pub, Gaelic Club, Devonshire St, Surry Hills,

March 23 – The Israeli Lobby and Western Media

March 30 – Economic Management or Debunking Howard's Myths

April 20 – What Has Howard Done to Our Institutions, State Library, Dixon Room, Mitchell Wing, 5.30 for 6.00 (\$17, \$12) (02) 9273 1770

March 5 – Gabi Hollows (founding director of Fred Hollows Foundation) at the Library

March 21 – Love in Another Country (by two travel writers, Claire Scobie and Gabrielle Carey) Gleebooks, 49 Glebe Point Rd, 6.00 for 6.30, 9600 2330

March 2 – Enough is not Enough: An Aboriginal History of the Pilbara

March 28 – Ruling Class Men

FREE MOVIES

State Library 12.10pm Mitchell Auditorium

March 2 – World War 2 Women from all states were encouraged to join Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force.

Hear recollections and interviews from women who were involved.

March 16 – Sydney Harbour Fascinating blend of contemporary and modern footage which looks at life on and around the harbour.

March 30 – The Gondoliers Enjoy one of Gilbert and Sullivan's Operas

ART GALLERY of NSW

From March 3 – Archibald, Wynne & Sulman

Guided tours Daily 12pm, 1pm, 3pm and Weds 5:30pm

Feb 21 to April 29 – Tesuka: The Marvels of Manga

March 14 – Talks Weds, 28 Films Weds 2pm & 7:15pm Sun 5:30pm

March 3 to April 29 – S H Ervin Gallery Salon de Refuses, Paintings not hung in Archibald

BOTANIC GARDEN

Free daily guided walks 10.30am from Information Counter Palm Grove Centre

BELVOIR THEATRE

March 17 & 18 – Coming soon 'Parramatta Girls', looking at the industrial school, "the bad girls' home" which operated until 1980. Cheap seats at preview. No information about free performance yet.

Sydney OWN International Women's Day

CELEBRATION BREAKFAST

Louise Anike - Honoured Speaker

Meet 9.30am, at 87 Lower Fort Street, Saturday March 10, 2007

When we grow old we shall wear purple !!!

Those who wish to can then join the march from Town Hall to Hyde Park, starting at 12 midday.

Meeting up at our OWN NSW stand in the park, where we will distribute material from various OWN groups across the state. All offers of assistance are warmly accepted! Just call Beth 9247 7046 to register.

The theme of this IWD is *Stop the War on Women: In the Home, the Workplace and the World.*

At and Beyond the Rocks

Sydney

Back from the end-of-year break and all systems go. The working group held their first meeting on Friday 2 February - which was also Peg Hewitt's 80th birthday - so the meeting was followed by a celebration. Congratulations Peg!

The project *OWN Your Village* is underway with our project officer Sue Kucharova. Sue will focus on three villages in the City of Sydney area which have been selected because they have the largest number of OWN members. The project aims to research how networking occurs at grass roots level, how information is sought and received. At our first quarter meeting on 9 February we heard Barbara Squires, a CEO of the Benevolent Society, speaking on Aged Care now and in the future. She was extremely knowledgeable, and an interesting discussion followed which had to be cut short as Barbara had another appointment. She is, however, willing to come to us again at some time.

Our usual International Women's Day breakfast will be held at 87 Lower Fort Street on Saturday 10 March at 9.30am to be followed by the march, for those who are able.

On 27 April there will be an *Owning OWN* workshop to which all members are invited. More on this later. We also plan an event to focus on the concept of leadership.

Judith Mustard

Sutherland

OWN Sutherland claims a unique place in the OWN family in that the majority of our members are the volunteers who run a very successful Wellness Centre. This perhaps limits our activities in comparison with other OWN groups.

We are partners with the Community Services Department of the Sutherland Shire Council in this year's Senior's Week Healthy Ageing Expo as well as being partners with the local Division of General Practice in running a series of workshops on dementia entitled, "Mind Your Mind".

We have received grants from our local Council to run activities for Mental Gymnastics as well as collect the stories of our local women to form Sutherland Shire "HERSTORY" marking our shire's centenary.

In October our social secretary Anne Passmore organised a wonderful tour of the Rocks for a combined OWN Sutherland and OWN Wellness Centre members. Led by Noreen Hewett our "Foundress" and historian we listened to the Windmill Street story before heading off to explore, have lunch and visit the Museum at the Rocks.

The following day most of us returned to enjoy the talents of the OWN Theatre Group who showcased lots of new material.

Melbourne Cup Day found 44 women in an amazing display of millinery having fun at the

Karimbla Community Restaurant with lots of prizes again organised by Anne P.

Our Christmas Cruise saw fifty women from both groups sailing around our local Port Hacking River while enjoying a superb luncheon and the musical entertainment provided by Margaret Bradford, a talented psalterist. We rounded off the year beautifully with a Club Luncheon for 76 at the conclusion of our Wellness program for the year.

At the December meeting office bearers were elected for 2007.

We were very proud when Noreen Hewett was honoured with Life Membership of OWN NSW at the OWN Sydney Christmas Function. Her exuberance for OWN and all that OWN stands for is evident in everything she does. Congratulations!!

Future plans include a week away at the Sport and Recreation at Point Wollstonecroft from April 16th to April 20th. Anyone interested please contact Pat Donaghy on 9526 5746 for details.

Pat Donaghy

Southern Highlands

We had our AGM on Thursday 1st February - sixty-five women attended, with ten new members joining. Our election for the 2007 Committee ran smoothly. No positions had more than one candidate willing to stand but we had no trouble in getting replacements for the committee members who were standing down so we still have

At and Beyond the Rocks

a committee of eleven.

Scheduled events are:-

Wednesday 7th February, Tai Chi resumes.

Thursday 8th February, Southern Region Get Together at Bowral Memorial Hall.

Thursday 8th March, International Women's Day. We received an unexpected \$250, through a grant that Wingecarribee Shire Council received from the NSW Office for Women. We are holding a social day at Bradman Museum, with BYO lunch, French and other informal cricket games, then afternoon tea.

When we found out about the IWD grant, we decided to put our efforts and money into making that a success and not to bother going ahead with our Seniors Week event as there's plenty happening that week.

Robyn Smith

OWN Wellness Activities Chatswood

Our Wellness Activities at Chatswood have been going for ten years, but now we are in trouble with finances. Unfortunately our income has not kept pace with the increasing financial demands and the increasing expectations of our members to provide high quality yet affordable health-related activities for older women in our community.

Donations from class participants are needed to keep our Wellness activities afloat!

We are not a service group, but a unique Network group, owned and organised by older women for older women. This means that class participants

own the Wellness Project.

We need to attract more people and think of ways of getting more funds. You can help by distributing our program in libraries, doctors' surgeries and local community centres.

Please come along and invite your friends to join in as well. Copies of our program are available by phoning the OWN NSW office on 9247 7046.

Joan Johns

Bankstown Greek OWN

Happy New Year everyone! I hope that 2007 will be a good and productive year for all of us.

Personally, I had the best Christmas in a long time, because my mum came from Greece two weeks before Christmas. I had not seen her for three years, and I was not expecting her, so it was a terrific surprise. She made the trip to see her new grandsons, born to my younger brother and his wife.

Our first OWN meeting of the year was held on 22 January. We cut the traditional Greek sweet bread, containing the lucky coin. Our new member Nikki was the lucky one who found the coin. Congratulations Nikki!

Later that week some of us got together for a day trip to Manly. We had a jolly good time. We took advantage of the good weather and organised another day trip, this time to Cronulla. Twenty-five members came along, and those who couldn't missed out on a great day.

That's enough relaxation for

now. From next week onwards, we have to get serious about our work, ladies.

Connie Kondilios

Free Introductory Exercise Classes

- Fitter and Stronger
- Lite 'n Low
- Gentle Aqua Fitness
- Strength, Stretch and Relax

People over 50 are invited by SHARE to participate in three free exercise classes from 16 March to 5 April 2007. After this time each class will cost between \$7.00 and \$8.00.

SHARE is a not-for-profit organisation supported by Sydney South West Area Health Service. Its Class Leaders are accredited instructors experienced in teaching exercise to people over 50.

Classes will be held at:
Balmain, Canterbury Hospital, Croydon, Drummoyne, Earlwood and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Camperdown.

Book before 9 March 2007 by phoning SHARE on 9533 4422

Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

Change to ASC Meeting Time

The Aboriginal Support Circle will now meet on the 2nd Monday of each month, starting in March.

Now that the OWN Management Committee are meeting on the first Monday of each month, Judith Mustard and Cate Turner, who are members of the ASC and also the Management Committee, are too valuable for us to lose them at our Monday meetings. So after consulting our members, the second Monday of each month will now be our official meeting day. All OWN members are cordially invited to view Part 1 of "Women of the Sun" on Monday, 12 March at 75 Windmill Street at 10.30am. This video series was made 25 years ago and deals with women who were stolen from their families as children and brought up in institutions.

Hope to see you there!

Pat Zinn

1967 Referendum - 40th Anniversary

On the twenty-seventh May, 1967, a Federal referendum was held in Australia asking whether two references in the Australian Constitution, which discriminated against Australian people, should be removed.

The sections under scrutiny were:

51. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to:

(xxvi) the people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any state, for whom it is necessary to make special laws.

127. In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives should not be counted.

The removal of the words ".....other than the aboriginal people in any state...." in section 51 (xxvi) and the whole of section 127 were considered by many to be representative of the prevailing movement for political change within Indigenous affairs.

The referendum saw the highest YES vote ever recorded in a Federal referendum, with 90.77% voting for change. The right to vote had already

been legislated for Commonwealth elections in 1962, with the last state to provide indigenous enfranchisement being Queensland in 1965.

What has been forgotten is that there was a powerful movement of Aboriginal activists with a platform of self-determination in the 20's. In April 1925 Fred Maynard, president of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) opened the first Aboriginal civil rights convention, held in the hall of St. David's Church, on the corner of Arthur and Riley Sts. in Surry Hills. He was a powerful speaker, self-educated and charismatic. Their aims were to work out their own destiny through spiritual, political, industrial and social means. The AAPA attracted widespread support from many articulate, eloquent and educated Aboriginal men and women and eventually had eleven branches with membership exceeding 500, with an office in Crown St. Sydney with a telephone connection. This was in spite of the greater number of Aboriginal people in NSW confined on restrictive reserves where they were denied mobility. Annual conferences were held in Sydney, Kempsey, Grafton and Lismore before they were apparently hounded out of existence four years later by police implementing the directives of the NSW Aboriginal Protection Board.

Fred Maynard's grandson, Professor John Maynard, chairman of Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle, has reminded us, in the *Koori Mail* newspaper of 31 January, of his grandfather's powerful resolve which closed the AAPA conference in Kempsey in 1927:

"As it is the proud boast of Australia that every person born beneath the Southern Cross is born free, irrespective of origin, race, colour, creed, religion or any other impediment, we the representatives of the original people, in conference assembled demand that we shall be accorded the same full rights and privileges of citizenship as are enjoyed by all other sections of the community."

Has much genuine progress been achieved since then?

Pat Zinn



Taking Action of Your OWN

Needing Help to Write a Letter?

Many times we have thought we should be writing letters to various people about things which concern us, and some of us do it all the time, many of us do it some of the time and some of us never get around to it.

The coming elections are a case in point, and this could be an occasion for us to harass those who are standing for parliament, whether State or Federal. So how about an orgy of enthusiastic letter writing, in time for both elections.

If you need inspiration, OWN has some advocacy resources that may be of use, or perhaps your group would like to organise a workshop to improve your skills in these areas? Let OWN NSW know if you'd like our help in getting your concerns heard.

Perhaps you or your group has already made great strides in a particular area, and you feel that letters you have written could be adapted for other members or groups situations, if so maybe you would consider sending them as a template for action on that issue.

If women have a special concern, whether women's health, transport, dental health or whatever, we could work with you to write letters.

We could also add you to a group list to keep you informed on issues in your areas of interest.

Anyone interested?

Lorraine Inglis

Something for Everyone?

Sheila recently received a promotional brochure for a new car being marketed, from the same company as the car she owns. The advertising ambitiously proclaimed that its new product was something "meant for everyone to enjoy", the glossy promo then unfolded to reveal the marketer's vision of this 'everyone', standing in front of a quasi stretch limo-like version of the vehicle. Of the eight representations of humanity standing in front of the car, although gender balanced, all are white, and none appear over forty - two may just have earned their P plates. Sheila wrote a pointed letter to the company, explaining that their advertising excluded her, which may have her rethinking her purchase in order to find a company with which she could 'appropriately' identify. Their apology included the explanation that "the brief to our production agency was to include people of all ages and

backgrounds, and we have clearly failed..."

Beth

Sheila's Says:

This illustrates how older people do not exist in the eyes of marketing and advertising people.

My reference to behaving appropriately, was of course tongue in cheek and was based on a (for me) controversial talk given by Professor Bill von Hippel from U.N.S.W. titled *Ageing, Inhibition and Social Control*. The talk at the Royal Society Southern Highlands Branch focused on inappropriate behaviour in old people.

Grateful thanks for including the important state and federal pollies addresses in the February issue. We now have no excuse not to make known our views on issues important to us. Inertia is not acceptable as an excuse and the politicians do have to take notice of electors. The result of persistent lobbying is currently having effect for example about David Hicks. We being older women have limited time to have some influence and have learnt that money and possessions are not the most important things in life; it is therefore up to each one of us to encourage lateral thinking on climate change and to place the economy second. We all know everyone lives up to the level of their income and consumerism can be addictive.

Sheila Benning

International Year of the Mother

The members of the Inner West Group of the Older Women's Network talked for a long time at our last meeting on a subject of great concern to us. That is, not only the plight of women all over the world, but most particularly, mothers and the atrocities being inflicted on them and their children across the world, in war zones and in many countries.

We spoke about the cruel suffering caused by FGM (female genital mutilation) and its lasting damage, about people trafficking, about 'ethnic cleansing', about mothers forced into prostitution, deaths in childbirth and after childbirth, through poverty – and more and more. Our whiteboard was filled to overflowing, as were our hearts.

Our speaker came up with the idea of having an "International Year of the Mother", as well as International Women's Day. This may have an effect in raising more public awareness and consciousness about the atrocities that are taking place every day against mothers and children somewhere in the world.

continued next page

Taking Action of Your OWN

We believe Ros Strong will be attending the UNIFEM Conference this year, so we had the idea, hopefully, that as 'UNIFEM Australia' president, she could present this idea to her committee. We have offered our help in any way we can to bring this to the attention of the Conference.

Merle Jones

Women's Right to Vote

It is fitting to remind women that their right to vote was gained only after long and bitter struggles over decades. Women in such countries as U.K. America, New Zealand and Australia had often intense local struggles.

Social historians of the 1970's looked back in the records of suffrage societies rather than relying on parliamentary debates. The sources included the personal papers of suffragists and the newspapers that they published such as the Australian Women's Sphere, edited by Vida Goldstein between 1900-1905.

Gaining the vote was viewed as the essential first step in improving quality of life for women. Women wanted input into decisions on the rights of children, the distribution of property within marriage, working conditions and a host of other issues that impacted on women's daily lives.

Lack of political rights impacts negatively on one's civil and social rights and this has certainly been the case for indigenous Australians.

New Zealand passed the Women's Franchise Act in 1893, South Australia followed in 1894, W.A. in 1899, New South Wales in 1902, Tasmania in 1903, Queensland in 1905 and finally Victoria in 1908.

The Federal election in 1903 was the first time in the world that women could both vote and stand for the election to a national parliament.

It was a referendum in 1967 which won uniform voting rights for indigenous Australians.

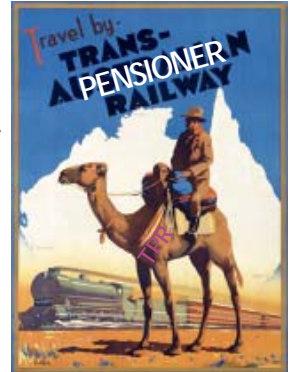
Democracy is best served when all have an equal right to vote and participate in the political process.

All women can take pride in the untiring efforts of the suffragists. Some women may think voting is merely a drudge having to choose one of the candidates who may seem to be best in the guidance of the welfare of all Australians and who will sincerely hold and act on election promises. It is difficult in the face of so many, many broken promises.

Louise Anike

Another Little Pinch?

They're at it again. The NSW Government's next penny-pinching exercise, there are rumours afoot, they are considering abolishing the pensioner exemption on car registration. Wow, they really want pensioners to feel loved, don't they? They've already fiddled with the two free annual return trips on CountryLink, requiring a "booking fee" of 15% of the fare, with a minimum of \$10; now they want to make it harder for pensioners to visit their families by requiring them to pay anywhere between \$212 and \$372 registration fee, depending on the size of the vehicle.



The Road Transport Authority has vigorously denied this rumour – they would, wouldn't they just prior to the State election on 24 March – but the rumbling persists. Perhaps you could question the next pollie who knocks on your door how his or her Party feels about all this. You could even ask him/her what reductions are planned for politicians' travel allowances!

Helen Young

Anger and agitation make us more susceptible to illness.

*Insight from the Dalai Lama,
contributed by Yetty Windt*

OWN UP -Did you know?

1. Did you know that the (Federal Government) proposed identity card is intended (initially) for people receiving benefit?

Whilst there is a need for people who don't drive for example, to have means of identifying themselves, we must still ask how the use of this card will affect older women? Perhaps we can expect a barcode on the forehead sometime soon?

2. Did you know that originally the idea was to have place of birth noted on it? Might this have been an attempt at racial profiling?

3. Did you know that such a card will define the less well-to-do, separating them by means of identification from the well-to-do?

Who will be them and who will be us?

Pearlie McNeil



A Balanced Life

Pulling a trolley backwards up a steep slope is not a good idea at any time, let alone when you are an arthritic old woman, but I did. Crash! The trolley fell on top of me. Ow! A sharp pain took my breath away. I had broken a rib.

Weeks later, hurrying up the front steps to the letter box, I tripped and fell – forward this time – pushing my teeth painfully into my mouth. It felt very odd and looked it. Luckily, Doug was at home to help me and we drove off to the doctor, blood dripping down my chin and a purple bruise developing on my cheek.

The doctor stitched up my lip, then the dentist pushed my teeth back into my mouth and wired them up – a lengthy and painful business.

Bloody and bowed I reached the radiologist.

I was the last patient for the day and they were ready to party. A glass of wine was pressed into my hand in spite of my protests. I just wanted to go to bed.

Doug accepted a glass of red and the radiologist started an animated discussion with him. They discovered that his father and Doug had gone through University together; his granddaughter knew our granddaughter and the nurse's son rock-climbed with our grandson.

On and on it went while I sat there in pain, limply holding my glass in my hand.

The nurse turned cheerily to me, waving a bottle in her hand. She looked at my ashen face and asked, 'How are you?'

'Ghastly', I lisped.

Doug came to my side, concern in his voice. 'I must take her home'.



They all crowded round, vying to support me, and we tottered off to the car.

As Doug was helping me into my seat, he turned to the radiologist. 'Give my regards to Bill and tell him ...'

A loud groan from me stopped him in his tracks. He quickly got into the car and off we went at last, the staff waving from the footpath.

I vowed to do something about my balance after that, so I bought a book, *The Busy Person's Guide to Easier Movement* by Frank Wildman Ph.D., (Intelligent Body Press) recommended by our Feldenkrais instructor at Wellness, Chatswood. It has 50 Feldenkrais movements which help every part of your body to function: one on balance, others on freeing hips and stiff knees, sharpen your focus, breathing and stress release. Excellent book with easy to follow illustrations.

Here's to standing on our feet!

Joan Johns

The Adventures of a Prosthesis

Prostheses don't usually have a name, but I like to think I have one. It is Left Boob. So if you think of me at all, will you think of me as that?

My life bounces around a bit, up and down, mostly down. The drawer I live in leaves a bit to be desired, a bit small, dark and uninteresting. There are times when it gets a bit exciting, like when a visitor comes and they open the drawer for whatever reason. When that happens I puff myself up and try to look interesting, hoping they will take me out for a bit. Alas, strangers never do and the look on their face as they slam the drawer shut says,



"Sorry, I should not have opened that." I sit back in the dark, trembling till the vibration of the slammed drawer settles.

Like most closet dwellers I wish my life were different. What I would really like to be is a shoulder pad.

On the days my owner does take me out I have a great time. I sail along in front of her, all puffed up with importance, knowing the tee shirt or blouse she is wearing has just taken on a much better look. Because of me! Oh what a feeling!

But after a while I get bored and my secret passion starts to come through and I forget my obligations and set off to have an adventure of my own. Sometimes I just slide up or down, giving the illusion my owner is trying to smuggle unpaid-for sausages out of the butchers. But the thing I like most is when she doesn't notice the slide and I end up waltzing upwards and outwards, until I am securely resting, albeit at a bit of an odd angle, on her left shoulder. What bliss, I can see everything from here. I smile at shop girls and bus conductors and notice their little smiles back – Mainly given with shoulders shaking and eyes down.

Her family and closest friends are my biggest enemies. They have no thought for my happiness and will come out with a "Fix your boob" from behind a hand which is covering their mouth. If we haven't left the house that is the end of my day. Back in the drawer, sitting in the dark, contemplating what might have been.

So think of me sometime and help me get out of the closet. If you see me playing the part of a shoulder pad, a smile and nod would make my day. And don't forget the name: Left Boob.

Barbara Malcolm

Letters to the Editor

Finding New Directions

In the February '07 issue Josie Jackson asks the question, "Have we lost our way?" Josie was very disappointed at the level of support to hear two speakers on the subject of Domestic Violence at OWN Office by the Sydney Group.

Having been involved since 1987, I have wondered why at times. The amount of effort put into organizing some information days never seems to excite the interest of members.

In 1987 there was only one group of OWN to work with. Today we have groups in the suburbs, all over the state. Wellness organisations also look after their health. There are also many interest groups for OWN Sydney to choose from.

Just check out the Diary Page of the newsletter! And only seven days in a week. Not to mention that Sydney provides volunteers to co-ordinate NSW work in the office and the office work of OWN overall. It is the volunteer numbers of OWN Sydney who organise the meetings and discussions.

All that development in 20 years since November 1987. I know my energy level is not as it was when I was 60.

The "younger" are coming in but are still at work! Ill health takes its toll on activity of members also. Maybe we have reached a point where we need to have some "Pow Wows" or "Speak Outs" to see if we could find what social issues/fun OWN could be undertaking that fit the needs of our age bracket?

Your letter caught my eye, Josie. Maybe others will send in their thoughts to OWN.

I only know if there wasn't an OWN organisation, I would be devastated. Now that our 20th anniversary is on the horizon, let's put our heads together to reaffirm our direction.

Peggy Hewett



Big, Bold and Becoming

While Own Matters contains some very valuable material and is very informative, I would like to offer some suggestions to help some of us in our senior years.

Firstly I would appreciate the type being bigger and bolder. I think I can speak for others who wear glasses or whose eyes are failing. I sometimes find myself getting out the magnifying glass and screwing up my face to decipher the print.

Also the layout could be lightened up a bit. My concentration span is unfortunately less than it used to be and it is difficult to absorb large chunks of print. Maybe some cartoons and drawings.

I know our world is not a pretty place but is it possible to have more personal stories like 'Remember When' and perhaps something to make us laugh as well as cry?

Thank you for all the hard work you put in. I appreciate it.

Helene Gonski

Thank you for your constructive suggestions, Helene. We, too, worry about the print size. Trouble is, a larger, bolder font would take up more space and would thus restrict the number of articles we can use, as we have to keep the number of pages in each issue within cost parameters. Costs are also responsible for the scarcity of cartoons, etc. as we have to scrounge those we can publish free. We are always delighted to receive amusing articles, as we like a good giggle too. Even there we have to watch our step, since they are likely to bring on complaints (usually verbal) that the Journal is becoming lightweight!

Editorial team



Serious Matters

Thank you, OWN Sydney, for inviting Barbara Squires to address the OWN Sydney quarterly meeting on Thursday 8th February. What she had to say on aged care was vitally important. What struck me is that there ARE services out there, but many people don't seem to know about them. A friend of mine cares for her husband, and being an assertive, strong woman, she joined the support groups that were available in her area and also made enquiries at her local council. As she still works part-time, she was able to arrange for her husband to be taken to a day-centre and to be returned home in a wheelchair taxi. She is now invited to talk to medical students and nursing

Letters to the Editor

students and it seems to me that one has to be pro-active in finding out about services and even making a fuss if necessary.

At the same meeting, we discussed larger print for *OWN Matters*. Of course that would mean we would have to cut back on articles, otherwise the extra pages would add to extra expense. I've been very lucky to have gained good sight through having cataract operations, but I admit that I need magnifying spectacles to read the magazine and perhaps we need to ask our members how they feel about larger print and fewer articles.

Finally, a friend of mine mentioned that she finds *OWN Matters* too serious and that we need to lighten up. I don't agree. There are plenty of laughs in each edition, we now have a list of free, fun things to do (thank you, Lorraine Inglis) and the whole point of *OWN* is that we need to be kept informed about what's going on and how it affects us as older women, we need to be stimulated and to think and we need to share health information.

Probably the most serious items are those of the Aboriginal Support Circle, so I promise in future to try and report positive news!

Pat Zinn



Peel Me A Grape!

Today I am in Coles Bay, at the YHA, and am recovering from my walk to Wineglass Bay and back.

Trying another tomorrow. I wish I was traveling with a cook, who would provide nourishment at the end of each day.

I read a book recently called *No Place For a Lady*, all about those women who traveled the world solo over the last 200 years.

Some of them of course came from the moneyed classes and hired guides and cooks where they traveled. I wish!!!

Hasta la vista

Lorraine Inglis

The Taming of Rude, Crude and Lewd

A radio account of some young men beating up a bystander with no cause and a policemen comments that this behaviour is **unacceptable**.

Another report of young men caught speeding on a highway is called **anti-social**.

Sexual harassment is **unacceptable**.

Still further, other behaviour such as bullying in schools is called **inappropriate**.

What is going on? What has happened to *dangerous/illegal*?

The words in bold have given gloss-ary a new meaning – gloss over the rude, crude and lewd with weasel words

Why?

Have people lost the plot with political correctness or some form of etiquette? A spade is no longer a garden implement. It is an engineered tool for humankind to civilize and utilize the earth for botanical species.

We don't need this kind of disguising, shielding and hiding these offensive acts. Keep the bastards honest, as was once the Democrats' slogan!

Louise Anike



Earth Hour

At 7.30pm on 31 March 2007 Sydney will turn off its lights for just one hour – Earth Hour – to show that it's possible to take action on global warming. Switching off is a simple action that can make a difference and it sends a powerful message that the people of Sydney care about the future of the planet

I think it's a great idea.

Jan Monson



Our OWN Writers

Brief Encounter

You'd think shopping for bath towels was a fairly ordinary activity. Here I am on an ordinary afternoon, an ordinary grandmother, holding an ordinary bath tile close to the piles of towels, lost in consideration of which colour would look least garish or least boring, when I am unexpectedly interrupted.

"No, that's not the right colour!"

A male voice cuts into my thoughts. I smile tentatively, wondering if he is an assistant though I know TARGET stores are not renowned for eager assistants anxious to guide bewildered customers. The clearly expressed words and rather loud voice belong to a dark-haired, baseball capped fortyish man who has a friendly face with a heavy five o'clock shadow surrounding a Cupid's bow mouth and a winning smile.

I look more closely at him, my face registering unspoken questions.

"I'm Jewish and I'm gay!" He announces this theatrically.

Unmoved, I say dryly, "So?" I pause. A sudden flicker of curiosity mixed with concern for him prompts me to draw him out further. I add, "I have several delightful gay Jewish friends."

Caught off balance by my reply, the lively extroverted stranger regards me in silence for a moment. He recovers himself, seizes my bath tile and proceeds to hold it up to towels he thinks would be perfect, but I demur at each one, pointing to others I think would be better. He looks doubtful for a moment, but seeing the surreal nature of the dialogue we are in says quickly: "I can see you have good colour sense!" By now, guessing I won't get far with the deeper issue, I'm wondering how I can escape without being unnecessarily discourteous, but he begins a long story without pausing for me to make my excuses and go. He tells me about his blossoming career in TV comedy and how he is to work with a famous TV megastar. Today he is here to buy some last minute props, bed valances, for the show which is to be recorded soon. He mentions TV actors and wealthy business men as if they were old friends, perhaps to impress me, but at this point, as each moment passes, I'm feeling more impatient than impressed. I spy a real shop assistant and direct his attention to her. As soon as he turns his head to speak to her, I slip away, heaving a sigh of relief.

Not finding anything in TARGET, I hurry to BIG W. Today I am not the last of the big spenders. Quickly I search out sheets and towels, turn into that aisle and...he's

here before me!

"Oh, not you again!" I blurt out. At that he looks up, not the least offended, and smiles, glad to see me. He speaks now as if we were long time friends. This time, I'm quicker to get away. Feeling a bit like the cartoon cat who is perennially escaping from the pursuing skunk, I hide, loitering in a distant aisle 'til I think he must have had time to finish. I sneak back, peep round the corner and ... he's still there! This time, he has packets of valances on the floor around him, some opened, and some in his hands. He looks perplexed, but catching sight of me begins again to discuss the show he's shopping for. Despairing, I throw in the towel, psychologically at any rate, and begin to feel sympathy for him.

"Of course I'm not gay," he says. "I've got five children!"

In spite of myself, I want to argue that that proves nothing, but before I can speak, he's naming well known male entertainment personalities, all married with children, "...but all of them are screaming queens, you know!"

At this point, noticing the time, I give up all thought of further shopping, and more poignantly, of talking with him. "My husband's waiting for me in the coffee shop. I've got to go. I'm sorry..." I say, rather lamely. Privately, I am regretful as I'd like to continue now that the real issue has surfaced again.

"Oh!" His face falls. For a bizarre moment I wonder if he will invite himself along as I am aware of his longing for accepting connection. Attempting to ease the pain of separation, I ask which channel I should watch to see him and when it will be screened. He tells me, but adds carefully, "That's if they don't edit my scene!" He looks sad for a moment, but brightens. "Well, goodbye then. It's been a really great pleasure to meet you!" I hasten away, smiling to cover my mixed feelings. He waves enthusiastically. "Goodbye! Goodbye!" Strangely, my heart is warmed...

Bev Cameron

Silencing Dissent

I am taking some comfort in the fact that I have just been able to buy, hot off the press, a book that expresses the dissenting opinions of some very well known and reputable people. I am fearful that another term of office under the present Coalition Government, led by John Howard, might see the end of such liberty.

Our OWN Writers

You think I'm exaggerating? Well I advise you to read a book called *Silencing Dissent*. How the Australian Government is controlling public opinion and stifling debate, by Sarah Madison and Clive Hamilton (Allen & Unwin). This riveting book tells how, during the last ten years, the Howard Government has been progressively dismantling the democratic processes that allow public debate and dissenting opinion; how it has, in fact, altered our way of life. Ten important writers graphically outline the attacks that have been made on all aspects of our lives.

There have been many victims of censorship over the past ten years; not only NGO's and charities, many of whom have lost serious funding through differing with Government policy. Notably, universities, academics, researchers, outspoken journalists, public sector organizations, even judges have been bullied, intimidated, tied up in red tape, subjected to a manipulation of rules and laws. So gradual and insidious has been the profound abandonment of our former way of life that it has gone unnoticed by many people; there has actually been an effective lid put on public debate about much of what has been happening.

How many have noticed the gradual politicisation of the military, the abandonment of multiculturalism (now citizenship), the uncritical pro-American foreign policy, the refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol. Where is the scrutiny and outrage that one would have expected?

The forward by Robert Manne says, "*Silencing Dissent* is a timely, disturbing and unnerving book that raises serious questions about the state of democracy in Australia." I found it quite shocking as I learnt more and more of the tactics used by John Howard to change our former most cherished rights and way of life. I think the writers have been very courageous in writing so honestly about the alarming decline in the health of our democracy.

As the editors say in the final chapter, much of the government's activity has been "beneath the radar of most Australians, yet the effects of these strategies are disturbing and deeply worrying". However there are some signs of resistance.

Let us hope that most people are deciding that ten years is just too long for this government to be in office. I urge you to read this book.

Muriel Hortin

After lots of request from friends and fellow writers, I collected the best of my poetry- some of which have been included in OWN Newsletters- in a small volume. I am pleased to let the OWN Library have a copy, as a small contribution for the huge benefits I have derived from this excellent organization. Please feel free to browse through it or borrow it if you feel like it.

With best wishes to all.

Trudy Davis

Inner Landscape

'I shut my eyes so I can see'
the things that really matter;
with open eyes I get disturbed
by quantities of clutter.

The world abounds in complex shapes
competing for attention;
reducing to the right amount
requires comprehension.

An artist and musician both
depend on inner vision,
interpreting what they believe
is true without intrusion

At certain times when eyes are closed
a new image arises,
allowing us the realm of dreams
to offer some surprises.

No wonder, when my mind runs dry,
I shut my eyes and ponder,
till I get carried far away
to my inner world and yonder.

Trudy Davis

NOTICES



Seminar for Seniors Week

The NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing will be holding a seminar 'Living Alone, Staying in Touch' during Seniors Week.

They are looking for speakers to be identified from local older people who live alone, who are good talkers and prepared to talk about their own personal experiences.

This will be held in Sydney CBD on Tuesday 13th March at the Lyceum Theatre, Wesley Centre, Pitt Street.

Contact Megan Nicholson Snr Policy & Projects Officer

Facilitator will be Julie McCrossin.

Tel 02 8270 2146

Free Morning tea will be provided

Healthy Ageing Talks

COTA, NSW (Council on the Ageing) once again has planned a series of Healthy Ageing Talks for 2007 as a part of their community service to inform better choices for health. Speakers are of a high caliber, professional and interesting. The aims are to promote quality education, quality of care and quality of life.

■ Tuesday 27 March 2007

9.30am for a 10.00am start

Is Your Skin up to Scratch?

Dr Jo-Ann See is a Fellow of the Australasian College of Dermatologists and a National and International Speaker. Dr See will speak on skin care, skin cancers, skin diseases, cosmetic dermatology, tags, barnacles and everything that we seem to acquire as we age!

■ Wednesday 2 May 2007

9.30am for a 10.00am start

Turn the Light On ... I Can't Hear You!

Grant Ewer, Clinical Audiologist with Australian Hearing, and Pat Fulton, Nurse and Hearing Coach. A subject that as we, or our loved ones, age, becomes more relevant.

■ Thursday 14 June 2007

9.30am for a 10.00am start

Alzheimer's – Mind Your Mind

Lisa McDowell, Education, Dementia/Aged Care for Alzheimer's NSW, will discuss memory in ageing, strategies to mind your mind, and memory changes; could it be dementia?

■ Thursday 6 September 2007

Diabetes and Nutrition

Venue: Level 1 / 280 Pitt Street, Sydney (*Hearing loop available*)

Bookings essential (02) 9286 3860

Free for COTA members

\$5.00 for non members.

For information, ring COTA at (02) 9286 3860

email Suzanne Williams, Medication Management Project officer at pep@cotansw.com.au

or visit the website:

www.cotansw.com.au

Bequests to the Older Women's Network

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

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

Option No. 1

I devise the sum of \$
..... to the Older Women'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.

OWN Sydney Notices

Subscribe NOW!

Subscription to *OWN Matters* is \$22 per year, these are due every JULY 1. So pay now for 4 or 16 months: \$11 or \$33

Payment method

- I enclose a chq/money order for 4 mths \$11 - to Jun30,2007
 or 16 mths \$33 - to Jun30,2008 made payable to OWNNSW OR
 Please debit the following credit card for \$11/\$33
 Visa
 Mastercard
 Bankcard

Card no.

____/____/____/____

Exp. date __/__/__

Name on card (please print)

Signature _____

Address _____

State & Post Code _____

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: _____

Signature _____

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.

Film Discussion group

Tuesday, 13 March

You are invited to join with us to see *Venus*, other films recommended for viewing are *Notes on a Scandal* and *Scoop*.

Please ring Yetty on 9665 2050 to check details.

Creative Movement

Classes have resumed with the inspiring instructor Meredith Lucy. Please join us in Mott Hall on Thursday mornings at 10.15 to discover your inner rhythms!

OWN UP — Unashamedly Political Discussion Group

10.30am to 1.00pm, Friday 13 April, then Friday 8 June, Friday 10 August and Friday 12 October 2007.

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 - IWNG

- 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!

Jubilation - reaching out to retirees, all OWN members welcome 6pm-8.30pm, the 3rd Friday of each month, at 87 Lower Fort St. Bring food & drink to share, a gold coin donation is appreciated. RSVP essential. Contact Terry 0419 441 766.



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

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