



OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network NSW

Vol.8 No.1 – February 2011



OWN NSW Polls the Pollies

Sonia Laverty has been taking our concerns to the next round of State leaders to see what thought they have given to the issues that matter most to our members.

see *OWN NSW - Questions for Politicians* page 3



Fire in the Belly - Enid Harrison

Dorothy Cora pays tribute to OWN Member and long-time activist and OWN Matters contributor Enid Harrison.

see *A Woman of Many Passions* page 5



Dorothy Cox frames freedom

A recent hip fracture forgotten, I sign myself out at the Hostel office and down the ramp we go, my trusty trolley and I, to discover what delights the world has to offer us today.

see *Adventures with a Walking Frame* page 16



June Goss dishes the dirt on plastics

Like so many other chemicals used in various industries we are not really told about them or the effect on us and on children.

see *There are Nasties in the Kitchen* page 20

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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 news-letter 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 email or mail marked Attention – Editorial Team. Please include contact details. Contributions must be received by the second Tuesday of each month.

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OWN Office



The phone hours at our OWN office are from 10:00 to 3:00.

If you call outside these hours you may get a recorded message.

Leave a message, with your contact number, and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Between 10:00 and 3:00 the phone will be answered by one of our friendly volunteers.

OWN Matters Direct!

We love to hear from you and publish what you have to say in our newsletter.



The best way, for you and us, is for you to email your letter or article.

We have an email address especially for your contributions.

The email address is newsletter@ownsw.org.au

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

NSW State Election

Questions for the politicians:

Selected politicians and independent candidates were sent questions to elicit their policy position on a number of issues. OWN NSW Management Team adopted this strategy at its final meeting for 2010 with the expectation that our concerns will stimulate interest and relevant policy development by the political parties and other candidates. The questions, together with supporting information, were distributed during the first week of January 2011. The questions are as follows:

Ageism

What strategies would you support/implement to address ageism in the workplace and in society beyond the Anti-Discrimination Legislation including:

- Improved and more effective procedures requiring Government employers to acknowledge all job applicants and maintain statistical records reflecting their adherence to EEO policy and legislation in advertising, interviewing and hiring of staff.
- Immediate investigation of measures to redress any government role in feminisation of poverty in Australia.

Affordable Housing

Do you support the recommendations set out in the report 'It Could Be You: female, single, older and homeless' (McFerran 2010 www.ownnsw.org.au). For example:

- Collect mainstream homeless and housing data disaggregated by sex that enables the development of a gendered homeless and housing policy.
- Consult with older women on their experience and needs when developing mainstream homeless and housing strategies.
- Set targets to meet the needs of older women in all relevant strategies.
- What priority would you give to this issue and how would you measure outcomes?

Prevention of Violence against Older Women

What priority would you give to policy development and program funding to address the prevention of violence against older women based on the experiences of older women living with violence?

(McFerran 2009 *The Disappearing Age; strategies to address the prevention of violence against older women*; www.ownnsw.org.au)

Health

Do you support a gendered analysis of all government spending on health programs addressing issues of particular relevance to older women, with a commitment to improved program funding as the outcome?

Volunteers and Carers

Do you affirm CEDAW Recommendation 43. –that “parties should ensure that older women, including those who have responsibility for the care of children, have access to appropriate social and economic benefits such as childcare benefits, as well as access to all necessary support when caring for elderly parents or relatives”?

What measures would you take to improve access to home and community care to a level required to meet community demand?

Transport

What steps would you take to improve access to public transport for older people including improved access points to trains, buses and prepaid ticketing?

Their Responses

We will continue to report on any responses in the next issue of *OWN Matters*.

OWN groups may wish to use this information to lobby candidates in their local areas. Copies of the complete correspondence together with the list of recipients is available from the OWN Office.

Within days of posting our questions to politicians we began to receive acknowledgements from politicians of all affiliations, assuring us that they would look into these issues and respond to us in detail in the near future. We were particularly impressed with the speed and depth of response we received from Clover Moore, where each of the issues we had raised was addressed in turn, and her actions, past, and future plans outlined. We have published Clover's response on the following page and will bring you further responses next month.

Sonia Laverty

Our OWN Election Issues

Clover Moore Responds to OWN Election Questions

I write to express my support for the Older Women's Network 2011 State election issues. I share OWN's concerns about the need to respect and acknowledge the specific circumstances of older women, ensure their voice is heard, and provide support and services where needed. OWN is a highly valued organisation, and I support your work.

Ageism

While employment and income security are largely Commonwealth responsibilities, I share your concerns about programs to support employment of older people, and oppose discrimination against any group based on irrelevant criteria including age. The NSW Government should provide strong leadership opposing discrimination, including community education and model employer programs.

Affordable Housing

During the past term, I supported retirement village residents on legislative changes, and have developed a Private Members Bill to improve strata management. I strongly support social housing and social housing tenants across my electorate, and have advocated strongly for increased affordable housing, including through the Legislative Council Inquiry.

I continue to work for protection of boarding house residents and measures to provide more energy and water efficient housing, as well as effective programs that help homeless people get back on their feet. The factors involved with homelessness are complex and changing, and I support OWN's proposal to ensure gender is incorporated into the analysis of needs and the development of programs to help those in need.

Violence

While responses to family violence have improved in recent years, OWN's research showing higher levels of violence against older women are a concern. I support better coordination between domestic violence and elder abuse programs to address this concern.

Health

I have consistently worked to get more emphasis on prevention and early intervention to better respond to health concerns, including oral health, mental health and alcohol/drug problems, particularly for disadvantaged groups. Programs and services should be based on need, and I support an assessment of gender impacts on need to ensure that services meet community needs.

Volunteers and Carers

Programs such as Home and Community Care are vital to help people remain in their home and community, and I have consistently supported expansion of these programs. Both Commonwealth and State Governments need to increase funding to match identified need.

Transport and Mobility

Active transport is vital for all residents, and I strongly promote and advocate for better public transport services including accessible stations and vehicles. Major inner city railway stations remain inaccessible to people with limited mobility, and many buses are not accessible, despite Government promises and Easy Access programs. I will continue to push to fast track access upgrades.

I have advocated for expanded community transport options and increased use of smaller shuttle buses to transport people with limited mobility to public transport.

Please contact Roy Bishop in my office if you have specific questions or need more information

Yours sincerely

Clover Moore, Member for Sydney

REMINDER!



Thursday 17 February
10.30am

Quarterly Meeting to be held at Illawarra OWN

All welcome.

If you have not RSVP'd for catering, then bring your lunch!

Phone Peggy Rodden to book 4268 0856.

A Woman of Many Passions!

Some people are said to have a ‘fire in the belly’, but I think Enid Harrison’s fire is in her heart and mind. Flicking through some old copies of the OWN newsletter recently I was again impressed with what a prodigious writer Enid has been over the past 16 years – and how far-reaching and diverse her contributions have been.

Nothing has been too banal or too thorny for this feisty old warrior to rage about, critique, discuss or celebrate. Her ideas and concerns have been primarily motivated by a passion for social justice, but personal experience and a quite outstanding ability to observe have also played their part.

In more than 100 newsletter articles she’s had published since 1994, Enid has covered a huge spectrum of issues including political correctness, euthanasia (she’s against it!), op shops, TV cooking shows, leadership, dental health, hospital staffing, gambling, happiness, the GST, high tech medical advances, hospital tucker, depression, newspaper personal columns, transport, social isolation, plastic surgery, and dementia.

Her first contribution explored the topic of *Human Rights for Women who Become Widows*, in which she identified the potential for financial abuse of older women by family members following the death of a male partner. Sadly, Enid recently lost her own husband and in 2011 is now reminded of the sensible advice she gave to others all those years ago.

In *What can I eat?* published in May 1995, she critiqued advice about food and alcohol intake “shoved in women’s faces” by the ‘experts’. In her usual provocative way, she wondered whether, as the appetite for sex lessens, perhaps another appetite takes over? “And why not?” she asks.

Another article reminded us that women are straight-jacketed and framed for life by patriarchy – a common refrain in Enid’s writings – and advised that older women should rebel against the stereotypes: “Don’t get mad, get eccentric”, she urged. In this instance Enid is surely the embodiment of her own advice!

At times Enid’s writings have been positively inspirational. “Let us challenge” she wrote in 2001, “all the unmentionables that hinder and demean us as older women; publicise and investigate problems like social isolation; seek remedies for those who are affected, and stop using the label ‘demented’ for those of us whose memories are not as effective as they used to be.”

More recently, she wrote that it is wiser for us to try to stay ‘in life’, to keep our minds open to change and to stretch our brains. “Decide to live to please yourself, to not deny your own needs. You owe it to yourself to stand

up for your own dignity, take responsibility for yourself and accept yourself. All hail to us, the older women!”

And I say, all hail to Enid, who turns 89 this year!

Dorothy Cora



Equal Pay: Big Changes not Small Change

This year the F collective – a group of energetic feminists who organized and hosted Sydney’s 2010 National Feminist Conference last April, are organising the Sydney International Women’s Day march and rally for 2011. Your participation is crucial!

This year marks the 100th anniversary of this international march for women’s rights.

The theme for the Sydney rally is around Pay Equity under the slogan:

“Equal Pay: Big Changes not Small Change.”

The march and rally will take place on Saturday March 12th, 2011 at 12pm at Sydney Town Hall.

This will be followed by a festival at Martin Place concluding the rally.

Thanks to a Community Grant from the City of Sydney, OWN Sydney IWD will be organizing Pedapods - which are those covered-tricycle-taxi devices you see around Circular Quay - for a **very limited** number of enthusiastic older women who pre-register with our office. The aim of the Pedapods is to have women who are physically unable to walk the event, actually participate in the march, as a flotilla of these vehicles. Apparently they will also be using them for Anzac Day to enable older veterans to do the same, so they are OK to get in and out of with limited mobility. However they are not suitable for women in wheel chairs. Please call Beth on 9247 7046 before February 28 to book your seat.

If you would like to volunteer to assist with other IWD preparations, please email Charity Danquah danquah_charity@yahoo.com.au if you have questions or would like more publicity material, or call Charity on 0432294120.

More publicity material coming soon for you to help make this the biggest IWD this century!

<http://iwdsydney.wordpress.com/>

Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

A Different Way to Create Well-being for Indigenous Australians

Professor Patrick Dodson, founding Director of the Indigenous Policy and Dialogue Research Unit (IPDRU) at the University of New South Wales, is calling for a new, open-minded dialogue based on a new methodology. At the inaugural National Indigenous Policy and Dialogue conference held over two days in November, 2010 at the University of New South Wales, he explained how the new process would engage with past history but would also look forward in a way that conjures up scenarios as to what a reconciled Australia might look like.

He hopes to hold four dialogues, the first Scenario Dialogue Project to be workshopped in June 2011, with the participation of influential people across the corporate, government and civil society sectors engaging in a process that might help reframe the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This is a structured process drawing on international experience whereby possible future scenarios are described. It was used successfully in South Africa where a highly diverse group of influential leaders constructed a set of stories about how a peaceful and prosperous transition to democratic government comprising all inhabitants might unfold.

Thanks to these efforts, a peaceful transition took place. The Scenario Dialogue Project should coincide with the planned referendum on constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Australians. Professor Dodson feels this dialogue process has the potential "to shift Australians out of the polarised arguments about past culpability, present policies and advocated vision" and to create a renewed nation. <http://ipdru.arts.unsw.edu.au>

Pat Zinn

Constitutional Amendment

Sydney's Mayor, Clover Moore, welcomed the State Parliament's recognition of Aboriginal people as the State's and Nation's first people in our Constitution.

NSW's history before European settlement is significant and recognition has been too long coming. During debate on the *Constitution Amendment (Recognition of Aboriginal People) Bill*, Clover called for practical action to remove disadvantage and discrimination. All members of the State Parliament signed a Statement of Intent to close the equality gap on health and life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

From *Clover's State News Nov 2010*

Indigenous Archaeologists' Body Launched

Aboriginal archaeologist Dave Johnston, who runs his own archaeology company, has formed an Indigenous archaeology organisation with an initial twenty members. The organisation wants to be able to act as a lobby group on heritage issues because it feels the need to be more involved in the control of its own heritage and management. Its goal is to see archaeology being taught in Australia by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander archaeologists and to support Indigenous archaeology students.

Dave is editing a book by Australian archaeologists which will be a reference for students and professionals, and is part-way in completing a pilot study to develop an Indigenous community-based approach to sustainable cultural tourism. He is working towards "further recognition of the unique part Aboriginal heritage has played in Australia's history and that we have a national obligation to ensure that part of our history is not ignored".

Pat Zinn



Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

New Way of Thinking Turns Community Around

In the remote Pitlands in South Australia, comprising 4300 Anangu, Pitjantjajara and Yankunytjatjara (APY) people, new police stations have been opened at 3 townships, - Ernabella, Mimli and Amata, in an effort to build confidence and trust and to combat lawlessness and crimes against children.

All police have been carefully selected, some conversant with Aboriginal languages. These officers had to pass a psychological aptitude test and were selected for their problem-solving abilities and willingness to engage with Aboriginal culture, because they have to work with families in complex situations. They are expected to stay for 2 years and invest personal time in getting to know the people. The numbers of police and child protection case managers have tripled compared to previous times. In the past there were just seven officers covering an area the size of a small European country, having to deal with petrol-sniffing, domestic violence, alcoholism and child abuse.

New housing is being provided and others refurbished; and already petrol sniffing has dropped dramatically and there is less drinking. There are more children in schools and they are staying longer. There are 200 twenty-one-year-olds doing year 12 subjects so they can take up Tafe, courses and efforts are being made to maximise job opportunities for young school leavers because the law and order problems cannot be solved unless young people are working. All of the communities have agreed to a local plan that requires them to participate in projects, including maintaining houses, community safety and security. There is a definite change in attitude now, with the realisation that children must be educated in order to have economic development and jobs. Crime rates may go up initially because more people are reporting crime, but this means that the level of safety will increase.

Overcoming years of neglect will take time, but now there is hope for the future.

Pat Zinn



Pioneer Activist Dr. Roberta (Bobbi) Sykes Mourned

Activist, poet and author Bobbi Sykes died on 14th November after a long illness, aged 67. Her white mother refused to divulge the identity of Sykes' father but her contribution to the Koori political struggle was immense.

She was the first executive secretary of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy and was arrested in 1972 outside Canberra's Parliament House. As a worker and advisor in Aboriginal health and education, she won a scholarship to Harvard University and set up the Black Women's Action in Education Foundation, renamed the Roberta Sykes Action in Education Foundation in 2006. The Foundation supports black Australians to assume positive roles across the spectrum of career and leadership choices, including through scholarly pursuits. She wrote a three-part autobiography for which she was awarded the \$22,000 Nita B Kibble Award and will be remembered not only for her writing but also for her passion for human rights and devoting her life to getting justice for Aboriginal people. Professor Larissa Behrendt, herself a Harvard graduate, acknowledges that she would not have gone to Harvard were it not for Bobbi, and has paid tribute in the following words - "she broke down doors so others could follow through....she was a trailblazer and she has left an amazing legacy". Vale Bobbi!

Pat Zinn



At and Beyond the Rocks

Reminder of OWN Matters Roster

Hi to everyone, from both the *OWN Matters* Editorial Committee and the OWN NSW Management Team.

Both the editorial team and our readers would like to see greater variety in our magazine. The only way this is going to happen is if our readers write, so that we get different ideas and viewpoints. We have also been a bit light-on with articles in BTR. We discussed this at our recent strategic planning workshop and have decided to ask every group to contribute more regularly. This does not mean it has to be the report for BTR. Someone from your group might write a story, or a letter or an article on anything that takes their fancy.

We are drawing up a roster, and are asking two groups each month to make sure they send in something for the magazine. You might find it so easy, that you do it frequently, and that would be even better. You might send in a couple of contributions when it's your month. We simply want to hear what you have to say.

This is the roster for this year, but if you send something from your group every month it would be great.

February	Sydney	and	Wyong
March	Blacktown	and	Wollondilly
April	Hastings	and	Bankstown
May	Newcastle	and	Sutherland
June	Illawarra	and	SHOWN
July	Northside	and	Penrith
August	Nowra	and	Parramatta
September	Macarthur	and	Banks Greek
October	Hills	and	Sydney
November	Bankstown	and	Sutherland
December	Newcastle	and	Illawarra

Some groups will find their name there twice. I must think you are twice as keen! But don't forget, you can write as frequently as you like.

If your name is on the roster, and you don't send us anything, we will just leave a blank space where we were hoping your article would be.

Lorraine Inglis

Wyong OWN

OWN Wyong hold their monthly meeting on the first Monday of each month at Rose Cottage Wyong. Some of our members enjoy lunch before the meeting at Legends Bakery. Quiche with lovely fresh salad is a popular choice and only \$6.00 including coffee!

Our member Margaret has kindly compiled a list of outings for us. Among the highlights have been ABC Building in Sydney, The Elephant Shop at Cooranbong, Hunter Valley Gardens and St Barnabas' Church and Lavender Farm at Yarramalong Valley. Equally, visits to some of our members' homes (Bev, Margaret and Jenny) "bring a plate luncheons" have been very enjoyable.

We also invite various speakers to our meetings. On occasions we are involved with meeting up with Newcastle OWN for meeting and lunch.

All of our members contribute in various ways to ensure the running of OWN is a success. Thank you to June Goss for the informative letters, advising "What's going on". Myself, well I look after the money. I must admit though I often feel tempted to flee to some exotic location with the funds!!! Well, on second thoughts, I would surely miss being a member of such a lovely warm group of ladies.

Happy New Year everybody!

Rita Millar

Contemporary Chinese Painting with an Australian Perspective

The Older Women's Network Northside together with the Australian Chinese Painting Society is running Chinese Painting classes on *Contemporary Chinese Painting with an Australian Perspective*

Classes will be held between 1 - 3pm, every Friday for 10 weeks. Commencing Friday 4th February 2011, at The Studio, Dougherty Centre, 7 Victor Street, Chatswood.

Cost for tuition is \$150 for 10 weeks.

Places are limited. Please call 0416 166 789 for booking and enquiries.

Rhoda Sexton

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Australia Website

It is with much enthusiasm that I write to you to share some good news.

We have now an OWN Australia Website and an Intranet system for all OWN members to communicate with each other electronically.

The VOICE Project has developed a friendly and easy to use internet communication system (similar to email) called 'Intranet'. Through the Intranet all OWN groups across Australia can chat with each other, share information about the work they've been doing, access resources such as submissions, advocacy letters and reports and even look at photos of events and activities ran by OWN. All the communication happens among members only; the public cannot see any of the information lodged here. The Intranet allows members to 'meet' and have discussions that might usually occur at committee or group meetings, where strategies for lobbying politicians, Government or other decision makers are set in a friendly and confidential environment. Through the Intranet we can also 'talk' about activities, programs, ideas and our future plans for our groups in a peer-to-peer setting, and store our submissions, letters of advocacy, reports, newsletters and photos as if we had our own office with a filing cabinet. All this happens electronically. Members are issued a login name and password, and this opens the doors to our Intranet. It is very easy to use and there are instructions available to learn from basic to advance levels.

The OWN Australia website address is: www.ownaustralia.org.au

Once you open our website you'll find a link to the intranet, named '**members only**'. You click there and you'll have access to our own 'electronic' office, with people coming in and out for a chat, members showing photos of events, sharing ideas or posting a comment that you can reply to, as you would do in a two-way conversation. You may even check the documents in our filing cabinet, and pull out a good submission for funding, print it and use it, adapting it to your own group's needs.

The Intranet allows us to pull together a wealth of information, expertise, ideas and knowledge

from thousands of OWN members across Australia. Activities programs, ideas on starting new groups, policies and rules for running meetings, strategies to increase membership, discussions on training for members, or proposals for the next OWN Australia conference can all be shared in our 'electronic' OWN Australia office. The Intranet brings us closer together, making us stronger as an organisation with a good presence across the country.

If you already have been introduced to the Intranet and have your own personal login name and password, I hope you are visiting it often and are enjoying having access to this communication. If you are new to the Intranet, please email me at roxana.rascon@inet.net.au so that I can send you an Instructions Manual and create a login name and password for you. Please mention in your email the name of the OWN group you belong to, so that I also get to know the groups that have been contacting me. As not every OWN member has access to the internet or has computer knowledge, I want to make sure that at least one or two members per group has access to the Intranet.

Roxana Rascon

VOICE Project Coordinator, OWN Australia

roxana.rascon@inet.net.au

Vale Moira McGuinness

I am sorry to announce the passing of Moira McGuinness, MBE on 18th January, aged 87.

I'm afraid that I have no other information at this stage.

Moira was my inspiration when joining OWN, her knowledge of all things political and her belief in women's rights. Her devotion to her husband, Jack, through all his problems, her conversations with my husband through his troubles. I will always remember Moira as a very special person.

Although we had not communicated for a few years, due to her dementia, I always remembered her birthday and thought of her every St. Patrick's day. *Danny Boy* was her favourite song.

She will be remembered.

Sally Jones

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS * NEWS FROM THE GROUPS * NEWS FROM THE GROUPS * NEWS FROM THE GROUPS * NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Advocacy Issues

Voluntary Euthanasia

In last month's *OWN Matters*, inspired by Nancy Brown, I called for further discussion on the issue of voluntary euthanasia, which I mentioned is not strictly speaking just an older woman's issue, but concerned men too.

This elicited a long email from a reader, Mr Bill Alcock in Port Macquarie. Thank you Bill. Due to the length of the piece we have had to edit it for publication.

This coincided with the release of the Greens position paper on The Rights of the Terminally Ill. Again we have reproduced an extract here with a link for those readers who would like to explore the issue further.

Pat Zinn

Living Death

It is inhumane to leave those who have lost quality of life to linger indefinitely; we do not do this to our pet animals. Personally at 85 years of age I fear degeneration much more than I fear death.

Why didn't the recent Commission into Aged Care mention Voluntary Euthanasia in its findings and recommendations? Surely it is just common-sense not to spend scarce health care resources on forcing patients to continue in care if they feel they have reached the end of life's road? The majority of these patients would welcome the opportunity to make a choice for a dignified and peaceful death, and I cannot understand why the government will not grant approval to those who have documented this choice in an advance care directive.

The rapid increase of the shameful death is being fuelled by an ageing population and a lack of foresight over how to deal with the ultimate consequences of the medical advances which keep people alive for longer.

The care people receive in nursing homes continues to receive major criticism, not just in the UK but around the world. The most common concerns surround lack of attention to the cultural needs and cognitive status of the residents; their former lives are all but ignored. When we interview nursing home residents through our research, they tell us that they feel they lead useless lives, are a burden to others, have no future, and suffer psychologically and physically. The fear of abandonment expressed by so many elderly people is frequently realised in full at many of these institutions. Dying today is becoming increasingly tragic and antisocial.

Today, although people still expect these kinds of death, medical advances and a growing dementia epidemic mean that we experience a prolonged death. Taking so long to die when you are so old that you become confused,

unmanageable and unrecognisable to friends, makes the way we are likely to die uncertain.

For governments and policy makers the best solution to this problem has been to build nursing homes - some people describe this as the final solution.

I believe that increasing numbers of elderly and terminally ill people will turn to suicide in order to take control and manage their own death. There are approximately one million suicides per year worldwide, and the largest age-related grouping is for those over 80 years of age. Old people intent on suicide seem very serious about their decision to die; they are less likely to give a warning, and are far more likely to complete a suicide than other ages. (50 per cent of over 65s who try to kill themselves through suicide succeed in doing so, compared to 25 per cent in younger age groups.)

This is not about the well-publicised individuals who insist on their right to die, this is about ordinary older people who do not want to face disability, pain, cognitive impairment, and loss of bodily and social autonomy and dignity that old age can bring.

When asked, respondents to a survey on why they might not want to live to 100 said that being a burden to others, losing the ability to be active and useful, losing the ability to think and reason clearly and the desire to avoid prolonged suffering, were the key reasons offered as to why finding the right timing for death was important.

Governments and individuals need to tackle the issue of how we care for the dying before it becomes a major crisis. Whether it is introducing more liberal policies that enable people to better manage how they die, a closer examination of medical ethics, better training for nursing homes or support for people who care for elderly - something needs to happen.

We need to tackle the subject of dying head on. Talking about dying, let alone our own death, is not a popular theme for politicians or public debate, but there is no escape from the tragedy that will befall many of us as we age.

(edited) Bill Alcock, Port Macquarie



Advocacy Issues

The Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill 2010

The Greens' *Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill 2010* will enable terminally ill patients, of sound mind and whose pain and suffering cannot be alleviated, to voluntarily request and receive assistance from a medical practitioner to end their own lives.

Unfortunately the best palliative care does not provide relief for approximately five per cent of terminally ill patients, who suffer excruciating pain at the end of their lives. This bill enables those small numbers of terminally ill people to take control of their own dying if that is their wish

- Some individuals with terminal illnesses suffer excruciating pain and loss of dignity prior to their death.
- It is currently illegal for doctors to assist these individuals to voluntarily terminate their life in such circumstances.
- Individuals should have the right to die in comfort, in dignity and at the time of their choosing, if they so require, in strictly controlled circumstances.
- This right should not be impinged upon by those with differing religious, ethical and personal beliefs. Those that do not want to use the legislation have no obligation to do so.
- Legislation for voluntary euthanasia has overwhelming public support. A recent Newspoll puts this at 86.5 per cent in New South Wales.
- Voluntary euthanasia for the terminally ill is legal and operating successfully in other countries.

For further info see:

<http://greensmps.org.au/category/issues/health-wellbeing/euthanasia>

Housing Issues

NSW goes to the polls on March 26. Now is the time to press our politicians to commit to fair and just solutions to our housing problems.

We have identified nine solutions to nine pressing housing problems facing NSW. **Access, Choice, and Liveability** are the key features to focus on. We think almost every problematic issue in our housing system can be organised under these headings. A fair housing system gives **access** to affordable housing, **choice** to fit individual needs, and a **liveable**, well-designed sustainable home for all.

The pamphlet, other supporting documents including fact sheets for NSW and key electorates can be downloaded from our website www.sheltersnsw.org.au

You can also join us on facebook <http://www.facebook.com/sheltersnsw>

Source: Shelter N.S.W.

HECS for the Elderly

This is the comment about Productivity Commission's Draft Report, *Caring for Older Australians* from Beth Eldridge and used in the *Sydney Morning Herald* headline last weekend.

The Commission conducted an Inquiry into the social, clinical and institutional aspects of aged care in Australia and included residential and community care.

The report calls for older people to pay more for their care and recommends that the family home will be counted towards a person's ability to pay.

The March *OWN Matters* will have more information. The daily papers are having something to say.

Public consultations will be held in all states. The NSW consultation will be held on Monday 28 March at 8.30 am-5 pm at Medina on Crown, 259 Crown Street, Surry Hills.

You can view or request a copy of the draft report at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/aged-care/draft>

OWN NSW will be making a submission and we would like to know what you think. Please let us know by mail to:

OWN NSW,
87 Lower Fort Street,
Millers Point NSW 2000
or email to info@ownnsw.org.au
by March 14.

Betty Johnson

Humour in Adversity

Yet again Brisbane has been inundated by its river. The 1974 flood and its consequences went largely unheeded, but the fortitude and irrepressible humour of Queenslanders remains. I'll give you an example of that later on.

At the time of the 1974 flood June West and I were working for a Brisbane-based publishing house called Jacaranda Press, later taken over by American publishing giant John Wiley & Sons. Jacaranda Press was founded in 1954 by one of Australian publishing's all-time characters, the late Brian Clouston, AM. Australian publishing – and particularly our educational publishing – owes much to Clouston, and the debt has never been fully recognized.

Since the early days of settlement, British publishers had regarded Australia as their own parish, and had established enough influence to preclude the lawful indent of books from other countries. With typical British disdain for anything colonial, they returned, unread, manuscripts from Australian authors who later became world famous. *The Bulletin* did its best, but it was a magazine publisher and no match for the British moguls.

In the mid-20th-century the most persistent cry for Australian books came from teachers, who were tired of teaching a syllabus based solely on British text books written for a British syllabus based on the British way of life. Who would have the courage, the sheer cheek, to confront the power of the established British book trade and produce school texts for Australian kids, based on the Australian experience? Who would kick this lucrative market, that the Brits had claimed as their own, from under their complacent feet? Clouston would.

Predictably, having seen Jacaranda's writing on the wall, British publishers quickly set about establishing a list of Australian authors and Australian text books, but the wily Queenslanders had already done his homework. Or was it his pubwork? After drinking gallons of XXXX with the teaching profession at every level, he not only knew what they wanted, he also knew that well-written Australian texts would win every time. He had the contacts, he knew the good writers and he knew they'd write for him, on every subject in the syllabus.

June and I, who had daily contact with the teaching profession at the time, still remember the absolute joy and relief displayed by Australian teachers in the 1970s on the publication of Australian reading material for schools, not to mention source material for Australian history and other ground-breaking teaching material designed specifically for our schools. (Former infant school teachers may remember the big red box called Triad, a breakthrough in making maths concepts understandable to very young schoolchildren.) That all goes back to Brian Clouston, who had the courage and the vision to adopt innovative approaches to education.

Those of us who knew this larrikin publisher remember him fondly, and with enormous respect. We worked hard for him, but we played hard too, and we often encountered – uproariously – his wacky sense of the ridiculous. Jacaranda Press prospered. We even had our own theme song, borrowed from another Australian company.

“Why *I like Aeroplane Jelly?*” people would ask him. “It doesn't even mention Jacaranda.”

“Because we all like singing that one best,” was his usual reply, and we all saw the powerful logic in that. A touch of wackiness never went astray in Jacaranda circles.

In the 1974 flood, Jacaranda's entire warehouse of books, located in low-lying Geebung, was inundated, and water was half way up the walls of the upstairs offices. This gave rise to a famous Clouston statement – and a prime example of Queenslanders' humour in adversity – when he claimed to be the only Managing Director in Australia who had swum the length of his Company's Boardroom.

Helen Young

Memories of a Bag Lady

She sat in the corner waiting. Waiting for something to happen. Was he coming? Will he come?

“He said 11.30, it's 12 now, I can't wait any longer, I'll be late for work”. Mary's chair clattered to the floor of the small café. “He said he would be here, I know he did, he said 11.30... I know” Mary's voice was becoming quite shrill as she gathered her bags, scattered around the floor.

The other customers in the café were feeling uncomfortable and making efforts to leave when Brian, the manager, came over to the small unkempt woman at table 4.

“Sit yourself back down Mary. I've had a phone call. He'll be coming later. Here have a sandwich”

Mary settled down in her chair, “When he does come I'll give him a piece of my mind for keeping me waiting.” Mary was waving her arms in the face of the manager.

“Quieten down Mary and eat your sandwich, you are disturbing the customers.” Brian straightened up and spoke to the onlookers, “It's OK folks, Mary has been waiting for her Beau for twenty years now. Any day now, he will come.” And with a wink he moved back to the counter.

Mary sat, eagerly eating her sandwich and mused to herself. “Mmm chicken again. Tomorrow I'll try 'Bertha's on The Corner,' they give me pies and coffee.”

Coral Littlewood

OWN NSW Theatre Group



The Theatre Group resumed on 18 January but devoted their first meeting to celebrations and farewells. Birthdays are always important in our group but two out of the four this time were for long standing members namely Norma Bastock and Jo Allon. Jo was also retiring as our Coordinator so our celebrations were tinged with sadness but we all wished her well and hoped that she would stay in touch. Our brilliant pianist, Rhona Nicholson, also retired so she got to cut a yummy, exclusive cake with Jo and Norma.

On this day we were also fortunate enough to meet and greet two new and very important people for our group. Alison Ingram will be our new Director and we already know that she has joined our “Mutual Admiration Society”. We can’t wait to start working her and hope that our association will be long and fruitful. Our new pianist, Janice Beahan, also popped in to meet us and we welcome her and hope that she will also enjoy her vital role in our group.

At our next meeting all positions were declared open and we are pleased to announce that Rita Tratt will be our new Coordinator. She will be ably assisted by another long term member, Brigid Sen, who volunteered to be our Chairperson. Veronica Willis will continue her prominent role as Stage and Props Manager while Norma continues to count the cash as our Social Treasurer. Our Public Relations and Marketing Officer will be Joan Modder and she will also be our representative at OWN NSW meetings. Marjorie

will continue in her role at OWN Sydney as well as all her invaluable computer work such as providing schedules and scripts. Halcyon Evans will look after the Running Sheets as well as any artwork. The three “New Kids on the Block” will share House and Record Keeping and look after our great new banner.

What an exciting year we are in for as we begin to prepare our new ‘Village People Show’ as well as continuing “Don’t Knock Your Granny!”. Stay tuned for the next instalment in the life and times of the Theatre Group.

Denise Miel

Centre Stage

by Dorothy Cora

\$15.00 plus \$7

Available from Older Women’s
Network NSW

Ph (02) 9247 7046

admin@ownnsw.org.au

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City of Sydney

Letters to the Editor



Dear Team,

Congratulations to everyone on the new look for *OWN Matters*. It's timely and it's good.

Perhaps it's also timely to revisit the issue of Aged Care. They are going to hold one of their repeated inquiries again! The Community Aged Care Packages have failed in the purpose for which they were intended. The lack of reliable transport is another big issue, creating a lot of unnecessary anxiety about getting to appointments or missing them.

Best wishes to all.

Helen Monaghan

Deadly!

Congratulations on the latest Newsletter – just deadly!!!

Lorraine McGee-Sippel

Greetings From Noreen

This is a boundlessly loving greeting to all those who have enriched my life, partnered important periods of it, and given crucial support during the difficult periods, including more recently, when you helped me adapt to residential care.

My family has shouldered responsibilities for me and delivered

pleasures and comforts which ease my condition. I can never thank my immediate and extended family enough; nor indeed friends – particularly Dorothy Cora, for her support and help (her research has resulted in extended advice about Advance Directives being available for residents of Big Sister Hostel).

My son Rex and daughter-in-law Helen funded the printing of Dorothy's 'portrait' of me as an activist and I hope Older Women's Network (OWN) benefited from its sales. A recreation officer at Big Sister bought four copies (for staff and residents) which are still circulating. Also son Roy and daughter-in-law, Beverley, have given me ongoing support before and since I came to Big Sister. This continues despite Bev's continuing recovery from a critical heart attack during bushwalking – an experience that has been publicised across much of Australia, because of the dramatic rescue of her by school boys who applied immediate CPR and got an ambulance.

So, I thank all of you, friends and family, while at the same time giving special thanks to those who have devoted extra time to maintaining connections and have organised events that I enjoyed enormously – particularly of course the celebration of my 90th birthday.

Of course there are not the opportunities here for those one sees in the current activism of Older Women's Network (OWN) members. But though I could learn new tricks from you, old ones in company with likeminded women can get results. So while applauding the enormous progress made by OWN in NSW and interstate, and by many individually, I'm also pleasantly surprised at the opportunities to contribute to events which are provided here. And I hope for more.

Newspaper articles regularly criticise the inadequate resources for aged care. In the circumstances it is a revelation to see the devotion to their duties by Big Sister staff who come from overseas or are Australian born. I've made a submission for an award for their recognition and assure you that it is in no way exaggerated. I also consulted with other residents who approved it. It's a wonder that aged care still gets recruits when wages are so low for the skills and effort required for such work.

I apologise to the many – in the family of OWN and in my extended family, who have been neglected by me in the way of correspondence. In fact I must confess that what was once a pleasure is now a chore – sitting in front of a computer, or indeed sitting at all, for any length of time. The pain can be excruciating despite the various comforts provided by Beverley Hewett in particular.

Love to you all.

Noreen (Hewett)

Memories

How lovely to hear news of Margaret Howard and her partner Yvonne. I have warm memories of Margaret and the support and friendship she gave in 1992 following the death of Muriel Ashcroft, the coordinator of newly formed Gosford OWN. When organising our first Seminar and applying for funding, Margaret was there for us, quietly encouraging us giving us the confidence we needed. I do remember Prudence very well, not my idea of a pet but intriguing to watch her appear popping her head from the collar of Margaret's jacket.

Thank you Joy and Renate for news of Margaret and memories of all the wonderful women who have been part of OWN over the years.

Nancy Brown

Letters to the Editor

Razzamattaz

I was just browsing your newsletter and discovered your article [sadly] regarding Bernice Lynch.

I had the pleasure of regularly performing with Bernice when I was quite young many years ago. Here is an old photo of Razzamattaz 6 I do remember we were called Sugar and Spice for a very brief period but I left that when I had my first child in 1986. Bernice was great- fun, encouraging and a wonderful entertainer. She was my introduction to the world of gigs, my first gig was at a pub called the Sussex Hotel in Sydney around 1978 6~ all girls jazz band to an all female ["closed club"] audience. Good memories!!

Cathy Connor



Sydney International Womens Festival: 1979 Razzamattaz
Terry McDonough :bass Monique Lysiak: Clarinet Loraine Rutherford:drums
Cathy Connor: Trombone Bernice Lynch: Guitar Ione Harbourne:Trumpet

Magpie Millinery

I'm sitting in the garden reading the *Herald*, minding my own business. Down comes a magpie and lands on my head ... not pecking, just sitting on my shiny, newly washed hair. I can feel his claws settling comfortably, he's found a perfect landing place.

But not for long – I swipe him with my paper. Now I wonder – should I have left him unswiped? Would he have stayed there and allowed me to wear him like a hat?

Dorothy Cox

An Encounter

It happened when I was waiting for a seat outside a Shopping Mall as my carer had to park her car far off in the carpark. A man sat next to me, so as usual I decided to chat – asking him if he was Chinese. I was surprised when he answered “No, I am Russian, I was born in Siberia”. “I said, I've been to Russia, I travelled across on the Trans Siberian to Moscow after a trip on a small Russian ship across the

sea of Japan, where we experienced a typhoon – but that's another story.

He said he came from near Ikcoso, I said we were not allowed to that place when we travelled but I have forgotten the name of the place where we had been barred (maybe Boak Deri)

I asked him did he like Australia. He did indeed and had children and grandchildren here. He was very happy to be here, and hoped that all his grandchildren would grow up to be little Aussies. He agreed that OZ was much more democratic and egalitarian (didn't know whether he knew the latter word).

It was a most interesting conversation. So next time have a chat when you have time as you never know what and where the person you are talking to is from.

Enid Harrison



Australia Day

I was sitting catching a cool breeze on my terrace, marveling at the liquid notes of a magpie as he had his post-breakfast gargle. Could anything be more Australian? Yes, it could ... at that moment a large Blue-tongued Lizard waddled towards me and settled himself on my foot.

Helen Young

Our OWN Stories



Adventures with a Walking Frame

Walking the peaceful streets of the charming old Sydney suburb of Fairlight is the balm of my life. A recent hip fracture forgotten, I sign myself out at the Hostel office and down the ramp we go, my trusty trolley and I, to discover what delights the world has to offer us today.

Away from the hustle and bustle of Manly below, you could be in an English village between the wars, with its old stone and timber houses in their little cottage gardens. But that's as far as it gets . . . glorious Australian Angophoras line the street and, because the season has dictated it, the bark is peeling like sunburnt skin, to reveal a smooth trunk the exact colour of new Sydney sandstone.

Two wild storms have spread the fallen bark far and wide . . . oh, take away your brooms, you tidy people, and let us enjoy their pinkish cream undersides a little longer! I used a curling piece of bark once, as a sort of boat, to display my treasures. Most of my visitors loved this use for the bark; not so the spider that came crawling out, scowling darkly.

Bright yellow hibiscus flowers, innocent victims of the storms, lighten up the lawns like fallen stars. They are not as innocent as they seem – I turn one upside down, to find a cheeky yellow-striped bottom.

The arching canes of a dark purple bougainvillea in full bloom stop me in my tracks. As I gaze at it with delight, a voice says: "Would you like to see it from inside the gate?" . . . "Oh yes, please" . . . and from that vantage point it is even more dazzling. So is his veg. and herb garden.

His wife comes out to join in the garden chatter. She invites me in for a cup of tea, and I have discovered two more friendly souls.

Then we're off again, my trolley and me, collecting treasures – human and otherwise – along our merry way.

Dorothy Cox

Summer Reverie

Today I am deliberately wasting time. My Devoted Spouse and I are on a brief summer beach holiday with extended family members to both renew close ties and celebrate DS's 70th birthday. We've been working at both goals with admirable devotion and enthusiasm. In between, we've been shopping, lunching and sightseeing energetically together. Not a moment has been lost to inactivity. Until today.

Now, in longed-for solitude, I am doing nothing, sprawled on the white cotton coolness of a vast bed while gazing into lush green rainforest which stands between our holiday house and the rolling surf that is rhythmically booming and hissing in the background. Bright noonday sun highlights thick green vines festooning lanky casuarinas and dragon flies flit lazily to and fro. Whip birds call intermittently, their delayed two-part song teasing my mind, while a light breeze stirring the indoor stillness caresses my skin so subtly that I have to think about it to realise its presence.

For the first time in our hectic holiday, as my mind lets go of lists, plans and essential tasks, fond memories of past beach holidays surface briefly. I recall youthful energy that thought nothing of burning heat or oppressive humidity, that welcomed sun-kissed skin and sand between the toes and relive the delight of splashing in the waves and drying off on the hot sand before diving in to do it all again. For a magic interlude, such memories supplant the very different realities of my now senior years.

I stretch lazily, drinking in the summer loveliness as if it were fine wine delighting the palate and easing the mind. For a tantalising hour, every part of me relishes such welcome sensuality.

Eventually and reluctantly, I rise to return to the world of here and now, but I have already stored in my mind's treasure trove the memory of my summer reverie.

Bev Cameron



Australian Tales

Goldfields Cockatoo

My father was born in Kalgoorlie in 1911. On his mother's side, he was descended from Cornish miner, Benjamin Bishop Hocking, who emigrated to the Victorian goldfields in 1856, following the downturn of mining in Cornwall.

It was not until 1896 that, accompanied by his eldest son, Benjamin Mathews Hocking, he joined the goldrush to Kagloorlie. A photograph of them, taken in the same year outside their hessian humpy in Coolgardie, shows the primitive living conditions of the time. Four years later they were joined by Ben junior's wife and children, the eldest of whom would eventually become my maternal grandmother.

The subject of my story became a member of the family a number of years later, when the publican of the Boulder Hotel offered Cocky in settlement of a debt he owed to the husband of my great aunt, Milcah. Prior to that, Cocky had been kept in a cage in the front bar of the hotel, so his language was colourful, to say the least!

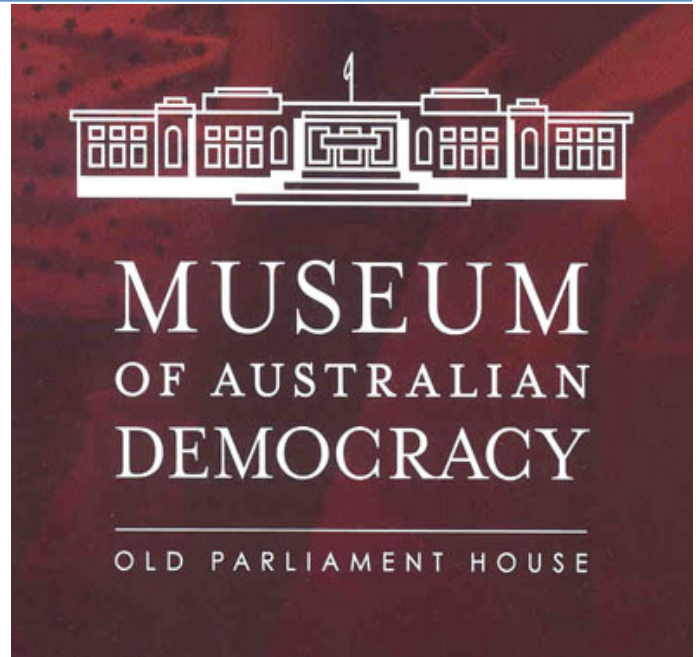


Every Christmas they travelled to Perth to spend it with other family members, so Cocky went too. Famously, on their return journey one year, instead of putting him in the luggage van, one of the porters stole Cocky and ran off with him. The relatives on the platform pursued the culprit and reclaimed Cocky, who was left with my maternal grandmother. She became so attached to him that he remained with her until she died.

In the late 1930's, my family relocated briefly to Perth and I must have been about 6 years old when I first met Cocky, who by that time lived with Dad's Aunt Mary. I had been forewarned not to get too close to his cage, as he was in the habit of enticing one to "Scratch, Cocky", with a tin over one wicked eye. Dad never forgot Cocky biting his bottom when he was a boy.

Nobody knew how old Cocky was when he died. Aunt Mary persuaded someone at the museum to stuff him and when she eventually entered a nursing home, Cocky went too and had pride of place on my great aunt's bedhead.

June West



The Museum of Australian Democracy

Visiting family in our National Capital over Christmas/New Year offered me a great opportunity to take in some of the exhibitions in Canberra. For me, these were splendidly presented, diverse and stimulating –and hard on my feet.

This new exhibition, just opened last year, is actually **all** of Old Parliament House with some new galleries. This makes sense of its rather ponderous title, and I question the word "museum" for something as ongoing as democracy. I visited just two galleries, the first devoted to the history and heritage of democracy from the early concept of Pericles, 2000 years ago, right through the struggles and revolutions of different countries and societies as they sought to establish democracies. We ordinary people fought military dictatorships, all powerful monarchies, established religions and powerful class establishments. Some gave their lives, I experienced this as a dynamic series of very small exhibit spaces, showing moving personal histories, faded documents, peppered with questions demanding answers.

The other gallery, "The Power of the People" practically shouts out how we the people must, must know about and exercise our freedoms, so hard won. Instead, so often we say it's all too difficult! Arguments are presented for and against compulsory voting, should we have a republic, what are the pressing issues for Australia today?? Here are recordings of protest songs, a great "Get UP" display, early newspaper reports; how women fought for and got some freedoms and how they made use of them. What a huge debt we have to early fighters for democracy here and all over the world. We must be alive to what other countries crave for and other people risk death for, even today.

Joan Modder

Life in the City

Shopping Mad

Does anybody else besides me hate the new maze that is City centre Westfield? I had occasion to go to DJ's just after Christmas and needed to shop in the Market Street store. My bus drops me right outside the Elizabeth Street entrance, from where it is a simple matter of going down one floor, out through a convenient passage at the back, round the corner and into the Market Street food hall of DJ. Or so I thought...

OK as far as through the passage, only to be faced with a swirling maze of shiny marble tiles and shiny metal pillars and corridors leading off in all directions, shops I'd never seen before, shops I'd never even heard of, and no signs to anything, anywhere. No straight lines, either. So I took a route that would, as near as I could make out, lead me to the entrance I was looking for. Instead, escalators! I tried going up – no good. I tried going down, and round, by which time I had lost all sense of direction and was growing less than full of goodwill to all men.

I saw Myers signposted. MYERS? I WANT DAVID JONES! By this time, too, my somewhat unreliable waterworks were urging me to find a Smallest Room, and after a few more false starts, find one I did. Only I might have known it wouldn't be quite as straightforward as that: there was a sign, yes, but on the corner of a corridor which led only to storerooms. In the other direction, the Gents was marked loud and clear (Digression: why is the men's loo always first in line?), and outside it several men were sitting lounging around on sofas. Ah! Waiting for their womenfolk! The prize must be nigh. So I ran the gauntlet of the stares of lots of bored males to the loo, only to find there were just TWO (apart from another set tucked well out of sight in the basement five floors down) and, of course, a long queue. But I made it. In time! On my way out I was somewhat gratified to see several other women looking equally bemused by the apparently vanished loo.

When I did at last, by sheer bloodymindedness, stamina and desperation, find my way to DJ, Market Street, it was only to find they had sold out of the item I wanted. Of course they had. So the helpful girl advised me to try Myers (after all that), and then began the next phase of How to Drive Your Customers Mad in one easy lesson. I found Myers, I DID! But there was an escalator; up? Or down? I tried down: wrong. Back to where I started; now find a window to look out of – with difficulty – to get my bearings from the street outside, since by now I could have been in Bondi Junction for all I knew; aha! there's Market Street and I can see I'm now two levels too low.

On the fifth floor I find what I've been looking for, buy it then and there, none of my usual go-away-and-think-about-it. Then I head back to DJ braving the hell hole yet again, and why? Because I want to do it in reverse and see for myself exactly where they have hidden that left turn from Elizabeth to Market Street, and I do, and it's still there!

So if you are foolhardy enough to venture into that gleaming tribute to Money, Westfield Maze, turn very sharp left, behind a pillar, ignore the shiny marble and lure of the escalators, look neither right nor left, and you will find yourself in DJ's Food Hall, back entrance.

If you can't find your way out again, there's a handy little corridor – somewhere in the Maze – quite tucked away and deserted, and very near "the amenities", where I'm sure you could spend the rest of your life unnoticed, but do take a cushion or two, just in case; that marble may be glossy but it's also bloody hard.

Brigid Sen

Choker Chain Gang

My daughter, the owner of Molly a Labradoodle, is in America, so once again I am in charge of said dog duties.

Now Molly, Molls for short, is a very nervous dog. In order to have a relative calm and normal walk, I arise at 6am, clip on a choker chain (on the dog, not me) and away we go towards Redfern Park. I cannot go into the park because there will be other dogs in the park and they like to make newcomers welcome by sniffing the newcomers hind quarters, Molly thinks this is far too personal, so we bypass the park and walk down streets and laneways.

We had our first trauma this morning when a council truck pulled out of a laneway as we were about to cross the lane. Molly screamed, I pulled tight on the choker chain, she could not breathe and the trauma was forgotten when she was trying to regain her breathing ability.

We continued on our doggie way sniffing trees and bushes, she does not do any business until we get home in case someone sees her.

We went as far as Botany Road where there is a shop that sells old Christmas decorations and they had left a huge Father Christmas bobbing about outside, well Molly did not only scream, I thought she was going to pass out, pulling on the choker chain did not work this time so I bent down and cuddled her until she calmed down. She reluctantly continued with the walk and we both sighed with relief when we turned into the street next to our street, but oh dear, there was an ambulance outside one of the units and the Ambos had left one of their trolley beds outside, she screamed with fear, I screamed with frustration at this mutt of a dog. I had to walk in the road with her and she kept looking back in case it was chasing her.

This dog loves me I know, the feeling is not mutual. I feed her, I bathe her when necessary, I clean up her poo from the garden. I am debating whether the walks should continue because either she will be on Valium, or I will.

Josie Jackson

Your Rights in Your Hands

Right Hand, Left Hand

Did you know they only started making right and left shoes about one hundred and fifty years ago? Surprising, when so much significance has been attached through history to the right hand /left hand thing. Many religions have beliefs attached to right/left. In Hinduism, only the right hand must be used for eating, giving, receiving and offering in worship. In Islam only the right hand can be used for eating and the left must be used for any impure activity. In the Christian bible there are many references to being on the right hand of God implying being with goodness and power. In the past all kinds of beliefs were attached to left. The Latin word for left, *sinistra*, has led to the word *sinister* which now means *threatening, suggesting evil or harm*. Right is good and left is evil.

This right-handed thing became part of human culture and even invention. When they put hands on clocks, they used it. Clock hands are made to turn towards the right, clockwise is round to the right. Many devices, old and new, were made to suit right-handed users; pliers, scissors, can-openers, cameras, refrigerators, microwaves, padded kitchen mittens, guitars, golf-clubs. They have favoured the 70%-90% of the world population that is right-handed.

If you play mahjong, you have to get used to the movements in this game, which are almost all anti-clockwise. And you always have to think about it, because you have been trained into *clockwise* which is towards the right. Even when you have been playing mahjong for some time, you have to overcome your conditioning, in order to go by the left, to go anti-clockwise.

So where did this right/left get attached to political movements? If right is good, is left evil? If right is power, is left weakness? If the left is for the powerless and it struggles against the powerful, how did some associate the left as evil? Is it part of the age-old superstition about left being the opposite of goodness?

The more you can increase fear of drugs and crime, welfare mothers, immigrants and aliens, the more you can control all the people.

(Noam Chomsky)

The current leaders and would-be leaders on the right of politics and the media in the USA, who have been fostering extreme and angry beliefs and attitudes and actions, are a worry. They seem to think that they are right and that their rights are greater than the rights of others. This thinking is not new. These ideas drove Nazi Germany, Apartheid in South Africa and are part of the thinking in extremist religions and tribalism the world over. Have the rights of the Right always been more right and good than the rights of the Left?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights can't be ignored. Maybe it should be the Universal Declaration of Rights and Lefts?

Think right and think left, and think low and think high.

Oh, the thinks you can think up, if only you try.

(Dr Seuss)

Lorraine Inglis

Mobile Phone for Seniors

Research conducted by COTA (Council on the Ageing) and supported by many other organisations, clearly shows that older people cannot or choose not to access technology because of many varied reasons. In the case of mobile phones, there are hundreds of mobile phones available, but very few that are made with older people specifically in mind. These phones are not user friendly and come with features and gadgets that older people will never use. The purchase cost of the phone is also a barrier for many people. Mobile phones, specifically for older people, are now available from COTA, as an exclusive member benefit.

The COTA Mobile Phone has the following features and functions:

- Large easy-to-read screen numbers
- Large tactile buttons, three times bigger than the average mobile
- Adjustable ringing and call volume
- Hearing aid compatible
- Digital number announcer
- Hands-free speaker built in
- Weighs only 75 grams
- LED flashlight
- FM Radio
- Send and receive text SMS messages
- "SOS" button on the back

Call 1300 1400 50 visit www.cotamembership.org.au

Special Launch Price: \$99.00 incl. GST plus \$9.00 postage and handling for COTA members. For non-members \$119.00 incl. GST, plus \$9.00 postage and handling.



There are nasties in the Kitchen!

I have found one of the real pleasures of being old is that an octagerian is not held to a rigid timetable. I have time in the mornings to settle down, pick up my *“Wrap for love”* latest effort and listen to Margaret Throsby’s interview on 2FM Classical. (Believe me, classical music really does help to keep the brain ticking along!)

There I was, trying to get my knitting tension correct (I have a sneaking suspicion it alters along with the tempo of the music I am hearing), when Margaret introduced her guest. It was Bruce Louri, one of the Canadian authors of *“Slow Death by a Rubber Duck”*. His co-author and other scientific researcher was Rick Smith.

As the interview progressed I became increasingly aware that all is not well in a house and the outside world. These scientists have been investigating, and experimenting on themselves, the effects that the chemicals and plastics we use daily in our lives have upon us.

Wow! Is it scary? And like so many other chemicals used in various industries, we are not really told about them or the effect on us and on children. How many of us have *“Teflon”* coated frypans etc. in our kitchens? Every time teflon reaches a certain temperature (as in when you’re frying) it gives off the nasties that work their way into the food and then into the bloodstream.

Toss anything that is teflon-coated and go back to using what your Mum used. Teflon might be easier in the washing up but it takes ages for your body to get rid of the chemicals. By the way *“Teflon”* is produced by DuPont, famous for doing away with the hemp industry by the introduction of nylon. I think way back then hemp was called *“jute”* and it was used for all types of industrial heavy duty packaging. DuPont were also involved in the production of the first atomic bombs.

I was not quick enough to catch the complete spelling of one of the chemicals, it begins with *“phth”*, and it is found in the plastic used in products such as baby’s bottles and in rubber ducks. It has a softening effect on the plastic it is used in.

Finally I would like to tell you about what is happening to some of the world’s plastic handled ever so carelessly by humans. There are five

Gyres (whirling currents) in the northern areas of the world’s oceans where the vital currents slowly change direction. Slowly swirling in the currents, and over one thousand kilometres across, are solid masses of plastic. They are made up of plastic bottles, fishing nets, plastic bags etc. They are so solid that sea birds nest on them. Some of the plastic slowly breaks down into little pieces and the birds tend to feed them to their chicks, and, of course, they die.



I think we women can help all generations by spreading the word about that nice convenient plastic and the over use of so-called *“anti-bacterial”* products. Hey, we need so many of those bacteria to build up our antibodies. We do need to *“wash our hands”*, but when I was a kid that was just the thing to do. I bet you remember having to scrub down the kitchen table with *“Pearson’s”* sandsoap, wrapping your lunch in waxed paper and putting it in a brown paper bag (the brown paper bag was usually folded and taken home for use next day).

So let’s take up the cudgel against the over use of all sorts of plastic by refusing to use it. Let’s do it for the younger and future generations and dear old Mother Earth. Use ceramics in your microwave (much safer than plastic with the dreaded *“phth...”*), use your stainless steel frying pan and you can add to the list.

What Bruce Louri said, was to look at the number in the little triangle on the bottom of the plastic container and remember: ***Four, five, one and two is the plastic good for you!***

Wow! I’ve still got time to do some more knitting. You’ve got to admit aging certainly has its benefits!

June Goss

Dark Invaders

‘Yes, Viewers, just mix one third white wine vinegar with two thirds water and you’ll have an organic spray mix to wipe out those inevitable ants that come into your home! Success guaranteed!’

Such a useful item of information from our favourite infotainment show was too good to ignore. I prepared a spray bottle ready for the next line of marauding ants that might send an exploratory vanguard into our kitchen. The current warm, humid, spring weather had already caused me to put drops of ant poison out for them several times and the long-range forecast of rain until April implies there will be many more such occasions.

Some days later, preparing a late night coffee for myself, I decided a drop of rum would add a pleasant exotic element. Reaching up to our liquor cupboard, I could only blink in appalled astonishment as I opened the doors to see a black, swarming mass of ants all over its inside walls. A carton of COKE at one end of the cupboard was solidly black with ants and on the inside of the carton walls I could see tiny white specks. Eggs! The little six-legged wretches had not only invaded our kitchen, they’d set up camp!

Careful not to collect any ants on myself, I pulled the rum bottle from the cupboard, sloshed a good swig into my coffee and stood there, sipping and fortifying myself while plotting a defence strategy. The plan included support from my Devoted Spouse [DS]. I called him to come and look. Dismayed at the sight, he checked quickly that none of his favourite beverages had been infiltrated and began emptying the cupboard while I sprayed vinegar and water like a crop duster spraying locusts. Gratified, I saw the now frantic mass slow to a stop, only a few hardy individuals struggling on. Before long, I had swept the carnage out of the cupboard. The corpses became a swirling mass of black specks at the bottom of my bucket of vinegar and water before being tossed out into oblivion.

“Well, that’s the end of one lot of dark invaders,” I told DS, adding cheerfully, “Tomorrow we can tackle the rats who seem to have returned to our ceiling for the summer holidays.” DS simply shrugged and sighed as he slumped off to bed to get over one battle and prepare for the next.

Bev Cameron

From my Journal

In Thailand we wanted to take a look at The Golden Triangle and maybe cross over the border somewhere. We hired a car plus driver for the day and travelled north to a very beautiful temple set high on a hill above the Mekong River. The Triangle itself lay on the far side, across

the wide brown waters of the Mekong with toy boats chugging their way upstream, a sandy river bank, and mountains in the hazy distance, looking peaceful and innocuous. A temple with a shining golden dome in the foreground – and a casino, red brick and conspicuous! Perhaps the heroin trade does still operate?

After that we continued to the Tha Khi Lek border-crossing to the markets we’d been told “not to miss”. You have to walk across the bridge into Myanmar, no cars allowed, streams of people going each way and a holiday atmosphere all round. We stepped out briskly on to the bridge, only to have agitated officials shouting and waving at us from the left hand side as we walked straight past the check point on the right. How was I to know we were supposed to knock on their firmly closed door? But when we had duly entered their office, the border guards turned out to be very jolly; they thought it was a huge joke that I had tried to enter Myanmar illegally. We were photographed, thumb-printed, filled in forms, signed documents, paid an exorbitant sum by Thai standards, were provided with special two page passes for the duration (and our passports retained!) – and we walked into Burma.

An absolute scrum met us – people, hawkers, hasslers trying to sell Marlborough cigarettes, pens, watches, Viagra, you name it! There was some mirth and sniggering as they offered the Viagra to Gour, occasioned by his Senior status, no doubt. He told them he didn’t need it, which made them laugh outright in appreciation. The market turned out to be covered, hundreds of small alleyways lined with tiny shops on either side, crammed with all manner of goods, people buying, bartering, trying to pass in both directions, motorbikes pushing through the thick of it – and nothing worth buying, or so it appeared. It was a far cry from the peaceful and much more sedate markets in Thailand, and I couldn’t wait to get out of there. We found a proper shop along the street and bought some incense, the only thing actually made in Burma. You’ve guessed it – everything else comes in from Thailand!

So, back across the bridge, with young boys jumping off it into the sandy banks and undergrowth a long way below, and then the whole procedure in reverse. It was as well that we had set off in good time and not followed Gour’s inclination to “explore”. Blow me down if they didn’t insist on retaining our special passes! Our passports were returned to us, but with no stamp, no official acknowledgement of our feet having stood on Burmese soil. Gour was affronted. To add insult to injury, he had really been expecting to cross into Laos, not Myanmar at all!

Brigid Sen

Get Involved!



Lost Ladies February - March 2011

Lost Ladies returned to Windmill Street on 3 February. We are looking forward to another great year.

- 10 Feb 10am at Windmill St going the to "Nicholas Harding" at S.H.Ervin entry fee: \$8
- 17 Feb 10am at Art Gallery of NSW for Rupert Bunny Tour - sorry \$12 was the best I could do.
- 24 Feb Will discuss how you feel about "Treasured" exhibition at Parramatta. Travel by train and shuttle bus (less than an hour transport to door).
- 3 March 10am National Art School Gallery Darlinghurst for Survey of Masters Graduates 2005-2009 Free.
- 10 March 10am Museum of Sydney for Martin Sharp exhibition, plus 70's photos of Kings Cross Tour, for \$5.
- 17 March 10am Museum of Contemporary Art (back door Quayside) for 2 exhibitions Olafur Eliasson and Sylvie Blocher ticketed exhibition usually \$15 for us \$10.
- 24 March 10am Art Gallery of NSW for Utamaro (Japanese wood block print maker) then Australian printmakers Margaret Preston, Thea Proctor etc. I thought this would be good to show how they were inspired by the old Japanese prints. Just \$7.

Walking for Health - a guided bush walk program specially designed for older women

Here are the dates for the 2011 walking dates and locations.

- Saturday, **12 March**, Fullers Park & Blue Gum Reserve, Chatswood, 10am - 12:30pm, Grade: Easy
- Saturday, **9 April**, North Arm Track, Mangrove Section, Castle Cove, When: 10am - 12:30pm, Grade: Medium (Some steep steps, please bring a walking stick.)
- Saturday, **7 May**, Where: Wilksch Walk, Artarmon, When: 10am - 12:30pm, Grade: Easy to medium

There is a courtesy bus at 9:30am to take you from Dougherty Centre, 7 Victor Street, Chatswood to the starting point of the walk and back.

Booking is essential, please phone 0416 166 789

Regards, Rhoda rhodasexton@gmail.com



An Edwardian Summer

There is a new exhibition at the Museum of Sydney Cnr. Bridge & Phillip Streets, Sydney, titled *An Edwardian Summer*.

Arthur Wigram Allen's exquisite photographs document the Edwardian years in Sydney. Images of bush picnics, the first surf bathing, celebrities, shipwrecks, pageants and house interiors as well as a rich selection of toys, fashions, jewellery, and artworks reveal a time of optimism, change and newfound freedoms. Kids can enjoy dress ups and craft.

An accompanying publication is available from the Museum of Sydney shop, The Mint shop and online at shop.hht.net.au.

Source: Historic Houses Trust, Naomi Hill, Marketing Asst.

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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.

10.15 - 10.45 Tai Chi. Classes have resumed for 2011.

Drumming

12.15 - 1.30pm Wednesdays, Mott Hall, Argyle St. Millers Point.

\$8 per session. Drums and gourds are provided. If you would like to drum please contact Lorraine: 9569 0051 Also please check times as some sessions in March will start and finish earlier.

Lost Ladies

10.00am every Wednesday during school terms, exploring various locations or topics of interest. Full program on page 22.

Contact Annette Butterfield: 9665 5369 email (changed) :

abutterfield_852@hotmail.com

Film Discussion group

You are invited to join us on **Tuesday 8 March**, to see *our chosen film*. Please ring Yetty on **9665 2050** to check details.

OWN NSW Quarterly Meeting

The OWN NSW Office will be closed on 17 February 2011, to allow staff and members to attend the OWN Quarterly meeting at Illawarra. See Reminder entry on page 4.

Book Club

21 February 12.30-2.30 pm at 87 Lower Fort Street. This month's book is: *The Life and Times of Harry Lavender* by Marele Day. Come at 12 and bring a sandwich for lunch at midday. Any questions, phone Anne Marie on 9622 0717. Note: Book to be discussed at the March 21 meeting is *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov.

Aboriginal Support Circle

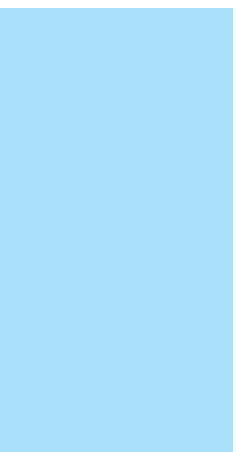
14 February 10.30 am Monday. Confirm all details with Pat Zinn: 9389 1090 or email patzinn@hotmail.com

Saturday Social Group at Birkenhead Point

We meet at 10.30 a.m. - 12.00 noon at Birkenhead Café, 1st floor Birkenhead Shopping Complex. Contacts: Nora Huppert 9181 3918 and Bev Cameron 9957 5367. The dates are Saturdays 12th and 26th for both February and March.

**IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO:
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87 Lower Fort Street
Millers Point NSW 2000**

OWN Matters



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