



OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network NSW

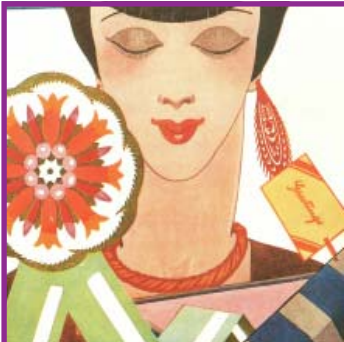
Vol.8 No.11 – December 2011



The Gender of Poverty

Sixty per cent of women retire with no superannuation at all which means that many are reliant on the age pension...Forty two per cent of working women over retirement age are working because of financial need...

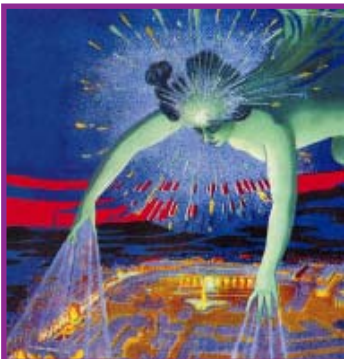
see *Poverty and Older Women* page 3



Creating New Meaning

As with all things, change is inevitable, even with our dearly loved Christmas traditions, although it is to be hoped that the essence of the season, the rebirth of hope for a more peaceful, just and compassionate world remains as the central motive and meaning.

see *Changing Face of Christmas* page 9



Unimagined Liberty

...Then, my daughter came to visit bearing aloft her newest purchase, her iPad2. She was so enthusiastic, so keen to show me all the wonderful things her iPad could do, she barely had time to notice the results of all my hard work. "It's so great when you're travelling," she enthused...

see *Brave New World* page 12



Downloaded your Invitation to the Revolution?

How much power do you have, as a serf, against the lords who make the decisions that affect your community and your country and your life?

see *An Uppity Serf* page 19

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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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More help always welcome!

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@ownnsw.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.*

Life in the Lucky Country

Poverty and Older Women

Older women in Australia are slipping into poverty because of events that are much more likely in the lives of women than those of men. As a result, many women of retirement age have to continue to work to support themselves, and older Australian women are significantly over-represented in homeless figures.

What are the figures on the financial state of older women? Sixty per cent of women retire with no superannuation at all which means that many are reliant on the age pension. This is possible if you own your own home, but pretty dreadful if you don't and have to pay Sydney rental prices! Forty two per cent of working women over retirement age are working because of financial need.

Of the 40% of retired women who receive superannuation, their average payout is \$112,600 compared to \$198,000 for men, so women, who are more likely to live longer than men, have to manage on less.

How has this happened? Remember the 1960s? When you joined the State Public Service as I did in 1966, superannuation was compulsory once you achieved permanence in your job - unless you were a married woman. Once married a woman could opt out of superannuation, and once that decision was made you could never reinstate superannuation while you stayed in that job. What a decision to make in your early 20s, as many of us were when we married in those days? Later in life many of us rued the decision to leave superannuation.

Many employers outside the Public Service did not offer superannuation to women then, so many had no opportunity to access any plan to secure financial independence in old age. The idea of women working for much of their lives was novel in those days.

As well, women in particular broke the continuity of their employment to raise a family or to care for a sick parent or family member. Therefore no income, so no superannuation contributions were possible for several years. In practical terms, women's wages were sacrificed rather than men's because women's earnings were, and still are, lower.

Relationship breakdown and loss of shared assets has also contributed to the disadvantage of women in retirement. Also, it is harder for women to build security in retirement as their pay is usually lower than that of men and their work pattern more likely to be part-time to accommodate carer duties.

According to the Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for the Status of Women, the simplest way to boost women's

superannuation is to increase their employment participation and wages. This is a good idea for the future but it's not much help to older women who, because they were women, were paid less, not offered superannuation, not offered job security and lacked continuity of employment because of carer responsibilities.

Pat Rayne



Productivity Commission Proposals for Aged Care Reform

The family home has always been exempt from means-testing. Owning your own home outright is part of your security. However, one of the measures proposed by the Productivity Commission is the inclusion of the family home in aged care means-testing. Eating into the equity in the family home to pay for aged care is therefore by definition at odds with the provision of quality aged care, from both a clinical and a quality-of-life perspective. The Commission's argument that no one has to sell their home to access aged care may be technically true, but it would be devastating for older Australians to see their home equity evaporate.

Whether you need aged care or not is just part of the draw. It is unfair to make those unlucky enough to need aged care sell or reverse mortgage their house to pay for it. If these proposals are enacted, people will be made to pay 25% of any form of aged care, whether it's for home care, cleaning, mowing or nursing home care. It could lead to people going without home care rather than going into debt.

The issue of home equity depletion to pay for aged care and accommodation costs adversely affects partners and live-in informal carers of recipients who have died. Surviving partners will be left with severely depleted (up to 50%) home equity; they can't sell the house and move elsewhere without repaying their partner's aged care debt. Elderly parents of children with disabilities will not be able to pass on their home to their children, in many cases the only security they can offer their children.

Life in the Lucky Country

These proposals by the Productivity Commission will not allow people to stay in their homes for as long as they can. These measures will instead entrench that last bastion of institutional care, the nursing home. The Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association (CPSA) intends to work with the Australian Parliament to ensure older Australians are not disadvantaged as a result of the forthcoming aged care reform measures.

This information was provided by the Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association.

Old Age Ain't No Place for Sissies! (Bette Davis)

It's probably true to suggest that most of us are not afraid of death. But the passage through ageing to get there is quite another question.

A geneticist speaking on ABC Radio National's *Future Tense* program suggested that the average life span may one day be as long as 150 years once science uncovers the genes responsible for ageing. But many genes of ageing don't become activated until after our reproductive years and these are responsible for many of the health losses and illnesses of our later years, for example, osteoporosis, arthritis and vision and hearing deterioration. Sadly, we can't know until we reach our final decades whether we'll be affected personally by such genes, or whether our offspring will inherit them. This, it is argued, is Nature's way of ensuring our genes will keep reproducing, for if we knew we had genetic issues we may be less prepared to have children, the human gene pool would be reduced and genetic evolution negatively affected.

Another scientist pointed out that though we might be living longer, thanks to the miracles of modern medical science, that often does little to improve the quality of our final years, meaning only that we may have to suffer needless pain and disability longer than in earlier times when life was shorter.

The obvious ethical issues of greatly increasing numbers of the elderly were noted (too many people to feed adequately; insufficient health and care resources; less opportunity for younger adults to get to the top jobs, etc.) These are already high on government agendas and frequently discussed in public forums and to me, of less relevance for my current considerations. My mind wandered off to more personal implications of the topic which, no doubt, apply to many others at the same point on life's trajectory.

This year alone has been particularly sobering to me. One friend has already died of cancer, two more,

also suffering cancer, know their days are numbered, three more are going through various forms of cancer treatment trusting all will be well, two have had to place their husbands, now seriously affected by dementia, into permanent care and lastly, both my mother (94) and her sister (92) are living with many age-related losses and debilitation and are, as a consequence, suffering severe limitations in their daily lives.

In relating to all these acquaintances, friends and family members, I have been deeply absorbed in noting their differing attitudes to dying and death. While the desire to maintain independence as long as possible seems to be universal in my small sample, some are quietly resentful about being unwell and having to slow down. "Why me?" they ask. Others, more positive, look approaching death in the eye while setting about simplifying their lives in preparation, and pressing on regardless with all the unpleasantness of treatment and continuing debilitation, determined to make the most of what may be left to them. It is apparent, though, that those who have loving, attentive support from close friends and family are less stressed and anxious, knowing they don't have to go through their journey alone.

Others are ambivalent. "Why am I still here when there is no point in going on?" they query. But further questioning soon shows their deeper desire to stay on living as long as possible. (Despite vociferous calls to legalise euthanasia, an authority on the subject has noted that where euthanasia has been legalised, very few have taken up that option. When it comes to the crunch, most of us won't take our own lives.) Still others, despite obvious signs of ever-increasing suffering and loss, refuse to contemplate dying at all, behaving as if muddling along, persisting in the status quo and refusing to make appropriate adjustments, will somehow allow the pain of ageing and loss to be avoided.

As an observer of those in this period of life and also as a participant seeking wisdom for myself, I can only conclude that I must live the truth of what I have long known: that life is essentially about uncertainty and although that is often extremely taxing, were we to live in its opposite – total, predictable security – we would have died of boredom long before. All we can do is contemplate our individual life experiences, attitudes and beliefs and distil from those a way to be at peace with our conclusion, whatever that may be, as to how best to live until we die.

Bev Cameron

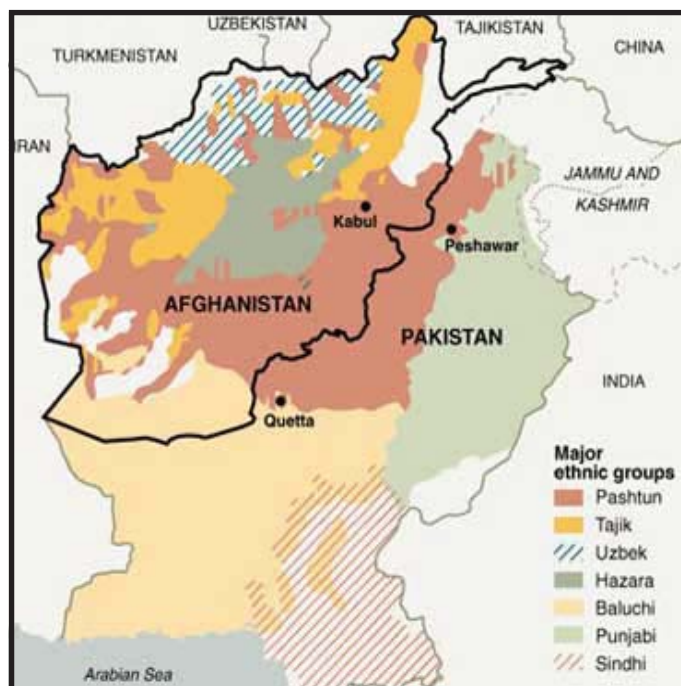
Point of View

The Eleventh of the Eleventh

World War I started because of tribal warfare in the Balkans and then, because of alliances, pulled in many nations. It was spoken of as “the war to end all wars” and on 11 November 1918, the Armistice was signed to end that war. The end of “the war to end all wars” did not end any such thing. Tribal disagreements have led to many wars since then and alliances are still pulling other nations into these wars. On this day of remembrance, Australia is still involved in a war in Afghanistan. Australian soldiers are still being killed in that war.

So why did we become involved? It certainly was not the choice of the Australian people. I was there in Sydney on the day of the big rally and march. I was one of the thousands who protested against the decision by John Howard to take Australia to war. We were told it was part of the fight to protect freedom. We were told that we were part of an alliance and had to fulfill our obligations within that alliance. Many of us debated the real reason behind this war and invasion but came up with no answers that satisfied us. Many of us feared it would lead to a long drawn-out and unwinnable war like that in Vietnam. Were we wrong?

Who, in Afghanistan is fighting against the invasion force? Basically Pashtuns. And who are they? Most Pashtuns live in either Pakistan or Afghanistan, 27 million in Pakistan and 13.5 million in Afghanistan. They are inhabitants of a land, much of it dry and harsh and unforgiving, much of it mountainous and cold.



Tribal *Pashtunwali* includes these principles:

- **Hospitality** to all, regardless of race, religion or status.
- **Asylum** for any who seek, no matter what the cost.
- **Revenge** for any injustice suffered, even if it takes years.
- **Bravery** against tyranny, in defence of family, property, honour.
- **Loyalty** to one's family, friends and tribe.

One can see how they have contributed to the ability of the people to fight against invaders.

A number of armies have tried to subdue the Pashtuns. The British army conquered India but tried a number of times, without success, to control the Pashtuns. They eventually signed a treaty and split off part of the Pashtun land and this became north western Pakistan. The Russians invaded Afghanistan but after ten years pulled out.

We, as part of the alliance that invaded Afghanistan, have not won the war. It is time we left the Pashtuns to do their thing and if that is tribal warfare within Pakistan/Afghanistan, so be it.

I think that the Australian people should be putting pressure on our politicians before the next election. A promise to pull out of Vietnam did a lot for Gough. If the major political parties all promised to pull out of Afghanistan, it would make it a very interesting election. What would it do for Julia? Probably get her over the line? What would it do for the Greens? Enhance their position. What would it do for Tony Abbott? Hard to tell!

And how would it affect my vote? If Greens alone promised to pull out, I would still be voting for them. If Labor and Greens both promised it, I would vote Labor to help achieve it. Even a promise from Tony Abbott to pull out of Afghanistan couldn't get me to trust him. How would it affect your vote?

Lorraine Inglis

Letters to the Editor



Messages of Support are Important

To all those who visited, sent cards or rang during my recent stay at Hospital, my many, many thanks. It's once more reaffirmed how important messages of support are to patients in recuperation.

I met some great staff and fellow patients, even two who had been involved with OWN Wellness and The Aboriginal Support Circle.

Am home again and should find out how the oncologist will deal with my 'low volume' breast cancer secondaries.

See you soon.

Joy Ross

Dear Women of OWN

I wish to thank you for showing such a powerful solidarity towards me on the occasion of the launching of my 'Book of Memories'.

I'm very appreciative of your support and I hold much love towards individual members and towards our feminist commitment to our values.

Sincerely yours,

Elsa Gimenez

PS Your generosity has greatly helped me in my moment of need.

Embracing Technology

I must express my GRATITUDE for the courses I attended. You signed me up at The Customs House Day. I thought I did not qualify, but so glad I went.

So many of my questions were answered by the course and the wonderful manuals. Also the facilitator Jenni Warren was so patient with us!

Now I have to practice what I have learnt. It has inspired me to embrace other technology as well. I started to put in a CD and convert it to MP3 and put it on my IPod. Now I need to sort out iTunes. I will have to go to Apple for that. No time for anything else these days!

Thanks again for this opportunity! Such a wonderful gift for me!

Love from

Jenny Cleland

More Praise

Thank you for your hard work.

OWN Matters is terrific.

Gillian Fisher

Thank you from Lucy

On behalf of La Perouse Public School I wish to thank all the people who sent Coles' Sports Vouchers to me. They were greatly appreciated by the school.

Our school's population is predominately Aboriginal and we also have a marvellous Aboriginal Headmistress and very supportive and compassionate staff. The children thrive under their administration with the emphasis on education, sport, responsibility and respect for elders.

Unfortunately, we are a poor school, with no multi-millionaire benefactors, so we have to rely on conglomerates like Coles to promote sport vouchers so we can access essential sports equipment. Otherwise our children would miss out once again, as has happened in earlier generations of aboriginal people.

Best wishes to all,

Lucy Porter



In Support of the Occupy Sydney

The Gray Panthers has been supporting Occupy Assemblies all over the US because we are all part of the 99%! We support you in this effort of having a strong voice - especially for older women! It is important for those in power to realize and understand that THEY are to blame for the world's economic woes and need to change their ways. Fairness is all we ask and for the head of a company to make millions more than the lowest waged worker is not right!

Please share our support by the Gray Panthers to all your members. It is important to know that people all over the world are linked together.

In unity,

Judy Lear, National Chair

Gray Panthers

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Supermarkets and the ACCC



Over the last few years many people have been concerned about the rise of Woolworths and Coles as their share of the supermarket sector has become more dominant.

Not only have they sought to price out their competitors, but they are now trying to change their supermarkets into a place which sells their own/home brands at the expense of branded Australian or other company products. Most of these home brand products are imported from overseas such as jars of peaches from South Africa, jam from Denmark and rice from Pakistan.

The products are often on the shelf at a cheaper price, which can undermine Australian companies and cause job losses. The farming sector is affected by this trend either by a drive to the bottom in prices or because the supermarkets are not buying their product at all.

The drive to expand the home brand products is based on what happened in England, with supermarket chains such as Tesco who began the trend towards in house labels. In fact, the new chairman of Woolworths, Grant O'Brien, has just appointed a former member of Tesco, Tjeerd Jegen, to be in charge of the strategy to expand the level of own brand share. The aim is to have 35% of total sales excluding fresh food.

I call this 'comrade shopping' to remember the great and glorious days of Soviet Russia where there was only one choice of shop to go to and only one choice in food selection.

The combination of dominant position, free trade agreements allowing the importation of food products from around the world and the obsession with profits at the expense of local communities, farmers, employees and businesses are all part of the problem.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission have raised some concerns about Coles and Woolworths. This includes the issue of market share and the growth of the private/home brand products. This sounds like a welcome change, at last, from the ACCC. Up until now the ACCC has not investigated with any vigour the supermarket sector.

With a new chairperson, Robert Sims, it is possible that there is a new focus on the supermarket sector. He gave a speech in Victoria in October which suggested that the Commission might examine at the sector. He mentioned a possible investigation into companies who have a dominant position and misuse their market power or use predatory pricing to exclude competition.

However, all of this is still a bit vague and uncertain. There needs to be more action. The Senate in Canberra has held an enquiry into the need for greater protection for suppliers to supermarkets, notably farmers such as dairy farmers. This inquiry has criticised the ACCC for failing in the past to take stronger action over supermarkets.

However on a positive note there is a Consumer Consultative Committee for the ACCC. This committee includes Choice magazine and The Council on the Aging. Contact them if you think there needs to be more action by the ACCC.

Margaret Kearney

FREE Hands-on workshops for complete beginners, take one or all three!

1. Introduction to Computers

10.00am – 11.30am

2. Internet Basics for Beginners

12.00pm – 1.30pm

3. Email for Beginners

3.00pm – 4.30pm

Thursday 8 December

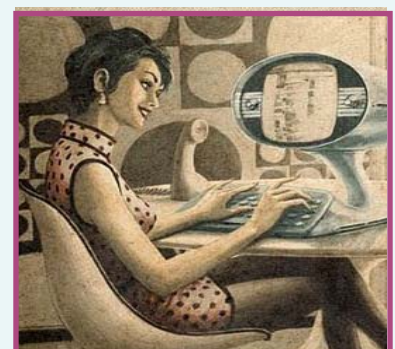
Customs House

Library

Telephone

8242 8554

Bookings Essential



Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

Centre for Indigenous Excellence Wins Prestigious Trophy

The International Olympic Committee's Trophy for Sport and Social Responsibility for 2011 has been awarded to the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) in Redfern. This marvellous centre has made an incredible impact since it was opened in 2010, with thousands of Indigenous people from across Australia having accessed its facilities. The trophy recognises people and organisations that have worked for social and educational development within their communities. The NCIE fulfils that role by promoting active and healthy lifestyles through sport, while also giving each participant a clear pathway to achieving improved learning, recreation and employment outcomes.

Nearly forty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander athletes have been selected to compete in the Olympic Games over the years, including gold-winning runner Cathy Freeman, medal-winning swimmer Samantha Riley and hockey player, later athlete, Nova Peris. Anyone is free to join the NCIE and take part in their programs including using the gym, the swimming pool, dancing classes, and educational activities for young and old. Its stated values of excellence, inclusiveness, growth and integrity complement those of the Olympic movement.

Pat Zinn

Buying of Fish River Station

The Fish River Station along the Daly River in the Northern Territory has been bought to create training and jobs for local Aboriginal people, and to conserve its spectacular environment. The Federal Government's *Caring for our Country* program contributed \$8.6 million dollars, the Indigenous Land Corporation contributed \$1.4 million dollars, while \$3 million dollars were obtained from other sources. Its 178,000 hectares consists of billabongs, woodland and pockets of rainforest, with fish, turtles and nationally threatened

animals. There are already seven rangers on the property and an Aboriginal-owned business removing feral animals such as buffalo which are sent to its abattoir. Training and jobs to come include fencing, cultural site protection, plant and animal surveys, soil conservation, and regeneration of threatened fauna and flora.

Ownership will be transferred to the traditional owners in due course. With so much pristine land in the Northern Territory being threatened by mining, this is a positive enterprise!

Pat Zinn



Giree Giree

Dr Ruby Langford Ginibi - "I call myself an Edumacator"

Ruby Langford Ginibi, one of Australia's foremost Aboriginal authors and historians, died on the 1 October, 2011, after a long illness. She was born at Box Ridge Mission near Coraki in NSW in 1934 and experienced poverty, family disruption and racial violence, with very little education. Yet she was able to channel her anger into writing with much humour and charm. Her books, poems, short stories and essays are studied in schools here and abroad, and she won numerous literary awards.

Her first book, *Don't Take your Love to Town* is available in our library at Windmill Street, and her story appears in our book *Steppin' Out and Speakin' Up*.

Five of her nine children survive her and she has 25 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren.

Pat Zinn

Compassion

The Changing Face of Christmas

You've probably noticed the Christmas season starting earlier and earlier each year, commercially speaking. One sceptic has commented: "If the retailers had their way, we would be Christmas shopping in June!" But while commercial interests may want us to spend, spend, spend, there is also a growing trend to donate to charity and give the receipts to our families and friends as Christmas gifts. In a consumer society, this is a welcome change that focuses on generosity to those in need rather than further acquisition for ourselves.

If you have adult children, it's likely that they will be working harder than ever in these difficult economic times, to keep their own ships afloat and if both partners in a relationship are working, time will be very precious. Finding a time for everyone, old, young and in between, to get together then becomes very challenging.

It has long been necessary for many young families to share themselves with the families of both partners at Christmas. Now, with many couples breaking up and being replaced by new partnerships, even more complex arrangements need to be negotiated. As an escape from such complexity, many young adults and families choose this time to travel, take a cruise, go interstate, be anywhere but at their usual address at Christmas. The upshot for at least some senior adults, is the need to make major compromises, such as, choosing another day, or having several smaller gatherings with separate family groups or even choosing to meet with friends instead and stop feeling so deeply disconcerted about such a change. In our highly mobile society where many now live alone, celebrating with friends is already a workable substitute for family and enjoying a feeling of sharing with those they love.

As with all things, change is inevitable, even with our dearly loved Christmas traditions, although it is to be hoped that the essence of the season, the rebirth of hope for a more peaceful, just and compassionate world remains as the central motive and meaning.

In conversation with members of my own small family which wrestles with all the conflicting pressures I have already alluded to, it has suddenly occurred to me that the Christmas family rituals I grew up with and attempted to maintain in my adult years are now becoming unworkable and even irrelevant. To retain peace of mind, I – along with many other seniors – have had to let go of the past and move into a new way of celebrating family at Christmas. Naturally, as with all significant losses, this is a sad experience, but there is always the hope that the closing of one era means the dawning of a new one with all the challenges and possibilities that could bring. With this

thought in mind, the prospect of a new and more satisfying way of being family to all, rather than a select few, looks promising.

Bev Cameron



A Gift for Elsa

Do you know about Greenwich Hospital? It was my good fortune to find myself in the care of Greenwich Hospital staff during September-October this year. Greenwich Hospital is run by Hammond Care, an independent Christian charity which nevertheless does not attempt to proselytise while offering compassionate care to all patients.

The staff treated me with dignity and respect. They were not patronising and, always with warm smiles, were eager to make me as comfortable as possible. Patients are offered a particularly surprising and generous opportunity to fulfil their most deeply held dream. Volunteers and staff at the hospital, through the Hammond Care – Palliative Care 'Dreams Project' go out of their way to fund this program. Some patients might desire a ride in a Cadillac, others might choose to travel in a hot air balloon. I wanted to spend a night at Taronga Park Zoo among my friends, the animals.

My dream was fulfilled when, with friend Gwen Bate, I spent a fabulous night and the following morning at the Zoo. We were shown a warm welcome, excellent hospitality, delicious food and comfortable accommodation. We were able to pat some of the Zoo's inhabitants, we fed giraffes and we saw a great variety of other animals. Our visit to the Australian Night Mammals' kitchen was a fascinating experience in which we began to realise the enormous care the Zoo staff take to ensure each creature is given exactly the right proportion of appropriate food, including frozen bush rats, worms, flies and silkworm pupae. The latter are special treats for deserving animals!

You can see from all I have related how impressed I am with Greenwich Hospital. I could not choose a better place to end my days when that time comes. If you should ever wish to do volunteer work in a hospital, caring for patients or helping to raise funds, I could only recommend you consider making Greenwich Hospital your top priority.

Elsa Gimenez



The Big Day

The occasion was my son's wedding on 11.11.2011 in Bangalow, on the north coast, because, as the bride-to-be said, "It has to be somewhere romantic". I guess it had to be a "big deal" after 25 years of living together!

My two daughters, 14-year-old grandson and I decided to stay a day either side of the festivities. So we booked a great apartment close to Byron Bay where the wedding ceremony was to be originally. Later the venue was changed to the delightful Bangalow Guesthouse, where the bridal party and some of the guests stayed.

The weather had been fine until the wedding day, when it was decidedly cooler with possible showers forecast. The ceremony took place at the bottom of the beautiful garden surrounding the guesthouse, where the celebrant and guests were assembled, when it started to sprinkle. Undeterred, my son and his bride-to-be, accompanied by their five-year-old daughter who was flower girl and ring-bearer, made their way down toward us as the first drops of rain began to fall. But it must have seemed an interminable distance to my young grand-daughter, because they had walked about half way when she suddenly turned around and ran back towards the guest house. It was an unforgettable sight – quite hilarious! Anyway, one of her maternal aunts pursued our flower girl and persuaded her to return. By this time it was raining in earnest and we were a somewhat bedraggled lot by the time the ceremony was over.

We all warmed up very soon after a glass or two of bubbly, plenty of good food, good company and being entertained by a great three-piece band.

June West

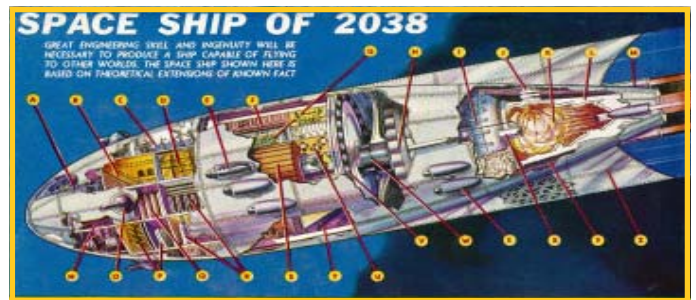
Tiling the Loo

'Painting the Loo' ('Our Stories' November 2011) prompted my memory of another true 'loo' story.

A friend, a tiler popular and busy in his country town, was often left with small quantities of left-over tiles. Of different colours and sizes, of course!

He solved the problem by slapping the latest oddment onto his family's outside loo, the remnant of pre-sewerage days. Over time the loo's decoration became very interesting, decorative and financially useful. When a prospective customer was having trouble describing the type of tiles he wanted for his new kitchen or bathroom, our friend would lead him to the outside loo, open the door, then explain to the surprised customer that inspecting the wide range of tile samples therein might solve his problem. Mostly it did: satisfied customer, happy tradesman, deal decided. Business was brisk, even in those not-so-affluent days, the 1940s.

Noelene Baker



Being Ten

Jan Wood, Producer of *Coffee Break* TV Series, has a current project called "Being Ten". Jan wants to record on video, women's experiences – personal and global – when they were ten years old, so that young people can get an inkling of how different the world was in "our day".

Jan wants to interview people across generations and nationalities. For example Jan was ten in 1962 in the middle of The Cold War, Sputnik was circling overhead, the contraceptive pill came on the market and invariably her ten-year-old school mates' mothers quaffed Bex Powders at the kitchen sink. In 1962 the "Biro" pen became mainstream in schools making ink and nibs obsolete and the class "ink monitor" was made redundant.

If you would like your story included, please contact Jan at info@woodlandproductions.com.au or telephone on 0431 632 801. The recording will take place in late January 2012, at 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point.

OWN Writers

Lucy's Story

I was born in 1932 at a large unemployment camp called Happy Valley in La Perouse. This camp was situated next to the prestigious NSW Golf Club and, as it was in the middle of the Great Depression, the unemployment men used to go caddying to earn a few bob. I think they carried the golf clubs for 18 holes of golf for two shillings. At that time the government gave no money to the poor, they only received a meagre food and clothing allowance so, as there was absolutely no work available, caddying was the only option.

My father saved his money and eventually he bought a cow and a car (twenty pounds) with the money he earned. Dad had been a merchant seaman and had travelled the world and he was determined to show his ever-growing family there was life outside of La Perouse.

When he could afford petrol, off we would go in the Oldsmobile on a new adventure. This car had a roof but no side windows. However it did have running boards both sides. Mum and Dad sat in the front, us three kids in the back and Gussie Sherritt (a young Aboriginal boy who loved Mum and Dad) stood on the running board with his arms around Dad's neck. On the other running board was our faithful dog, Bozo. We thought we were kings of the road.

On one memorable trip we went to Mascot aerodrome and watched the planes taking joy riders up for a trip over Sydney. The man selling the tickets must have felt sorry for us and came over and offered to take us all up for one pound. We were so excited and lucky Dad had a pound note, so up we went, our first plane trip. I later learnt it was Charles Kingsford Smith's plane, the Southern Cross.

Dad sold the car when WWII broke out as he couldn't buy petrol. It all went into the war effort.

Lucy Porter



Attention Lesbian Writers in OWN

The 2012 Mardi Gras short story comp has significantly larger prizes on offer. With around \$6,000 in cash and kind in the kitty, next February's comp is expected to be the biggest yet. The winner will receive \$2,000 from the CAL Cultural Fund and a \$500 Sydney Writers' Centre voucher. Prizes for 2nd, 3rd and Youth (under 26 years of age) have also increased significantly.

Each entry will be considered by three independent judges who will not be given authors' names. Writers are free to interpret the competition theme "Heroes" in any way they wish within the 750 word limit. The story must be previously unpublished and LGBTQI themed (entrants need not identify as LGBTQI).

The deadline for entries is January 7th, 2012. Winners will be announced and read on February 25th at Queer Thinking. Entry forms and further details are available from: mardigras.org.au

lesbian-ebooks.com.au or gay-ebooks.com.au

Someone has to win all this loot - so start writing now !!! January 7th isn't that far away.

Cheers and good luck



Outing organised by the Kings Cross Community Centre

- Wednesday 7 December
- St. Fiacre Distillery - Erina
- A great day out with a chance to buy some Christmas Cheer for yourself
- or for others. Bus departs 10am. Cost \$7, all trips due back by 5pm.

New Horizons

Brave New World

I am ashamed to admit that with the advent of spring this year I have come down with a serious case of 'spring-cleaning-itis' and for weeks have been dusting, polishing, scrubbing everything that moves or doesn't move. Unused or unnecessary items have been ruthlessly disposed of and wonderfully efficient storage systems have been introduced for the items allowed to stay. Well, to be truthful, I have not been quite such a paragon as this, but enough changes have been made to make me feel somewhat smug about my temporarily tidy house.

However, when it came to tossing out an out-of-date set of Encyclopaedia Britannica, I failed the test. No one wants an old set of encyclopaedias any more, now you can store the digital version on computer and easily update it. "You will just have to put a few volumes in the bin each week", I was told by someone who had already ditched her set. Sadly I opened one of the old books for a last goodbye and saw all that precious information sitting there just for the reading. Sure, some information had not stood the test of time, but there was still enough relevant, fascinating stuff to keep me happy for years. So I repainted the bookshelves, and restored the volumes to their rightful place – right by my bed.

Then, my daughter came to visit bearing aloft her newest purchase, her iPad2. She was so enthusiastic, so keen to show me all the wonderful things her iPad could do, she barely had time to notice the results of all my hard work. "It's so great when you're travelling," she enthused. "You don't have to lug around all those heavy books so you won't run out of something to read. And look at all these apps(?) I've downloaded." The most amazing display of information was paraded before my eyes – HSC Chemistry for her daughter (amazingly, this looked fascinating even to me who has not done Chemistry for years), newspapers from around the globe, in fact almost anything you wanted to know even if you didn't know you wanted to know it. (Thank you Donald Rumsfeld).

This was my moment of truth. Those bookshelves all over my house stacked with books that need cleaning, dusting, re-arranging can all be replaced by a small rectangular object which needs hardly any maintenance. Those shelves of CDs and DVDs can also be replaced. It's so easy to have the music you want or the film you want with a minimum of effort. When you no longer need an item, you can get rid of it with a click of the fingers. Very tempting!



Even though it's a bit scary, it's wonderful to think about what amazing things might soon become commonplace in the lives of our grandchildren, our children and even ourselves. It's like reading a thriller – you can't wait to see what happens next!

Peggy Rodden

The Women's Communal Living Project

An exciting new women's project will get under way in January/February 2012 on a small eco-friendly farm in Exeter in the Southern Highlands of NSW.

www.womenscommunallivingproject.com

About 50 women, aged 50 and over, will come to stay at Eden Farm throughout the year. In groups of four or five, they will be accommodated for periods ranging from a couple of weeks to a month or more, depending on availability.

We hope to be able to discuss and evaluate the feasibility of older women living a communal life.

We want to devise some creative ways of addressing a few of the challenges women face as we grow older whether we live in the city or the country – such as scarcity of affordable housing and insufficient savings to fund increasing longevity.

The Women's Communal Living project is aimed at women over 50 who are living alone and who plan on living independently for as long as possible without necessarily relying on family or having to move into a retirement village.

So please, check out the website – come and stay – bring a friend or two if you like (think of it as an extended 'girlie weekend'!).

Share ideas and discuss how friends or small groups of women on their own can take charge of their futures by living an active creative life together if they are widowed or divorced and on their own.

So please, don't delay. Check out the website. Call Kaye Healey, the project facilitator, on 02 4857 4001 or 0408 675536 and book your place today!

Introducing Our OWN Volunteers

OWN NSW relies on a fantastic team of Volunteers to keep the network running smoothly. Because our Volunteers rarely get the opportunity to meet each other, we thought we'd make a space to introduce them to you via the newsletter. As you all know this newsletter is written and edited by OWN volunteers, and their names appear each issue inside the front cover, or on articles throughout *OWN Matters*, but there are about 70 women throughout the OWN Network, who keep the wheels of this machine oiled and turning. This issue, OWN Volunteer Sandra Windsor, interviewed another volunteer Kit Cheung about the what brought her to us and, better still, what makes her stay!...

KIT

Kit migrated from Hong Kong in 1984 and has been a volunteer working for OWN approximately 2 years. She found OWN on the Volunteering NSW website, applied for a position, and was successful.



Before she came to OWN Kit worked with an insurance company in Sydney where she was employed in both face-to-face customer service and internal customer service positions. After a company merger, her section closed and she was transferred to a Project Office as a Systems Tester. This job brought new issues and challenges, the most difficult was being faced with inevitable retrenchment as the business opportunities diminished.

Kit has been involved in researching the history of OWN Sydney from minutes and old records, and entering that information on to our computer. She has nearly completed this facet of the data gathering for the OWN Sydney History Project. Through the research she has conducted Kit has learnt so much more about OWN, and has also enhanced her writing skills. She has enjoyed the staff and other volunteers' company plus the friendly atmosphere that OWN provides to work in.

Kit's interests include reading and occasional cooking – her fried rice for OWN events is legendary! Kit is married and has two adult daughters. Kit sees her greatest achievement as being her migration in '84. She is happy and her aim is to maintain her independence as she ages.

Sandra Windsor

Housing NSW Repairs Campaign

Do you, or someone you know or love, live in public housing? If you answered “yes” to this question, chances are you will be very familiar with concerns over the difficulty of getting repairs attended to on time - if at all - and in “a tradesmen-like manner”. The good news is The Redfern Legal Centre has created a kit that will help you negotiate this battlefield.

The **Housing Repairs Kit** outlines clearly your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, and theirs as a landlord. It details the steps you can take to ensure that your tenancy remains secure, AND your repairs are carried out. Oh, you may be thinking, what's the point of all that grief, they will still take forever – after all, it's not like it's their money and time they're wasting! Well actually, if you follow the steps, every day they delay, could count towards a rent reduction when tallying up any settlement if the case drags on. So given the parlous state of repairs in Housing NSW, if we all lodge our requests now, we could eventually wipe years off our rental bill – now wouldn't that be worth the effort!

If you live in Sydney and you would like to discuss this further, three of the Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Services based in the inner suburbs of Sydney (the Inner Sydney Tenants' Advice Service in Redfern, the Eastern Area Tenants Service in Bondi Junction, and the Inner West Sydney Tenancy Advice Service in Marrickville) have made Housing NSW repairs a priority issue for the next few months. If you or any other HNSW tenants you know want to be interviewed, please contact Phoenix at phoenix@rlc.org.au or on 9698 7277.

The **Housing Repair Kit** can also be downloaded at: <http://www.rlc.org.au/publications.html>

Everybody in Housing NSW can use this resource. They'd appreciate any feedback on the Housing Repairs Campaign – tell them if it is making a difference, if there are issues you think they should be pursuing, if there are things you think they should be doing differently. Feedback can be sent to Phoenix van Dyke at: phoenix@rlc.org.au



Medical Energy Rebate

The Rebate is for eligible customers who have a medically diagnosed inability to self-regulate body temperature when exposed to extremes (hot or cold) of environmental temperatures. It may be associated with certain medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis. The Rebate provides \$145 a year for eligible customers rising to \$200 a year from 1 July 2011.

Eligibility for the Medical Energy Rebate is based on the following criteria:

Either the account holder or anyone residing at the residence must have an inability to self-regulate body temperature. This requires the completion of a signed form by a medical practitioner who has been treating you for at least three months.

The account holder must have one of the following concession cards: Pensioner Concession Card issued by either Centrelink or the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA); Gold Card issued by the DVA; or Health Care Card issued by Centrelink as a result of receiving one of a number of income support payments from the Commonwealth.

To apply for the Rebate, eligible customers should submit an application form to their retailer.

The Medical Energy Rebate can be received in addition to other assistance such as the Low Income Household Rebate, the Life Support Rebate and the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) scheme. The Medical Energy Rebate is also available to long-term residents of caravan parks.

For further comprehensive information see Medical Energy Rebate - questions and answers.

You can also call the Energy Information Line on 1300 136 888

<http://www.trade.nsw.gov.au/energy/customers/rebates#Medical-Energy-Rebate>

Guard against X-Rays

On Wednesday, Dr Oz had a show on the fastest growing cancer in women, thyroid cancer. It was a very interesting program and he mentioned that the increase could possibly be related to the use of dental x-rays and mammograms. He demonstrated that on the apron the dentist puts on you for your dental x-rays there is a little flap that can be lifted up and wrapped around your neck. Many dentists don't bother to use it. Also, there is something called a "thyroid guard" for use during mammograms.

By coincidence, I had my yearly mammogram yesterday. I felt a little silly, but I asked about the guard and sure enough, the technician had one in a drawer. I asked why it wasn't routinely used. The answer was, "I don't know. You have to ask for it." Well, if I hadn't seen the show, how would I have known to ask? I hope you pass this on to your friends and family.

June Gernhoefer - Northside OWN

Free Community Christmas Fun!

City of Sydney is hosting a series of free, fabulous Christmas Village Concerts. This is a great way to celebrate the festive season with friends, family and the local community.

Four concerts will be staged over two weekends at Rushcutters Bay, Rosebery, Alexandria and Surry Hills.

Take a picnic or enjoy a sausage from the Charity Fundraiser BBQ and come along to enjoy lots of family fun! All are held from 6.30pm – 8.30pm.

Venues and Dates

Alexandria Park, Alexandria

- Saturday, 3 December 2011
- Buckland St, Alexandria

Ward Park, Surry Hills

- Sunday, 4 December 2011
- Devonshire St, Surry Hills

Turruwul Park, Rosebery

- Saturday, 10 December 2011
- Cnr Primrose & Hayes Rds, Rosebery

Rushcutters Bay Park

- Sunday, 11 December 2011
- Waratah St, Rushcutters Bay





You must write to stop the closure of Medicare Dental

Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon, plans to close the Enhanced Primary Care Scheme that provides dental treatment of up to \$4,250 for people with chronic illness. The aim of the scheme is to prevent poor dental health from aggravating a patient's chronic illness. However, as part of this year's budget, the scheme is to be closed on 31 December 2011.

The legislation hasn't gone through parliament yet, so it's not known whether patients will continue to be treated after 31 December if their treatment started before the closure of the program. When the government attempted to close the scheme in 2008, there was to be no treatment post closure date.

The Australian Government has given a commitment to address the lack of public dental care in the next budget. As to how is anybody's guess, but that's why they want to close the current Medicare scheme: in order to free up funds.

Even if the Government does include a dental scheme in the 2012 budget, there will be at least a six-month gap between the closure of the chronic illness Medicare scheme and the beginning of a new one, and that's ambitiously assuming that the new scheme kicks off on 1 July 2012.

CPSA calls on readers to write to Minister Roxon and politely outline their opposition to the closure of the Enhanced Primary Care scheme before a dental scheme for people on low-incomes is ready to replace it.

The Minister's contact details are as follows:

The Hon Nicola Roxon, MP
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
or email the Minister at:
Nicola.Roxon.MP@aph.gov.au

Northside Politics in the Pub

A new group has been formed on the northern side of the bridge – Northside Politics in the Pub. A group of like-minded progressive thinkers started the group to provide a public forum where views, information and expression, beyond the mainstream can be discussed and shared.

The first meeting attracted over 20 people; the presenter was a young asylum seeker from Kenya who discussed the hardships in his country, the five-year detention there followed by the two year detention in Australia. The second meeting, Saturday 5 November title, "What the Frack" drew 45 people. The topic of Coal Seam Gas has attracted a lot of interest and much debate. Speakers were:

Justin Field: Policy advisor to the Lock the Gate Alliance & to the Greens in the NSW Parliament. **Dr Helen Redmond,** rehabilitation physician, doctor for Environment Australia and an expert on the health risks of coal seam gas. **Paul Cleary,** Research Scholar at the ANU, senior writer for The Australian and author of 'Too much luck': the mining boom and Australia's future.

It was a riveting presentation; the presenters certainly knew their subject and spent a long time, going overtime answering the many questions that arose from the presentations.

The next Northside Politics in the Pub will be on the first Saturday in February 2012 and will be following by subsequent meetings on the first Saturday of each month. Thus far the group has met at The Union Hotel, Pacific highway North Sydney and hopes to continue to meet there. The Union Hotel has provided a room free of charge for which we are most grateful.

If you are interested, and want to know more, contact OWN member, Aloma Fennell, and have your name put on the mailing list. Of course, you just simply turn up to any event. We are also keen to have topic suggestions. We are in the process of establishing a Facebook page and may well have this in place by the time you are reading this notice. We hope to see you in February.

[Aloma Fennell](mailto:alomafennell@gmail.com) ph:9922 3809
alomafennell@gmail.com

At and Beyond the Rocks

Getting fit, while having fun!

As this year draws to a close it must be noted that the OWN Model of Wellness is working well. All six centres continue to grow and the range of services expanded as more women elect to check out what's happening at OWN Wellness Centres throughout the greater Sydney area. Women living around the Northside, Bankstown, Blacktown, Sutherland, Sydney and Illawarra areas strive towards maintaining their physical and mental health by embracing stomping to the Bootscooting Boogie (Blacktown,) International Folk Dancing (most Centres), moving reluctant fingers over the strings of a ukulele (Illawarra), beating the blues and stress away on a drum, getting the creativity going through art, craft and writing groups, practise gentle exercise, Tai Chi, Thai Yoga, Meditation and many other practices that ensure they stay active and independent, in touch with friends and connected with their communities. Performance groups entertain at local events, our OWN conferences and cheer residents in nursing homes and similar residences. How good it that! Having fun and getting fit is good for you.

Watching the improvement in the level of coordination, concentration, balance, strength and overall physical fitness in the women who come to the centres is very satisfying to the coordinators and those who keep the centres working smoothly. Their efforts ensure that the Older Women's Network will continue to be recognised as a cost effective way of running centres that are of a benefit to older women who are the largest demographic in this ageing population.

Being run by volunteers and staffed by professional facilitators, costs are kept to a minimum to ensure that even those on very low incomes are able to attend the classes regularly. The volunteers who take on the responsibility of the week to week running of the centres make a serious commitment to ensure that every one who walks through the door is greeted with a smile and that during their stay they will receive respect and tuition that will be of benefit to their physical self and overall sense of wellbeing. Our volunteers cannot be thanked enough for time and effort they put into running this important entity that is the Older Women's Network. I dips me lid to you all. Well done.

*Barbara Malcolm Convener, Wellness
Coordination Committee*

I'm on a Committee

Oh, give me your pity, I'm on a Committee.
This means that from morning to night,
We attend and amend and contend and defend,
Without a conclusion in sight.
We confer and concur, we defer and demur
And reiterate all of our thoughts.
We revise the agenda with frequent addenda
And consult a load of reports.
We compose and propose, we suppose and
oppose,
And the points of procedure are fun,
But though various notions are brought up as
motions
There's not a terrible lot that gets done.
We resolve and absolve but never dissolve
Since it's out of the question for us.
What a shattering pity to end our Committee
Where else could we make such a fuss!

contributed by May Brown, Hastings OWN



Sydney OWN Summer Solstice Party

It's that time again - end of the year and summer.

Sydney OWN would like to invite our members to the end of year Summer Solstice Party.

Please bring a plate of food to share, and come along to join the fun on:

Friday December 16

at 11.30am

at OWN NSW

87 Lower Fort Street Millers Point

Sydney OWN Committee

At and Beyond the Rocks

Born Free - but now I'm Expensive

I can't believe it's November again. I am sure there is something sinister going on here where we are tricked into thinking there are thirty days in most months. It's bleeding obvious that some months only have one and a half weeks. Monday is the first of the month, Wednesday week sees us turning over another page on the calendar and we've only done half of what we planned to do that month, not to mention all the things we should have celebrated and never had time to. Still, the sun does keep coming up each morning, we do have a calendar to turn the pages over and there is still a wall holding up the calendar. Should everybody in the world be so lucky!

Here in the Illawarra the Wellness centre continues to grow faster than we ever imagined it would. All the classes are bursting at the seams, proving there was a great need for such a facility in this area. The Thai Yoga and exercise classes have had to be doubled to accommodate all those wanting to take part, and the ukulele class is such a delight it has me smiling, not only on the days it's held, but whenever I think of it. We have 26 members enrolled and between 20 and 25 turn up every week. Our psychology workshops of a Friday fulfil a great need in the women who suffer from social isolation, depression, grief, loss, anxiety and other issues that affect us all, but are often left unattended to for financial and other reasons. We are very grateful to the Illawarra IWD Committee for their funding that has enabled to hold these workshops.

The results of the research into the benefits of Thai Yoga to older persons are about to be published and the final presentation was made public at the University of Wollongong Health Science Facility early in November. I hope to be able to have those results in the next edition of OWN Matters.

Chaiya Nornadechanunt, who ran the study, will be returning to Thailand towards the end of next year. This will be a great loss to us as he is the only person teaching Thai Yoga in Australia. He is very anxious to teach this practice to someone who would continue teaching after he has returned to his homeland. I have been searching unsuccessfully for such a person for months and would like any of you who know of any women who would like to accept his generous offer to teach this course, free of



charge, to get in touch with me. It would be a lucrative career move for someone in the industry as it is a very popular class. As I said earlier Chaiya's class continues to grow each week as more women hear that the classes are being run here in the Illawarra.

I get lots of messages sent to me on the internet, too many times without the author being acknowledged and here is something I would love to pass on but know not who to acknowledge. It moved me with its simple message on life and how we accept the fellow travellers we meet on life's journey.

We know, life is full of imperfect things...and imperfect people. I'm not the best at anything and I forget birthdays and anniversaries just like everyone else. What I've learned over the years is that learning to accept each other's faults and choosing to celebrate each other's differences, is one of the most important keys to creating a healthy, growing and lasting relationship.

I'd like to add to this that judging others is a selfish act. Unless you have walked another's journey, in their shoes, in their timeframe and in their family, you do not know if you would be any different from the person you are judging today.

Gosh I'm getting soppy in my old age. I'd better stop and go and check my pot plants.

Just before I do that, I cannot let this opportunity pass without expressing the sadness I felt on hearing the news that our OWN Betty Little has passed way. Betty was one of our original poster girls and her smiling face has always been such an inspiration to me and I am sure, many of you. Vale Betty. You are sadly missed.

Barbara Malcolm, Illawarra OWN Wellness Centre

Theatre Group

2011 has been the year of 'The Neighbourhood' for the Theatre Group as we performed seven of our shows in the seven city villages and got to know our neighbours in the City of Sydney a whole lot better. It's been an interesting time seeing how the various centres conduct their over 55 activities and becoming aware of the various demographics that operate, so that Alexandria audiences were quite different to Glebe audiences who were quite different to Pyrmont and so it goes.

In October we performed for over 100 staff members at Macquarie Hospital at the Northern Sydney Education Centre at North Ryde. This followed on from a performance we did last year, and the purpose of our show during Mental Health Week was to once more promote the message of positive ageing to a workforce who are often caring for older people during vulnerable periods of their lives. Several women came up to us after the show and expressed interest in joining the group when they retire, which seems to be the most effective recruitment method the Theatre Group has.

In addition to the above performance the group performed *Don't Knock your Granny* at Gosford Hospital for the Education Centre against Violence at their forum entitled 'Not Seen or Heard'. It's sad that violence is still present in so many women's lives and statistically on the increase in older women's lives, as they become the target of abuse from not just male partners but also children and their partners. The work of this Centre is very powerful in educating staff who work with at-risk women and children.

And just because it's Christmas doesn't mean that life is all jolly hockey sticks. We all know that for many it is a time of high stress when an overcooked turkey can literally knock the stuffing out of us. So let's be calm and joyful. Is this possible you ask? Yes, it is – breathe deeply and then burst into song and do whatever movements your mobility allows. And we are allowed to get cross. In fact such displays are almost mandatory at this time of year.

A special thanks to Veronica, our stage manager, who will be on leave over the next few months, 'back home' in Ireland to cement OWN's international reputation and relations as OWN's Foreign Affairs Liaison. Thanks also to Wendy, one of our stellar performers, who is retiring from the Theatre Group this year and also to Beth and Kris who've given us wonderful support. We really appreciate it.

Rita Tratt

Wanted: Volunteer Theatre Director

If you are a woman old enough to know what political theatre is, read on.

The Theatre Group is searching for a part time volunteer Theatre Director who can assist us in continuing to develop our programmes, vision, and skills.

We are a group of opinionated older women who perform dangerous entertainment. With musical theatre as our Trojan horse, our troupe insidiously spreads anarchic messages on overcoming institutional ageism through creating elder empowerment. We write our own material and use humour, skits, popular music and puppetry to liberate the isolated, alarm the hidebound and start gales of laughter. We are needing a Director to take us on a new journey.

Essential to this role would be a shared commitment to OWN's organisational objectives: to promote the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women. Diversity is also a core value at OWN, so women with experience/professional background in musical theatre are welcome to apply if you also possess the following **Essential skills and availability:**

- Ability to direct and choreograph a dedicated troupe of variously trained individuals.
- A knowledge of traditional/ popular music and musical direction, and ability to communicate this effectively to cast and pianist.
- A creative flair for bringing ideas to the stage.
- A structured approach and methodology for liberating the best from all performers.
- Availability to rehearse with the Group and our professional pianist nearly every week at Millers Point in The Rocks.

Apply now to start next year. Please contact Theatre Coordinators: Rita Tratt: ritatratt@yahoo.com.au or Brigid Sen: bmsen@bigpond.com.au

Warning: To give you an idea of the sort of women that have inspired the OWN Theatre Group, the following link features two former Theatre Group members being interviewed on Andrew Denton's Enough Rope, Josie Jackson, who is featured in the interview still writes for the group:

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/enoughrope/transcripts/s914626.htm>

In Our OWN Write

Power to the Serfs

We haven't got rid of serfdom. It is still lords and serfs, even if it is 500 years since feudalism was banned by Queen Liz I in England. In feudal times serfs were legally part of the land that belonged to the lord of the manor and if the land was sold they were sold with it. The feudal system involved the forced labour of the serfs on the fields of the land owners, or in other areas the lord controlled, like mines or forestry or transportation.

Some might argue that some economies in which farmers were tied to farms, whether they were *kolkhoz*, which were collectives, or *soykhos*, which were state owned, were government controlled serfdom.

Others might say that the feudal system and capitalism and communism have striking similarities: Each system included lords at the top and serfs at the bottom. Each system relied on taxation generated by the populations to maintain infrastructure, to provide social services and to conduct wars initiated by the rulers. Each system utilised labour; feudalism with its serfs and communism and capitalism with their workers. Serfs by other names.

At least, under the feudal system, the lords had some responsibility to their serfs, depended on them, needed them. Today the *corporatocracy* has usurped the power of elected representatives in our democracies. They have no loyalty or responsibility to the workers. They have learned that they can use serfs in other lands to produce, at lower labour rates, and without job benefits for the workers. This system of *outsourcing* jobs to other countries has created a growing number of unemployed serfs in many countries. Many family businesses have been wiped out by practices of chains. The media is now controlled by large conglomerates. Our taxation is being used to prop up financial institutions, such as banks.

And don't think that you are not a serf. You might be an educated serf. You might be an intelligent serf. You might even be a well-off serf. (I was told that I am an uppity serf.) How much power do you have, as a serf, against the lords who make the decisions that affect your community and your country and your life? They might build hotels in your harbor, dredge harbours in your barrier reef, drill mines that damage your aquifers and farmland and put large amounts of money into advertising campaigns against any legislation that might affect their profits.

Democracy is being eroded by the power of these new lords, these *corporatocrats*. It is hardly surprising

that they have done their best to wipe out unions, and absolutely hate organisations like GETUP, as the more recent threat to their control of the people. It is also hardly surprising that the serfs of the world are revolting, whether online, or in organisations like Occupy. I say, "Power to us Serfs".

An Uppity Serf



Occupy Sydney

What is it all about?

The Occupy movement is sweeping the world, highlighting the global problems of class inequality and corporate greed. The occupations in over 900 cities worldwide have been vibrant protests against the callous greed of the 1%.

Occupy Sydney has been one small part of this worldwide movement. The movement believes communities are being weakened by the privatisation of health, education and essential services. While a select few grow wealthy, an underclass is growing in Australia, alongside a permanent class of workers stuck in low-paid and insecure employment. These people receive none of the benefits of the mining boom while struggling to afford increasing rises in the cost of living. Two million people — 9% of the population — live in poverty. ABS figures state that the poorest 20% owns only 1% of total household wealth in Australia, while the richest 20% owns 61%. Official surveys show that at least 100,000 people are homeless on any given night, 27,000 at least in NSW alone.

Big business plays too great a part in influencing the outcome of government policies such as the mining tax, with pressure from the pokies and tobacco lobbies for the government to also abandon progressive initiatives that benefit ordinary people. In a land of

In Our OWN Write

plenty Australia declares the need to maintain balanced budgets and fiscal austerity, curtailing wage increases, and restricting immigration policies while punishing the most vulnerable. The consequence for workers are precariousness and insecurity. The consequence for unions are decreased bargaining power against the monolithic business lobby. The consequence for pensioners and welfare recipients is poverty, so-called 'mutual obligation', welfare quarantining and social control.

While many struggle with housing affordability, the banks continue to increase their profit share. The participants in Occupy Sydney come with diverse experiences. But all believe that the issues of corporate control over the lives of citizens need to be raised and challenged continuously until our society changes.

<http://www.occupysydney.org.au/about/support/>

edited text from

The Occupy Sydney Outreach Working Group

Occupy London

After reading about Occupy London in the newspaper, Number One Nephew and I decided to visit St Paul's Cathedral to find out more about the protest movement that highlighted the differences between the one per cent of people with 'obscene wealth' and the other 99%.

At first this movement was described as anti-capitalist but the protestors said that they were not against capitalism *per se* but wanted to highlight that the average income of directors of the richest 100 companies had risen by nearly 50% in the past year to about \$4 million whilst in the same period public sector employees had to manage with a pay rise of 2.6%.

For many involved in the protest, and we spoke to quite a few, their reasons for coming were that they just couldn't see a future for themselves in an economy where they felt more squeezed every year with rental and mortgage stresses and the feeling that nothing was ever going to improve. Some older people felt that there was no prospect of retiring because they could never afford to and were worried about what would happen to them if they were to lose their jobs. At the other end, about one in three people is unemployed in the 16 to 24 age group and this crisis is seen to be one of the major causes for the anger that was expressed in the summer riots in Britain.

Unlike the summer riots where anger turned to stone-throwing, looting and torching, these protestors have

worked hard to ensure their protest is peaceful and that meaningful debate can take place between themselves, church leaders, the public and politicians. The use of forced evictions, seen as the only possible solution by the Bishop of the Church, was modified when a senior clergyman resigned rather than be involved in the violent removal of protestors. The Archbishop of York, commenting on the church's relationship with city financiers, argued that "greed should be made as socially unacceptable as racism, sexism and homophobia".

I noticed a shift in the weeks I was there from a mood of anger and disgust at the protestors to one of more thoughtful consideration of the views they were representing; and increased support from politicians, journalists, the public and the church. In the words of one of the activists, Tim Hardy, "The occupation is the beginning of a conversation the whole world needs to have."

Rita Tratt

No Fracking Way!

I know I'm not the only person worried about the use of hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking, to extract gas for commercial use. Fracking is when chemicals and water are forced at high pressure into rocks so that shale or coal gas can be extracted. One concern is that this method may lead to the contamination of aquifers. However, there is another problem that has been recently publicised; that of earth tremors.

Cuadrilla, a company extracting gas near Blackpool UK, has admitted that two tremors in April and May were probably caused by their operations. Neither of the tremors was very violent but there were over forty aftershocks. One group of seismic experts has concluded that such tremors are extremely rare and the result of a pre-existing fault in the rocks. Another group believes it is very likely that continued fracking will cause more tremors. Whichever group you believe, the practice sounds worrying.

Fracking has been common in North America but is only recently being used in other countries. Cuadrilla is 41 % owned by AJ Lucas which services coal gas basins in Queensland and NSW. AJ Lucas want to use fracking in the Hunter Valley, Bowen Basin and Surat Basin. I believe we have every right to feel disturbed by the risks associated with this practice.

Pat Rayne

In Our OWN Write

Living with Coal Seam Gas Mining

Carcinogenic chemicals have just been detected in five water bores around the Queensland town of Dalby.

In the past two years the industry has drilled eleven gas wells within three kilometres of our house. They plan to turn our area into a fully developed gas field with thousands of wells, 750 metres apart, spread across the area. It could happen anywhere; coal seam gas reserves have been found right across the country and the industry is moving in at a breakneck pace.

When they are drilling, we can't sleep. You can hear the droning of the drill rig from inside my home over the sound of my five noisy children. When they drill, there is a sulphury, rotten-egg smell in the air and sometimes you get a metallic taste in your mouth.

Coal seam gas mining has already made our property unsellable. Nobody wants to live in a gas field. I don't want to live in a gas field.

Debbi and family

Tara, Queensland

As frightening as this is, coal seam gas mining doesn't just pose a threat to people's health. It is damaging water supplies, jeopardising agriculture and food production. Where do you stand?



Every year I enjoy the Sydney Festival. It is one of the joys of living in Sydney and part of the passing of the seasons. I wanted to book for Sydney Festival 2012.

Booking online is encouraged. You click on the event you want to book for, book and pay a booking fee. If you want to book for multiple events, you go to the multiple events list, click on the events you want, pay only one booking fee and even get a discount on the costs.

A friend and I had been through the book and had picked out five events we wanted to attend. To book online for the events we wanted, we had to book each event separately and pay booking fees for each event, to various booking agencies. If I wanted to book

multiple events of my own choosing, and only pay one booking fee, it had to be the Sydney Festival booking office, by phone. I knew that last year it had taken an hour.

Booking opened Wednesday, 9 November at 9.00 am and I am supposed to start work on OWN Matters at 10.00 am. So I was at the office bright and early and at 9.00 am I rang the number to book for the Sydney Festival, of course going into a queue.

I stayed on the phone, frequently hearing their message, "Thank you for your patience. Your call has progressed in the queue and one of our ticketing consultants will be with you as soon as possible." For the first hour I just waited.

I went into left brain/right brain, multi-tasking mode. I proofed articles, wrote a couple of notices, discussed articles written and those which could be written, listening all the time to the message on the phone.

After two hours I said, "There is an article here." I started to write this article, still listening to the phone message. I was quite pleased that Sydney Festival had given me this topic. Finding a new topic is one of the challenges in writing.

At 12.00 pm, I finally got through to the booking office. I booked for three out of the five events, but was told that two others were booked out. I asked why I had been on the phone for three hours, and was told I couldn't have been, because they had only been busy for the first hour and a half. I replied that five women in the office had watched me on the phone for three hours, so then was put through to the supervisor. She apologised and told me it was a technical hitch. I told her I had been on the phone so long, that I had begun writing an article for the magazine, about what was happening.

This is when she asked what they could do to make up for what had happened. I said that the call had taken so long, I had missed out on tickets for two events. She put me through to an IT person, who got me tickets to the events I had missed, but said I would have to pay a second booking fee, so they would try to give me a discount. I thanked him for his help.

I had already known that booking online has its difficulties. I was already disenchanted with some of the booking agencies, because of past experiences. From today's experience, what did I learn? Go for what you want, accept this is more difficult, but don't give in gracefully.

Lorraine Inglis

Some Sydney Gifts



Cinemanía

Cinemanía is a series of late night screening events presented by self-confessed cinephiles. This instalment takes a particularly festive turn, looking at the wonderful world of Christmas movies. Whether they spark memories of romantic moments under mistletoe or dramatic exchanges with estranged family members, these presentations will transport you from Australian suburbia to a snowy Hollywood world of glamour and dysfunction.

Curated by Georgie Meagher and Diana Smith.

A Late Night Library event

Thursday 22 December

9.00pm – 10.00pm

Surry Hills Library



Bookings essential : 8374 6230

Free event

Cowbelles Exhibition and Craft Fair

The **Concerned Older Women (COW)** group in Glebe provide community support and social engagement for local women, helping those who may otherwise be isolated to participate in community activities. The Library is delighted to host a display by their craft group COWBelles of hand-made jewellery, bookmarks and more. Perfect Christmas gifts, the items will be for sale to raise funds for next year's craft supplies.

Exhibition: 5 – 10 December, Library hours

Launch party: 5 December, 11.00am – 12.00pm

Craft Fair

10 December, 10.00am – 3.00pm

Glebe Library

Bookings not required

Free event



THE IRON LADY- only at the Movies DECEMBER 26

OWN Volunteers in December could score one of 5 double passes to this fabulous new release - by being the first to offer with the Christmas Party set up/clean up!

THE IRON LADY tells the compelling story of Margaret Thatcher, a woman who came from nowhere to smash through barriers of gender and class to be heard in a male dominated world. It is a film about power and the price that is paid for power, a story that is both unique and universal. THE IRON LADY stars Academy Award-winners Meryl Streep as Margaret Thatcher and Jim Broadbent as her husband, Denis.

Link: <http://www.iconmovies.com.au/Movies/I/IronLady.aspx>

OWN Sydney Notices

WOW! Subscribe NOW!

Subscription to *OWN Matters* is **\$22** per year, due every **JULY 1!**

Want to join **OWN Sydney** at the same time? We can fix this up in the same way, if you tick this box and include just another **\$5**

Would you like to donate? \$.....

Payment method

I enclose a chq/money order for **\$22** - covers to Jun30, 2012 made payable to OWNNSW **OR** Please debit the following credit card for **\$22 (plus any donation)**

Visa

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Total amount:

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I need the large print version (on A3)

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Looking for a gift idea?

Please send the above subscription to:

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With my best wishes!

Members and friends are welcome to attend all activities

Wellness on Wednesdays

9.30am-1.30 pm every Wednesday

Held in Mott Hall, Argyle St., Millers Point.

9.30 - 10.30 Gentle Exercise, \$5 per session.

10.45 - 11.45 Tai Chi, \$5 per session.

End of Year Morning Tea is on Wednesday 14 December.

Lost Ladies

10.00am every Wednesday 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 to join us on **Tuesday 13 December**

to see *The Debt* Recommended for viewing is *The Iron Lady*.

Please ring Yetty on **9665 2050** to check details of films.

Bondi Junction Coffee and Gossip Group

30 December 11am The Coffee Shop,

Eastern Suburbs Leagues Club.

Last Friday of every month. Contact Yetty on **9665 2050**

to check details.

Book Club

12 December 12.30-2.30 pm at 87 Lower Fort Street.

This month's books are: *Tirra Lirra by the River* by Jessica Anderson.

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 **17 January** meeting is

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer.

Aboriginal Support Circle

This month we are meeting on Monday **5 December**, 10.30 am, at 75 Windmill Street, for our End of Year Party!

Confirm all details with

Pat Zinn: 9389 1090 or email patzinn@hotmail.com

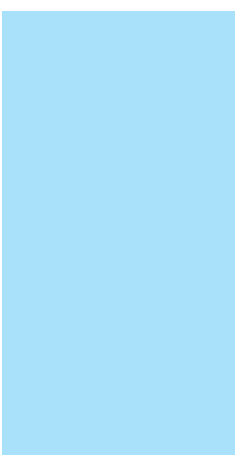
Saturday Social Group at Birkenhead Point

We meet from 10.30 a.m. to 12.00 noon at Birkenhead Café, 1st floor Birkenhead Shopping Complex.

Contact: Bev Cameron 9957 5367.

The dates are Saturdays **3 and 17 December**.

OWN Matters



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