



# OWN MATTERS

New Home. Joan And Doug Go North. The Guardian Angel.  
Something Fishy. Give Me Stick. What Am I? Page of Poetry.  
Being Older Is Not A Problem. Best Xmas Ever. Bit By Bit.  
Brown Hiking Boots. Unite Against Racism. Feminist Difference.



## Moving in to new OWN HQ

OWN NSW will be moving  
into new premises in  
Newtown. The venue offers  
us great facilities.



## SPECIAL EDITION

In our last newsletter for 2014  
we celebrate change



## A page from our history

This issue takes a look back  
at some of the the articles,  
poetry and stories written  
by our contributors.



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## Who Are We?

The Older Women's Network (OWN) NSW is the peak body for 18 groups and 6 Wellness Centres 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 \$35 and \$44 for organisations and includes GST.

## Have your say

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.

**Send by email or mail marked Attention – Editorial Team.**

**The email address is [newsletter@ownnsw.org.au](mailto:newsletter@ownnsw.org.au).**

Please include contact details. Contributions must be received by the third Tuesday of each month.

## The Team

### Editorial Team

Lorraine Inglis, June West, and Anna Logan.

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### Mailout Team

Pat Rayne, Noel Carpenter, Veronica Willis, Corinne Campbell, Wendy Brown, Colleen Wellsmore.

**More help always welcome!**

## OWN Office

From 10am-3pm the phone is answered by one of our friendly volunteers. Out of office hours, leave a message, with your contact number.

*Produced with the assistance of the Australian Government through Ageing Disability and Home Care, Department of Family and Community Services NSW, with project funding from the NSW Department of Health, and assistance from the City of Sydney.*



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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.*

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It's official, OWN NSW and OWN Sydney will be moving to new premises in the near future. City of Sydney has supported our application to relocate to Newtown, which will take effect as soon as the lease is finalised, and with subsidised rent until June 2016.

The new venue is the Carter Evans building: 8 – 10 Victoria Street, Newtown. It is close to all amenities and the vibrant life on King Street, well serviced by public transport, is disabled accessible, has a well run and friendly Community Garden organisation on site and is large enough to hold a variety of functions in the building.

I'm sure some lively discussions will be held and plans made for the best use of the location.

Already plans are underway to establish an OWN Wellness Centre in the building. The space is perfect and there is enormous opportunity for promoting Wellness programs in the local area and surrounding Sydney villages.

It is also envisaged that programs and events run in the



The new OWN NSW headquarters

evenings could prove popular especially for those with daytime responsibilities.

Of course there is lots of work to do both to move out and move in, and the Management Team and staff would appreciate all the help they can get to achieve a smooth operation.

Contact details are provided if you can spare time to help! This is your big chance to be involved in history!

As Chair of the Management Team I would like to acknowledge the assistance we have been offered by Department of Family & Community

Services to assist with costs associated with moving and for the flexibility in meeting agreed dates.

I also acknowledge the assistance of the City of Sydney which OWN has benefited from for a number of years in Millers Point, and in obtaining the use of the premises in Newtown.

Please contact Sharan Tuite if you can help with the move in any way. Sharan is Secretary of OWN NSW Management Team. The best way to contact Sharan is by email: sharon.tuite@bigpond.com

Sonia Laverty



# Letters

## In Celebration of Change

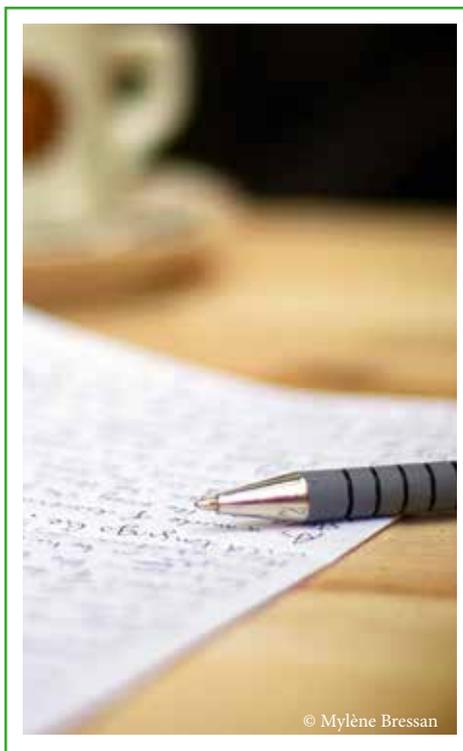
**T**he December issue celebrates change including that of getting older, if you are reading this you are older, your life has changed and you can still celebrate it.

Many changes took place in the lives of the women who wrote for past issues of *OWN Matters*. This issue celebrates those changes through the articles, poetry and stories they wrote.

They wrote about the changes in their lives; becoming an exercise expert, children moving, becoming primary carer of grandchildren, crossing the bridge for change for the first peoples of Australia, gardens changing, finding a different angel, walking the world in new boots, finding Xmas diner in Hong Kong, travelling Australia in a campervan.

Some wrote about getting older, or about learning how to twirl a walking stick, or about having to deal with a prosthetic leg or wheelchair.

It was a challenge for me to choose from the incredible range of ideas in *OWN Matters* through



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the years. This issue has more pages than usual but I regret that there still wasn't enough space for all those other stories.

There's a report about changes for OWN included, with new premises, and a new chairwoman, and a new Wellness Centre. In my *Bit by Bit* column I've written about Jessie Street, another woman who helped bring about changes in the lives of women. We have other reports too, about groups trying to bring changes, including our Theatre group.

I hope you enjoy the changes and challenges in your lives, as the

women in this issue did. I hope you enjoy reading about them.

*Lorraine Inglis*



## A case of mistaken identity

**T**his happened way back in time, in England, where the winters are decidedly colder than they are in Sydney.

We lived in a lovely little two-storey home, semi-detached, as are so many of the houses in England, with a pretty garden, back and front, tended by our faithful gardener. Shrubs and flowers abounded in our tiny lawn, daffodils, tulips, roses, marigolds, dahlias, azaleas - a sight to behold. Winter was on the way.

Our gardener was going to be away for a while and he gave me instructions to dig up the dahlia bulbs when they stopped flowering and store them in a cardboard box in the shed so that the frosts wouldn't get to them. Which I did.

Snow and ice came, as it usually does in England. Washing froze on the line, chilblains returned

to our toes and fingers, smoke arose from our chimneys. Came the spring, birds sang and foliage appeared on the trees. Life returned magically to the garden, leaves and buds everywhere. Joyfully I replanted the bulbs to the best of my ability, and was delighted to find that, within a very short time, the plants grew very tall and masses of green leaves appeared. But no sign of buds.

In the course of time our dear gardener came back. He surveyed the scene assessing what needed to be done.

“I don’t know what happened with the dahlias,” I said. “I followed your instructions, but there’s no sign of flowers.” He stared at the plants. He looked back at me in disbelief. “They’re not dahlias,” he said. “You’ve planted bloody potatoes.”

*Renee Simons  
April 1995*



### New Fence

**W**hen I had a new fence installed at the back of my property some months ago, I



wondered how I could use it to brighten up the back of the garden, which is too dark for flowers to grow successfully. I didn’t want to paint it, but I suddenly thought how attractive a mural would be in that spot.

Through Ashfield Council I got the name of Marta Ponti, an experienced mural artist. She understood what I wanted – which was images associated with this property which including a house visited by friends and relatives from all over the world.

Through ANTaR Inner West (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation) I also made contact with Leanne Tobin, an Aboriginal artist from the Darug mob in the Blue Mountains.

The beautiful mural, which demonstrates my pride in being part of the vibrant community of Homebush West, is now finished. I’ve even been able to use a panoramic picture of it, taken by a photographer for a local paper, as my Christmas card.

The mural is intended to reflect

where I live and what I do, so has images of the Olympic Pool, Flemington Markets, families who stay here, people of different ethnicities, babies, toddlers, elders, the beautiful Rainbow Lorikeets and Cockatoos that visit my garden, a Turkish symbol of my good friend and neighbour, flora from my home country and my adopted one, dogs that I care for, and some of the lovely images from inside ‘Mum’s House’, which is where guests stay.

I also wanted to demonstrate that I owe a debt to the local Aboriginal mob, the Darug, for this land that I presently live on. So Leanne has added another wonderful dimension by painting two Aboriginal panels with some of her mob’s totems, including eel and bream.

The finished product is truly beautiful, and will apparently last some 10 years. I’m so happy that this idea occurred to me in the first place, and that it has been so well executed thanks to two wonderful artists.

*Anna Logan*



# At and Beyond the Rocks

## Exercise Queue

**R**ae Payne and I felt responsible enough to train as Fitness Leaders for Wellness activities at Penrith.

Having been accepted for the training course, we arrived on enrolment day. We were very noticeable, being the only older grey haired people in a line-up of flexing muscles and bouncing young ones in short shorts – all with visions of becoming personal trainers or running their own gyms.

They let us know we were in a queue for exercise and gym work. We assured them, with humour, that yes, we were aware where we were and what we were about.

It was intense study, two full semesters with more than gym work. We learnt the workings of the heart, lungs, the names of the muscles (what a brain teaser) and how they worked, bones, and how exercise affects the body, and a lot more. We sat for exams and took part in class discussions.

We were so adamant about making a stand for the older person, we didn't miss a class.

The young people, when they realised we had a sense of humour and could listen to their point of view, as well as giving ours, accepted us and even admired us for what we were doing.

Rae and I attended our graduation night this year – International Year of the Older Person – where it was announced we were top of the class!

We feel we achieved a milestone for ourselves as well as for older women in undertaking this course, and hope our influence will be far reaching because of our association with the young people in this class.

*Thelma Anderson*



## Who wasn't very

**I** was the junior nurse and my first task when I came on at 10pm was to sponge bath and get Mr Bright (who wasn't very) ready for the night. The first night I didn't know why Sister giggled.

Mr Bright (who wasn't very) had

had a confrontation with a tree and a tractor and his head. He had been in hospital for quite a while.

Mr Bright (who wasn't very) had one trouble on his mind and that was the size of or I should say the lack of size of his favourite appendage. This night he had come to the conclusion that the said appendage had been shot off in the war.

“OH! Was that the first war or the second one?”

(Why can't 17 year old Coral keep her mouth shut?)

“No I think it was the First World War...Oh wait a minute, maybe the Second.”

Mr Bright (who wasn't very) was vigorously scrubbing the said area with his face cloth.

“I think we have done enough work on that area now. Wipe off the soap, Mr Bright,”(who wasn't very).”

(Why do I just have to keep the conversation going...)

“Seeing as you are only 46 Mr Bright (who wasn't very) we will have to find another answer.”

Bed changed, all dry, roll over and straight off to sleep.

The next night Mr Bright(who

wasn't very) was sitting up straight in his soaked bed. "I've got it girlie. It was a lion. Yes I remember."  
 "Well now that could be the answer, you've been to Africa eh?" (See I just can't keep my trap shut).  
 "Oh! No. I haven't been out of Australia. Does that make a difference?"  
 "I should think so Mr Bright"(who wasn't very).

Mr Roberts in the next bed was choking with laughter. "Be quiet Mr Roberts or I'll have to give you a sponge bath."  
 "Any time my girlie I will be here."  
 "Oh you fellers are just too bad."

The bed changed, all dry, roll over and off to sleep.

I had come to the conclusion we had to put an end to Mr Bright's (who wasn't very) dilemma. I initiated the subject in between the back rub and neck massage.

"What do you think Mr Bright?" (who wasn't very) "Could it be that, when you were a toddler you pulled and played with the appendage so much, that the growth was halted?"  
 "You have it my girlie, that is it"

"So can we find another subject to discuss tomorrow night?"  
 "Yes my girlie, we will. That one is solved."

Bed changed, all dry, roll over and off to sleep.

*Coral Littlewood*



## WOW! - Wonderful Older Women

**O**lder women – at least those who are part of my life – are feisty, fun and caring. Many have overcome enormous hurdles, both through health and/or personal adversity, but are still able to smile and participate in activities and enjoy the company of their peers.

We come in all shapes and sizes – some are feisty, some mischievous with a wicked sense of humour, some gentle and calm, whilst others have an enormous capacity to give.

We've raised families, have known hardship and worked hard, and now is our time to get the most enjoyment out of life

with as much fun as possible.

Forget the housework – who cares if you can write your name in dust. Be outrageous, wear a purple hat, lie in bed 'til ten, join a salsa or belly dancing class, float off in a hot air balloon, swim with the whales, do a tandem hang glide or anything else you have always wanted to do, but never had the time because there has always been someone or something more important.

Our aim is to 'grow old disgracefully', and remember, if you think you can do it, you can – age is not a factor and 'old' is a word we do not acknowledge.

While supporting each other we can face the challenges that the future may bring while making the most of each day.

These women from all areas of my life make me laugh, are fun, supportive and caring, and life would be a lot less enjoyable without their friendship.

They enrich my life and I feel privileged to be one of and part of these Wonderful Older Women.

*Sheila Hall*





# Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

## I am Lucy

I am a chameleon. When I was young I was like a gazelle, a bit flighty and highly-strung, inquisitive but cautious. When I married I became a placid Jersey cow, giving birth to four children in five years. My husband made sure I was completely subservient.

With the children in High School and my marriage over I became a worried, sleep-deprived and time-deprived workhorse. Up at dawn each day to get the washing done, cooking, cleaning, shopping and working full time, I had no time for me.

Forty-four years of age, I could sense freedom at last. But it was not to be. My mother was injured in a serious car accident and I became a grandmother for the first time. I accepted the responsibility of caring for my dear mother and my grandson.

At 60 years of age, after my mother's death, I joined OWN and came into MY own. For

the first time in my adult life I felt free. I was encouraged to speak out about issues, and I was empowered by the support, laughter and friendship that I received from wonderful, clever and caring older women. I joined the OWN Theatre Group, was elected to the Management Team and helped found the Aboriginal Support Circle.

Now at 76 my life has veered completely around again. I have custody of my two grandsons, so I also teach them manners, supervise their homework and take them to school, swimming, surfing and athletics. At night, as I watch them sleep, I feel deep contentment as I observe their trouble-free, peaceful faces.

I do not know what the future holds or who I will become. I greatly miss OWN and the challenge and companionship of the many delightful and feisty older women, especially on the days when I suffer "kidity", but at the moment I'm just another grandparent doing her duty!

*Lucy Porter*

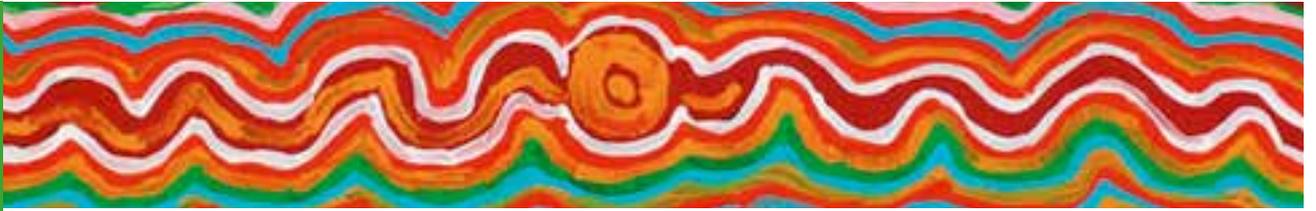


## Pat's story

Having grown up in Cape Town, South Africa, the only way I could combat apartheid was to become active in my local opposition political party and work as a volunteer in the Black townships.

I arrived in Sydney in January 1991 and was determined to learn as much as I could about my new country, especially Aboriginal people.

I believe in karma, or fate, to use a different word. I had a cousin who was a member of OWN and when she told me that they had an Aboriginal support group I joined up. In those days I was shy and lacking confidence but meeting Noreen Hewett, Lucy Porter, Ruth Layard, Merle Hight and Ermes Solari at my first meeting in 1995, I felt part of a sisterhood. I began meeting Aboriginal women and attending lectures, forums and rallies. It upset me that few Aboriginal children were getting an education, that there was



so much poverty and poor health, and that Indigenous men were dying in police custody.

I've seen many positive changes over the years – the Apology and the Mabo decision have both made difference, and survivors of the stolen generations are finally being acknowledged.

However, the Northern Territory intervention is a cruel imposition at great cost and under false pretensions. Indigenous health is still atrocious, too many people are being sent to jail and too many young people are taking their own lives. The heady days of the Bridge Walk have faded, and there has been a reduction in the number of active reconciliation groups in Sydney and NSW. Even the coming referendum has lost its early impetus and the more time that elapses, the chances of getting a positive result is fading.

Too many problems face all of us at the moment: the Abbott government's plans for savage cuts to services and support to disadvantaged and vulnerable

people, the treatment of refugees, and the lack of action to cut back on carbon emissions.

However, all over the country there are small, positive changes taking place, and I'm optimistic and hopeful for a better future, even though I might not live to experience it.

*Pat Zinn*



### The Great Walk



**I**t was an unforgettable day, May 25, when a quarter of a million Australians, black and white, joined in solidarity to walk across the Harbour Bridge in support of reconciliation with the indigenous people of Australia.

My friend I joined a great wedge of people at Town Hall Station, jam-packed from George Street down to the railway platforms. At North Sydney Station we all poured out and were carried up

to the road by sheer numbers, our feet hardly touching the ground. Across the street was the welcome sight of our green and gold banner and the friendly, familiar faces of OWN members. We moved off down the hill, and then we were on the Bridge.

There we were, hundreds and thousands of us, black and white, young and old, men women and children, of many backgrounds, from all over Australia. There were people in wheelchairs; there were famous faces; there was Malcolm Fraser and his family; the Premier of NSW, and up front, leading the procession were the stars of the reconciliation movement, people like Faith Bandler, Bonita Mabo, and Sir Gustav Nossal.

A quarter of a million people, 'ordinary' people, united in a common cause! There was such warmth and good humour.

A few members of the federal Government had walked, but not the Prime Minister. For him it proved to be a bridge too far.

We should be resigned to the fact that the Prime Minister will never say sorry on our behalf. As Sir Gustav Nossal said, "We must wait for another government to gain office before this comes about, and may that be soon."

*Muriel Hortin*



## *Our life experiences make us what we are and give us something to share with others*

### *The Guardian Angel*



**Y**ou know, every Catholic child has a guardian angel who stands at the right hand shoulder day and night. I don't know about non-Catholic

children. I've never tried to find out. I think it was one area of privilege I was unwilling to share. It was very comforting alone at night, to know that this beneficent creature was on duty.

At other times, it was a damn nuisance. How could we children go about our illegal activities whilst under this constant surveillance? It bothered me. How did that baroque with those hugely curving wings and that long nightgown manage to squeeze into the small space, somewhere to the side and behind, my bed? And I know that my aunt, who spread brown paper for me to sit on, would never tolerate a dropped feather nor any other evidence of angelic attendance. If she found any, goodbye angel.

Then, like a little miracle, my problem was solved. I found my guardian angel. He stood on our corner selling papers and was there whenever I went out. He was about sixteen, and wore a motley selection of clothes. Trousers that bagged at the knee and were patched in many places and tied with string above a pair of sandshoes which had seen better days. The trousers were held up by braces whose clips sported horses' heads. His checked shirt was faded, and around his neck a skimpy scarf was carelessly knotted – a suggestion of the dandy? On his head was an old cap, worn back to front. His face, snub-nosed, wide mouthed

and always smiling, was peppered with freckles. His hair, ginger, no other word for it, stood up like a stiff brush under his cap. I don't think it was ever afforded the dignity of a barber. This was the height of the Depression, so it was cut at home.

Every day his hoarse voice could be heard crying the headlines and the latest winner. One night, in my enthusiasm to impress him, I swung a billy of milk around my head and spilt it all. As I gazed in horror, he pressed threepence into my hand to buy some more. Did he know of the punishment he saved me from? I never asked. But from then on, I was his slave and I loved him. Here was my guardian angel. I just knew that he could more than match my aunt in cunning and would remain undetected.

He stayed with me and on that corner for years, and then, like so many icons of childhood, my guardian angel was gone. From time to time, I still catch the faint rustle of a wing and a hoarse voice crying the winners.

*Judith Mustard*



### *Give me stick*



**Y**ou see them, poor things, struggling along on painful feet or crumbling knees.

You think to yourself, "Oh Vanity, thy name is Woman". As my knees complained louder and my balance became tottery I was advised, "Never go out without a stick or a friend".

Now my stick and I have become best friends-together we brave rough streets, steps and sandy beaches. We lose each other in shops and ferries but, oh, when we twirl together we are as one in glorious synchronicity, and for those few flying moments I am a girl again.

Now I discover that stick twirling is to be an Olympic sport! Is there a course on this? And when can I start?

*Dorothy Cox*

.....

## Something fishy

“**H**ow about a chowder, Hellie?”  
It so happened that I had two litres of fish stock in the freezer, so I said OK. Chowder isn't difficult to make, just tedious, but who was I to deny the world's best soup to a sick friend?

So off I went and bought vegetables and cream and fishy ingredients, including an enormous snapper head to make more stock, and went to work. I finished up with six litres of a chowder.

With the chowder in three 2-litre containers I set off for my friends' place, 15 minutes away, its appetizing aroma working up my appetite. About half way there I realized that the aroma was getting stronger... the lid had come off one of the containers. Two litres of fishy, creamy chowder were swilling around on the floor of the passenger's seat.

I'm glad we enjoyed the rest of the chowder because it turned out to be a very expensive soup. After paying a car detailer \$77 to extract the mess with

## What am I?



A stirrer? To bring to the surface of sight the muddy intentions of power that blight the peace of our days in the autumn of life;  
who think they know best what is right for the old and would still every voice that dares to be bold.

The grit? in the oyster which legend has it produces the pearls which so lustrously sit on necks of the wealthy; but also with wit creates words of wisdom in these days of strife to help solve some problems that plague us in life

A diamond? whose edge can cut wide and deep a swathe through the promises polities won't keep a tool to try to shape earth's heaps make rocks of security, wellness and fun and end laws of disaster of bad laws and guns

A grain in the sand? By plunderers mined against laws of nature, shorelines redefined used to build monuments which just remind us of egocentricity, men of great power, how we must be brave – to challenge not cower

Do I muddy the waters and sting with the grit, cut needlessly deep with the edge of one's wit; does love conquer all, and should small grains of sand just go with the flow and ebb from the land?  
Hell, there's no way I'll change, take me as I am.

*Noreen Hewett*

his special vacuum, my chariot still reeks of rotten fish and sour cream and is now known as 'The Fishmobile.' It's ruining my social life. Even when it's raining, my friends suddenly need the exercise rather than accept a lift in it. I've tried sprinkling the carpet with vanilla and Nilodor. It now smells worse. If there is a magic cure for my problem, I'd be glad to hear about it.

In the meantime, anyone who wants to sample my world-famous chowder will have to come to my place for it ... but not just yet. I'm off chowder.

*Helen Young*

.....

*A page of poetry -  
moving, sad and funny*

---

*She phoned from England*

She phoned from England  
4a.m.  
We're getting married, Mum!  
Music in the background.  
Who's getting married, Sue?

David and me, of course.  
David?  
He's in the Navy,  
Father calls from bed.  
Oh, yes, I said.  
Well tell me about it  
Now I'm up.  
And let me say hullo to David too!

David who?  
I rummage through the letters  
on the marble near the stove-  
through the names of fellows  
for a while-back  
one to tell us David who.

Her big romance had fallen through  
She'd gone away,  
She played the field and worried me.  
I guess she knew.

What she was looking for.  
It's twenty years or more.  
I've seen them now and then  
Across the seas  
And David still gets nicer  
With the years

*Norma Balzer*



*The Getting of wisdom*

We were babies in the twenties  
when the Charleston was the rage,  
Brought up in the thirties  
in the dark Depression days.

Married in the forties  
or left up on the shelf,  
Being someone's auntie –  
no thought for oneself.

Some of us went overseas  
some culture there to find,  
Or to get ourselves a husband  
if sex was on our mind.

The sixties and the seventies  
saw Women's Liberation,  
And the likes of you and me  
came out of hibernation.

We spread our wings experimenting  
in many diverse ways,  
Our minds and bodies waking  
from a pleasant sort of daze.

Now we are older women  
and our days are nearly done,  
We can go and catch a toy-boy  
if we catch him on the run.

Or maybe there's a man or two  
if we're prepared to look,  
But it's hard to beat a woman-friend  
or a bloody lovely book!

*Nina Walton, Dorothy Cox*



## *When we grow old*

When we are young we rarely think  
That one day we'll grow old.  
We drink too much, we smoke too much  
We never feel the cold.

We laze beneath the burning sky  
We swim in sparkling seas,  
We never thought that all this fun  
Would cause rheumatic knees.

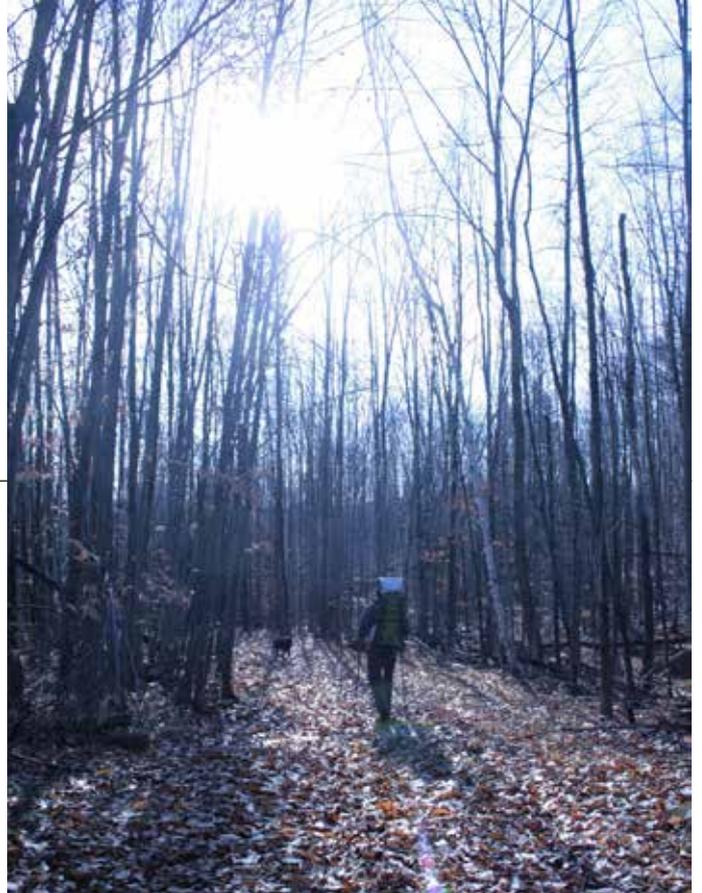
All the booze we guzzled down  
All the smokes we sucked,  
We never knew, in later years  
That both lungs would be #x%/.

Just waking up each morning  
To face another day,  
To get the body moving  
Sends another ten hairs grey.

We think of all the fats we ate,  
Good grief, it makes you shiver  
Can you imagine what that muck  
Has done to our poor liver?

The body just gets bigger  
As you reach those golden years,  
You tell yourself, you do quite well  
As you wipe away the tears.

I don't hear anything these days  
That I don't want to hear.  
I don't do anything that needs  
My body in full gear.



I never could imagine  
Being old and grey and bent,  
With my hair a different colour  
And my energy all spent.

My face has dropped onto my neck,  
My rosy cheeks have gone,  
My body is all wrinkled,  
I persevere, just carry on.

*Josie Jackson*



## *Saturday Morning*

A magpie hops  
across the poplar branches  
outside my fourth floor window.  
A quiet, grey Saturday morning.  
Coffee, juice and newspapers.

A willy wagtail darts  
Around the big bird's tail.  
Silent inner city street.  
The magpie carols  
and suddenly in this parched time  
it gently rains again.

*Joy Ross*



## *Being Older is not a Problem*

**B**eing older is not a problem. The problem is the negative myths and messages about being older which the media and society continuously reinforces. Many sexist/ageist remarks are made about our looks: 'old bags', 'old hags', 'mutton dressed as lamb'. Older men's grey hair and wrinkles are 'distinguished' – ours are ugly.

Old age is usually seen in terms of decay and dependency and the media reflects this view. The elderly are most often portrayed as weak, frail and dependent. We rarely see older people as achieving, deciding, initiating, creative, asserting, dancing, loving or laughing.

We may experience ageism from the media, the community around us, or we may have ageism within us, that is, we may believe being older is inferior to being young.

You might like to consider these questions about being an "older" women:

- Have you ever said or thought, "I'd rather die than be old?" If so, why?
- How do you feel about being older?
- Do you feel ignored or invisible in shops, streets and the work place?
- Why do you think this happens?
- What is your reaction to phrases like, "She's 70 years young", or "You don't look your age"?
- How do images on the TV and in films affect your self image?
- How do you feel about the way women fight older age with cosmetics, surgery, diets, exercise and clothes?

- Do you lie about your age?
- Why are grey hairs and wrinkles on older women considered ugly?
- Do you think your looks are more important than what you do?
- Do you object to being called "granny", except by your grandchildren?
- Do you object to being labeled "little old lady"?
- How do you feel if someone says, "Act your age"?
- How do you feel about being called a "girl" at your age?
- Do you believe you are too old to learn, dance, have sex, travel, change, and be outrageous, or do anything else?"

*Louise Anike*



## *Best Xmas ever*

**A**Xmas in Hong Kong with friends many years ago turned out to be one of the best Xmases we've ever experienced. We were staying at a hotel where Xmas dinner was on the menu at a very inflated price and the atmosphere was zilch.

So, the four of us took off about 11am to search for a suitable restaurant. We knew that we wanted - turkey and the rest - which was totally unreasonable, and for an hour and a half we searched high and low for that certain place that might offer up at least one course of a traditional meal.

As I get very grumpy when I'm hungry I started to do some controlled mutterings along the lines of "I don't think we're ever going to find what we want",

when there it appeared – a marvellous Chinese (of course) restaurant advertising a traditional dinner. And what a dinner it was – turkey with all the trimmings and plum pudding and to make it extra special some dumplings to start with. The waiters gave us each a bag, which contained whistles, a little plastic toy and a cracker.

As on other occasions I found that having limited local language is rarely a problem and the goodwill that was in that room, where we were the only diners, has stayed in our hearts forever.

*Rita Tratt*



### *Happy (?) New Year*

**I** hope the Christmas break treated you kindly. More than I can say it did for me!

It was a very expensive break. I lost my purse for a start. It contained a few hundred dollars, pension card, my address with the keys to it, plus my driver's licence, Medicare card...I'm sure purse-losers know what you lose!

However with one day to recover I flew off to Perth and spent a few relaxed weeks with my daughter at Margaret River. Relaxed? Well, then I cracked my dental plate - \$72 worth of repairs. Luckily the dentist was only two doors down the street so it was quickly and easily fixed.

Then I went swimming once, ONCE, and couldn't



@Michael Jastremski

get the water out of my ear and tried to relieve it with a cotton bud. Yes, I know you're not supposed to put anything in your ear smaller than your elbow, so consequently I was deaf overnight and proceeded to the doctor next morning who had to have three goes with the syringe to remove the wax that I had firmly tamped down with the cotton bud. The doctor was just down the street, too. It's so easy to get things fixed in Margaret River!

Back home and thinking. "Well, the three things have happened. That's it!" You reckon?

Shortly after, while walking back along the pier at Gwandalan with my friend June and her son, after a stroll along the foreshores, my jogger-clad feet struck a loose board and down I went, landed on my wrist and wrenched the tendons in my upper arm.

I have come to the conclusion that if it was raining palaces, it would be the toilet that hit me! Hallelujah!

*Peg Hewett*



*These feet (and vans) were made for moving, hiking, roving and discovering!*

## *My Brown Hiking Boots*

**M**y brown hiking boots have been pivotal in my life. When I saw them in the shop window, reduced by more than 50%, I had to try them on. It was love at first feel.

At home we had been talking about bushwalking. My husband was always talking about the bushwalking he had done, but that was before we met.

In his opinion no one could go walking in sandals. You had to have good sturdy boots. I found it very frustrating the way he always talked about going but we never went. Because he was always talking about it, the children gave him maps, rucksacks, water bottles to get him going.

Once I had my boots we had to go. Our first trip was to the Snowy Mountains. I can't remember what Noel was wearing, but at the first little bridge, a short distance from the car, Noel's feet shot out in front of him. He fell flat on his back.



Yuck, I thought. We'll be in our car and on our way back home. Luck was with me. We had a great weekend.

Encouraged, I suggested a nine-day walking trip in India in a place called The Valley of the Flowers. I was sure my husband would love it. I dragged my reluctant husband into the city to see the presentation.

Not enough people wanted to see The Valley of the Flowers. The film was about the Himalayas. When we came out Noel said, "There is no way you're getting me on that trip." I heard myself saying, "Well I'm going."

That was the beginning. India, Nepal, Kashmir, Russia, Iceland, Greenland. All in my trusty boots.

*Pamela Sharpe*



## *Joan and Doug go North in their Campervan*

**I**t was cold in Kangaroo Valley, a good night to snuggle up in a warm bed in our camper.

We were in deep sleep when a strange rocking of the camper

woke us. What was going on?  
We crawled to the window and  
looked outside.

Another rock shook the camper.  
The full moon lit up this beautiful  
bush valley. There was nothing to  
be seen. Another shake, and we  
looked down and saw, emerging  
from beneath the camper, a  
large flat, black furry animal – a  
wombat. It had been scratching  
its back on our chassis and  
bumper bar!



“What a hide it has,” I said to  
Doug. We laughed, and then  
tucked ourselves up and went  
to sleep. Weird and rather  
wonderful.

We were approaching the town  
of Bulia (pronounced Bull-ya) in  
far West Queensland, famous for  
the Min Min light, a large white  
creepy light that follows you in a  
bouncy way.

Many had said they’d seen it  
– one woman said it followed  
her car home in the bush. I was  
doing a pee in the bushes when  
I saw a white light bouncing  
towards me. The Min Min light!  
Shock! Horror! And then a face  
appeared in the light, a man’s face  
with a great big grin on it. Doug  
with a torch under his chin! The

devil. But I had to laugh. Weird  
and not so wonderful.

The road was long and narrow  
– a Queensland one-car road.  
To pass, both cars need to have  
two wheels off the tarmac. As we  
only saw two cars in one and a  
half hours there was no problem.  
Road trains don’t pass this way  
– they can be over 50m long,  
travelling fast and Kings of the  
Road.

We were going to spend a few  
nights camping in the mesas at  
Cawnpore. Suddenly, there they  
were emerging from the mirages  
in the distance, jagged flat-  
topped red rough track that led  
into the valley. We chose a spot to  
camp, surrounded by mesas.

This is dinosaur country, ancient  
and mysterious. Spinifex dotted  
the sides of the hills in subtle  
colours of green and cream, the  
setting sun shone on the white  
trunks of the snappy gums. In  
the east, soft shades of blue, then  
pink crept up the sky. I

It was getting dark and cold, so  
we went inside and had dinner.  
Later, we were getting out the  
Scrabble when we saw a soft  
glow in the east. A full moon was  
rising slowly behind a rugged  
mesa.

We rugged ourselves up, sat  
outside in the stillness, and  
watched in silence. Wonderful.

*Joan Johns*

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## To bring about change, you need to get the message out there

### Making a feminist difference

**T**his year's Ednas were once again held amidst scenes of high tension as we waited for announcements of the winners!

The Ednas are awards given annually to women who've made a feminist difference in their trade, profession, volunteer work, lives. Once again the Trades Hall Auditorium was packed with around 165 enthusiastic people.

Eva Cox, one of the first winners of an Edna 16 years ago, emceed the evening, while winners were announced by members of Edna's family – Lyndall Ryan (daughter), Madeline Challen (granddaughter) and Rachel Challen (great granddaughter).

The winners were:

**Arts** for creative feminism – Vee Malnar and Maeve Marsden.

**Community Activism** for feminist activity in the community – Lillian Howell project and McKenzie Raymond.

**Sport** for promoting the engagement and recognition of women in sport – Kate Rowe.

**Workforce** for improving conditions for women workers – Marion Baird and Marilyn Forsythe.

**Leadership** for leading feminist changes in the public sphere – Roxanne McMurray and Bush Lemons.

**Media Communication** for consistent promotion of women's interests in the media – Hawzhin Azeez and Zoya Patel.

**Mentoring** for sharing knowledge and ideas generously with other women – Bronwyn Culling and Lin Cooper.

**The Grand Stirrer** for inciting others to challenge the status quo – Dorothy McCrae-McMahon.

Further information about the actual citations for which winners received their awards, can be viewed at [www.ednaryan.net.au](http://www.ednaryan.net.au).

Since 1998 many OWN activists have also received awards.

Amongst them are:  
Peggy Hewett 1998,  
Noreen Hewett 1999,  
Merle Highet 2001,  
Cate Turner 2003,  
Lucy Porter 2004,  
Muriel Hortin 2004 and  
Trude Kallir 2005.



### Unite Against Racism

**S**adly this Government is hell bent on another war in Iraq, in the process taking the heat out of its disastrous budget measures. But as a consequence of this war mongering Islamophobia is reaching new heights. Who cops the worst effects of this? Yes, Muslim women in our community, most of whom are clearly as concerned about the waste of young men's lives as the rest of us.

On Sunday, November 9, I attended a forum on Islamophobia and its impact on our fellow Muslim citizens. The NSW Greens MLC, Mehreen Faruqi, the only Muslim woman in ANY Australian Parliament, chaired the forum.

Speakers included Stephen Blanks (NSW Council of Civil Liberties) and Stuart Rees, (Sydney Peace Foundation). Both pointed out the absurd logic that the Abbott government and the Murdoch Press are using to justify the war against ISIS, and the dangerous erosion of our own civil rights in Australia, going far beyond Identifying

genuine terrorists. Wendy Bacon discussed the silencing of the mainstream press.

But the most impressive and scary information came from two Muslim women speakers, Fatema Ali, of the Arab Council and Lydia Shelley, for the Islamophobia Register. Both confirmed the widespread hurt and anger experienced by Muslim women. Lydia in particular identified the growing verbal and physical abuse being experienced by any woman wearing the hijab.

These women, young and old, are being attacked almost on a daily basis, usually by Anglo males who abuse, spit on, knock down these innocent women. Women are increasingly afraid to go out in public alone, especially at night. More disturbing is the report that these women have given up approaching the police for assistance. The Islamophobia Register is the one place that these women can register a complaint. The solicitors there are then able to confirm the events and pressure police to act.

This growing racism in our community ultimately hurts us all. And the unfair

scapegoating of Muslim women is unacceptable. If any of us is witness to such racist attacks, we should speak out. Not in our name!!!

*Jenny Onyx*



## *TG Report November* **Playing games - Theatre Craft**

**O**WN Theatre Group members have been experiencing a vigorous new introduction to our Tuesday rehearsals. We now begin with various exercises and games facilitated by Jonnie Swift.

Jonnie has a wide background in community theatre and we have been 'all shook up' since she introduced us to Theatre craft. These games and exercises, which we enjoy enthusiastically, have a serious purpose: to help enhance our team work as members of a theatrical group, expand our comfort zones as performers and assist us to recognise our responsibilities to each other as members of a group.

It will take time for the group to experience the full benefits. I have a greater awareness of individuals in the group and my role in it.

## **The National Folk Festival 2015**

It is Canberra again for the Theatre Group, as we have been invited to perform on two days at



*Ruth and Jonnie*

the huge National Folk Festival at Easter.

This is a whole crown of feathers in our hats, as each year there are thousands of applications to appear at the Festival.

We must have made a splendid impression this year with our elder abuse show, *Don't Knock Your Granny*. There will probably be ten in the group going to Canberra and now the search is on for inexpensive, convenient accommodation in Canberra.

## *Ma It's Time To Move*

This new program has been slowly evolving this year in the hands of theatre group member Joan Modder, now mentored by Jonnie Swift.

*Ma* will make its preview in early November. *Ma* has drawn on the resources of all members of the Theatre group especially the four original writers. It has a strong theme about the options and choices in affordable housing for older women.

Our entertaining 'Cabaret' program, directed by Denise Miel, has been successful at community events all year.

*Joan Modder*



## *For Jessie Street and Merle Hight, one step at a time*

### Bit by Bit and Little by Little

#### *Jessie Street (1989-1970)*

**J**essie Street came from a background of wealth and status but didn't choose a comfortable life. 'Red' Jessie was accused of being a communist, was thought of as a 'class traitor' and was once called a 'dilettante Liberal socialist'.

She did become a socialist because of the Depression in the late 1920s. She was certainly no dilettante. She used her connections and money to work all her life for equal rights and justice for everyone, to eliminate discrimination and for world peace.

In 1929 Jessie founded the United Associations of Women, a radical feminist group, and remained president, on and off until 1950. "Throughout history", she wrote, 'vital changes of policy have been brought about by moral pressure'.

The women used deputations to ministers, letters to editors and politicians, public meetings, radio talks, to get the message out there.

Jessie set up the House Service Company to provide employment and training for women



in housekeeping. In the 1930s, she started a cooperative farm for unemployed women at Glenfield, New South Wales. She didn't have to work for a living herself, but she passionately believed that women had a right to economic independence. She fought for equal pay, equal training and equal employment opportunities for all women.

The UAW briefed Nerida Cohen for the basic-wage enquiry in 1940. In 1942 Jessie secured the Australasian Council of Trade Unions endorsement of equal pay for all.

Jessie had joined the ALP in 1939. In 1943 and 1946 she was endorsed as the candidate for Wentworth but despite sound support from voters, she lost.

Jessie Street was the only female adviser in the Australian delegation to the United Nations Conference held in San Francisco in 1945. She secured the insertion of the word 'sex' in the clause 'without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion' wherever it occurs in the Charter of the United Nations.

In 1950 Sir Kenneth Street became Chief Justice of the NSW Supreme Court. Publicity about her support for Russia forced Jessie Street to leave Australia. She continued her work for equality and international cooperation with the World Peace Council in the 1950s and 1960s.

On her return to Australia in 1956, Jessie championed the cause of Indigenous people. She, and Christian Jollie Smith, drafted an amendment to the Australian Constitution to remove discriminatory references to Aborigines.

She campaigned with Faith Bandler and the suggested amendments were eventually carried in the 1967 referendum.

We remember Red Jessie for living up to that name: never behaving as she was expected to, ignoring class barriers, working passionately for the disadvantaged, and for her incredible contribution to Australian society and untiring efforts for word peace.

*Lorraine Inglis*

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## *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (or two hops back in my case)*



**Y**ou can't always choose what happens to you but you can make a choice as to how you deal with it.

It was five days prior to New Year's Day 2012 and my right foot felt frozen and it was causing me to hobble around. (I was feeling on top of the world and was planning to move into a ground floor, newly renovated unit in the block where I had resided for over eight years.)

In the evening of 2 January I fell asleep in my chair. I awoke the following morning, unable to get out of my chair. I was taken to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital by ambulance. By the time I reached the hospital my lower leg had turned a deep reddish colour.

Later that day I was interviewed by a vascular surgeon who said that I had to have an amputation as my condition was life-threatening. I remember very little of that day.

That was the first time an amputation had been raised with me. I was told there were two possible outcomes, depending on what the surgeon found. They were either amputation below the knee or above the knee.

I told the doctor to do what he had to do. From that time on I knew I had to change my whole way of thinking. I put my previous ways behind me and my main thought was that I was determined to walk again with the help of a prosthesis. After four weeks I was transferred to Balmain Hospital Rehabilitation Unit, waiting for a vacancy in St George Hospital Rehabilitation Unit.

I have met with supportive people from the amputee association and hope to play some part in that organisation to advance the cause of young and old people who become amputees. Especially now as I have suddenly become homeless, because my unit in the retirement village where I have been living is not wheelchair-friendly.

Becoming an amputee has highlighted many matters for me. I have become aware of defects (especially for mobility impaired people) in the standard of current retirement housing.

Government-set building regulations seem to allow a large number of retirement villages to exist that are not wheelchair-friendly, thereby forcing residents into hostels or nursing homes due to inadequate living options. This just doesn't affect older people, as younger people who need special care are often forced to live in nursing homes.

I plan to approach my local MP and other community/ disability organisations to highlight these issues as well as bringing awareness of how the impact of suddenly finding yourself in a wheelchair can affect your life.

*Merle Highet*

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## Big Change

OWN NSW and OWN Sydney is relocating to the Carter Evans building, 8 – 10 Victoria Street, Newtown. An OWN Wellness Centre will operate in the building. The management and staff would appreciate help moving.

Please contact Sharan Tuite if you can help with the move in any way. Sharan is Secretary, of OWN NSW Management Team. The best way to contact Sharan is by email address: sharon.tuite@bigpond.com



## Wellness activities

OWN also offers a number of very affordable Wellness activities at various locations during school terms. Ring the appropriate contact person listed below for more information.

**BLACKTOWN:** Rooty Hill Senior Citizens Centre, 34a Rooty Hill Road, Rooty Hill. Tuesdays: Hoy & Bingo, Gentle Exercise and Ukulele.

## International Womens Day 2015

### Festival of Ideas

### 'United We Stand'

**Friday March 6,  
10am- 1.00pm  
SMSA, Level 1, 280 Pitt St  
Sydney**

Keep this date free!

Wednesdays: Drop in for a cuppa and Line Dancing.

Fridays: Drumming & Tai Chi. Monthly bus trips & more! Ring Coral on 9631 3289 or Pam on 9675 7836.

**SUTHERLAND:** Pensioners Centre, 749a Old Princes Hwy, Sutherland.

Mondays: Tai Chi, Strengthening Ex, Meditation, Feldenkrais.

Wednesdays: Tai Chi, Gentle Exercise, Drumming & Book Club. Speakers, courses and more!

Ring Noreen on 9545 3489.

**ILLAWARRA:** Coniston Community Hall, Bridge Street, Coniston (near train station & parking available).

Mondays: Tai Chi, International Dancing, Drumming & Gentle Exercise.

Tuesdays: Relaxation/Meditation, Thai Yoga & Ukulele.

Ring Barbara on 0406 627 493 or Sheila on 4228 7840.

**BANKSTOWN:** Bankstown PCYC, Cnr French Ave & Meredith St.

Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Activities include:

Gentle Yoga, Gent Exercise, Drumming, "Let's Talk About" (Discussion), International Dancing, Guided Relaxation & more!

Ring Diane on 9708 2245.

**NORTHSIDE:** The Annex, Dougherty Centre, 7 Victor St, Chatswood.

Tuesdays: Mums with Drums.

Wednesdays: Feldenkrais, Discussion, Book Club & Qi Gong.

Ring: 9415 2474, 9419 6417 or 0400 630 089.



## OWN MATTERS Schedule 2015

In order to get for the editorial team to put our magazine together we have to coordinate dates and these are the dates for 2015.

### MAIL OUT DAYS

February 12  
March 4  
April 1  
May 6  
June 3  
June 24  
August 5  
September 2  
October 7  
November 4  
December 2.

### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

January 21  
February 19  
March 18  
April 22  
May 20  
June 10  
July 15  
August 19  
September 16  
October 21  
November 18

### CONTRIBUTIONS DEADLINES

January 21  
February 19  
March 18  
April 22  
May 20  
June 10  
July 15  
August 19  
September 16  
October 21  
November 18

## ACTIVITIES

### MEMBERS & FRIENDS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND ALL ACTIVITIES

#### Lost Ladies

10am every Wed (during school terms), exploring various locations or topics of interest.

Contact Annette  
Butterfield 9665 5369.  
Email: abutterfield\_852@hotmail.com

#### Film Discussion Group

You are invited on  
**Tuesday December 9.** Contact Yetty on 9665 2050 for more information.

#### Bondi Junction Coffee and Gossip Group

11am - last Friday in each month.  
Lunch, Eastern Suburbs Leagues Club (enter from 93-98 Spring St. You must sign in.)

Contact Yetty 9665 2050 to check all details.

#### Book Club

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15 - *The Road from Coorain* by Jill Ker Conway.

Newcomers welcome.  
12.30pm at 87 Lower Fort St. Come at 12 with a sandwich for lunch.  
Anne-Marie Kestle 0408 740 435

#### Aboriginal Support Circle

Confirm details with Pat Zinn 9389 1090 or email pattzinn1@hotmail.com

## SUBSCRIBE NOW to OWN MATTERS

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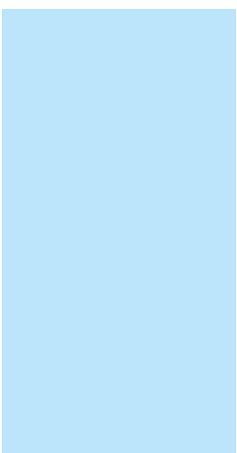
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