



# OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales

Vol.4 No.4 - May 2007

## Keep Your Friends Close

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By the time this article goes to press we will have participated in the NSW component of what should have been a national community consultation between women's groups and the Federal Government.

The focus of these consultations - conducted by WomenSpeak for the Federal Office for Women - is to examine the impact and leadership of women's organisations in communities. WomenSpeak is a non government network of 37 predominantly national women's organisations, funded by the Federal Government's Office for Women.

We had an excellent representation of OWN women register, and as the word spread throughout the state, and women from other organisations began to register their interest or apologies, it was clear that the significance of this opportunity was only matched by the alarm organisations felt when they realized that NSW came very close to being left out of consideration altogether.

The structure imposed at a federal level on the Federal Office for Women, meant that only the 37 organisations already within the WomenSpeak national forum were invited to represent their states interests. The NSW contingent failed to respond.

This can perhaps be traced back to a NSW government "mini-budget" in 2004, when it was announced that the NSW Department for Women, was to be honoured with an office in the Premier's Department. The re-fit and relocation must have overstretched the budget, because what actually happened was the NSW Department for Women, lost 50% of their budget, and were reduced to a skeleton staff of 14. They have no grants program, and it effectively limited their ability to provide strategic policy advice or gender analysis of public policy. It also severely limits their ability to promote women's events and assist with the dissemination of information outside approved core activities.

Strangely this brings to mind an ancient quote: "**Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer**". Sun-tzu Chinese general & military strategist (~400 BC)

NSW Department for Women, had a history of fantastic achievements - like the role it played in the NSW pay equity inquiry, which finally brought discrepancies in wages for 'traditionally female occupations' before the Industrial Relations Commission - that was in the heady days when Australia was riding the crest of the gender equity wave.

How quickly the tide can turn, and how willingly the general public seem to accept these ideological shifts within our cultural psyche. To think that with a two year wait for under two's child care, no positions offering anywhere near two years paid maternity leave, and changes to our IR laws that are going to further disadvantage mothers trying to juggle work and families - we have a treasurer who would encourage every fertile woman to have a third child to help the economy? Mercifully even if women do heed Costello's call to 'Babe in Arms', and they find themselves, jobless and in dire need of something more, there will be a multitude of community organisations, ready to adapt their practices to accommodate these willing women as volunteers - just like they did in the '40's and '50's.

Ah, who said time travel was impossible?

*Beth Eldridge*

## 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 and 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

## Age Gives No Immunity to Violence

The murder of 81 year old Katherine Schweitzer, a Holocaust survivor, in her Bellevue Hill home and her body shamefully placed inside a wheelie bin is another tragic case of an old, single woman being targeted, usually by a relative or by someone who knew her, perhaps some time ago, or perhaps merely casually.

There is no protection just because a woman is old, in fact, she is seen as vulnerable as often she may be frail. The violence may be domestic violence, or it may be by an invader. It took the government and non-government organisations a long time to recognize and start to take action on the problems with violence against older women.

One of the prevalent crimes has been bag-snatching in public places – often with injuries to the victim.

Assaults on elderly women were reported in the Sydney Morning Herald on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January. A 70-year-old was attacked on a road in Horsley Park when she investigated noises outside her home. A 93-year-old was found lying injured outside Waverley Police Station in Bronte Road.

The case of an old woman in Wee Waa a couple of years ago was extremely disgusting and sad. She lived alone, quite independent. She was attacked in her own home and raped. Her happiness along with her own things and her garden went, when she had to go into a nursing home. The police decided to DNA test all the men in the area which led to a married man with children confessing that he did it.

Older women can become socially isolated through fear. We know social isolation is deleterious to health, and there is the sadness of being lonely and seemingly forgotten.

These samples of awful violence can serve to prompt more women to resolve to be an advocate/activist and join with other women willing to give their time and energy to inform themselves of the nature and prevalence of the violence.

More hearts and minds are needed to work on the many different aspects of violence against older women. We need more voices to get better resources which at present are scarce and inadequate.

*Louise Anike*

### DISCLAIMER

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# OWN NSW

## Coordinators' Report

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Hope this finds you all well after the Easter break with its chocolate eggs, chocolate bunnies and all sorts of other excesses. Also hope you had time to catch up on much needed rest and are now refreshed and ready to think about what the next few months hold for the thinking woman. The Conference is coming up in July and we hope that many women decide to attend. It is very informative and also lots of fun. Speakers, workshops, menus etc. are all being attended to and when we greet each other at Sancta Sophia College in July; it should be the beginning of a time of learning and making new friends, as well as catching up with old ones.

Sadly the management team had to say goodbye to Maria Camelin who because of circumstances had to resign. Being part of the Team gives us a chance to work with an interesting group, while at the same time learn about OWN and how issues that affect Older Women are dealt with. There is always a need for more members with fresh ideas, so have a think in the next few months and when the Conference comes round you may like to put your hand up or your name down to join the Management team. It's fun and you learn a lot.

May is shaping up to be a busy month. On 8<sup>th</sup> May Quarterly Meeting will be held here at number 87 and as usual promises to be a day not to be missed.

On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May a forum is to be held on *Financial Abuse of Older Women* commencing at 10.00am at the Mechanics School of Arts, Level 3 / 280

Pitt Street, Sydney. Sue Field is the main speaker with guest speakers from Centrelink Financial Information Services (FIS), Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and other representatives from financial institutes who will all bring their own ideas on this most important subject. They will talk about the much mentioned *Reverse Mortgages*, highlighting the 'for' and 'against', what the pitfalls are and what the fine print tells you. So do come along and fire all those questions you have about it. It is so important for all women to be fully informed about these matters.

Abuse and cruelty in nursing homes is still happening, although the screening of Carers is getting stricter, which is a step in the right direction. It seems that, like bullying at the schools, something really bad has to happen before anything will be done.

The new information pamphlet from OWN NSW is now in circulation. It gives more detailed information on every aspect of what OWN would like to achieve. Feedback about the booklet would be much appreciated so have a good look at the publication and let us know what your thoughts are.

Now for something completely different: Is it not lovely to have those cooler nights? At least there is more chance for a good night sleep!

*Joan van Halen*

### Married Bliss

They had been married for more than 50 years and had no secrets from each other, except for one. The wife had a shoe box in her cupboard, which she asked her husband not to open, and he respected her wish.

Eventually the old lady developed a terminal illness and it was time to sort out their affairs. The old man took the shoe box to his wife's bedside and she agreed that it was time to open it. Inside were two crocheted dolls and money amounting to \$95,000.

"My grandmother taught me how to make these dolls", said the old lady, "and when we were married she told me the secret of a happy marriage was never to argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you I should hold my tongue and go away and crochet a doll".

There were only two dolls - the old man was deeply moved that she had only been mad at him twice in all those years of marriage.

But what about the money? "Ah", she said, "that's the money I made from selling the dolls".

*Contributed by Lola Cummings*

# Our OWN Writers

## What You See is What You Get

Do you ever have those moments of insight when a passing glance at a familiar scene reveals meaning quite different from its former unexamined significance?

Dressing after my shower one morning, my eyes flickered over the contents of an open wardrobe drawer. As I noted the heat pack, the eye cooling pack, the electric massager and the “Denco Rub”, I laughed, mainly at myself. What a change from the jewelry, scarves, perfume and hair care paraphernalia of earlier days! Bemused, my gaze dropped to the shoe rack, absorbing with a mixture of chagrin and gratitude my stout walking shoes and two pairs of orthotic inserts. Not a flimsy sandal in sight. On my desk, my spectacles seemed to wink at me and the powerful reading light and ergonomically correct computer chair sat smirking in knowing silence. I chose not to even think about the contents of my bathroom cabinet.

There was no need to see my reflection to be aware of the body whose changing shape and changing needs provide the motivation for acquiring all the abovementioned goodies. Nowadays, no matter how hard I might try to disguise it, what you see is what you get. I wondered anew on how to put a positive spin on what our society regards as so negative that it is almost unmentionable – ageing and all its attendant losses. We no longer have an apparently limitless future, our youthful firm flesh and unbounded energy may be diminishing or gone, our health may be less robust, and soul-sustaining social interaction, which came easily in our younger years, may be much harder to maintain.

We might have thought that our senior years would be more settled than our earlier years of often turbulent change. We might have thought our later years would be a time of pleasing ourselves. But to our astonishment or maybe dismay, the changes and challenges continue and, worse, seem to come even faster! There is no let up.

Yet strangely, this time of life is exactly where we can relax inwardly and go with the flow. After all, we’re not going to be here forever and might as well use our mature outlook to savour life in a new way. Hopefully, we have found through life’s exigencies a centre of stability, a set of values that we can rely on. More than that, with any luck, we have also found ways of securing regular periods of relaxation and inner refreshment that will strengthen us to cope with whatever life brings. No longer concerned with “making it” in the world of affairs, we have concern to spare for others. We can support, encourage and even – if invited – advise. We can quietly disagree with others, maintaining our point of view while accepting theirs, because

we know at last we can rely on our own truth. There is no further need to win every power struggle. If we make mistakes we have now the strength to admit to them and make amends without loss of self-esteem. We accept that we, too, are fallible human beings.

Despite the many global issues ahead, the world remains an incredibly lovely place with unending discoveries to be made and fascinating things to be learnt no matter what our age, but to me, the hard-won lessons of self-awareness and self-confidence, things which are shaped and tempered only by courageously confronting life’s challenges and coming to one’s own conclusions, are the real treasures.

Though I may smile ruefully, this realization lets me look into my mirror and be thankful that I can say without regret, “What you see is what you get.”

*Bev Cameron*

## Topless on Delwood!

Water and bare bodies go well together. I’ve always thought so, ever since those high old times in the big bath with my siblings, and those carefree days with my mum and her mates and their little covey of preschoolers. Except, of course, as a burgeoning teenager when “my hair was too straight, shoulders too narrow, hips too big”. Oh, the shame of those awful words “child-bearing hips”! But then along came maturity and to hell with such nonsense. We may as well learn to love our bodies, imperfections or not. So I went happily naked into billabongs, dams, rivers, people’s pools, whenever possible.

One memorable day, my sister and I were visiting a country property with two farmer friends, all in our early twenties, just after the war it was. The blokes went off to examine some fly-blown sheep, so we, understandably, chose to go down to the river to bathe. Sunbaking on towels, her hand fell upon Alf’s camera. We took photos of each other, lying on our fronts, as a concession to modesty, but bare bottoms showing. Didn’t mention it to Alf. On collecting the films at the local photographers, Miss Pardy said to Alf, “Some of these are rather over-exposed.” What a naughty thing to do in those stitched-up 40’s!

Many years later, now a longtime resident of our beautiful Manly, I realized I’d never gone naked on Manly Beach. Reef Beach, yes, before its untimely demise as a nudist beach. But Manly Beach, no. And so my latest challenge was born... I just had to go topless at Delwood.

Ah, Delwood. The little gem of a beach just down from

# Our OWN Writers

my place... you could pass by and not notice it, it seems to belong to just those sea-dipping, snorkel-wearing locals who know about it. And topless would be less brazen, more legal, (and I have to admit to a certain reluctance in my advanced age, to full frontal).

The right day comes at last, a dull, cloudy one, not your dazzling, sizzling day to attract the hordes. Perfect! So down to Delwood we went, me, my friend, her grandchildren and their father. "I'll take the kids in", I said in my new board shorts. With one long slow movement, I took off my Tshirt. With long slow steps I made my way to the water's edge, first snatching a look at their father's face... shock, horror, amazement! And his little kids didn't even notice! Now that was a swim to remember!

I wonder what my next challenge will be?

*Dorothy Cox*

## More British Breakfasts

This is a sequel to my recollection of my first British breakfast, which was such a near-fiasco. In the interest of historical accuracy I hasten to admit that, on further acquaintance, British breakfasts turned out to be my favourite meals.

To start with, I owe an apology to dear old porridge, which I so grossly misjudged. As soon as I realised its potential with milk and sugar, I became addicted to it. When I made my own breakfast, I even had the temerity to improve on it by cooking the oats in milk, to which I added honey. This way I could enjoy hot porridge instead of lukewarm one when the cold milk was added.

However, a great rival came onto the scene, by the name of Cornflakes. How this great invention could escape discovery in Europe for such a long time, beats me, as there was plenty of corn available, always relished freshly boiled off the cob. I loved its taste, and to have it transformed into a crunchy delicacy, seemed the ultimate indulgence. I preferred it straight, as milk tended to make it soggy. I was so excited with my discovery, that I posted a packet as a special gift to my best friend in Czechoslovakia.

Then came my acquaintance with things smoked. I have already mentioned my love at first bite of bacon. The next contender was kippers. Oh, what a delicious pungent flavour, with the further advantage of their price being a pittance! Smoked haddock came a close second. Then there was smoked roe, every bit as flavoursome as the overrated Russian caviar.

Last but not least, to conclude breakfast, the so-called coffee (as most part of it was chicory) was greatly enhanced by the accompaniment of toast, generously spread with orange or lemon marmalade. Its bitter-sweet flavour with the right amount of crunch was a real treat to my taste-buds.

All in all, British breakfasts won hands down over Continental ones.

*Trudy Davis*

## The Last Gift

Tidying the linen cupboard  
my hands re-discover  
a brightly-patterned kitchen towel.  
Gaudy even, with a design  
of bread, cheese, wine  
and ill-proportioned artichokes  
(or are they cloves of garlic?).

This waisted square is gathered  
into a buttoned loop, the whole  
to hang behind a cupboard door.  
The top is crocheted together  
in six assorted colours,  
cheerful but practical, too  
for wet and busy fingers.

Now, as I hold it  
I suddenly recall  
my mother gave the towel to me  
(carefully wrapped in tissue)  
when I left that final time.

She stood at her gate  
after we had hugged goodbye.  
Now, in my mind's eye  
still I see her little figure  
(depleted with the years)  
but waving a brave farewell.

And I remember too,  
as I put the car in gear,  
an unexpected benediction of tears.

*Valwyn Edwards Wishart*

# Theatre Group Report

## The Jugglers:

I invite you to be a fly on the wall of Mott Hall, The Rocks, on a Tuesday morning about ten thirty. Below you, around tables, are members of the OWN Theatre Group. With their Director, Coordinator and Choreographer they are deciding on the programs for the many performances ahead over the next two months.

Voice 1 "So what are the lengths of these programs?"

Voice 2: "20 minutes, several 30 minutes, two 45 minutes and oh, there's a 60 minutes once."

Voice 3 "Let's stretch the 45 minutes to fill 60 minutes by going slowly!"

Voice 4 "Yeah, slow links."

Voice 2 "Right, slow singing?"

Voice.3 "What about slow dancing!"

Voice 1 "Much as that would delight some of you...we have to decide on numbers..."

Voice 8 "Oh, do the 30 minutes twice over, that's 60."

Voice 1 "That's it! I'll decide and let you know. Now who is going to be able to do all of these dates...?"

Voice 5 "I'll be away in May."

Voice 6 "Depends on when my daughter has her baby..."

Voice 7 "I have to move house end of the month."

Voice 3 "I can do three of the dates...but not the others..."

Voice 1 "Well I think all of you will have to learn all the songs so we can cover all the roles."

ALL "OH NO!"

Voice 1 "Now I must find out which musician can accompany which rehearsals...and which performances..."

Although we can joke about preparing programs, it is a juggling and balancing act, getting the Theatre Group ready for performances. Currently, with three out of eleven members absent on sick leave, we are having to present programs of 60 minutes (22 items) with only eight performers and a musician.

So everyone is an understudy and, yes, everyone wisely has to learn all the songs.

However, we have had the recent pleasure of welcoming a new TG member and an accomplished dancer, Susan O'Brien. With experience in theatre behind her, Susan is on a rapid learning curve to prepare her for taking part in as many items as possible, as soon as possible

The TG has a very full list of performances for May. June includes a tour around Gunnedah. July is already sprinkled with dates.

That fly on the wall will hear many surprising discussions in the months ahead.

*Joan Modder*

## Tell Me More...

It's good to know that some potential visitors to Australia conduct serious research about our country, its characteristics and its customs before they arrive. Their questions were on an Australian Tourism Website and the answers are the actual responses by the website officials, who obviously have an excellent sense of humour.

Q: Please send a list of all doctors in Australia who can dispense rattlesnake serum. (USA)

A: Rattlesnakes live in A-meri-ca which is where YOU come from. All Australian snakes are perfectly harmless, can be safely handled and make good pets.

Q: I have a question about a famous animal in Australia, but I forget its name. It's a kind of bear and lives in trees. (USA)

A: It's called a Drop Bear. They are so called because they drop out of Gum trees and eat the brains of anyone walking underneath them. You can scare them off by spraying yourself with human urine before you go out walking.

Q: Do you have perfume in Australia? (France)

A: No, WE don't stink.

Q: I have developed a new product that is the fountain of youth. Can you tell me where I can sell it in Australia? (USA)

A: Anywhere significant numbers of Americans gather.

Q: Can you tell me the regions in Tasmania where the female population is smaller than the male population? (Italy)

A: Yes, gay nightclubs

Q: Do you celebrate Christmas in Australia? (France)

A: Only at Christmas.

Q: I was in Australia in 1969 on R+R, and I want to contact the girl I dated while I was staying in Kings Cross. Can you help? (USA)

A: Yes, and you will still have to pay her by the hour.

Q: Will I be able to speak English most places I go? (USA)

A: Yes, but you'll have to learn it first

# What's On in May

## May Madness.....

### Sydney Writers Festival

May 28 to June 3

Pick up a program at libraries, bookshops, cafes and other retail outlets.

Booking Telephone 92501988, In person Sydney Theatre box Office, Pier 4/5, 22 Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay.

The program features a mix of free and ticketed events, including panel discussions, one-on-one interviews, talks, workshops, readings, performances, literary lunches, film screenings, walks and exhibitions.

### Free lunchtime organ concert

Kemp English, Sydney Town Hall, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 12:30 to 1:30

### PEN lunchtime readings

first Tuesday of the month, 12:45-1:15pm

Customs House Library, 31 Alfred St, Circular Quay

### State Library, Free movies

Alternate Fridays, 12:10pm. Metcalfe Auditorium

May 11 Advertising Missionaries

Branded: Blue Dreams

May 25 The Balanda and the bark canoes

### Talks and Discussions

Sydney Mechanics School of Arts, 280 Pitt St

Food For Thought Conversations; Consumerism Series, Wednesdays 12:30 – 1:30 pm

May 2 The Selling of Images and the Ideal Body

May 9 Advertising and children: Pester Power

May 16 Selling Food

May 23 Living Simply

### WAIG Discussion Group

May 14 Kathryn Ridley, Policy & Projects officer with Willoughby City Council will talk about women's issues as identified in social plans across the Northern Sydney region. Also a brief overview of what "social planning" is all about.

25 Stokes Street, Lane Cove 2066, 9427 3359

### Domestic Violence Legislation

May 28 Constable Briodi Abbott, Domestic Violence Liaison Officer at the Police Northern Area Command (Chatswood) will talk about her role as a DVLO and update us on the recent domestic violence legislation. 25 Stokes Street, Lane Cove 2066, 9427 3359

### WAIG Book Group

May 7 Kathie Forster will review "Children of Men" Kathie will discuss both the novel and the film which followed.

25 Stokes Street, Lane Cove 2066, 9427 3359

### Gleebooks

49 Glebe Pt Rd, Book 96602333

Weds May 2, 6:00 for 6:30. Paul Gillen and Devleena Ghosh, Colonialism and Modernity

Mon May 14, 6:30 for 7:00. Anthony Bourke, Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence

Thurs May 17, 6:00 for 6:30. Mira Crouch. War Fare; Sustenance in Time of War or Want

### Australia's Biggest Morning Tea

May 28 WAIG invites you to join them at the Meeting House 25 Stokes St, Lane Cove, but bring a plate (or bottle) with you. Proceeds will be donated to this important cause.

### Politics in the Pub

Every Friday, 6:0 to 7:45pm, Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills

May 4 Thank God for Political Cartoonists

May 11 Counting the Human Costs of War

### Art Gallery New South Wales

May 2, 6:15 – 7:15. Clover Moore and the 2007 Archibald Prize

### Music

Jazz: Norfolk Hotel, Cleveland St, Surry Hills, Saturdays, 4-7pm Strawberry Hills Hotel, Elizabeth St, Surry Hills, Sundays 5-8pm

Blues: Hero of Waterloo Hotel, The Rocks, Monday to Thursday 7-11pm

# At and Beyond the Rocks

## Bankstown Wellness Centre

The Centre had a stall at the annual Seniors Week *Healthy Ageing Expo*, organised by the Bankstown Health Service at the Bankstown RSL. Term 2 began Monday 23 April and finishes Wednesday 27 June. This term some of our *Wellness in Your Hands* sessions will look at "control issues" - how our need for control may actually result in mental health problems. For example, Perfectionism. What effects do our behaviours have on ourselves and others? Wellness participants will be exploring the difference between being a perfectionist and a "healthy achiever".

Other Wellness talks will include: an update from Centrelink's Financial Information Service about changes to the assets test due in September this year; how to explore your family history with the Local Studies & Family History Librarian; living with Parkinson's disease; learning about one of the many diverse communities living in Bankstown (this term it's the Italian community's turn) and we are looking forward to a talk called "The Cabbage Pharmacy", which reveals the medicinal properties of cabbage, a popular winter food.

We will also be offering workshops in learning how to write stories and biography, and finally, workshops exploring "Famous women from the past - not HISTORY but HERstory"!

*Jan Malley*

## Sydney OWN Jubilation

Our group of not-long retired, or not-yet retired, members meets on the third Friday each month between 6:00 and 8:30pm.

One of the problems facing some of our members is the issue of finding an affordable, secure place to live in retirement. So last meeting we discussed housing, focusing in particular on co-operative housing. We will follow that up this week, then go to a round-the-table general discussion next time. We enjoy the discussion, food, wine and fellowship.

Our walking group tried the Manly to the Spit walk last Sunday. The walk was great, the company good, the scenery magnificent and the weather terrific. We are planning some other walks, one Sunday morning each month, now that daylight saving is over. The next one, in May, will be from Bondi and we will see how far we can go.

Some of us enjoyed music, blues or jazz, at a couple of inner city venues. Check with Patti or Lorraine if you would like to join us.

*Patti Buckingham*

## Sydney OWN OWN UP

**Did you know** that a Parliamentary enquiry recorded that in 2004, Pauline Hanson spent \$35,426 on her unsuccessful campaign for a Queensland Senate seat, but received a whopping \$199,886 from taxpayers under the

public funding scheme? Candidates were paid \$1.94 for every vote they attracted, and needed to gain only 4% of the overall vote to qualify for this payment. Ms Hanson is lining up to have another go in this year's Federal election, and the rate per vote will jump to \$2.05. Is it cynical of us to question her motives for entering the race and the timing of her book launch?

**Did you know** that Australia is the *only* democratic country without a National Charter of Human Rights for its citizens? (Indeed, among all countries in the world, democratic or not, only a few lack such a Charter.)

**Did you know** that, in the course of allocating tenders for retirement/nursing home places, sacked Minister for Ageing Santo Santoro closed one service and ignored or rejected a few others that were up and ready to run, in favour of a colleague friend who had only a block of land and could not hope to offer any beds for some time - *and yet* a federal government inquiry has since cleared him of any wrong-doing in the matter.

*This list compiled by OWN-Ups. Staying alert, staying alive!*

## OWN Nowra

This year, as in previous years, Nowra OWN spent a day late January at a member's home close to the white sands of Hyams Beach on Jervis Bay. Time to hear about the Christmas holidays and make OWN plans for the year ahead.

# At and Beyond the Rocks

A relaxing day looking out across the blue bay, hearing the sound of the surf and looking forward to the year.

The February meetings focused mainly on ideas, plans and arrangements for a Seniors' Week program we decided to undertake. However, we did have an interesting speaker that month from the Shoalhaven campus of Wollongong University. She came to tell us about the Patient Volunteers Program at the new Graduate School of Medicine there. It sounded innovative and interesting and appealed to several members who have already undergone training to be patient volunteers.

Our big Seniors' Week effort was a Tea Dance. Imaginations were soon fired up as we discussed it, from palms, cucumber sandwiches to frilly aprons and caps for the waitresses. It involved a lot of arranging from the 5-piece orchestra playing music of the 40's and 50's to white lace tablecloths, all the suitable refreshments for afternoon tea, to the more than 100 notices distributed throughout the district in shops and clubs and wherever else seemed suitable. The afternoon was a success due to the enthusiastic co-operation of many members. The pleasure and satisfaction we gained from working together was matched by the obvious pleasure of several elderly guests as they responded to the music. It left us all feeling good.

The following Sunday, as in other years, we helped serve afternoon tea at the

Shoalhaven International Women's Day Awards Ceremony. This is held in the garden of Meerogal, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century family. We find outings give opportunity to chat and deepen friendships on the three-hour train journey to Sydney and back again.

A topic for discussion that we had recently was "Memories of Grandma". It proved to be a winner. Members gave heartfelt responses and we heard stories and memories that moved us. It was obvious that in hearing them others were encouraged to talk.

Since the New Year we have had several enquiries about OWN and all encouragement is made to foster interest. Time will tell if our numbers grow this year.

*Barbara Apperley*

## Illawarra

Our year began with all of our old members, plus a few new ones. In addition to our usual sub-groups a new one was created in February. Several members joined in a session of creative dance led by Tamara Jero. It was a hit, and there are plans to continue this popular group. Before her hip operation Jacque Skinner exhibited her collection of Netsukes from Japan. They are beautiful carved stones and figurines, and everyone was quite impressed. The play reading group which Jacque takes had to be put on hold for awhile, whilst she recuperates from her operation. She plans to be back in action this week. Our coordinator, Roma Bates

will be presenting a talk on her time spent in New Guinea, while her husband was stationed there with the army. We are really looking forward to her talk.

The current affairs group is still well attended, with a few new members joining in our lively discussions. Joan Hilton is still in charge of the Writing group, and there is always something to write about!

We celebrated our 9th birthday, on March 15th, and we had a great time as well as a great cake, courtesy of Thelma Prescott and Shirley Tucker. We are really looking forward to our 10th birthday, and plans are underway already. We celebrated IWD by attending a luncheon, made up of women's groups in the Illawarra. This event was sponsored by the View clubs. Photos of some of the members were taken, and they appeared in "The Illawarra Mercury" newspaper.

Our only excursion so far this year was a guided tour of our Wollongong Art Gallery, which was most informative. This was followed by a lunch in the city. A local newspaper, "The Northern Leader" sent a reporter out to a meeting and took photos, which accompanied a very positive report on the Older Women's Network. The singing group, The Silvertowns, is still going strong and we have 4 new members in the group. We have some interesting meetings and social days coming up, and look forward to the rest of the year.

*Arlene Little*

# At and Beyond the Rocks

## Sutherland OWN

So far in 2007 our group has only met once but members have been involved in a number of previously arranged events, centred mainly around Seniors' week and International Women's Day. For most of these functions our group has played a supportive or partnership role in conjunction with the Older Women's Network Wellness Centre, Sutherland. Some of these events have also included partnership with the Sutherland Shire Council or another community based group. Contrary to what may be understood, the OWN group and the Wellness Centre are conducted independently of one other and are separately managed.

As a number of the group members who carry a responsibility for the group also play an active role on the management committee of the Wellness Centre, expectations of who is doing what can become a bit difficult for non OWN members to grasp, as well as leading to dangers of overload and repetition for some.

With these issues in mind, the OWN group March monthly program was cancelled, but a few members got together informally over lunch and, in discussion, proposed that the program we operated on last year be reduced to a once a month get-together for a short business meeting followed by a round table discussion on topics nominated by those present.

*Barbara Burnham*

## Seniors Week in Sutherland

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2007 dawned if not brightly, at least warmly. My first duty of the day was to pick up one of our long-standing members at a local retirement village. Hettie was waiting at 9.15 and told me she'd been looking forward to the bus trip for some weeks.

We drove across to Sutherland to be met by Pat Donaghy, Sutherland Wellness Centre Coordinator and eighteen other members, all milling round with excitement at catching up with friends, some of whom they'd not seen for a long time. The St George Community Bus arrived at 9.45 and Nick the driver courteously welcomed us aboard for the first leg of our trip down the South Coast. Pat had contacted the Scarborough Public School, after seeing an article in the local paper about the school's offer to entertain visitors to morning tea during Seniors' Week.

The school is perched right atop the coastline and we were shown proudly through the class rooms and then adjourned to the playground for home-made cakes and biscuits for morning tea. This was followed by a concert, some of the 87 students sang and with great gusto under the guidance of their teacher. When the concert finished we were approached by some of the smaller children who came forward in a friendly and trusting way to exchange hugs with our group. I speak for all when I say it made the day

something unforgettable.

We travelled further south, crossing the spectacular new bridge at Coledale then sallied onto Corrimal RSL Club where the staff was prepared for an onslaught of 19 people. Our meals, hard to choose from such a varied menu, were all delicious and the service friendly and prompt. All of which added to our enjoyment. After the main meal was finished it was time for story telling. Some of the group were invited to tell their stories - these were all interesting and spiced with humour. What a rich vein of history runs through our OWN members. You'll be pleased to hear that Pat arranged for the stories to be recorded and transcribed so that they'll be available for inclusion in a future HERSTORY project.

Thank you OWN Sutherland and the Wellness Centre Management Team for a very enjoyable day. I'm most appreciative of the huge amount of work that goes into organizing such an event for the pleasure of its members, particularly those who are no longer able to participate in other Wellness activities.

*Enid Leighton*

## Sutherland Wellness Centre

During Seniors' Week, a bus trip down the South Coast was organised for some of our members and their carers who are no longer able to participate in Centre activities.

Second term for 2007 commences activities 23 April,

# At and Beyond the Rocks

and our new program includes some minor changes plus the inclusion of 'Mental Gymnastics.' This session is funded by Sutherland Shire Council under their small Grants program. Trialled in the second half of last term, this program teaching relaxation and meditation, was very successful, and attracted women who felt in need of stress management. We have now succeeded in securing more suitable premises which should further enhance the next eight week course.

Distribution of the program throughout Sutherland Shire continues to be endorsed by a number of health services. Our partnership with the Shire Division of GP's, for the two rounds of the highly successful 'Mind Your Mind' project, also promises to yield a new wave of interest in our Wellness Centre from the diverse audiences that were attracted by the project's wide advertising coverage.

Added to this is the valuable exposure flowing from our part in events for Seniors Week and IWD functions. Together with continuing support by the local press, with the repeated inclusion of our notice, we are expecting a record enrolment for the new term.

*Barbara Burnham*

## Wagga Wagga

I've been busy with *OWN Matters*, getting ready for our next meeting and preparing a survey on how our meetings will be run in the future. I've also been successful in arranging

a two hour session on Mind Your Mind with Aged & Extended Care Services here in Wagga. I got the idea from an article in February *OWN Matters*. Another success, this afternoon I've received a reply to an enquiry to the Borombola Sport & Recreation Centre just out of Wagga, for a day of activities for our group later in the year.

*Judith Constable*

## Wollondilly

Over the last few weeks, our group has enjoyed several outings and trips. Back in March we drove to Windsor, a pretty town with graceful and historic buildings. The Museum was a bit disappointing but the lady on duty explained that they would soon be moving to new premises where they will have room for many more exhibits. On the way to Windsor we stopped for morning tea at the White Water Rafting venue at Penrith. There is a spacious area there for picnicking with tables and chairs and amenities and a good view of the participants in the rafting which looked like a lot of fun and we spent a very pleasant hour there.

Our train trip this month was to Manly. The weather was perfect and I must honestly say, ploughing through the water on Sydney Harbour on a sunny day really takes a lot of beating. We bought delicious fish and chips and sat at tables on the esplanade at the beach. Some of our group shared a table with an English family on holiday here. They had been to Tasmania for a week and were spending a week in Sydney

doing the sights and tours. What better way to spend a holiday?

Our other bus trip last week was to Katoomba. Echo Point lookout never fails to take my breath away as it first comes into view. After enjoying lunch at the RSL club we drove to the lookout at Bridal Veil Falls and other beautiful scenery at Blackheath. Our usual driver Keith was not available that day so many thanks to an old friend Tony Morrice who drove for us that day and we had a very safe and pleasant journey. We are now planning and looking forward to next months outings.

*Audrey Van Dragt*

## Abraham Mott

Ever wondered about this name? Who was he? How is he linked to the hall we use?

Lisa Murray, Research Historian, states that in a letter to Council on 6 November 1958, the Millers Point Old Age and Invalid Pensioners Welfare Fund requested that the new centre be named after Abraham Mott, who was their Foundation President.

The letter stated: "Mr Mott was widely known in the district for his honesty and good works for needy people. He was responsible for the formation of the Millers Point Old Age and Welfare Centre and was its first President. He was an active member of the ALP and President of the local branch. A highly respected official of his church, he was also a prime mover to erect a modern Baby Health Care Centre, which was opened in 1952.

By a curious twist of circumstances, that Baby Health Centre is now the headquarters of the Older Women's Network NSW.

*Anne-Marie Kestle*

# Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

## Rona Tranby Trust Award to Aunty Beryl Carmichael

Several members of the Aboriginal Support Circle were at the Sydney Jewish Museum last month, together with members of other reconciliation groups, to celebrate Ngiyeempaa Elder Aunty Beryl Carmichael being awarded the Rona Tranby Trust Award aimed at supporting oral history recordings of Aboriginal Elders.

Aunty Beryl was born on a mission station at Menindee, and learned about her culture from her father, including gathering food and making weapons. She is the last fluent speaker of her language. She says “probably one of the greatest tragedies this country is witnessing at the moment is the loss of our languages at the rate of two a year. There are only 60 left that are spoken conversationally out of 500 or 600, and there is nothing being done to protect them except endeavors like this.” She will use the award funds to collaborate with writer Jennie Kerr to complete oral history recordings of her life story, and is then planning to produce a book, *The Footsteps of a Ngiyeempaa Elder*, based on these recordings. Nearly 25 years ago, Aunty Beryl started education classes to bring Aboriginal children back to the bush. She has helped establish Aboriginal pre-school kindergartens in Broken Hill and Menindee and, as reported in April’s *OWN Matters*, has helped set up a pioneer NSW Meals on Wheels bush tucker project at Menindee.

The Rona Tranby Trust provided most of the funding for our book *Steppin’ Out and Speakin’ Up*.

*Pat Zinn*

## Reading for Reconciliation

A new partnership, initiated by Reconciliation Queensland Inc. with the Australian Bookseller’s Association (ABA), has been formed to help promote a new project, Reading for Reconciliation. It aims to encourage readers to learn about Indigenous Australians and to promote reconciliation through books.

The ABA is to work with its members to promote reconciliation related reading matter

during National Reconciliation week (27th May - 3rd June) for this year’s 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. It also plans to work with members to make sure that books about Indigenous Australia are not placed within narrow classifications in book stores.

*Pat Zinn*

## Aboriginal Health - Government's Inaction

On March 2nd this year, Oxfam released a report on Aboriginal Health which revealed that “Australia ranks bottom of wealthy nations in the health outcomes of its indigenous citizens because of a lack of political will to meet the indigenous health crisis.”

“Close the Gap,” a 25-page briefing paper drawn on published data for Indigenous populations in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA and the expertise of the National Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisation may be viewed on [www.oxfam.org.au/campaigns/indigenous](http://www.oxfam.org.au/campaigns/indigenous). It is well worth reading, because it provides practical and specific suggestions as to what can be achieved if funding is raised to \$350- \$500 million per annum. It also cites several examples of pioneering health interventions in certain communities that have resulted in significant, sustained improvements in their health. Few people know about these successes as newspapers prefer to report negative news in lurid headlines. “People spend \$1.9 billion on confectionary each year”, reports Oxfam. How much does Australia spend each year in keeping our troops in Iraq and on military hardware and equipment?

The present poor state of Indigenous health in Australia is preventable. The paper goes on to state that “it is clear that political leadership and will have been major factors in achieving health gains and improvements in well-being for indigenous peoples in New Zealand, Canada and USA beyond what Australia has been able to deliver for its own Indigenous population. It is inconceivable that a country as wealthy as Australia cannot solve a health crisis affecting less than 3% of its population.”

*Pat Zinn*



# Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

## Cross-cultural Awareness Program

A partnership between the Yothu Yindi Foundation, established in 2005 and the aluminium and bauxite miner Alcan Gove is an “Australian first in setting the benchmark for working relationships between the business sector and traditional owners for the benefit of the local community and the Northern Territory.”

The partnership delivers a cross-cultural awareness program designed to provide Alcan employees at Nhulunby with practical knowledge about the indigenous culture of Arnhem Land, indigenous land ownership and interaction with indigenous people. More than 1500 Alcan employees and contract workers have attended information sessions. The partnership also aims to nurture traditional culture and at the same time create economic opportunities leading to social and economic well-being in the communities in which they operate.

*Pat Zinn*

## Never Argue with a Woman

One morning the husband returns after several hours of fishing and decides to take a nap. Although not familiar with the lake, the wife decides to take the boat out. She motors out a short distance, anchors and reads her book.

Along comes a Game Warden in his boat. He pulls up alongside the woman and says, “Good morning, Ma’am. What are you doing?”

“Reading a book,” she replies, (thinking, “Isn’t obvious?”)

“You’re in a Restricted Fishing Area,” he informs her.

“I’m sorry, officer, but I’m not fishing. I’m reading.”

“Yes, but you have all the equipment. For all I know you could start at any moment. I’ll have to take you in and write you up.”

“If you do that, I’ll have to charge you with sexual assault,” says the woman.

“But I haven’t even touched you,” says the game warden.

“That’s true, but you have all the equipment. For all I know you could start at any moment.”

“Have a nice day ma’am,” and he left.

MORAL: Never argue with a woman who reads. It’s likely she can also think.

*Contributed by Josie Jackson from the net*

## Some Like it Hot

It was a hot day in the Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land where I was visiting my daughter. She worked there as a remote area Doctor – a busy and challenging job.

We needed supplies, so I prepared myself for a walk to the shop. I wet my hair and hat and took my underwear from the fridge, a trick I learnt from Marilyn Munroe in ‘Some Like It Hot’, and set off along the dusty road with my beautiful pandanus basket.

Several women passed me, walking so elegantly in their flowing skirts and modest blouses.

The sound of tapping intrigued me. Two women were comfortably sitting cross-legged on the red earth outside their house, tapping their sticks and humming.

Incongruously an electric fan whirred away beside them, its cord snaking into the house.

I wanted to laugh. It looked so funny. Here was the combination of two cultures – one clinging to ancient traditions but taking advantage of modern technology. Would a do-gooder – maybe a politician – want to give them an air conditioner and build a brick patio outside the front door – with a seat of course – instead of noting that this is how they feel most comfortable, sitting on the red earth with the sky above? They motioned to me to sit down beside them. I must admit that I was not at all comfortable, my arthritic legs protesting, but it was a great experience.

I was so pleased to read Lorraine Inglis’s article in the Newsletter re the Fred Hollows Trust. I quote ‘The Fred Hollows Trust doesn’t give answers or advice. It supports the Communities to assist themselves to implement solutions through genuine partnership that provides access to resources and information.’ Bravo!

I hope the Government funds them up to the hilt. The best thing we can do is to join the Trust in its good work.

*Joan Johns*

## NSW Sorry Day Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2007

The March commences at 10.00 am at Town Hall, Proceeds down George St to First Fleet Park, Circular Quay.



# Letters to the Editor

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## Poor State of Health

Where do the priorities of the Federal Government lie? Two recent reports reveal stark inequities. Defence Minister, Brendan Nelson, has billions of dollars to spend on the war chest, yet Health Minister, Tony Abbott, has on two separate occasions denied funding to Professor Chris O'Brien, former head of the Sydney Cancer Institute at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Professor O'Brien has a vision to establish a National Cancer Centre of Excellence to co-ordinate research and attract top scientists from overseas. The NSW Government has pledged \$1 million to assist, however such a centre requires both levels of government to come to the party.

*Anne Collins*

## Retirement Woes

Are you new to this retirement game and find it can be quite woeful?

Perhaps because I was forced into early retirement through redundancy and health problems the transition has been extremely difficult to cope with. Friends of a similar age are still in the work force. I miss the camaraderie of a big office and the social interaction and conversations with mixed aged groups are no longer available to me. I miss the sense of purpose going work gave me. My immediate family are busy with their own lives, extended family live in Queensland and overseas, which means that my husband and I depend on one another for support. He has different interests to mine and we need space!

Well meaning fellow retirees try to encourage me to take up bowls, or learn to play bridge with them – Endless craft classes hold no interest (I don't want to be seen en-masse on market days etc vainly trying to sell my wares to an unresponsive public)

I find these friends/acquaintances do not just get involved with bowls and other activities maybe once a week but often indulge themselves sometimes 4 days a week! Not for me I cry.–This is no a compensation for the 5 days a week routine I once thrived on while in the workforce!

Isn't retirement supposed to be full of impromptu coffee mornings – long walks, picnic lunches, interesting outings and day trips? Is there no one in my area with whom I could enjoy such spontaneous activities?

I have even found seemingly quite intelligent peers who now get so involved with their bowling competitions they actually get quite stressed about it all! The word "pennants" reduces me to tears – I know what follows when the word is mentioned.

*HELP (name withheld to protect the innocent but will be supplied to a saviour)*

## Difficulties Close to Hand

Everyday jobs become increasingly difficult as one ages Opening jars and cans, packaging, plastic food containers and medicinal tubes. can be a struggle

Of course, foodstuffs need to be protected from damage or tampering, but how to deal with some of them?

Hands of the elderly/disabled are simply not strong enough to open lids of many varieties of jars of jam, pickles, etc. Cans give problems too. Can openers – even of the more elaborate, expensive kind – need more strength than I have.

Food in plastic containers can be frustrating. In hospitals, nurses often have to help patients remove lids of plastic food containers. Opening thick

cardboard packaging is also tough – even with scissors.

Medicinal tubes with screw tops have tops that must come off and be reversed so that the small point inside the top can be used to pierce the sealed tube. That is, if you can manage it.

Sometimes, if you know how some of the plastic food containers work, it is easier.

Of course it is an important unwritten rule to use the right tool for the job. That is, use a large carving knife for cutting a hard pumpkin, not a smaller knife.

*Louise Anike*

## HELPFUL HINTS:

*A useful little gadget called a JarKey can be obtained from "Howards Storage World" Shop 8, Norton Plaza Shopping Centre, 55 Norton St., Leichardt, telephone 02 9518 1425. JarKey is invaluable in opening vacuum sealed jars. Price \$6.95. –*

*Judith Mustard*

## Cumberland State Forest

On a very hot day in February, a friend introduced me to the Cumberland State Forest in West Pennant Hills, Sydney. What a cool and beautiful haven from summer humidity within the suburbs.

We walked along the sensory trail which is accessible for sight-impaired people, with the use of a rope as guide and Braille on labeling. When it is cooler we'll do one of the longer walks. As we finished we noticed a shelter which is available for community groups and schools. Also lovely picnic areas. We wandered through the Information Centre and shop, where I bought a bushwalker's

## A Few, But Not a Happy Few

guide to eucalypts. We finished up with a lovely coffee and shared a lunch (a little expensive – \$18 for a salmon wrap) in Cafe Saligna.

This area was resumed for farming in 1908. In 1938 the then NSW Forestry Commission took over the management of 40 hectares, some of which was allowed to regenerate naturally back to the original indigenous species, and a third was planted as an arboretum.

I recommend this as a most enjoyable outing. The address is 95 Castle Hill Road and the phone number is 1300 655687. Web address: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests). A great idea for an OWN event.

*Lindley Berrie*

### So Sorry...

With Sydney Writers' Festival looming, this is for all aspiring writers, apart from myself, who have collected rejection slips. It appeared in a Sydney newspaper on 1991 and is purported to be the reply an author received from a Chinese publisher.

“We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper it would be impossible to publish any other work of a lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that in the next thousand years we shall see its equal, we are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition and beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity.”

*Helen McMaugh*

Palm Sunday, 2006 and 2007; each year an anti-war rally of a few dispiriting hundreds, gathered in a park in Parramatta then wandered off to a Rock concert in the Town Square.

Why so few – when three years before 25,000 people had gridlocked Sydney's streets and other great cities. Then, millions had gathered to protest against a war waged in a country far away which was threatening none of that assemblage now being called 'the coalition of the killing'. Our country was being dragged into this war by a self-glorifying Prime Minister on the tail of his friend, the feeble-minded President of the United States – unhappily the most powerful man in the world.

On that three-years-before day in Hyde Park I met by chance Trude Kallir, encumbered by a banner wrapped about two poles and unable to find her group, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Together we were buoyed up by a noble fig tree, and later I was happy and proud to hold up one end of Trude's banner. After three hours when the crowd thinned a little, Trude went off to find her friends but I hobbled off home.

So many then and in previous years – filling Belmore Park, interrupting traffic; marching up Broadway to the sound of bands and finishing in Victoria Park. And now so few in far-away Parramatta.

Palm Sunday 2007, we were addressed by clergy from the major churches and by the representatives of other faiths. Most inspiring was a woman from *Jews and Palestinians for Peace in the Middle East*. She was followed by a young Muslim, a Buddhist and a Hindu. There were a few Quakers and a tiny group of young people carrying a rainbow flag of a gay and lesbian movement. Those who spoke did so with eloquence and passion – which would have been encouraging if addressed to thousands not that few hundred. Why such a small crowd? Because, like other movements, they are weakened by a 'split'.

The group called *The Coalition for Peace and Justice* broke from the main body because of some unruly elements. The split seems unpleasantly like religious fundamentalism, a microcosm of the war we are protesting against. And this calls itself a movement for peace against the most unpopular war in living memory, in which tens of thousands have died and even more have had their lives ruined by loss of friends and family or by being forced to leave a country they love.

Last Sunday it was encouraging to see that most of that little crowd were young – those between 18 and 24 – in whom lies our hope for the future. The thousands who stayed away, it seems, continue to support a government whose regard for the truth is flimsy, and which keeps another god, the economy, so cosy.

Helen Monaghan

With thanks to Trude and Pat Zinn

## And Now for Something Different ...

It was terrifying! In all my years of being requested to perform in and outside of OWN, I have never been faced with such a daunting experience, and nor had my fellow performer Noreen Hewett.

It had seemed simple enough – Noreen’s niece had found a group of women who met monthly in a space at Cronulla, where they had a meal followed by entertainment. She was so enthusiastic she dobbed in her aunt to entertain them.

Unfortunately, although Noreen had tried to gather a support team, the only ones left standing on the night were herself and me. Solo singing with no musical accompaniment wasn’t a real confidence builder, but it was only for a group of women in a small space. I had put together a running order and we had rehearsed about twice. No problems.

We were in for a surprise. The space turned out to be The Brass Monkey, a type of night-club set up like The Basement – a bar surrounded by stools and the restaurant below, with a stage tucked in the corner. The audience were basically very young men and women. A very young woman was strumming her guitar and belting out some songs while the audience created a roar of sound as they laughed, chatted, ate and drank. “They’ll never hear us,” I screamed to Noreen above the din.

The compere shook her head when I asked her if they ever had older people up on stage, and said “You’re on next”. So there was nothing to do but get up and get on with it.

Our first problem was that my mate couldn’t get onto the stage, so we had to borrow a step to help her up. A great introduction to our act! I have to say they had the stage set up well for us – two mikes, a stand for our running order. Then we were on ...

The compere introduced us ... Celebrating International Women’s Day ... two women from OWN ... working in community, health, etc. etc.

I was sweating.

Here we were, two grey-haired oldies, no music (except a tambourine), so I said to Noreen, “Just say your name and I’ll say mine and that we’re here tonight to celebrate being awarded O.B.E.s.”

Well, they clapped and clapped, and I put my hand up to say, “Sorry, it’s not from the Queen but from our peer group for being Over Bloody Eighty”. That broke the ice, and they listened respectfully to a few words from Noreen about OWN’s beginnings and our fight to make women visible. That, of course, brought on the first few lines of “Mrs Cellophane” ... and that got us going.

For the next ten minutes we were unstoppable, belting out all the old OWN favourites ... and the audience didn’t utter a word. Noreen read her poem about acceptance,

which led to her song “I’m not Elle McPherson”, by which time my legs were like jelly.

As we left the stage there were warm hugs, with people saying “I hope I’ll be able to do that when I’m eighty,” which made all that terror seem worthwhile.

After that experience, it seems there’s no place OWN can’t hold its own.

*Peggy Hewett*

## Lasca

“Lasca used to ride on a mouse grey mustang”

I can see it now- in fact, I could probably recite the whole dramatic tragic tale of Lasca and her horse.

There we were – the whole family – mum, dad and four adoring sisters, as our big handsome brother said his piece on the stage of the Masonic Hall to a packed crowd of parents, guides and scouts. Harry held us all spellbound, standing up there on that great big stage in his Scouts’ uniform, not a thing to be heard except his unfaltering utterances. Of course we girls all knew it word for word. Endless sessions of practicing made sure of that!

Mad keen scouts and guides we were, and mad keen performers. Mum made sure of that as we all learnt elocution, and we could sing and dance and recite at the drop of a hat.

But Harry was the star of this show. We never did find out why, but for some reason his friends all called him Mike. They would hang around the back fence calling him, and I’d wish they were calling me, but they never did.

Concerts were a great part of our daily lives. We’d make up our own show and charge a penny to come in. Girl Guiding was a great diversion and we loved the camping and tramping, learning the skills of knot-tying and singing around the campfire.

But the Lasca thing was our favourite.

“In her blue wrap and bright bell spurs

I laughed with joy as I looked at her.

Little knew she for books or creeds.

An Ave Maria sufficed her needs.

Little cared she save to be by my side,

To ride with me, forever to ride.

The blue above and earth beneath us

And danger and life and love and Lasca.”

*Dorothy Cox*



## Tell this to your daughters ...

A controversy has been raging for the last five years concerning the association of anti-perspirants with breast cancer. Is it another urban myth or are there good reasons for this concern?

The anti-antiperspirant lobby explain that toxins are purged from the body through perspiration that occurs behind the knees, behind the ears, the groin area and the armpits. When this is prevented by the use of underarm anti-perspirants the body is unable to expel toxins from below the armpits and they are instead deposited in the lymph nodes below the arms, right beside the upper outside quadrant of the breast, where nearly all breast cancer tumours occur.

Women who apply anti-perspirant straight after shaving increase the risk further, it is claimed, because shaving causes almost imperceptible nicks in the skin, which give the chemicals entrance into the body from the armpit area.

Deodorants are not under suspicion...it's just hard to find one that isn't combined with an anti-perspirant.

Highly respected bodies like the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society have dismissed this theory, but studies are still being conducted by others in the medical profession who aren't so sure.

The jury is still out on this issue, but it seems a good idea until the controversy is sorted out, to see how a deodorant-only works for you or to use as little anti-perspirant as possible.

*Helen Young*

### Recommended Cleaning Tip!

You will never buy commercial glass cleaning sprays again!

In a spray bottle mix 1part vinegar/1part Meth. spirits with 5 parts water.

Shake well and spray onto your windows, glass tops and mirrors etc.

Wipe clean with preferably a micro cloth.

This has amazing results – no smears. Your glass will gleam!

NB Newspaper no longer should be used – today's printing ink not suitable for glass cleaning.

## Early detection of ovarian cancer

Half of all Australian women mistakenly believe ovarian cancer can be detected with a pap smear test, a survey has found.

The National Breast Cancer Centre, which also researches ovarian cancer, said that among the most misguided are women over 50, who are more at risk of the disease than any other group.

“Women should not be complacent in thinking a pap smear will screen them for the early warning signs of all gynaecological cancers,” the centre's director Dr Helen Zorbas said, “it was designed to detect cervical cancer only”.

There is no screening test for ovarian cancer, which is considered a silent killer because its early symptoms are easily attributed to other causes, and it is notoriously difficult to diagnose. And more than half the women surveyed could not name any of the symptoms of the disease.

However, in a recent issue of the medical journal *Cancer*, a new “symptom survey” was described which could help in the early detection of ovarian cancer.

Researchers comparing the medical histories of 225 women at high risk for ovarian cancer with those of 149 women already diagnosed with the disease, have developed an index of symptoms that could distinguish between early ovarian cancer and other benign conditions. If any of six different symptoms – pelvic or abdominal pain, frequent urination, bloating, difficulty eating or feeling full – were experienced for more than 12 days per month, this could correctly identify 57 per cent of women with early-stage ovarian cancer.

“It is vital that women are aware of the symptoms that may indicate ovarian cancer and see their GP promptly about any unusual or persistent changes in their bodies,” Dr Zorbas said.

About 1500 Australians are diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year and about 900 women will die of the condition in the same period. Most are diagnosed when their disease is advanced, which means only 40 per cent are still alive five years on.

A recent Senate inquiry into gynaecological cancer called for more community awareness of the conditions and better educational support for doctors.

*Helen Young*

# Notices

## Carers Alliance

This is a new political party. It had a few candidates on the form for the Senate in the New South Wales election held earlier this year. It is an alliance between all unpaid carers, the people who are cared for and their families and supporters. Their aim is to win seats at the State and Federal level in order to give political voice to the families who have been voiceless and ignored.

Check email: [nellbrown@optusnet.com.au](mailto:nellbrown@optusnet.com.au)

Phone: Nell Brown (02) 9477 2288 or check at OWN office for a copy of information and forms to join CarersAlliance. The Alliance needs a lot more members to be registered as a political party for the Federal Election due in October.

So please consider registering soon.

## Meditation

Do you know any woman who could conduct meditation classes at the end of Tai Chi at Sydney OWN Wellness Centre on Wednesdays at about 12.30? If you're interested in joining such a group please contact:

Cate Turner on 9428 2905  
[cturne@ozemail.com.au](mailto:cturne@ozemail.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.**

## More action needed

There is no doubt in my mind that Australia will eventually catch up with all comparable democracies and enact comprehensive human rights legislation, as proposed by the New Matilda Human Rights Act for Australia campaign. The only question is how soon? With your continued support this will happen and sooner rather than later! Please continue to support our campaign with your letters, petitions, email messages and meetings with all MPs and Senators you can reach.

Susan Ryan AO  
Chair  
New Matilda Human Rights Act for Australia.  
[www.humanrightsact.com.au](http://www.humanrightsact.com.au)

## National Dementia Network

[dementia@health.gov.au](mailto:dementia@health.gov.au)

The National Dementia Research Forum is scheduled for Sydney on 17-18 September, 2007.

## Women's Drumming and Chanting

@ The Women's Library  
8-10 Brown St, Newtown  
(behind Newtown Library)



Next on Saturday May 12, 2-4 p.m.

Cost: Gold coin donation to TWL

BYO drum (any type welcome)  
Percussion instruments supplied

Enquiries: Sue B: 0425346927  
Sue G: 95912245

# OWN Sydney Notices

## Subscribe NOW!

- Subscription to *OWN Matters* is \$22 per year, these are due every JULY 1. So pay now and receive 13 months!
- Want to join **OWN Sydney** at the same time? We can fix this up in the same way, if you tick this box and include just another \$5

### Payment method

- I enclose a chq/money order for \$22/\$27 - to Jun30,2008 made payable to OWNNSW OR  
Please debit the following credit card for \$22/\$27

- Visa **Total debit:**  
 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, 10 April. You are invited to join with us to see *Paris Je T'aime*, other films recommended for viewing are *Curse of the Golden Flower* and *Sunshine*.

Please ring Yetty on 9665 2050 to check details.

### Creative Movement

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. Discussion topic for next meeting on Friday June 8  
Contact Pearlie on (02) 4285 5373 or e-mail

[pearliej@bigpond.net.au](mailto: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. Book a place! Continuing our discussion of affordable housing options. 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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