



# OWN MATTERS

Right the Wrongs. A Tablecloth. Vale Enid. OWN Background.  
New Challenges and Opportunities. A Personal View.  
The Longest First Act. A Cautionary Tale. Gadgets.  
Seeking Asylum Is Not Illegal. Keeping Our Eyes On The Goal.



## Vale Enid Harrison

Friends farewell a feisty woman whose passion for social justice was a guiding force throughout her life



## Changing time for OWN

Our AGM will decide the future of our group and how we move forward to become stronger



## Keeping eyes on the goal

Recent events show women are still motivated towards change when tackling inequality



## Protesting against wrongs

Whether it be votes for women or giving asylum seekers the right to a new life, voices must be heard



**Older Women's Network NSW**  
**87 Lower Fort Street Millers Point, NSW 2000**  
**Phone: 02 9247 7046 Fax: 02 9247 4202**  
**email: [info@ownnsw.org.au](mailto:info@ownnsw.org.au)**  
**web: [www.ownnsw.org.au](http://www.ownnsw.org.au)**

ABN: 36 992 030 904

## 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 \$30 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

June West, Lorraine Inglis, Anna Logan and Fran Weston.

**Guest Editor:** Dorothy Cora

### Admin Support

Elissa Buttsworth, Margaret Holland Margaret Kearney and Beth Eldridge.

### Layout and Design

Michelle Davies

Mishy Dee Creative Designs

### Membership & Subscriptions

Chris Taylor

### 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.

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*I will continue to protest with others if a wrong needs to be righted. Would women have the vote if they had not protested?*

The Older Women's Network has, since its inception way back in the 1990's, always been a very democratic organisation where women can express their opinions on all kinds of topics. Some members will agree and some will disagree.

I understand that OWN is, in the words of a certain song, "a'changing", and that the reasons I joined OWN back in the 1990's are possibly quite different to why older women join today. Roma Bates expressed her views about protesting in the June issue of *OWN Matters*. I would like to make some further comments.

My first husband was a member of the RAAF and part of Australia's occupation forces following the end of World War II. In Nagasaki and Hiroshima Clarrie saw the results of the atom bomb, not only to cities, but also to the people. He could hardly bear to speak about their suffering. He died riddled with cancer due to radiation exposure.

Back in Australia 60 years ago many people were protesting against the use and manufacture of these weapons of mass destruction. They collected



signatures for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament petition and many thousands marched through the streets of our capital cities, and elsewhere. These protests were sadly unsuccessful and today at least 22,000 nuclear weapons are stored in silos in various countries.

Other protests have been more successful. Would women have the vote if the Suffragettes had not donned the green, white and violet colours in protest? Would women be able to go into a hotel for a drink and not

be directed to the small Ladies' Parlour without the Women's Liberation Movement protests? And would we have the right to legal abortion?

If we do not protest against the interference of one country in the affairs of another, for example, the war in Afghanistan, will the killing of innocent victims continue for another ten years?

My memories as a young girl during World War II is that we were fighting against the horrors of German Nazism, Italian fascism and Japanese imperialism in a united move to finally bring peace to the world.

I will continue to protest with others if we mutually agree that a wrong needs to be righted. I will do this by writing a letter, signing a petition or protesting on the street, even though the times they are a'changing!

*June Goss*



# Letters

## A wise man

**K**en Smith, husband of Mollie, sadly passed away on July 29 after suffering a stroke. Ken and Mollie (a performer with the OWN Theatre Group for many years) set up Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) at Parramatta in 1995.

He was featured with Mollie in the 2005 Rainbow Screen Productions' documentary *Bouncing Castle*, where they talk about their journey from shy private people to public speakers and advocates, educating others about gay and lesbian culture and rights. Ken always provided wise counsel and as a loving father of four children, three of whom were gay, he was an inspiration to all parents of gay children.

Ken would humbly say, "You just help people who are in trouble." His simple advice to parents was, "The most important thing is to accept your child and love them; put your arms around them and say that you love them!" A friend recalled Ken saying, "The best time of my life was marching arm in arm with my children in the Mardi Gras!"

*Dorothy Cora*



## Bravo

**B**ravo, Dorothy Cora, thank you for speaking up in support of Julia Gillard (July *OWN Matters*). I, too, am outraged by the sexism and lack of respect she had to endure during her leadership of the ALP. I hope there are young, dedicated, strong women out there willing to go into politics because we sure as hell need them to carry on her legacy. In the meantime, I hope Julia won't fade away, because we need her talents. Anyone know how to send her encouraging and supporting messages?

*Pat Zinn*



## I Can Dream, Can't I?

I dream of the day when women run the governments of the world, when there are no more wars because we know there are no winners, only death, destruction and misery for the survivors.

Roma, (July *OWN Matters*), you have highlighted where the blame lies. It's the men, the politicians, sitting smugly in the safety of their comfortable clubs with their comfortable incomes, perks and lies, who get us into these wars and sacrifice our brave young

men and women, who should be prosecuted in a court of law. This is what we should be protesting about.

*Pat Zinn*



## Stepping On or Prevenzione di Cadute

**A**s there was a vacancy I joined an Italian group to do this 8 week course.

It is government funded so free and I highly recommend it if you've had a fall or have a fear of one. The professionals and their advice have reduced falls in the Illawarra by 33%. It was also something I looked forward to each week, good, jovial positive company.

*Ceri Ritchie*



## Small State takes on the big guns

**T**wo years ago the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Robin Banks, launched an investigation into breaches of anti-discrimination law affecting organisations seeking insurance for their volunteers, and whether the

practice of insurers excluding volunteers on the basis of age was unlawful.

As a result, a report was released saying that some insurance companies were in fact behaving unlawfully in terms of the Anti-Discrimination Act in refusing to insure people aged 65 and over. Commissioner Banks reported that in Tasmania, volunteer organisations have reported turning away older people who were willing to work for them because of no or inadequate insurance coverage. This is reflected in all States in Australia.

She has called on the Federal Government's Insurance Advisory Group to oversee the development of an insurance anti-discrimination code, a measure recently reported by Kirsty Stein in *The Senior News*.

As our members are aware, volunteering is such a positive activity for themselves and for their communities. Many accept personal responsibility as they wish to remain active and contribute to the wider world, but the lack of insurance does worry some. It is time to be active on this issue. Letters and emails can be sent to Members of Parliament, Anti-Discrimination bodies, COTA and our own insurance providers.

Change commonly occurs through grass roots movements. At this stage the Insurance Council of Australia does not agree with the findings and as Kirsty Stein reported, they



### A Double Winner

**A**t the AGM in July, not only were two new assertive, extremely politically-savvy women voted onto the committee, but we had a superbly choreographed & costumed finale by the Silver Belles. Although I live in the Illawarra, I needed to journey to Sydney to see them....Thank you for opening our eyes to this troupe.

*Ceri Ritchie*

“believe the best way forward is to develop guidance on the use of the insurance exception in co-operation with stakeholders.” So, lots of room to move. Let’s go for it. Be bold – be active!

*Rita Tratt*



### Remembering Enid

**I** remember Enid, one of the first members of OWN. Sincere, cheerful, always a friend....I shall always remember her.

*Margaret Sargent*



### Velvet glove

**M**any years ago we bought an ordinary bedside alarm clock. It was an unremarkable purchase, until we noticed the cleaning instructions. “Wipe carefully with a velvet glove.”

We spent the rest of the clock’s life searching the shops for a ‘velvet glove’. In the meantime the poor clock had to make do with a duster made out of an old pair of underpants!

*Anna Logan*



# At and Beyond the Rocks

## OWN AGM – make a difference

**W**hat! Not another conference? Yes, it's that time of the year again. The OWN NSW AGM and conference will be held at the Mott Hall, Argyle Street, Millers Point on 10 October 2013. Registration begins at 10am for a 10.30am start and we finish at 3.30pm. Lunch will be provided.

This year the conference will focus on providing information that OWN Groups might find especially useful. The keynote speaker is Kris Hume, Chief Executive Officer, Sydney North Shore Medicare Local. Whilst some of us have had close encounters with Medicare Locals we are all still wondering what they do and whether there is a specific role for OWN groups? This is our big chance to find out!

There will be three workshops focussing on practical topics: Using the media effectively to promote OWN and its activities. Developing new ideas for Age Friendly Communities and the role of Local Government. Forming partnerships with other

organisations – the why, the who and the how!

The Minister for Ageing and Disability, Andrew Constance has been invited to open the conference and Aunties Ali Golding and Joan Tranter, two very esteemed elders who will relate their experiences through stories and dance, will perform a Welcome to Country.

The AGM will include nominations for vacancies on the Management Team. Nomination forms have been sent to the coordinators of all OWN groups.

Good food, time to catch up with friends and entertainment are all part of this event, so come along with your ideas and your creativity. This is your chance to make a difference.

We hope to see you there for this important AGM.

Please let us know by Thursday 26th September if you are coming. Registration forms are available from your OWN Group coordinator; Elissa or Beth on phone 02 92477046; or @ WWW.OWNNSW.org.au or email info@ownnsw.org.au

*Sonia Laverty*



## ECAV and the Theatre Group

**T**he Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) has been a strong supporter of the OWN Theatre Group. They first worked with us in the creation of our show about elder abuse Don't Knock Your Granny in 2009/10.

The Centre has sponsored us at several gigs since then, for example, performing for small groups of community workers undertaking training in issues of violence. Our last gig with them on 26 June was at a hotel in North Sydney for a large conference organised by the South West Area Health Service and ECAV.

The Theatre Group always recognise when we have a rapport with an audience, and so it was on that day. We won huge applause from a very large audience, with some of them later contacting us for performances for their own organisations.

Our first session with Dr Sarah Penicka-Smith, Music Director

of the Gay and Lesbian Choir has made us determined to use our voices with more precision and flexibility. In her one and a half hour workshop with us in June, Sarah took us through some of the new pieces we are learning for our new housing show. It was a concentrated session and the group now has an awareness of how we can sound. We look forward to the next session.

We have a new song *Feisty Women of OWN* thanks to Beethoven and Brigid Sen. A sudden invitation to sing at Cate Turner's 85th birthday on Tuesday, 2 July, held at the OWN office decided us to present this number for the first time. It seemed most successful. We were delighted to perform impromptu for Cate and our colleagues. Cate has been such a staunch supporter of the Theatre Group, always encouraging and helpful when we need it.

*Joan Modder*



## Parramatta OWN

**O**n 22 July Parramatta OWN celebrated our tenth birthday. Guest of honour was Mollie Smith, our founding



*Parramatta Town Hall*

coordinator. We also welcomed Val Squires and June Lehmann, foundation members, and May Gallacher, our last coordinator.

The day was sunny but bitterly cold so numbers suffered. Those brave enough to defy the elements found warmth in the camaraderie and joyful reunions. We also appreciated the air conditioning! Brenda spoke warmly of our interaction, our awards for participation and some highlights of our history. She then thanked Mollie for her initiative and vision before presenting her with a certificate of appreciation and small gift.

Mollie reminisced about the beginnings of our group, including the public meeting in Parramatta Town Hall, which was another bitterly cold day and the heaters fought unsuccessfully to remove the chill. She reminded us that the questionnaire distributed that day returned an overwhelming

desire for friendship – which has continued to be a strong feature of our group. Mollie thanked Brenda and the group graciously, and expressed satisfaction at the strong community involvement we have demonstrated over the years. She also commended the original working party members on their individual strengths. Finally, she cut the cake and drew the lucky door prize – winner Mollie Smith! A very satisfactory outcome.

We all enjoyed the company of new and old friends, and ample nourishment. We were pleased to hear that the visitors have retained their interest and membership of OWN, though circumstances prevent their attendance at meetings. Hopefully they will join us at our bi-monthly lunches at City Extra in Parramatta, which is more accessible. Many thanks to all concerned in organising such a successful day.





# Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

## Aboriginal Youths Training in Bushfire Management

Fifteen Aboriginal jobseekers in western Sydney are training for work in bushfire management as part of a Federal Government project. Training is provided by Muru Mittigar Aboriginal Cultural Education Centre, and once qualified, the graduates will be able to work with local councils, mining industries, Rural Fire Services and other landowners to manage bushfire risks. Jobs have already been guaranteed with local employers. At present, there are skills shortages in bushfire management and it is hoped that this training course will be repeated over the long term.



## Ancient Martial Art Revived

Coreeda, similar to wrestling, is a modern interpretation of what could be the oldest sport in the world. A couple of men wrestling was depicted 30,000 years ago on cave walls at the Mount Grenfell

Historic Site outside Cobar.

UNESCO has recognised the sport as part of Australian cultural heritage. The elders knew how transformative this sport could be, because it allows young men and women to vent aggression and anger in a constructive manner. In ancient times, it was used to keep the peace between tribes without bloodshed and deaths. It was inspired by the movements of kangaroos sparring with hands and feet when an intruder tried to oust an incumbent from his territory.

Coreeda Association secretary Gavin Dickson has been teaching youths in Mount Druitt since 1998, most of the boys and a few girls being Koori. Teachers have reported that this training is having a big effect on the schoolchildren, as they are better behaved. Unfortunately the sport hasn't received any official recognition or continuous funding because it is a mixture of dancing and martial arts, and is difficult to categorise. Early illustrations show that

Coreeda was still being carried out after British settlement.



## Shining a Light on Dark History

The Blacktown Native Institute was established in 1823, having been set up to “educate” and “reform” Aboriginal children. Its remains sit on a nondescript block of land on Richmond Road, Oakhurst, next to the M7.

In July this year, a smoking ceremony was held to remember those children and to launch the Native Institute Exhibition at the Blacktown Arts Centre. Seven Aboriginal artists are displaying works responding to the history of the site. A couple of artists have their roots in Blacktown. Maria Lock, great-great-great grandmother of one of the artists, Leanne Tobin, was one of the first students enrolled there.

Parents were allowed to see their children for just one day each year, the 28th December, and even then, could only see



them behind a wooden fence which surrounded the property. A lot of children died there. The exhibition is free, and will be exhibited until the 21st September.

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### Indigenous Leaders stamp issue

Five famous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been honoured in an Indigenous Leaders stamp issue by Australia Post.

Wiradjuri woman Shirley Smith, "Mum Shirl" (1921-98) was a committed activist for justice and the welfare of Indigenous people, and was a founding member of important organisations such as the Aboriginal Legal Service and Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern. She was a beloved figure in her community, fostering many children.

Jagera man Neville Bonner AO (1922-99) was the first Aboriginal person to be elected to Federal

Parliament by popular vote, becoming a Senator.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker - 1920-93) was a descendant of the Noonuccal people of Minjerribah, North Stradbroke Island in Queensland. She was a poet, a political activist, an artist, an educator and an environmentalist. She received many awards in recognition of her lifetime commitment to Indigenous people and to Australian literature.

Eddie "Koiki" Mabo (1936-92) was born in the Meriam community in the Torres Strait. In 1982 he challenged land ownership in the High Court of Australia, and won, overturning the concept of Terra Nullius.

Charles Perkins AO (1936-2000), whose parents were Arrente and Kalkadoon, was the first Aboriginal person to graduate from the University of Sydney and the first Aboriginal person to become secretary of the then Department of Aboriginal

Affairs. In 1965 he led the Freedom Rides, exposing racial discrimination throughout country NSW. He was member of ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission), becoming deputy chair in 1994. (This organisation was later disbanded). He was given a state funeral.

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### Vale Ermes Solari

Ermes Solari, who died last week, was a valued member of the Aboriginal Support Circle from its early days. She was a generous contributor to appeals for help and a passionate protestor when witnessing racism, as well as joining in our protests and vigils. Over the last few years ill health prevented her from playing an active part in the ASC. We join with OWN in expressing sympathy to her family for their loss. Go well, Ermes, we remember you with love.

*All stories by Pat Zinn*

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*Intelligent, articulate, passionate and feisty women. That's how we remember them.*

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### *A Tablecloth...*

**M**y mother was born in 1905 and following the accidental death of her younger brother she lived mostly with her grandmother. She was intelligent and articulate, but despite qualifying, was denied the chance of further education because she was a girl!

She married my father in April 1931 and while she awaited the birth of her first child she crocheted some beautiful lace suitable for the edge of a tablecloth. Sadly, the child died.

During the following years the family grew and with the many demands, particularly financial, of life in rural northern England, the lace was wrapped in tissue paper and stowed away, seemingly forgotten. As a child I remember fingering it and thinking how beautiful it was. There it stayed for nearly fifty years until I returned to England to visit her in 1980.

My mother was small of stature, but a remarkably strong woman and the very heart of our family. Over the years she raised six children, helped with chores on the farm, preserved fruit and vegetables, knitted and sewed, often working late into the night unpicking used clothes for re-use to ensure we were all warmly clad in the cold northern winters. She took in laundry for officers from a nearby army base during the war to earn extra money – without the convenience of running hot water or electricity.

Following the death of her mother, my grandfather lived with us and she took in boarders during harvest.



During my visit in 1980 I asked if she still had the lace and she told me how she came to make it and talked of her life with my father. There was a close and loving relationship based on mutual respect for forty years until he died of cancer in 1970.

My siblings and I were raised in a safe, caring and often very noisy home, where we were taught respect for others and a healthy work ethic. She was non-committal at the time of my visit, but in 1982 a registered package arrived with the coveted lace plus her engagement ring, which I gave to my eldest daughter on her 40th birthday.

As the only one of her four daughters who was interested in needlework, I can only assume she entrusted the lace to me in the hope that I would complete something that had begun more than 50 years earlier. I didn't see her again. She died from a stroke in 1988, aged 82, but not before I had converted the lace into a linen tablecloth. She was delighted with the finished product and asked that I hand it on to one of my daughters. So, hopefully, begins a family heirloom.

*Sheila Hall*



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*Vale Enid Harrison*  
*1922 – 2013*

**E**nid died peacefully in her sleep on 13 July. Her funeral at Greenway Chapel, Green Point on 22 July was a very positive, sometimes jolly event in a gorgeous natural setting.

The non-religious service included a highland piper, which was Enid’s wish, and political poetry she had selected from her favourite poets: Australia’s Mary Gilmore and American feminist Edna St Vincent Millay. Of course she also included Dylan Thomas’s *Do Not Go Gentle*, which Enid often loved to quote: Do not go gentle into that good night/Old age should burn and rave at close of day/Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

For health reasons I was unable to attend Enid’s funeral so Bev Cameron, in her role as celebrant, was also OWN’s representative. Bev quoted from the tribute that I wrote about Enid for *OWN Matters* in February 2011, and spoke about OWN more generally. Copies of the tribute – ‘A Woman of Many Passions’ – and ‘Gifts’, a short story Enid wrote for *Untold Stories: Voices of Older Women*, were distributed to those present. Together they provided a word picture of a feisty old woman whose passion for social justice was a guiding force throughout her long life.

Enid was not buried in the “el-cheapo cardboard casket” she intended when she wrote an article called ‘In Lieu of a Wake’, published in the June 2002 issue of *OWN Matters*. She was turning 80 and had decided to have a big birthday bash in lieu of a wake. It was a brilliant idea.



She wrote (in part): “What a treat! There were no kind platitudes, nary a tear or a word about now she’s ‘gorn’, no weak smiles at all of her faux pas. My only regret was that I was far too dizzy with delight to dance or to partake of the food. My faux wake was an enriching experience, which I recommend to anyone with an anniversary coming up soon. Now all I have to look forward to is an el cheapo cardboard coffin funeral.”

Enid’s real wake included moving eulogies from Di Wollen (her niece by marriage) and from her beloved nephew Ross, plus many yarns of humorous moments remembered by people who loved and admired her.

According to Ross, Enid has several unpublished short stories, which he hopes one day to put on the web alongside articles written for *OWN Matters*.

*Dorothy Cora*



*Every OWN group is a member of OWN Australia. At the conference they will be voting whether OWN Australia continues at the national level*



*OWN: Stepping forward proudly*

## *Background to OWN Australia*

**O**WN Australia was incorporated in 1993 and for the first seven years of its life received government funding, primarily through the National Agenda for Women's Grants Program.

An office was established in King Street Sydney and a staff member employed. Within two years groups were also flourishing in Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria and the ACT. Funding was discontinued in 2000 and the King Street Office closed. OWN A's only income became Capitation fees from the Member States.

OWN A has held annual conferences on a rotating basis, with an AGM incorporated into the conference. By rotating the conference, each State got to organise a conference once every five years. Conferences, usually held over two days, are enjoyed tremendously and the cross-fertilisation

of experiences and ideas is very important to all participants. Office bearers are elected to the Council every two years. The current Council holds meetings by teleconference. Sadly, by 2012 four states – South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and the ACT – had disbanded, leaving only NSW, Western Australia and Queensland. This means organising conferences more frequently for remaining states.

Members of the existing Council are all retiring at the next

conference. The problem now is finding women to fill the positions of Convenor, Secretary and Treasurer. Existing Council members are Sally Jones (Queensland) Convenor, Eileen Ward (Western Australia) Secretary, and myself (NSW) Treasurer.

It had been suggested that since OWN NSW is the biggest State responsibility for Conferences could be taken over by them, but this would mean travelling costs for women from other States would occur every year. I earnestly believe that to consider closing OWN A would be a retrograde step.

Hopefully OWN may be re-established in some of those states. We have a good reputation and in the many meetings I attend our name is well recognised. We are asked to attend various National bodies such as Centrelink, and we publish a newsletter every quarter. We should be looking to go from strength to strength.

*Cate Turner  
OWN A Treasurer*



## *New challenges and opportunities*

**T**he ‘feminisation of ageing’ and the ‘feminisation of poverty’ are both valid concepts; women live longer and are mostly poorer for reasons we are all familiar with.

The task of ensuring that ‘age and gender are on every agenda’ remains a key objective for OWN because older women are rarely identified as a priority group in government policy or program initiatives at either state or national level. In this context there is a place for OWN Australia as it is still the only national organisation whose focus is older women. And the same is true in every state.

The challenge is to maintain an effective organisation without a reliable source of income. Identifying possible sources of funding is going to be necessary for all of us as governments strive to achieve surplus budgets, and success is measured in economic terms.

OWN Australia must continue to be relevant with minimal income and opportunities for face-to-face meetings. This is important because ideas and plans are generated and followed up through the interchange of ideas and the support of colleagues. Distance and teleconferencing is perhaps not the best way to achieve this but has been imposed for financial reasons and definitely has value.

The OWN NSW Management Team’s proposal for the OWN Australia AGM and discussion on its future is to locate the Officer Bearers in one state to facilitate communication, and to establish a support group that helps in identifying and researching issues for consideration by the membership of OWN Australia. If the proposal from OWN NSW is adopted at the OWN Australia AGM in September we will be looking for members from NSW to participate in a support group.

The nominations from OWN NSW for the National Council are Aloma Fennell, Convenor; Barbara Malcolm, Treasurer; and Sharan Tuite, Secretary.

If you would like to be part of a support group to work with National Councillors from NSW – if they are elected – please contact me. I promise it will be both interesting and challenging.

*Sonia Laverty*



## *A personal view*

**I** joined OWN when I retired from work, downsized, bade farewell and good luck to the last of my children as they set out to follow their dreams and discovered I had idle hands. As a famous Aboriginal comedian once said, “I had a house, a Hoover and a husband.” I had these, but needed to know what I was going to do to replace the things that had previously kept me so busy. Seeing an article in a Sydney paper announcing an Older Women’s Network Conference, I thought, I’m an older woman, so let’s find out what they do.

That was in 1998. I enjoyed it immensely and was so inspired by the speakers, the workshops, the debates and the all out positivity of the women I met that I have never missed another since. This year, a new direction being proposed by OWN NSW. I expect the debate about future changes to be one of the highlights of the conference.

Going to the OWN Australia Conference each year reinforces my feelings that we can make a difference, for it is here we learn what is happening now, what has been done and most importantly what is still to be done. It also gives me a chance to meet many friends from other states. I value their friendship and am inspired by the work they do. It’s a chance to showcase OWN and to see and hear what is happening nationwide.

If you have never attended an OWN Australia conference I urge you to attend this one. It is being held in Brisbane in September. The company will be awesome, speakers first class, the workshops, discussions and entertainment excellent and you will have the chance to have your say on the future direction of both OWN Australia and OWN NSW.

*Barbara Malcolm*



*Life is what you make it, they say.  
Sometimes life's disasters are not of our making,  
sometimes we do cause them ourselves, and  
sometimes life is just plain ridiculous*

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### *The longest first act in history*

**I**t was a cold sodden July day in Sydney in the '70s. My partner's work group had an outing to see the *Pirates of Penzance* and we both wanted to go. Everything seemed to conspire to prevent us getting away on time. I had a major wardrobe problem, and then there was a worrisome phone call that couldn't be ignored.

The downpour increased as we fought our way through heavy Saturday night city traffic. We knew how fussy they were at the Opera House about latecomers and we started to panic about finding a parking spot close enough. I offered to drop Ruth at the door, shoot off, and do my best not to miss the first act.

I finally parked the car, ran down the street and across the forecourt and pleaded with an usher who hurried me upstairs into a box in the darkened theatre. (My friends were all in the stalls.)

It was pitch black. I felt my way to a seat and thankfully took it. As my eyes accustomed to the gloom I realized that, despite there being 5 or 6 seats available, I had sat down right beside a man who was the only other person in the box.

My heavy plastic raincoat was unbearably hot and uncomfortable so I gingerly raised myself off the seat and began undoing the buttons. Every movement made the wretched material creak loudly – and the performance had begun! Finally I divested myself of the loathsome garment and lowered myself to the seat. Lower and lower I went. The bloody seat had closed up behind me.

Instinctively I grabbed to save myself only to find the nearest object turned out to be the thigh of my unknown companion.

When the lights came on after the longest first act in theatrical history I fled downstairs without daring to look backwards.

*Daphne Degotardi*



### *A cautionary tale*

**I**n 2009 I moved to a retirement village. I thought this was the responsible thing to do at the time. Ha! How mistaken I was. I was totally sucked in by the marketing spiel and even though I paid highly for legal advice, none of the pitfalls were pointed out.

My warning is that you and your family need to be fully informed before you move into a village. Some residents love the village lifestyle – entertainment, trips away, happy hour, bingo, knitting clubs and so on. But not every village has those activities so if you want that lifestyle make sure it exists before you move in.

Basically, retirement village living is extremely expensive. The majority of villages are loan/license or loan/lease although there are around 10% that are strata villages. This means that the resident pays an interest free 'in-going contribution' roughly equivalent to the price of a unit in a similar area but they only have a license or lease to live in the village. On top of that they must pay monthly fees to maintain the village, which, in my case amounted



*Lorraine's new Thingamajig*

## Gadgets: essential or annoying?

**O**n late night TV, I watched Stephen Fry's 100 Greatest Gadgets. I think a gadget is a technological object (device or appliance) that makes life easier or more convenient. If I wasn't a post menopausal woman I would have included the pill and tampons. I could have chosen those most important to me: flush toilet, fridge/ freezer, automatic washing machine, microwave etc. But other gadgets may be essential, or just annoying.

I bought a new gadget at the weekend, a thingamajig, (to open jars, bottles, ring pull cans). I want to include it, but what should I leave out of my list of fifteen? What would be in your list?

*Lorraine Inglis*

to nearly \$600 per month. The village should have a Residents Committee to manage the village and approve all expenditure.

Retirement village legislation comes under State governments. In the past there was no requirement for the manager of a village to be licensed or to have even read, let alone know, the legislation, yet they might manage many hundreds of thousands, even millions, in recurrent fees. The residents' committee has to review every dollar they spend. Do you want to spend the rest of your life sitting on a committee and arguing with management? Or preparing cases to go to the Tribunal?

When you vacate the village, regardless of why you do so, there is a 'Deferred Management Fee' which may be as high as 40% of the 'in-going contribution'. Capital gain is usually 50%, set by management.

In my village the management caused me untold stress. I took four cases to the Tribunal in under three years and eventually managed to escape but it took its toll.

My plea is for you to be careful. Do your research before you move. Don't go through what I did – it ain't worth it!

*Judith Daley*

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

The NSW Government Department of Fair Trading has developed a new standard contract for retirement villages that will be mandatory for village contracts entered into on or after 1 October 2013.

### LORRAINE'S TOP 15 GADGETS

1. Spectacles: if I don't remember your name, I'll recognize your face.
2. Hot water system: cold showers are for the birds' baths .
3. Ball point pen: Pen and ink won't fit in my handbag.
4. Telephone: How else could I complain about my telephone service?
5. Computers: They run the world. Do they also make the decisions?
6. Internet/ emails/ Google: Is Google a separate gadget?
7. Electric light globe: so they can't keep us in the dark.
8. Batteries: gadgets storing power for all those other gadgets.
9. TV: brings news (i.e. facts, fantasy, drama and advertising) and ABC Iview.
10. Plastic containers, foil, plastic wrap; plastic waste to save food waste?
11. Battery charger: the gadget I need for gadgets I don't really need.
12. Digital Camera: a gadget to make me need yet another battery charger.
13. Remote control: How else could I watch ABC Iview?
14. Mobile phone: if only I could do what three year olds can do!
15. My birthday present: a heated throw, and I love it.



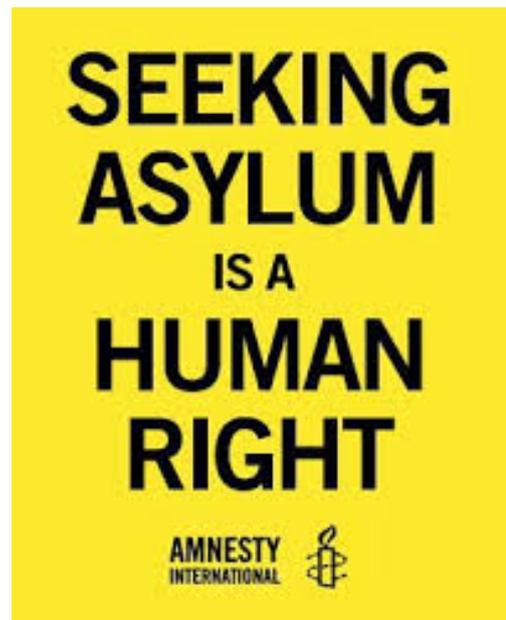
*Human rights are what we still fight for. Social justice, for us, and all those others, is what motivates our protests.*

*Seeking asylum is not illegal*

**R**edfern Town Hall was packed out, every seat and space on the floor taken, much of it by young people. At this emotionally charged meeting Dianne Hiles and Julian Burnside spoke strongly on behalf of asylum seekers. They rejected Labor's promise that "Australia's immigration policy will not be decided by people smugglers" (Qantas flights?) and the Liberals' mantra "We will turn back the boats".

Julian Burnside made the following points:

- Seeking asylum is not illegal
- Australia is paying billions of taxpayer money to build detention centres.
- Commercial interests run the centres at a cost of between \$25 000 and \$45 000 per refugee per year.
- Alternatives could be cheaper.
- Australia could put the billions into building well run UNHCR refugee camps in Indonesia.
- A real alternative would cut the flow of boats.



- Verified refugees could be brought by 747s to Australia.
- Here they could be given a temporary allowance for living expenses.
- The annual cost per person would be \$10,000 compared to \$45,000.
- Many Australians are afraid about the effect on local

employment if refugees are brought into their community.

- They could be released into the community while being 'processed'.
- Refugees would be required to live in one of the many Australian country towns that need more people. The allowance would be spent in that town for living costs.
- Some of those towns currently have excess housing stock.
- The chance of the towns surviving would be dramatically improved by more children in schools, extra services, possible future workers.
- Refugees would need to go to English classes.
- All of the above would cost less than detention centres Australia, a big country, could increase the refugee intake to 100,000.

Another idea proposed at the Redfern meeting was that refugees could be employed to work on building infrastructure as in the days of the Snowy Mountain Scheme. Would this solve a few of the issues?

Of course any such policies would need to be implemented

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with care and consultation. A precedent has already succeeded with Sudanese refugees. Of course there would be difficulties with all involved. How much more humane would such a policy be than what is proposed?

*Lorraine Inglis*



### *Keeping our eyes on the goal*

**I**n our current political climate where misogyny, sexism [i.e. the everyday expression of misogyny] and the continuing unequal position of women in Australian society are taking a central role, not all is gloom and doom. Two recent events showed me women are still motivated towards change.

At a lunch sponsored by the Women's Pioneer Society of Australasia, OWN'S *Lost Ladies* leader and art historian, Annette Butterfield, spoke on artist Sophie Steffanoni [1873- 1906], an Australian impressionist painter whose work was of international standard but unrecognised here largely due to her being a woman.

The mostly older female listeners, many of whom had achieved

much despite Australian society's gender obstacles, listened attentively. At the conclusion of Annette's talk, it was clear that the women had identified with Steffanoni's struggles and been inspired to continue fighting for full and equal participation of women in our society.

Later, I attended a talk given by Australian author and feminist, Anne Summers, who has been in the forefront of the Women's Movement from the late 1960's and has had influential roles in government, publishing and early feminist activism. She was promoting her latest book, *The Misogyny Factor*. Her audience was mainly older women.

She asked, 'Why after 40 years, have we not achieved equality with men?' Women are still largely out of top leadership roles, are paid less than men and still do more at home. The answer: 'Entrenched cultural attitudes.' Basic goals for women's ongoing struggle: inclusion, equality and respect – have in general, not been achieved.

In the early Women's Movement, the two basic principles were fertility control and financial independence. A third principle



*Anne Summers*

needs to be added now – freedom from violence. As women have begun to move into the public arena, there has been such a backlash of resentment and domestic violence from men that now many employers include leave to deal with domestic violence in women's employment conditions.

There has been no improvement in women's pay for 30 years and women are still not equally represented in public and private employment. Women in high office are frequently not regarded with the respect that is due to them. But if appropriate measures were taken to make it possible for more women to participate in our economy, our GDP would improve greatly. She encouraged the keenly interested audience not to give up the struggle and was met with loud applause.

Cultural change is taking longer than the Women's Movement of the '70s ever imagined, but we shall not give up.

*Bev Cameron*



# Notices

## Birkenhead Social Group

We will meet on September 7 and September 21. The Cafe Birkenhead has moved to a new venue, but is on the same floor of the shopping mall as the previous location. Queries can be made Bev Cameron on 9957-5367.



## Drumming Program

We follow after Tai Chi as part of the Wellness on Wednesday Program, though not every week. We meet for lunch and a chat from 12 noon and the session time is 12.30 – 1.30pm, at Abraham Mott Hall, Argyle Street, Millers Point. Contact Suzanne on 0425 346 927.

Next session: September 18

Future dates: October 9, November 13, December 4.



## International Women's Day

Festival of Ideas; I PROTEST. Friday March 7. More to come.



## Politics in the Pub

Gaelic Club Devonshire St, Surry Hills.

September 6: *Misogyny and sexism in Australia:*

*Is it getting worse?*

■ Eva Cox, long time feminist activist



■ Kate Gleeson, lecturer Macquarie University



## Own book club

Future books up for discussion will be:

October 21: *Follow the Money* by Peter Corris.

November 18: *Resilience* by Anne Deveson.

December 16: *The Drowner* by Robert Drewe.

January 10, 2014:

*Babel Tower* by

A.S.Byatt. If you have any trouble getting the scheduled books, please let me know. Happy reading. Call Anne-Marie Kestle on 040 8740 435.



## Crime Reading Group

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts.

10.30am-12.30pm.

21 September: Far flung crime

19 October: Crime in a confined space - a lift, a cell, the smallest room in the house – your choice!

16 November: It's elementary! Crime

fiction featuring earth, wind, fire or water in the title or plot

7 December: Christmas Party Group Coordinator- Carole O'Brien 9665 6639.



## Sydney Talks

September 7: *Sydney* by

*Gaslight*, 2pm- 4pm. Picture

Old Sydney in the soft and mysterious light cast by the

gas lights from every lamppost

and join Dick Whitaker as he talks about his collection of photographs showing the city as it was before the introduction of electric lighting. Glebe Town Hall, St Johns Rd, Glebe. \$2.00 subscription fee.

**September 11: Sydney Ideas: How the Westies won.**

6pm-7.30pm. Law School Foyer, Eastern Ave, University of Sydney. Free.

As Australia's most ethnically diverse region, does Western Sydney offer a glimpse of how radically Australian society is changing- and a foretaste of how we will look in decades to come?

■ Julianne Schultz, Kathy Marks, Tim Soutphommasane and Peter Shergold discuss.

**September 18: National Security Reporting in the age of Vulture Capitalism.**

6pm-8pm CB02.04.11, UTS Building 2, The Tower building, Ultimo. Free.

■ Antony Lowenstein, journalist, photographer and honorary associate with the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, discusses the controversial issue of security reporting in the age of government outsourcing and vulture capitalism.



**MEMBERS & FRIENDS WELCOME TO ATTEND ALL OUR ACTIVITIES**

**Wellness on Wednesdays**

9.30am-12.30pm every Wed. Abraham Mott Hall, Argyle Street, Millers Point. Contact Lola 9665 8741 or Joy 9698 5205

**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 **Tues Sept 10** to see *Blue Jasmine*. 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**

MON, SEPT 16 - 12.30pm at 87 Lower Fort St. *Gilgamesh* by Joan London. (Come at 12 with sandwich for lunch).

**Aboriginal Support Circle**

The next meeting for 2013 is Monday, October 14. Confirm details with Pat Zinn 9389 1090 or email patzinn1@hotmail.com

**Saturday Social Group at Birkenhead Point**

Birkenhead Café, 1st floor Birkenhead Shopping Complex. Contact Bev Cameron on 9957 5367.

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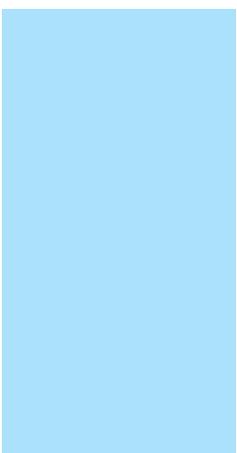
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