



# OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales

Vol.5 No.1 – February 2008

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## Now Let's Have Another Big Push!

In 1908, fifteen thousand women garment workers marched through New York City demanding shorter work hours, better pay, voting rights and an end to child labour. They were women of all ages and cultures; the one thing they had in common was that circumstance had sentenced them to a life of hard labour. Not the sort that imprisons the body, but the soul-crushing need to toil for survival, and often for the survival of your family, from childhood to grave, dawn to dusk with no chance of reprieve. They adopted the slogan "Bread and Roses", with bread symbolizing economic security, roses a better quality of life:

*"Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes,  
Hearts starve as well as bodies, give us bread but give us roses!"*

The vast majority of them would not have self identified as industrial revolutionaries, nor would they have conceived that their actions would give birth to the movement that would later name itself Feminism.

Although in many ways Australia has been seen as the 'lucky country', life for women here is no bed of roses, and many still struggle to earn a crust, trying to balance work and family commitments. In theory we have the knowledge acquired in the last hundred years through advancements in science, medicine, technology etc. to change, feed and educate the world - in reality the picture is somewhat different.

Women can now work and raise a family. For many, this isn't a choice, it's a necessity, yet Australia is one of only two OECD countries that don't routinely offer paid maternity leave. We have just been promised another inquiry into paid maternity leave, but how many children will be born before this change is delivered? And in the not too distant future, how many women will be spending their latter years in social isolation for want of a supportive network?

Women themselves are the key to that change, but first they must recognize that ageing is a part of the life cycle, and that women of all ages have an important role to play in their communities. Why is it that women spend millions on anti-ageing creams that promise to turn back time by re-establishing collagen networks to prevent wrinkles, when they would do better to invest their time, energy and money in re-establishing the social networks that will really support them as they age? Social isolation, one of the most devastating effects of ageing, can be alleviated by establishing supportive networks and women who are part of an effective network live longer, healthier and more fulfilled lives.

International Women's Day provides us with an opportunity to put our lives as women in some real perspective. There is no escape from the reality however that what's Good for Women is Good for the Community. We have yet to see the world deliver on a promise of equality. It's been a long, and slow labour, and I'm sure if we work, and breathe together we can see this through. Let's Make IWD 2008 a Spectacular Delivery, so let's just have another big push!

*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 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

## The Simple Pleasures of Life

Starting a new year is a simple pleasure; the first copy of *Own Matters* for 2008, my smiling garden after the recent rains, the happy memories of the family Christmas dinner with friends and afterwards, like the wonderful cartoonist and philosopher, Leunig, the simple ritual pleasure of washing up and putting the house straight again.

Best of all pleasures this Christmas was the continuing euphoria from election night when the Howard government came crashing down. Oh, how we gossiped and gloated over Maxine's victory and how wonderful it was to have Julia as deputy PM, and Penny Wong in Bali and all the other Labour women with responsible jobs. What a talk fest for all of us political junkies over Christmas Dinner.

We remembered how, during the last eleven years, Australia had slipped slowly into a quagmire of parochialism, of more obvious and nasty racism, bigotry, with more corruption in high places and more paranoia and fear of terrorism that has been carefully engendered. We had been led by an immoral, lying government, which began with the "children overboard" lie from the Tampa. We saw children and innocent refugees languish behind razor wire for years.

Worst of all, we were forced into a cruel, unnecessary war to keep on-side with George Bush against the wishes of the majority of Australians. We witnessed the ex-Minister for Immigration, Andrews, withdrawing habeas corpus for Dr Haneef and other so-called and never proven "terrorists" (an act which has been the backstop guarantee of liberty since Charles II.) Not to mention Bush, with Howard's initial approval, doing the same thing with David Hicks in Guantanamo Bay – imprisoning for him for five long years in a concentration camp without his even being charged.

We talked about the slow dumbing down of the ABC and the quiet replacement with Howard appointees of anybody too outspoken; the gradual silencing of free speech, the withdrawal of grants and funding for many cultural institutions. We didn't get off this engrossing subject until the luscious pavlova arrived.

So this new year brings us into, hopefully, a much better time, when we might start to regain some of our old values. The new Government seems to be doing all right so far with an intelligent, more compassionate PM. I think he has made a good start by righting many wrongs already, (like returning Dr Haneef's visa), his climate change statesmanship at Bali, and I am especially approving of his concern about the dreadful state of affairs in the Aboriginal communities in the North and for conceding that, at long long last, we must say "Sorry" to the Stolen Generation, and for scrapping the infamous Workplace Agreement laws.

So I am feeling cheerful and looking forward to all the simple pleasures I can expect to enjoy this year. (Like tootling about on my electric scooter, going to the Belvoir every free performance, having coffee with friends and "proceeding, graciously I hope, towards the door marked Exit." ... (I wish I had thought of that last quote, but alas it belongs to Gore Vidal and is the first line of his latest, and last, autobiography, called *Point to Point Navigation*.)

*Happy New Year, Muriel Hortin*

# *OWN Australia*

## *Convenor's Report*

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I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and successful 2008.

Hopefully, this year we will be able to achieve interesting things for older people now that we have a change of Government.

I wrote to Julia Gillard offering our congratulations for her appointment as Deputy Prime Minister and have already received a reply.

Others I am in the process of writing to are Nicola Roxon, Minister for Health and Ageing, Justine Elliott, Minister for Ageing, and our old friend Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing and the Status of Women. I am sending them all material about OWN and although some of it is NSW-based I am explaining that all states carry out these activities. I am also asking them for personal interviews where we can have the opportunity to discuss issues affecting older women. The Labor Party sent us their policies in relation to questions we asked prior to the election and I intend to use them as a basis for more detailed discussion.

If your group has issues you would like raised please let me know.

The papers presented at our Annual Conference make

up the issue of *KIT* which will be published very soon, as we feel that they are all of interest to members of OWN. Those who receive *OWN Matters* by email will get a copy with this issue. The Conference was very successful thanks to the untiring efforts of our Canberra representatives Julia Biles and Barbara Silverstone. I personally was disappointed that so few groups from NSW were represented.

The members of our new Council elected at the Conference are

Convenor: Cate Turner (NSW)  
Secretary: Eileen Ward (WA)  
Treasurer: Barbara Silverstone (ACT)  
Ann Robertson (VIC)  
Sally Jones (QLD)

We will be meeting via Teleconferences three times during the year and in person at the Annual Conference, which will be held in Victoria this year.

Pat Carlton has undertaken to produce *KIT* again, and for this we thank her. I will be asking all council members to ensure that copies are distributed in their states.

*Cate Turner – Convenor OWN Australia*

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## *Government Gets an Oestrogen Injection!*

Phew! What a breath of fresh air! After more than eleven years of deceptions and appalling decisions from the former government, Kevin Rudd and his team are like a Southerly Buster after a sticky day. Imagine a government that opens up its cabinet meeting to the public and actually LISTENS to what the people it governs have to say! You could even feel you were living in a democratic country. I'm beginning to feel optimistic. We have a good man at the helm.

And that's not all. There's a special, unique woman beside him and I think we have a lot to thank her for. Isn't it largely because Therese Rein is the sort of woman she is that her husband has delegated so many cabinet and portfolio responsibilities to women? The new Prime

Minister has been married for 26 years to this competent, resourceful and highly successful businesswoman, which has given him plenty of time to build up a high esteem for the abilities of the female of the species. He is comfortable with clever women, unthreatened by their potential, respectful of their views. I believe that it is through Therese that he has developed an admiration of women's good sense, acumen and capacity for hard work, and he has had the wisdom to put all that talent to work in his newly formed government. If I'm right, Ms Therese Rein is already a National Treasure.

The tally of female talent in the new government is impressive. First, we can rejoice in the appointment of

*continues page 4*

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## Government Gets an Oestrogen Injection!

- continued from page 3

Julia Gillard as Deputy Prime Minister, a role she filled with grace and competence while the PM was in Bali. You've got to have a strong belief in somebody you make responsible for the nation's education, employment and workplace relations, and Kevin Rudd has put his faith in Julia.

But the Prime Minister didn't stop there. Tanya Plibersek is Minister for Housing and the Status of Women, Nicola Roxon is Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Penny Wong has a challenging role as Minister for Climate Change and Water, Jenny Macklin is Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and Kate Ellis, only 30 years old, is the new Minister for Youth and Sport. On top of that, the PM has elected to have as his parliamentary secretary the already legendary Maxine McKew, slayer of dragons.

Government has never had such a massive dose of oestrogen, a therapy that was long overdue.

How times have changed! There was no chance this crack in the glass ceiling would happen in our younger days so, having waited a long time for it, let's relish and enjoy this change of heart and send our collective goodwill to these strong women. Not forgetting Therese, who set the mood.

*Helen Young*

## Loving Women

Australia Day, 2008. Along with a group of OWN members, I sat relaxed around a casual outdoor coffee table chatting, laughing, teasing – sometimes kindly, sometimes provocatively. Conversation ebbed and flowed, as I listened to the words of these women. I have not long been one of them and am a decade younger than most.

It's only recently that I have come to terms with seeing myself as an 'older' woman. After an adult life which had been stimulating, challenging and full, being an older woman looked bleak indeed. So I was eager on this occasion, as I have been at earlier meetings, to discover from my new friends the inside story of the status I now occupy.

What I had not anticipated was that this search for meaning would also be perhaps the dominant theme in the women's discussions, though they do not acknowledge that explicitly. To that end our ongoing conversations contain – though not in any systematic way – stories of disrupted childhoods, disappointments in love and work, regrets, losses and griefs as well as moments of discovery, achievement and fulfilment as the women attempt to come to a position of acceptance and peace for themselves.

There is something really special going on when one's story is attended to carefully by a group of loving friends. This fascinating process allows the story teller to make new meaning for herself from what she is saying and may even allow her listeners some insights of their own.

All this deep sharing goes on in a context of issues arising from the surface of our lives, our contemporary experience, whatever that may be. The women bear with one another in sharing stories of chronic or temporary health conditions, learning from each other while giving support and encouragement. Ways in which each one continues to make her life challenging and conducive to intellectual stimulation and emotional enrichment are thrown into the conversational melting pot. Within this world of womanly intimacy, old bonds of friendship are strengthened, new ones are begun and the foundations of mutual group trust and care are reinforced.

On this morning, a couple of hours passed barely noticed as we basked

in both the pleasure of the day and the pleasure of each other's company. We left our hostess reluctantly, though comforting ourselves that we would soon be together again at the local cafe, our usual venue. There we shall continue our search for meaning as we practise once more the art of being loving women loving women.

*Bev Cameron*



## Calling to Enlist Your Help!

If you can remember Bakelite telephones with

the clunky handle and the dial on the front, chances are you also remember kitchens filled with green and cream enamel ware, and the modernity of a Sunbeam Mixmaster?

Objects, images and smells from the past have an amazing way of triggering memories and transporting us back in time. They also have an uncanny ability to connect people and trigger stories from the past. OWN would like to start to put together some of these fabulous forget-me-nots, as tools to spark oral histories.

We'd love to see what you've got hidden in your memory closet – things that represent the history of women's evolution – magazines, school books, sewing tools, buttons, old birth control methods, sex ed materials from the past, kitchen treasures, parenting advice, breastfeeding aids, sanitary wear, old bus and tram tickets, cinema programs, biscuit tins, postcards – use your imagination!

We need to get this collection together for IWD, so let me know if you're interested in working with OWN on this project.

*Beth Eldridge*

# Recollections of a Houris

Does anyone remember Doris Fitton? She was one of the luminaries of the Sydney theatre scene and her 'playground' was the Independent Theatre at North Sydney. The Independent and Doris became notorious in the prim climate of the late 40's when she produced the Sumner Locke Elliot play *Rusty Bugles* in which – shock, horror – they swore roundly. The Chief Secretary's office did the play the incomparable favour of closing it on the grounds of obscenity, which ensured it a permanent place in Australian theatre history. Nobody would turn a hair at the language these days.

Doris adjudicated at the first post-war Central Western Drama Festival of One-Act Plays at Orange in 1946. We drove over from Cowra with a one-act play called *Paradise Enow* in which I and four other hopeful thespians were houris – and if you want to know what that means, I'll tell you. We were beautiful young virgins provided in Paradise for the delight of all faithful Muslims (one wonders what the women had to look forward to!). The play was produced, I remember, by the Cowra Health Inspector. He must have been good – we won the prize, whatever that was. I had been mad about theatre since school days – and now here I was again, on stage and loving it.

I was in several productions after that, enjoyed with equal relish, so it was no wonder that on joining OWN I leapt into the Theatre Group, which took over my life.

And then there was Leigh.

It was a stroke of genius that day in the '90s when OWN engaged Leigh Courage, at a very low wage, to coach the Theatre Group. This 23-year-old graduate from the Conservatorium was looking for a day job while singing jazz with a band doing gigs around town.

We'd had professional coaching before from various well known actors, writers, dancers, theatre people, and we were doing pretty well – and now we had Leigh. She was young, she was lovely, she was funny, skinny as a whippet with twice the energy *and she was ours*.

Our very own theatre group director, singing teacher, stage manager, drama adviser and best friend, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN I GIVE YOU LEIGH CARRIAGE.

She soon had us loosening up with physical, mental and singing exercises, then rehearsing us with wit and exuberance – cajoling, beseeching, demonstrating and demanding and, yes, swearing, as she threw herself with a toss of her long black hair into every facet of performance. And how we responded! As our skills sharpened we could feel our confidence soaring. To sing with the incomparable Bernice on guitar, with Leigh's clear young voice guiding us, was very heaven.

She worked us till we dropped. She came to every Sydney performance, to conduct, to *will* us to do our best. And so we did.

Ah, those were the glory days!

With all of the above, we still enjoyed the important meetings, conferences, IWD marches, social outings etc, the real work of OWN, as we sang and danced ourselves silly, spreading the word all over Sydney and beyond.

Leigh had a bit of a fling with a fellow she met at one of our shows, then she met her true love and went off to live in Byron Bay. And there she still is, still teaching and singing, and we can only hope they treasure her as much as we did. We'll never forget our Leigh, that blythe spirit who so inspired us.

*Dorothy Cox*



# Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

## Federal Political Landslide

Will the new government deliver its pre-election promises to Aboriginal people?

On top of the agenda is saying "sorry" as part of a national apology to the Stolen Generations. Kevin Rudd has said that he will do so after discussions with Aboriginal leaders as to where, when and how. Let us hope it will be soon. However, there is increasing pressure to not only apologise to members of the Stolen Generations, but also to provide at least one billion dollars in compensation. So far, Jenny Macklin, Minister for Family, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous affairs has ruled out payments. Gary Highland, ANTaR National Director, says the absence of a compensation fund will force many Stolen Generation members to seek restitution through the courts, prolonging the uncertainty and suffering of elderly and vulnerable Aboriginal people.

Jenny Macklin has already axed the Indigenous advisory body which was hand-picked by the Howard Government and has promised the creation of a new national representative body (but not the old ATSIC model) after "honest consultation" with Aboriginal leaders. She is set

to have her first meeting with the task force overseeing the Northern Territory intervention this month (January) to discuss its future direction under Labor. Kevin Rudd's pre-election position stated that the intervention needs to be given an opportunity to work, but he promised the restoration of the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) with a stronger focus on on-the-job training and work readiness and restoring the permit system in Aboriginal lands.

The National Aboriginal Alliance (NAA) says that although the appointment of Jenny Macklin as Minister for Family, housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is a "sound one", the Prime Minister needs to be heavily involved. They also suggest that there should be a Minister whose only responsibility is Indigenous Affairs.

*Pat Zinn*

## Yabun Award for OWN Member

The Inaugural Yabun Awards were announced on 22 January at a ceremony at the Australia Council for the Arts. Established by Gadigal Information Service, the home of Koori Radio, the Yabun Awards recognize valuable contributions made by Indigenous people in the



previous 12 months. Winners are drawn from within the Koori Radio 93.7 FM footprint, which spans Greater Sydney, the Central Coast, the Blue Mountains and Wollongong regions.

Writer Anita Heiss introduced the Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council, Lydia Miller, who presented OWN member, Lorraine McGee-Sippel with the Award for **Elder of the Year**, for her commitment to reconciliation in the Lane Cove municipal area and for her contribution to the local community.

The ceremony also launched the program for Yabun Festival 2008, which was held at Victoria Park, Sydney on 26 January. This year's Yabun showcased all art forms, with a music stage, dance stage, photographic exhibition of past events, book launches and readings and political discussions.

The word Yabun translates as "Song with a beat."

*Cate Turner*



# Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

## Magical Marvin

The Northern Territory Institute for Community Engagement and Development has initiated an Indigenous engagement program called "Marvin" (Messaging Architecture for the Retrieval of Versatile Information and News) which is to be distributed to millions of students not only in Australia, but worldwide, through Microsoft.

A \$5000 professional development grant from the Australian Flexible Learning Framework enabled the development of this program. It uses animated characters to

engage Indigenous communities with information campaigns which include health, education and drug abuse, using culturally appropriate language.

The characters and language can be adapted to engage any cultural group in the world with a tailored information campaign or message, which enables communities to create their own campaigns to suit their culture. Marvin won four awards at the 2007 Northern Territory Information and Communications Technology awards.

*Pat Zinn*



## No interest Loans – for Essential Household Items

Jubilee Resources is an activity of the Church in the Market Place, Bondi Junction.

Loans will be considered for essential household items eg: fridges, washing machines, essential electrical goods and furniture. Loans will **not** be approved for household bills, general living expenses or debt repayment.

Jubilee Resources offers no-interest loans. The term of the loan is usually 12-18 months. Repayment amounts are determined on a case-by-case basis, according to the size of the loan. To be eligible for a loan you must:

- be on a low income, that is, be eligible for a Health Card
- live at an address with a postcode in the range of 2010 to 2036
- have lived at the same address for the past six months
- be able to make regular repayments

Jubilee Resources is committed to work in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney, and to provide opportunities for people on low incomes to access affordable credit. This scheme enables recipients to benefit and also assists other members of the community to receive loans when existing loans are repaid.

To apply for a loan:

1. Check that you are eligible (please refer to the points previously listed)
2. Gather the following documents
  - Confirmation of your income, e.g. bank statements, social security records
  - Most recently paid telephone bill
  - Most recently paid gas or electricity bill
3. Make contact with Jubilee Resources Co-ordinator: Ring on Wednesday 11.30am – 1.30pm and ask for Lyn, to arrange an appointment
4. Attend the loan interview – you will need to bring documents set out in point 2, give details of your household budgets, details of the item for which you need the loan and the name of two referees who can vouch for your good character.

For information ring Lyn: Phone **9687 2300**

Wednesday, 10.30 am to 1.30 pm

Church in the Marketplace,

PO Box 165 Bondi Junction 1355

# At and Beyond the Rocks

## BTR Sydney February 2008

It was out with the old at Sydney's end of year event, a cool and pleasant day with about fifty coming along. It was good to be able to welcome a number of new members, which brings Sydney's membership up to 311.

And now it's in with the new and the Working Group wishes all members a healthy and interesting 2008, doing our best to promote older women's interests - and helping to arrest climate change.

The 20<sup>th</sup> party of OWN is now behind us, some of you may have seen the colour photo and article which appeared in *The Senior?* Now the OWN Sydney Working Group has decided to ask OWN Australia if it will celebrate its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year at the annual conference to be held in Melbourne.

Sydney delegates reported some very good speakers at this year's national conference held in Canberra. Fortunately a full complement of Council was elected, overcoming concerns for the future of OWN Aust. OWN Sydney congratulates Cate Turner on becoming convenor, and all other Council members, but we do regret that Cate has had to resign from our Working



Group. Thank you Cate for your past contribution.

Readers will note the flyer in the newsletter for the forum, 'Age Is No Immunity to Violence' to be held Friday 29 February. Members concerned to become more informed about this issue are encouraged to attend, please note that the registration date is February 15. An opening paper will be one by the late Louise Anike, written specially for the forum.

The end of the year brought some good news for two groups: the Chinese women's group which Sue Kucharova set up in Surry Hills has been successful with their funding application to the Australia Council to write and present their stories; and Jan Monson has been granted Leichhardt Council funds to hold 'Mindfulness' workshops.

*Joy Ross*

## Jubilation

At the final meeting for Jubilation in December, we celebrated the end of the year, ate, drank and made merry. It was a very good gathering.

A couple of us managed to find one another for Jazz in the Domain, among the hundred thousand others, and the resident fruit bats, enjoying a highlight of the Sydney Festival. While I was on 'minding the blanket detail', I even managed to dash across to the art gallery to see the Sidney Nolan Retrospective.

We had decided to go out for a meal every third meeting, so those of us who could be in town in January had dinner together at the Shakespeare Hotel in Surry Hills.

Our next meeting is at 87 Lower Fort Street on Friday 15 at 6:00pm.

*Lorraine Inglis*



## 10 Years !!!!!Come and help us Celebrate OWN Illawarra's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Select and wear a \*F.A.D. Outfit, and join us in a fun day of FASHION, MUSIC, FOOD and LAUGHTER.

**March 10, 2008**

11.30 am – 2.00 pm R.S.V.P. Norah: 4228 7037

Corrimal Community Centre – 28 Short St, Corrimal

\*F = Fashionable

\*A = Arty

\*D = Daggy

# Gearing Up for International Women's Day 2008

Beth Eldridge of Older Women's Network and Anne Barber of the Women's Electoral Lobby have started a project to make IWD 2008 Sydney march and following event, the best ever.

There is a concern that, over the last few years, this event has been attracting less involvement from women's and community groups, than we believe it should have. So, we would like you to join with us in making this public demonstration of women's efforts an outstanding occasion. More women's groups are joining the IWD Collective and the enthusiasm is spreading. However, we have an urgent need to find individuals or organisations to sponsor banners.

We have reserved 186 banner poles in the Sydney CBD in excellent locations: along Macquarie Street, in front of the Town Hall in George Street, Park Street (between George and Elizabeth Streets), Martin Place (between George and Macquarie Streets), Elizabeth Street (between Park and King) and Bent Street. In some streets the banners will hang for 2 weeks, in others only one.

Can you picture the streets of Sydney fluttering with the purple green and white feminist colours!!!!



Each banner costs approx. \$200 (producing, putting up, taking down, storing, etc). The Office for Women have sponsored 40 of them, as has the YWCA, and so we only need 106 individuals to sponsor a banner each and we will achieve our target. We are focussing on individuals for sponsorship rather than organisations, because they can decide more quickly to sponsor and we have to pay a deposit with the City of Sydney in only one week. Organisations usually have a lengthy approval process and we are running out of time in 2008. We will continue to seek organisational sponsorship, but with a focus for 2009 if we don't receive confirmation in time for this year. Major sponsors will be able to have their logo displayed on the Memory Tent, and Performance Area. Additional sponsorship will mean more banners next year!!! The life of the banners is approx. 3 to 4 years

(depending on weathering) and we intend to use them each year for IWD until they are no longer usable. After that you can have your banner to hang on your wall!

So, we are calling on feminists everywhere to either personally sponsor a banner or to spread the word amongst their friends and persuade others to sponsor a banner.



We would like all women's groups in Sydney to make IWD 2008 a special event by having our biggest march ever and by joining in the celebration afterwards. IWD has always been a time to celebrate and remember the origin and significance of this politically important day to women everywhere.

In 2008 we will also be celebrating that this is the first time in our nation's history that we've had a female Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, who is also the Federal Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

The first IWD was inspired by a strike of women garment workers in New York in 1908, when women in the United States initiated the first Women's Day, organising large demonstrations calling for the vote and the political and economic rights of women.

At the same time across the Atlantic thousands of women were taking to Fleet Street in London to protest their right to vote – a right which Australian women had won in 1902, New Zealand won the world first in 1893. We didn't start our IWD marches until 1928. Australia's IWD 2008 is a landmark event, celebrating 80 years since our first IWD march.

March organisation in recent years has been managed by a collective of university students at the start of their academic year, who have attempted to summon wider support from community groups to participate in the march and information stalls on the day.

Some of the reasons cited for this decline in participation are:

- Events have been sponsored in local areas, throughout NSW through Councils, shifting the focus from a central celebration and a public show of strength
- Quite a number of feminists/activists are ageing and can no longer march
- The ageing population of volunteers is impacting on organisations' abilities to participate in additional activities and promotions
- Lack of promotion of the event
- Promotional material arriving late

The Older Women's Network – OWN – together with the Women's Electoral Lobby – WEL – with the assistance of the City of Sydney, the Office for Women (OfW) and the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet and the YWCA, are determined to put this event back on the Sydney Events Map and to increase its visibility! In 2008 IWD falls on Saturday, 8 March. We would like to see every women's group marching and to encourage a contingent of young women to march alongside them and to learn the history of activism and of their organisation's involvement in political activity or the work they've accomplished in the community.

To ensure this visibility we are forming a small project team with the IWD Collective, City of Sydney, the NSW Office for Women – OfW, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the YWCA to festoon the streets with IWD banners, fill Hyde Park with information stalls, activity and entertainment and encourage organisations to raise funds/sponsors to enable their participation, ownership and ultimate success of the event. Women need to give a message to both State and Federal governments (particularly State) that women are energised, strong and politically active. By showing strength, it will make it easier to negotiate our needs with OfW and the Department of Premier and Cabinet – AND IT SHOULD BE FUN.

No one is paying us to organise this – it's a labour of passion, and that's what we want to see! CoS has allowed us free use of the poles, OfW and the YWCA has assisted with some funds, however organisations and sponsors need to get behind this endeavour by funding the banners, stalls and entertainment and creating a strong presence on the day.

## 1. The Women Who Made It Happen

The Older Women's Network (OWN) in conjunction with City of Sydney and the NSW Office for Women will launch a documentary series by filmmaker and OWN Member Jan Wood exploring the herstory and current practice of feminism in Sydney through the eyes of the women activists who made it happen. This series will then be broadcast on TVS, with 'teasers' being broadcast in the months leading

up to the launch on 7 March 2008 (IWD eve). The launch will be held at Customs House Library, Circular Quay, 10.30 am for 11am start. Nibbles provided.

## 2 The IWD Banner Project

As outlined on previous page.

## 3. The IWD March

In recent years the IWD march through the Sydney centre has struggled to find wider support from community groups in an environment of diminishing support from government for women's services. Most women's groups have been so busy trying to survive that participation in the march or information stalls at IWD assumed a low priority.

Times have changed! We can now welcome in a new era and with Australia's first female Deputy Prime Minister it is time to take to the streets and celebrate! OWN, WEL and the IWD Collective using the OfW and other government and community networks, have undertaken this IWD march and event renaissance to build a genuine sense of involvement, excitement and ownership in the event which celebrates women's political involvement.

### March details:

Assemble at Sydney Town Hall between 11 and 11.30am on Saturday 8 March. March along George Street to King Street, up King Street to Elizabeth and then along Elizabeth to Hyde Park north for the stalls and entertainment.

## 4. The Memory Tent

Objects, images and smells from the past have an amazing way of triggering memories and transporting us back in time. Our IWD Collective would like to start to put together some of these fabulous forget-me-nots, as tools for a display to spark oral herstories and intergenerational story telling. See the call for contributions on page 4.

## 5. IWD Stalls

The purpose of IWD stalls in Hyde Park north after the march is to both provide information and to increase awareness of the role of these women's and service organisations within the wider community.

## 6. IWD Entertainment

We've all heard the feedback – “don't preach to the converted”, and “you catch more bees with honey”, so we want to ensure that the entertainment in Hyde Park north after the march from Town Hall, is a celebration of our progress and achievements.

Please get involved by contacting the OWN NSW office: 9247 7046

Anne Barber: [annebarber@bigair.com.au](mailto:annebarber@bigair.com.au) or

Beth Eldridge: [info@ownnsw.org.au](mailto:info@ownnsw.org.au)

# Our OWN Writers

## A Letter from My Sister

Dear Barbara,

*Happy New Year to you and all the family, I hope it is a good one...*

My New Year started with a phone call from Dulcie asking me would I take her to see a show at the theatre in Cremorne.

Now I am perfectly willing to admit that going on a car ride with Dulcie is a little disconcerting to say the least. First of all she yells when another car comes within 500 yards of ours, (well five yards), then it's, "Oh my God! Watch that car front/back/side," etc! She is forever trying to find the brake on the passenger side of the car and giving advice like, "You had better get over to the middle of the road as we have to turn left any moment... Actually just back there," etc.

Anyway we manage to get to Cremorne, which is no mean feat on its own. We buy our tickets for the movies then go and have some lunch. Dulcie never shuts up when you take her anywhere. (I know, she is old she spends 90% of her time on her own and she is going to make up for it anytime she can). I don't mind this but I spend 99.9% of the time not knowing who she is talking about: "You know who I mean he used to live down where they turned the trams around at Ryde in that little tin shack... his mother took in washing and he married that girl who had had rickets... her mother's brother's sister's father-in-law's uncle, he lived near Sam's place..." You get the picture. Dulcie is 25 years older than I am and so she loses me every time.

By the time we finished lunch it was getting late and so we left the cafe and walked straight back to the theatre. We've just settled into our seats with the credits beginning to roll when Dulcie says, "How much was lunch?"

She had purchased the tickets for the theatre and I was to buy lunch.

**HOW MUCH WAS LUNCH!!!!**  
We had had a really tasty meal of toast and tea and then just sailed out of that cafe heads held high, smiling at the people behind the counter and thanking them for a lovely meal. Why on earth should I think of paying for it?

I knew that when the movie was over we would pass the cafe on the way back to the car and so we could call in then. But by that time there was someone else behind the counter and the lunch staff had gone. I explained what had happened and gave the man the money. He was very grateful that we did that. I said that it was really busy when we left and that probably none of the staff had seen us go. (This was a lie as some of them had said goodbye, but I did not want anyone to get into trouble and hope it's alright for them).

I think I am reaching ga ga before you with some of the things I do so you may end up looking after me yet.

*Talk to you soon,*

*Your loving sister, Elizabeth,*

*Supplied by Barbara Malcolm*

## Horse Play

At one stage of our life we bought some irrigated land near the Murray River. It was a disaster, Bathurst Burrs by the thousand, drought, then flood – the Murray a hundred miles wide – and our land caramel sauce. We were driven off. but funny things did happen.

A horse wandered onto our land and adopted us. We couldn't find the owner, so he stayed and the kids were delighted. We needed to name him

so one day when Glynis – who was seven or eight – and Doug were admiring him and thinking about a name, he urinated.

"What's that long thing hanging down between his legs?" she enquired.

Doug, who believed in giving correct anatomical names to parts of the body, replied, "It's a penis, darling."

"Oh," said Glyn, "That's a good name for him, let's call him Penis"

Doug was thoughtful. "Hmm, well, I think a better name would be Trusty."

Glyn clapped her hands. "That's it," she enthused; "we'll call him Trusty Penis!"

*Joan Johns*



## Black Cat on Green Lawn

She lies there, still as moonlight  
long sleek blackness on emerald lawn;  
taut as a clock spring THEN ...SHE  
POUNCES!  
poor grasshopper.  
she plays with it awhile,  
then saunters off.  
as if to say, 'poof that's nothing  
you should see me catch a mouse!'

*Dorothy Cox*

# Letters to the Editor

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## Open letter to Robyn Smith

Please convey to the committee of SHOWN, my heartiest congratulations on yet another wonderful Christmas party at which the success of the group was so beautifully presented to members and their guests. The whole event was testimony to a lot of preparation by your committee. The smooth running of the afternoon left Cate Turner and me in awe of the way the group has successfully fulfilled a need.

SHOWN illustrates the value of a locally based Older Women's Network Group which focuses mainly on the wellbeing of its members as well as the other core aims, which are to protect the rights and dignity of older women. Your group has earned the respect of all who come into contact with it. May you continue to grow and serve the older women as well as the wider members of the community of Southern Highlands.

Congratulations to you, Robyn for being made a life member of the group in recognition of the hard work you have done and continue to do, towards the smooth running of this wonderful organization. Well done Robyn Smith and well done SHOWN.

*Barbara Malcolm*

**Thank you! Thank you!  
Thank you!**

OWN, you're wonderful, generous and caring! Thanks for your outstanding support for our raffle — you raised \$675.00 towards the children's Christmas party at La Perouse, which, combined with the \$85.00 raised by Auntie Yvonne

Simms at Lapa, brought a grand total of \$760.00! A humungus hug for Barbara Malcolm — without your beautiful hand-made quilt, none of this would have happened. We're thrilled that Anna Logan won the quilt when the draw took place at OWN's Christmas party, and two ladies from Lapa won 2nd and 3rd prizes, a plaque by Kamilaroi artist Thomas



Avery, and an attractive white ceramic bowl, also hand-made. Gillian Fisher and I attended the party which was held on 16 December and it was great to see the large open grassed area filled with colourful booths and children bouncing on huge inflated structures, riding the merry-go-round and being driven around the periphery on a people-mover, as well as tucking into hot dogs. Koori radio was also there. Black Santa arrived on the back of a ute but unfortunately the rain, which had been threatening to dump all morning, finally pelted down. That's when everyone crowded into the booths to receive their presents and Gillian and I had to sprint for the car, as neither of us had brought rain gear.

The change in the weather brought home to us the fact that there's no Community Hall at Lapa where functions could be held in bad weather. Perhaps our ASC can consult with Auntie Yvonne and Auntie Barbara on how to lobby for a suitable structure.

*Pat Zinn*

## The Lucky Winner

What a wonderful time we women had at the OWN Christmas lunch. Before we got down to the serious business of eating, we engaged in the enjoyable business of having fun. Jokes were told, stories and poems were read, conversations were had.

What I loved about the day was seeing women I don't see regularly, and even getting the opportunity to put faces to names well-known.

A highlight of the day was drawing the raffle for the glorious double-sided quilt made by Barbara Malcolm for the Aboriginal Support Circle. Pat Zinn and her hardy helpers sell these raffle tickets for many months, in order to raise money to give the children of La Perouse a good Christmas. This year was no exception, with the Circle raising \$760.00.

Third and second prizes were drawn, but the lucky winners weren't present. Then first prize — for the quilt — was picked and... I won! As you can imagine I was overcome with delight. It's many years since I've won anything substantial in a raffle, and I've certainly never won anything as beautiful as this.

A wonderful feast then appeared miraculously on the table, thanks to Blacktown OWN, and to all the women who brought something as a contribution. It wasn't long before plates, bowls and dishes on the table were emptied and stomachs were full. Lots of talking accompanied the eating, as we all caught up with news and views.

Thank you, Aboriginal Support Circle and Barbara Malcolm, for arranging to raffle that glorious quilt of which I was the lucky winner.

*Anna Logan*

# The Night I Should Have Died

An incident that affected the rest of my life

I would like you to know that I have never discussed any fact of this devastating incident with anyone, not even my husband Ray, or any member of my family. In fact once this ordeal was over, I never really thought about it again until now. I just got on with my life, being thankful that I still had one to share with my loving family. Ray has never mentioned it either. I regarded that night as a secret between God and me.

It happened on the evening of 11 February 1957. I was a young mother with a daughter aged four and a baby son just fifteen months old. We were a very normal, happy family in the prime of our lives, or so we thought. A few weeks earlier I had undergone an appendectomy at the Hornsby Hospital and was recovering normally when suddenly I collapsed in excruciating pain and began vomiting followed by diarrhoea. I was rushed by ambulance back to the hospital.

There is not much I remember about the early part of that evening except the nursing staff bombarding Ray and me with questions about my state of health. I had tubes affixed in every orifice and vein available, then finally I was taken into theatre. They discovered my bowel had been nicked during the previous operation; it had twisted around the stump of my erstwhile appendix and had gone gangrenous. This had caused septicaemia and I was dying by the minute. They removed several feet of my bowel, but did not expect me to live through the night.



The nurses kept their vigil throughout the night and I awoke to find the head sister on her knees praying beside me, asking God to save me on account of my young children. I patted her head and said I was alright. Time passed slowly when suddenly I heard her say, “She’s going now, get her husband so he can kiss her and say his good-byes”. I thought, “She can’t mean me because I

feel too good to be dying”, but as soon as I saw Ray’s face, I knew it must be true. He just looked like a big flat blob; in fact the whole room looked very black. My parents came in and kissed me too and my father (through his tears) said, “She even wiped away my kiss...” the reason for that remark was because I never kissed anyone on the lips and if by chance anyone did, I would automatically wipe it away and to this day I still do not like it.

I really think the thing that helped me through that night was seeing Ray’s face. I did not panic, but prayed to God to let him find someone who would be good to him and our two children. After this I must have dozed off, waking later to find I was still alive, so I thought ‘That’s it, I’m not going to close my eyes for the rest of the night’.

Sister King stayed by my side all night on her knees, praying for me. I felt I didn’t deserve such attention. Finally dawn broke and at last I felt safe enough to go to sleep. Once that night was over I thought I was safe unbeknown to me my life was in balance for the next three or four weeks. It was an unusually cool February and the Matron told Ray to pray for the cool weather to continue because if the heat and humidity returned, my life could be “snuffed out like a candle”.

They continued to feed me by tube, as the vomiting had ripped away all the lining from my stomach. To give it the chance to repair itself, they allowed me only one teaspoon of water each hour. Nothing had ever tasted so good and to sneak a little extra water, I used to cheat and swallow the rinsing water after cleaning my teeth. Gradually they added other fluids into my diet and eventually I returned to normal food.

Finally, after almost seven months, I was discharged from hospital, but before I left I thanked Dr Giblin for saving my life. He replied, “Here comes my walking miracle, but don’t thank me, you were beyond anything else we could do, you were in much higher hands than ours. Also the fact that you have never smoked or drunk alcohol gave you the little extra stamina to beat the odds. Unfortunately, because of the battering your body took, it will affect your health for the rest of your life”.

He continued to call me his walking miracle until his sudden death from a heart attack about five years later. Sister King married a tropical scientist and moved to New Guinea with him, where she contracted a nasty, incurable disease and died about the same time as my wonderful Dr Giblin.

And this is the story of the night I should have died!

*Edith Lambert*

*Edith Lambert is a participant in the Writing workshop at OWN Bankstown.*

# Our OWN Writers

## Love in Computerland

It was early morning. I was seated at my computer, checking emails and organizing my day, enjoying the quiet solitude. The only sounds were the clicking of the keyboard, the low-pitched hum of the computer and an occasional swish of a passing vehicle in the street below. But my private, quiet world was about to be disturbed.

‘Did you sleep well?’ The foggy early morning voice of my Devoted Spouse announced his appearance. He was still not fully awake and, clad only in dressing gown, had shuffled quietly and somewhat unsteadily into my room, unnoticed. We exchanged conventional early morning conversation and he shuffled off again.

Turning back to the computer, I opened a new email and found a cheerful message writ large upon the screen. ‘Happy Wedding Anniversary!’ it said. A close friend had thoughtfully remembered our big day, whereas we two had apparently forgotten all about it. Now I did think about it. According to divorce statistics, eighteen years is not bad for a second marriage. We should feel proud of ourselves. My mind went back to our big day. We had included in the marriage service a reading from the Old Testament which encouraged those of, ‘weak and trembling knees’, to go forth in confident hope. I smiled at the memory and hurried to DS’s room. I planned to rub his knees and ask if they were still weak and trembling.

But when I saw him, now seated at his own computer, my smile of anticipation changed to suppressed laughter. He was seated, quite naked, before his screen. It is true, all who know him are aware of his retirement enthusiasm for his computer, but to be completely starkers while working

with it did strike me as more akin to a passionate obsession than to mere intellectual involvement. (Sweet reason did suggest he had probably been preparing for his morning shower and had been distracted by something popping up on his computer screen, but I did not ponder on that at the time.) Still restraining my mirth, I stood beside him and rubbed his knees, as planned, to see what he would say. His response was not one of puzzlement or even understanding. Instead, he just looked sheepish, almost embarrassed. I glanced at his computer screen and there, just discernible behind another open ‘window’ were the curves of a big pink heart into which he had been carefully inserting a wedding photo and a sentimental message to send to my computer via the Ethernet connection between our rooms.



I hugged him and laughed out loud. He had remembered our day! His loving greeting would be there to light up my day, and hopefully, the next 18 years. My appreciation of his message was not diminished by realizing some time later that what had popped onto his screen was, no doubt, a computer-generated reminder of our anniversary date. It only made me laugh once more, this time with irony. How wide is the gap between our romantic ideals and our very human reality!

*Bev Cameron*

## WE NEED HELP

The newsletter mail-out team is sorely in need of extra hands to join our friendly team. If you can spend two to three hours one day per month, we would love you to join us.

The job involves labeling and folding the newsletter, and this is just as important as the writing and editing — if we don’t do it, the newsletter doesn’t make it to our subscribers and supporters!

If you can help, join us at 9.00am on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> March, at 87 Lower Fort Street, or call the office.

*Noel Carpenter*

## Persimmon Tree Magazine

*An Online Literary Magazine by Women Over Sixty*

**Persimmon Tree** showcases an impressive variety of literature and art by women over 60, many still working well into their 80s and 90s. Many of the writers and artists are well-known, others are lesser known, while some are newly developing their craft in their later years.

“There is a growing body of work by male writers and artists who are entering or well into old age. But the comparable body of work by aging women is much smaller and mostly limited to a few already well-known writers and artists. Women are creating, but they are not getting the exposure they deserve.”

Less than a year old, **Persimmon Tree** is attracting thousands of readers of all ages from 40 countries and throughout North America. It can be found online at:

[www.persimmontree.org](http://www.persimmontree.org)

# Some OWN Wisdom

## Obituary of the late Mr Common Sense

'Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as: Knowing when to come in out of the rain; Why the early bird gets the worm; Life isn't always fair; and, Maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate, teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch, and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do, in disciplining their unruly children. He declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an Elastoplast to a student but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the Ten Commandments became contraband, churches became businesses, and criminals received better treatment than their victims. It diminished further when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents, Truth and Trust, his wife Discretion, his daughter, Responsibility and his son, Reason. He is survived by his four stepbrothers; I Know My Rights, I Want It Now, Someone Else Is To Blame, and I'm A Victim.

Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone.

*Contributed by Maureen King*

## The Getting of Wisdom — Meaning, Purpose and Aging

Wednesday 12 March at 6:00pm, Dixon Room, State Library of NSW  
\$25, \$15 concession. Bookings on 02 9273 1770.

Panel: The Hon Dr Meredith Burgmann, former President of NSW Legislative Council and author; Emeritus Prof Sol Encel, sociologist and author; and The Hon Prof Barry Jones AO, former cabinet minister and author.

Rosemary Moon, Manager  
Events & Exhibitions, State Library of NSW  
T:02 9273 1549 F:02 9273 1248

[rmoon@sl.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rmoon@sl.nsw.gov.au)

## The following talks will be delivered during Seniors' Week in 2008

### Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008

9.30 am *Beyond maturityblues*  
11.00 am Healthy Ageing Talk (topic **Safe Sight**)  
1.00 pm Medication Management

### Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008

9.30 am Medication Management  
11.00 am Healthy Ageing Talk (topic **Osteoporosis**)  
1.00 pm *Beyond maturityblues*

### Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2008

9.30 am Healthy Ageing Talk (topic **Hearing**)  
11.00 am *Beyond maturityblues*  
1.00 pm Medication Management

### Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2008

9.30 am *Beyond maturityblues*  
11.00 am Healthy Ageing Talk (topic **Oral & Dental Health**)  
1.00 pm Medication Management

**Bookings essential Contact COTA phone 9286 3860**

Venue: Level 1, 280 Pitt Street Sydney (between Park and Bathurst Streets)

Cost: \$2 per talk, payable at the door  
Morning tea and a light lunch will be provided.

# Taking Care

The pages of *Own Matters* seem regularly to tell stories of experiences that convey some of the stresses when confronting issues involving our needs for care and coping with some losses of independence. As in all things, it helps if we have an understanding of the overall situation. Some informed discussion on these pages may help dispel some of the many misconceptions that can challenge our concept.

We have all throughout our lives been subject to paying taxes on our earnings, so that society is organised with services and infrastructure to the standard of living created by that wealth. That's the theory anyhow!

In these days more and more of the previously Government-run services are being out-sourced, i.e., put up for tender by corporate bodies or organizations (frequently religious or community) who compete for these huge and profitable contracts.

Obviously Aged Care Services are of important concern to older people; the legislation governing these confers eligibility on all older Australians.

Of course the criteria of age must be met and certain other conditions are attached including possible requirement for some contribution to the cost. For services such as High or Low Residential Care, the level of your need must first be assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT). For all other aged care (chiefly the HACC Home and Community Care), your G.P. or hospital discharge services may refer you. I remind you here that any of these services, while provided by the public purse, will be delivered to the consumer by the enterprise which has secured from the government the contract to supply. Be it in residential care or served to you in your home, government subsidies are the basis for the service and, as such, government set regulations and standard conditions must be met by the body contracted for their delivery.

Access to all services is based on the criterion of need, thus, should available supply fall short of demand, those with the assessed highest level of need will be given priority of service. So you may sometimes find that lack of availability or waiting lists can be the situation. This may vary from time to time and from area to area.

The important point I want to make here is that you, the recipient of the services provided from tax revenue, are not only eligible to receive them, but you also retain certain rights of choice and decision on which designated service you agree to receive, and where you choose to receive it. You have the right to complain if you find problems. Some hard-won and much reviewed complaints systems are in place and advice and advocacy assistance is available for users of all aged services.

Awareness of your rights when entering into residential care is sometimes overlooked in the stress of such a momentous impact on your life. Being assessed for entry is not a sentence. Being advised of where a bed is available

is not an imperative on you to accept. It is a recommendation only. Instances of such recommendations on discharge from hospital are sometimes taken by the frail elderly as having lost their freedom to choose.

There is nothing so demeaning as that over-used phrase of "being PUT into a home." Assert your rights and dignity and the independence of retaining your right to make informed decisions. Again, I remind you the Government subsidises and issues the licences to run these establishments and imposes regulations of minimum standards. The provider (contractor of the service) has the right to ask a fee for service that may be over and above the subsidy, usually according to the standard provided. You have the right to agree or negotiate your acceptance of an available place. Hopefully you will have reached an arrangement with a close friend or relative to be your representative should the occasion arise and you are unable to deal with it yourself. It is important that you are informed of all alternative options before arrangements are made for you to take up residence in a care facility.

It is well known that the choices are not great and available places frequently fall short of demand. Nevertheless you retain the right to make an informed decision. Do not assume, or allow anyone else to assume, that you have lost your right to make decisions affecting your care while ever you can express them yourself.

*Barbara Burnham*

## Useful Web Links

- Aged Care Assessment Teams  
[www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-contacts-acat-cd3.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-contacts-acat-cd3.htm)
- Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme  
[www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-complaints-index.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-complaints-index.htm)
- NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care  
[www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au)
- The Aged Care Rights Service [www.tars.com.au](http://www.tars.com.au)
- The Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd [www.accreditation.org.au](http://www.accreditation.org.au)
- Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)
- Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)
- Carers Australia [www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)
- Centrelink [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)
- Commonwealth Carelink Centres [www.health.gov.au/ccsd](http://www.health.gov.au/ccsd)
- Alzheimer's Australia – National Dementia Helpline [www.alzheimers.org.au/content.cfm?infopageid=348](http://www.alzheimers.org.au/content.cfm?infopageid=348)
- The Guardianship Tribunal [www.gt.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gt.nsw.gov.au)

# OWN ADVOCACY

## Community Transport Now, how about Us?

Recently ABC Radio reported that only 6% of people aged above 65 live in institutional care. This information was supplied by the Institute of Health and Welfare. That leaves 94% of us living in private dwellings, owned or rented.

But, how are we living? Not very comfortably; a great proportion of that 94% are over 80, and at times we almost literally hold each other up. Ancient spouses care for each other, or one will care for the other more disabled of the two, an elderly child, sometimes with an intellectual disability, will care for a very old parent. We need affordable transport and more help with everyday tasks.

Home and Community Care and Community Transport do what they can with the funds they have available and hospitals provide transport to outpatient appointments. But there are other people we need to see as well as doctors. We do not need those many hundreds of nursing home beds, our governments seem so anxious to promise us, though they would help the hospitals to free up beds – but most of that 94% need taxis! At present to receive access to subsidised taxis one must be permanently incapacitated, totally blind, an uncontrolled epileptic, or able to walk less than 50 metres. To extend these privileges would not cost very much, a great deal less than a nursing home bed, and is it not better to have people well cared for and happy at home?

So, to those in charge of the country's money, please spare a few million — just to keep us moving.

*Helen Monaghan*

## A System that has Gone Wrong

Last year 114 children who were known to the Department of Community Services (DoCS) died, 33 of them as a result of abuse, neglect or suspicious circumstances. Successive Auditor Generals' reports in the past have concluded that the NSW Government should be doing more to protect children from harm, yet it was not until the highly publicised recent deaths of two children known to DoCS that the state established the Wood Inquiry, which is currently seeking submissions from the public on this matter.

The problem at DoCS is systemic – it is underfunded, understaffed, undertrained and overstressed. Twenty years ago the Department was stripped by the State Government of clerical and administrative resources, leaving overworked case workers to spend many hours on phoning and paperwork when they could have been in the field, where they can do the most good. Small wonder that they are totally out of their depth. Unless there is a massive injection of funds and trained staff the appalling situation in which this leaves our young children will continue and

probably worsen, while dedicated case workers leave DoCS in droves, still highly motivated but physically and mentally unable to bear the continual strain.

The success of the Wood Inquiry depends on the quality of the evidence it hears – and this means hearing from people who have either dealt first hand with DoCS, or have had problems with the Department. Lucy Porter's article in the November issue of *OWN Matters* brought the issue home in describing some of her problems with DoCS when her two small grandsons were put into her care indefinitely. Thousands of Australian grandmothers have assumed similar responsibilities and have dealings with DoCS. The efficacy of this Department in helping them to care for their grandchildren is being severely questioned.

The Wood Inquiry gives the public an opportunity to air their grievances about DoCS in the knowledge that they will be listened to attentively. The Inquiry will not solve individual problems, but its charter is to discover the reasons for and propose improvements to a system that has gone terribly wrong.

*Helen Young*

If you or anyone you know feels that their input would help the Wood Inquiry, written comments can be sent to: Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, PO Box K1026, Haymarket NSW 1240.

The Older Women's Network will be happy to assist OWN members who would like help in the preparation of their submission. Please ring on 02 9247 7046.

# Notices

## Age is No Immunity to Violence Forum on the Abuse of Older Women

This forum will:

- Bring together a range of experts who will discuss the abuse of older people, particularly with regard to older women. Information will be provided on how to recognize and respond to abuse.
- Be an opportunity to further explore issues raised in the 2006 Symposium, "Abuse of Older People," including the sexual assault of older women in residential care.
- Have a special focus on how to identify and respond to abuse of older women, particularly for workers and carers in the aged-care sector.

This forum will be an invaluable day for ANYONE working with older women and men.

Friday 29 February 2008

9.00am to 3.30pm

The Masonic Centre, Sydney

Register by 15<sup>th</sup> February 2008

For more information or to register: phone Matina Mottee on (02)9745 8448 or Jenny Huxley on (02) 9976 8020 or by e-mail on [patricia.sharpe@community.nsw.gov.au](mailto:patricia.sharpe@community.nsw.gov.au)

## Get Medicines Talk

Have a free *Medicines Talk* posted to you four times a year

Ring 8217 8700, and ask to be put on the *Medicines Talk* list **OR**

Go to [www.nps.org.au/consumers](http://www.nps.org.au/consumers) and under free information in the top right-hand corner, click on "Order now" **OR**

Download from the web version

Go to [www.nps.org.au/consumers](http://www.nps.org.au/consumers) and click on "*Medicines Talk*" in the left-hand column

## 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.**

## Join OWN Sydney for an IWD pre-march breakfast 9.30am on 8 March, 2008, at the Cascade Café Town Hall Sydney.



Shop 15/16 Town Hall Square

RSVP OWN NSW on 9247 7046 so we have some idea of numbers for our booking by 29 Feb, 2008.

This will be a day full of fun, activism, and recollection. So bring plenty of water,

and sunscreen. Wear your most comfortable shoes. Then dig out your favorite purple outfit, or blow the dust off one of your collectors item IWD t-shirts from yesteryear, and join with the thousands of women that will be making this years celebrations the best ever!

The crowd will assemble for the march from 11-11.30 am before setting off at midday from Town Hall to Hyde Park, North.

# OWN Sydney Notices

## WOW! Subscribe NOW!

- Subscription to *OWN Matters* is usually \$22 per year, due every **JULY 1**, now just \$11.
- 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
- Would you like to donate? \$.....

## Payment method

- I enclose a chq/money order for \$11/\$16 - to Jun30, 2008 made payable to OWNNSW OR  
Please debit the following credit card for \$11/\$16 (plus any donation)

Visa

Mastercard

Bankcard

**Total amount:**

Card no.

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Exp. date \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

Name on card (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

State & Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

I need the large print version (on A3)

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.

Classes resumed 9 Jan 2008!

### Film Discussion group

You are invited to join **Tuesday 12 February**, to see *Lust, Caution*, other films recommended for viewing are *American Gangster* and *The Kite Runner*.

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! Classes resume 21 Feb 2008.

**9247 7046**

### OWN UP – Unashamedly Political Discussion Group

10.30am to 12.30pm, next meeting Friday 8 February 2008 and then on the 2nd Friday each month at 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point.

Have an early cuppa with us and bring a sandwich for lunch. Contact Lola on **9665 8741**.

### Inner-West Networking Group - IWNG

**Meet on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month** 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

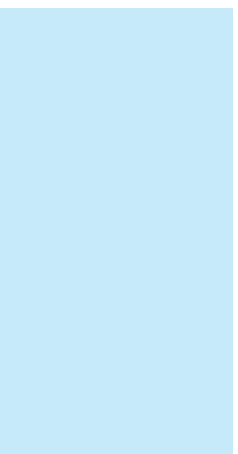
All OWN members are welcome. Just turn up, or contact the OWN office on 9247 7046 or Jan on **9692 9400** OWN Members from other areas are welcome!

Jubilation - Reaching out to retirees. All OWN members welcome 6pm-8.30pm, the 3rd Friday of each month, at 87 Lower Fort St, or dining out together at affordable Sydney eateries.

Contact OWN NSW on 9247 7046.

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

***OWN Matters***



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