

ABORIGINAL SUPPORT GROUP

Our November meeting was advertised as "Walk about and Talk about" the Aboriginal happenings we've all participated in recently. It was amazing how involved our members have been.

Betty Little sang and spoke at a YWCA dinner for homeless women, and attended an award meeting in which her brother, Jimmy Little, received two awards. Betty said that competition against each other was not the Aboriginal way, and that the winners on the night said that "winning was for all of them".

Norma Anet liaised with Maisie Cavanagh, to present a talk on spirituality and social change from an Aboriginal perspective; several of us attended art galleries; and Marcia Angelo visited her daughter, who is a linguist involved in studying Aboriginal languages, and living in Kuranda, Queensland. Monique Reiher has been invited to be one of the artists to display her work at Mum Shirl's Exhibition (she showed us one of her draft sketches) and

Monique, Lynn Pollack and I attended a seminar at the Museum of Sydney called "In Search of Sydney's Cultural Heritage". From there, we went to the "Mapping Our Countries" exhibit at the Djamu Gallery in the Customs House. Pat Zinn met Pat Dobson in Manly at the Book Sale organised by ANTaR and attended a public meeting in the Paddington Town Hall. Margaret Walker shared four of her scrapbooks. She has been collecting news articles on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the past eight years. Margaret Brennan has managed to successfully receive grants to hold stalls on reconciliation themes in four suburbs of Sydney.

Lynn Pollack's calendar, "OWN Aboriginal Support Circle: What's On", continues to grow in coverage and prestige. OWN is now printing the calendar on its WEB site. For those who don't know, the calendar was started when Ruth Layard was a joint coordinator of our group. It

really helps us know what activities we could be involved in.

Lynn, Pat, and I were also involved with a series of lectures held for the Eastern Suburbs University of the Third Age (U3A). The lectures were given by a group of very interesting Aboriginal and Torres Strait people, with our own ASC joint coordinator, Betty Little, the first presenter.

Not only did we report on what we had done, there were suggestions of things we could do in the future. A group of our members are now planning to attend the Open House at Tranby College on November 20.

It was very hard to conclude the meeting as everyone had so much more to share. Betty Little, who chaired this part of the meeting, pointed out the importance of telling each other about our Aboriginal activities on a regular basis.

Frayda Cooper

Catching up ... For more than five years, OWN has managed to maintain the cost of membership, which includes the Sydney Newsletter, at \$15 per year. For a couple of years now, the cost of producing and posting out the Newsletter has been increasing and, as a non-profit organisation, we find we are unable to absorb these additional costs. Therefore, from January 2000, the cost of membership/newsletter will be \$20 per year.

Many of you make regular donations, which we really appreciate. Please continue as we rely quite heavily on your support. If you would like to know more about Sydney OWN's financial situation, please phone and ask for a copy of the 1998-1999 Annual Report, which provides an overview of what we receive and how we spend it.

CONGRATULATIONS, LYNN POLLACK

On Monday night, 1st November 1999, Lynn Pollack was presented with a Woollahra Citizen Award at a meeting of the Council. The citation states that Lynn received the award for helping to establish the Eastern Suburbs Organisation for Reconciling Australia (ESORA) and promoting its objectives. The award itself is a handsome block of perspex with the Council's crest, and inscribed with her name and what the award was for. We are proud that Lynn has finally obtained some acknowledgment for her untiring work towards Reconciliation. She actively participates in our Aboriginal Support Network, in Action for World Development, and, of course, she produces and distributes the "OWN Aboriginal Support Circle: What's On" diary of events and activities every month.

Pat Zinn

'SUPPORTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS'

Social exclusion and social isolation are top issues for many older women. In the NSW Government's Healthy Ageing Framework one of the key issues was "establishing supportive neighbourhoods". The concept of Supportive Neighbourhoods was also a topic at a lively workshop at the recent Platform for Action forum.

An OWN concept of Supportive Neighbourhoods may not be the same as the government's. For instance 'Supportive Neighbourhoods' might better be referred to as 'social connectedness'.

Whatever it's called, some of us at OWN would like to explore the idea of OWN members getting together in small groups in their own neighbourhoods: to swap ideas, suss out needs, develop activities and projects, and have fun!

The meeting is at 1.30pm, Tuesday, 7 December, at OWN.

Noreen Hewett and Joy Ross.

Coordinators' Report

This month has hummed and bustled along at a fast clip and it seems too short a time since writing the last report.

This month Frayda Cooper from the Aboriginal Support Circle joined the working committee as a co-opted member. By including a representative from the Aboriginal Support Circle, we hoped to provide mutual support and ideas for activities and advocacy that will be important in the coming months.

As a first step in addressing the ongoing problem of the possible diminishing amount of government funding to be had in the future, Margaret and I met with a representative from Westpac who was able to provide us with a few ideas to pursue but had no suggestions about where we could obtain any substantial, extended funding. Other leads are still to be investigated, but we're also looking for more ideas.

Following Margaret's visit to Orange earlier this year we were delighted to hear that an OWN group has started there. They joined us, via teleconferencing, for their first NSW OWN Groups meeting on 3 November.

The Sydney OWN quarterly Members Meeting was held on Wednesday, 10 November. Bernette Redwood, who was our guest speaker, leads a government funded project to initiate support groups for people who suffer with depression. There is a full report of her address on page 5.

The 'meeting' part of the gathering was extremely dynamic and many useful suggestions were made about changes to the Newsletter, things to include in our Summer Solstice party and the need for more spacious premises for OWN.

Joy talked about the launch of the Platform for Action on 24 November and the emerging issues for continued action beyond International Year of Older Persons. Joy urged people to attend the Meeting of Generations event on 16 and 17 November.

Members also asked that information on the Peer Support Advocacy Network (PSAN) database be made available through articles in the Newsletter. We will write an update on PSAN and the possibilities for its use for the next Newsletter.

The meeting then swept into free form, extended and intense discussion about some very large issues. These included the future of OWN; its attractiveness to new members; the kind of values the organisation is perceived to disseminate; and the tension between the parts of OWN which are seen to be network activities and those which are seen to be more formal, such as advocacy.

It was just such a pity that only ten members were present for such a vibrant discussion on important issues. However, do not feel left out – we think these topics will make a good starting point for discussion at a future meeting.

Pam Ledden & Margaret Bridger

“Made to Measure”

This month, I attended a one-day NCOSS conference, “Made to Measure”. The first part of the day was the most interesting. Three speakers talked about the general feeling of dissatisfaction with the economic rationalist priorities that governments of all persuasions seem to be promoting and measuring. They were interested in other measures of community satisfaction, and what questions should be included in the design of surveys that purport to let us know how we're getting along as a community, and how we are measuring our progress. Comments about social capital, community trust, connectedness, set the room buzzing. More of this kind of discussion would be wonderful. The remainder of the day was taken over by various government departments talking about what they were counting and measuring and why. Some of the sparkle went out of the room as time wore on, and so did I.

Pam Ledden

COME OUT, COME OUT WHEREVER YOU ARE...

Help us to get the new millennium off to a great start at OWN by joining our Working Committee team of vital, involved women! We know that there's someone out there who is looking for the opportunity to bring their skills to OWN!

We have two vacancies that we urgently need to fill.

Treasurer

A volunteer Treasurer to join our Finance Team which guides and advises the Working Committee on OWN's finances. The Treasurer needs to have a background in book-keeping or accountancy and be available for two to three meetings a month (approx. 9 hours) and for occasional phone contact.

Volunteers' Coordinator

The Older Women's Network is run by voluntary workers right through from management to answering the phone. While we are lucky to have two very experienced part-time workers to assist us with our work, OWN has grown enormously over the years and this has put extra pressure on the regular volunteers who undertake a wide variety of roles. Recently, those of us undertaking coordination roles met with our workers to discuss strategies to deal with the issue of coordinating rostered volunteers.

We identified a new role: Volunteers' Coordinator. The tasks allocated to the Volunteers' Coordinator would include:

- Actively recruiting voluntary workers
- Organising skill development and training
- Providing information about OWN's policies and procedures
- Coordinating and supporting volunteers' work
- Maintaining a weekly volunteers' roster

If you would like to make some contribution to these exciting roles please phone Pam Ledden or Margaret Bridger on 9247 7046 before December 17 or after January 17.

'Meeting of Generations' Conference

OWN congratulates the Department of Ageing and Disability for the organisation and presentation of this two-day National Conference.

This conference has been the first opportunity for young and old to discuss their concerns, and it was most productive. Though young people were too few in number, the quality of their contributions was terrific. While the participants came from diverse backgrounds there was a fair degree of consensus about concerns.

The aims, as outlined by compere Margaret Scott (a regular Good News Week guest), were to:

- share the common concerns of young and older people who feel they receive too little attention,
- focus on their contributions that are often undervalued and their voices ignored,
- generate ideas for governments and communities to implement programs which cut across the divide,
- generate interest and respect for what each group can offer the community.

A mock trial was staged in which Australia was accused, and defended, of not being a society for all ages. I found it incredibly thought provoking as the contributions of both teams reflected the diversity of views and approaches in the wider community. OWN was represented by Noreen Hewett who made her usual substantial contribution. Noreen clearly won the respect of all, noticeably the young participants.

The four workshop 'tracks were "Community Attitudes", "Inclusive Communities", "Investing for Future Generations", and "Work and Community Participation". The workshops came up with many recommendations, which will be included in a report, to be made available to government and community organisations.

A debriefing meeting for the thirty OWN participants who were present will be held on **Tuesday, 7 December at 10am.**

Joy Ross

Raffle Prizes

As usual, we're planning another racy raffle for our end-of-year party on Saturday, December 11. The winners really love having multiple prizes from which to choose, so this is an SOS for prizes!

If your cupboards are over-abundant in unused gifts, we'd love to hear from you. You might also like to consider donating a gift voucher from your favourite bookshop or store?

Phone 9247 7046 if you can help.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH WEEK 17-23 OCTOBER

Craig Knowles, NSW Minister for Health, launched the National Mental Health Week at Technology Park, Redfern, where the old railway yards have been converted into interesting and modern buildings. The theme for the Week was 'HEALTHY MIND, HEALTHY LIFE' meaning we need to care for our mental health as we do for our physical health and as a part of our overall well-being. OWN leaflets and literature were available at the venue.

In order to promote Mental Health Week in the Northern Area, Warringah Council's Aged Services held one-day Forum for older people at Dee Why. The guest speaker was the aviatrix, Nancy Bird Walton, still an inspiring older woman. As is often the case, most of those attending were older *women*. In nine groups we looked at our various needs, how these are met and what services are still needed. Two key issues were the lack of mental health services, and the opportunity for consumers to have their say about them. Two women asked us 'when there is going to be an OWN group in the Northern beaches area?'

The NSW Association for Mental Health held an interesting and lively seminar on Phobias and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder at the Hyde Park Barracks. Once again, I was able to have a stall to distribute OWN information.

Some of the opportunities to be involved came about through Judy McCormack, a member of Women and Mental Health Inc., of which I am also a member. Judy is a younger professional woman, and a feminist, who works with older women and low-income women in public/social housing. She is very concerned with the well-being of older women and is an important linkage which hopefully will lead to a continuing and valuable relationship.

Jan Monson

Theatre Group Report

“We’re heading for the last round up!” That’s a song that perfectly expresses the Theatre Group’s commitments to mid-December.

November has been a very rewarding experience for the Group. We had the pleasure of sharing the ‘stage’ with Hazel Hawke when Leichhardt Women’s Health Centre celebrated its 25th anniversary. What stage? Two rooms so tightly packed with women, we were virtually ‘face to face’!

Then we were awarded the Mercy Foundation’s annual ‘Social Justice Award’ for “Achievement in the field of social justice”. We received a beautiful plaque and \$1000 to assist us in continuing to present, in theatrical form, the social, cultural and political attitudes and issues that discriminate against older women. We are very grateful to have been acknowledged by this wonderful Catholic organisation. You can see the plaque in our office.

We’ve had another first! We appeared at the ‘Reclaim the Night Rally’ in Hyde Park. For years now, I have not felt that our material fitted into the Reclaim the Night program, dealing as it does with violence. We have cast members who are willing to share their personal stories of violence. By courageously participating in this show, they are celebrating their survival. The audience reaction after the song ‘I am Woman’ was incredible. Hundreds and hundreds of women standing up, waving their arms in the air and screaming for more – a bit like a rock music audience. Once again, there we were, sharing the stage with the ‘big time’ people – Carmen Lawrence this time!

We had a second foray into performing at a high school, this time at Mt St Benedict’s College at Waitara. They loved us, too. At the Women’s Health & Sexual Health Nurses Conference Dinner, the audience went wild over the ‘Dr Edelweiss’ skit! Standing ovations are becoming ‘the norm’!

And now, to our recent tour ‘Off The Beaten Track’ where we were accompanied by representatives from the NSW Southern Health Area Service and the OWN Wellness Project. We left OWN’s office in a 12-seater bus with our luggage on Sunday 7th and travelled to Crookwell where we were welcomed warmly at the home of our driver, Kate Lohse’s, mother, Viv. Those country women are just so capable at coping – feeding twelve of us didn’t at all faze them. We were billeted by local women.

The structure of our program was different to the usual. Performances took the form of a sing/talk, with Sam Smart talking about the Theatre Group’s history and Betty Murphy, the development of OWN. The Theatre Group sang various songs to support what they were saying. After lunch, we did a half-hour show by ourselves and then a wind-up with the local women having their say. The five days followed the same pattern from Crookwell to Moruya. A more detailed report from Sam will fill you in.

We met some wonderful women who received us warmly into their homes and were very appreciative of our performances. We enjoyed travelling through magnificent scenery on both sides of the Great Dividing Range. Kate and Tashi, who are with the NSW Southern Health Area Service, looked us after very well. Touring is tiring but very rewarding.

This is our last report for 1999. We’ve got five more performances plus our ‘muck-up’ at the OWN Summer Solstice party on the December 11th, so we say farewell till the next newsletter in February 2000. May I take this opportunity to thank the Working Committee for its support for the Theatre Group this year, particularly Margaret Bridger for transporting us, and to Dorothy and Kris for their administrative support. And a really big thanks to those of you who have become a “Friend of the Theatre Group” – we hope the relationship will be a happy one.

To the Theatre Group itself: thanks a million for your energy and commitment. It has been an extremely busy year with many memorable highlights, and we’ve done well. June Goss, a member of the cast for nine years who has valiantly travelled vast distances to perform, will not be returning next year. Thank you, June, and best wishes for the future. Best wishes to you all for the holiday period. I’ll see you after my ‘long service leave’ break. Till then, cheers.

Peggy Hewett

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• Dear OWN,
• Yesterday, in Moruya, I had the privilege of attending the performance of your Theatre Group. WOW! What
• an amazing group of wonderful, talented women. They made me laugh so hard I had tears running down my
• face. They also made me cry with their sheer courage in being able to stand up in front of a room full of
• strangers and tell us their stories (in an instant they became our friends). At 51, I have been enjoying growing
• older, though sometimes I wondered if perhaps I’ve been regressing rather than progressing (my children think
• I’m a little strange), but now I can welcome each year with open arms, feeling a sense of anticipation as to
• what’s next! Totally empowering. So thank you OWN. How do I go about getting your newsletter?
• Yours, Jo Barnes
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“Off the Beaten Track”

“Older women can be innovators and pacesetters.” This quote from a 1993 OWN publication was spot-on for the intrepid group of ten, plus bus driver who set out from 87 early on the morning of Sunday, November 7th, for a seven day tour of southern NSW.

In a successful grant application written several months ago, the tour was described as “a collaborative project between OWN and the Southern Area Health Service, featuring a week long travelling road show by OWN to five targeted rural and isolated communities to identify key issues for older women through theatre presentations, workshops and group discussion”. And this is exactly what happened!

Peggy has described the tour in her Theatre Group Report, but this was a tour with a difference. Betty Murphy and I, representing OWN’s wellness initiatives, travelled along with the Theatre Group to conduct workshops and discussions with audiences of older women in five country towns. We found ourselves meeting and talking with around 500 women altogether.

We had hoped that the audiences would include women who are carers, women with disabilities, women who have experienced or are experiencing violence, older women of non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal women. Well, we met all these and many more! Each group was different and yet all shared the common bond of being older women, interested in talking and sharing our life experiences and what we might do to improve our lives.

We had a great time in Crookwell, huge numbers in Young, one hundred really great women in Dalgety, away down in the Snowy, a disappointing turnout in Braidwood, and an absolutely fantastic finish in Moruya.

This brief report is just to whet everyone’s appetite, as time and space does not permit the whole book. But wait for it, there will be a

Quarterly Members’ Meeting Guest speaker’s address

KEEPING YOUR HEAD ABOVE WATER

Keeping your head above water is not always an easy feat. The pressures, particularly of being a woman who is older, are enormous. For instance, dealing with loss of status when we were often administrators or top executives when we are no longer working; loss of identity when we are no longer ‘needed’ as a mother; increasing inability to have our bodies do what we want; and loneliness and isolation as our families go off and do their ‘own thing’.

As women we have always been expected to be the strong ones and carry on, regardless of the situation that arises. Feelings of frustration, anger, loneliness, sadness, hurt, etc. are thought not to be noteworthy. As an older woman who has suffered severe depression, let me assure you that under no circumstances is any level of depression insignificant. Not being able to express these emotions will often lead to some level of depression.

Often we might say that we are stressed or sad or ‘not well’, but, unfortunately, we feel that we are “letting go” if we say we are “depressed”. It doesn’t really matter what label you put to it; the important thing is to give yourself the opportunity to talk about it in a safe and confidential environment. Of course, talking about it won’t make it go away, but it will help you find better ways of coping, particularly in the knowledge that you are not alone with what you are feeling.

The project on which I am working is called the ‘Support Group Project’, which is intended to offer support to anyone wanting to set up self-help groups to deal with depression or other forms of mental illness. The response since the project started in April has been overwhelming as people realise what a difference a support group can make to their lives.

My role is to facilitate the setting up of these groups by helping those involved to decide what form the group will take, who will be responsible for running it, offering training in group leadership and facilitation, and having an ongoing input as requested.

No two groups are ever the same, as the needs of people are different. However, the thread that exists through all of these groups is that they are self-organised and facilitated. In other words, the members ‘own’ the group and therefore decide what they need. I am there to ensure that they achieve it if at all possible.

Referring back to the title ‘KEEPING YOUR HEAD ABOVE WATER’ maybe I should say that these support groups are like a swimming lesson with someone there to keep you afloat. Talking with other women who are, like you, ‘barely floating’, can alleviate an extraordinary amount of stress and give you the courage to ‘keep your head above water’.

Please feel free to contact me on: 9816 1611, ext. 212, if you would like any further information or you would just like to talk.

Bernette Redwood, Project Officer, NSW Association for Mental Health.

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full report, including the video, a travelling photographic exhibition and a return visit with some of the women in Sydney next year. We are indebted to Kate Lohse, Manager of Women’s Health Services for Southern NSW, who was the driving force behind the whole

project, as well as being our capable and efficient bus driver and roadie par excellence! Well done Kate, ably supported by Tashe, and well done all of us! It was a gruelling but successful week-long event.

Sam Smart

Another First for Gwen George

MEET ...

Judith Mustard

Working Committee member

Member of the Theatre Group

Editor of the Sydney Newsletter

Where is your favourite place to go?

Being near water

What do you like to do the most?

Cooking for friends and family

What is the one thing you never want to have to do again?

Be a teenager

What gives you your greatest sense of satisfaction?

Being creative

What is the best thing you get from the Network?

Meeting all these vital women and being part of an organisation that is making a difference

What is your greatest contribution to the Network?

Being in the Theatre Group and editing the Newsletter

What do you think is the single most important issue for older women?

Recognition

What are you most passionate about?

Friends and family

What causes you most distress?

Injustice

What do you wish you had done that you haven't done yet?

Win the Nobel Prize

At the recent Annual General Meeting, Gwen George, a founding member of OWN and a member of the Working Committee since its establishment, was awarded a Life Membership of OWN to honour her outstanding contribution to OWN's success.

This was the first Life Membership awarded by OWN. For Gwen, indefatigable feminist activist that she is, it was yet another in a lifelong history of firsts.

Gwen was Secretary when the Union of Australian Women (UAW) was formed in 1950. In the 1960's, she became a factory worker. She organised women on the factory floor to campaign for equal pay and to retain the 90% male wages paid to women for equal work with men during World War II. She also helped organise the first UAW working women's group.

In 1988, as one of the first appointees to the first national Telstra Central Consumer Council, Gwen discovered NSW was the only State without a Women's Information and Referral Service. In the name of OWN, she lobbied NSW women MP's to support the establishment of a telephone information service. The Government caved in, and a NSW WIRS was established.

Gwen was always active locally and, on one occasion, staged a theatrical event highlighting local beach pollution. You can read about her successful campaign in 'Surf, Sand and Sewage' published in *Untold Stories: Voices of Older Women*.

Gwen helped inspire our first OWN theatrical performance on the lawns outside Federal Parliament in 1988 focusing on the invisibility of older women contemporarily and in Australian history. The performance hit the front pages of the Canberra Times. She then became a founding member of OWN's Theatre Group and performed for some years with them.

While working in the Combined Pensioners' Association following her retirement from the paid workforce, Gwen was instrumental in setting up the Older Women's Network. In both organisations she used her excellent advocacy and media skills, disarming people with her sense of humour and ability to charm (even politicians!)

Although Gwen has suffered enduring losses, she's always been a great stoic. I didn't see Gwen much when she was caring for her terminally ill husband, but I was with her in 1980 when her brilliant, much loved son died. Even with her more recent disability she doesn't complain about personal circumstances or pain.

Today, while arthritis has affected her physical mobility, Gwen is as mentally sharp as ever and continues her advocacy role on the NSW Telstra Regional Consumer Council.

Gwen still enjoys life even though she depends on others to help with shopping and outings. We still have a couple of beers together occasionally, and she still wanders up to the local to meet friends and share her favourite beverage.

We mightn't see her regularly in OWN's office, I'm sure Gwen would welcome the occasional contact - her number is 9660 6067.

Noreen Hewett

Portia Geach

On the day I went to see the Portia Geach exhibition at the Ervin Gallery, I had the great fortune to meet the Gallery Director. I asked her about Portia Geach, saying I had always been interested in her but knew nothing about her. The Director, a much younger woman, seemed to take great pleasure from my interest and appeared excited and eager to discuss the artist, her feminist activities, and the exhibition.

Portia Geach, painter, etcher and feminist activist trained in Melbourne, London and Paris, finally settling in Sydney crusading against the "closed front" women artists encountered in Australia. She won several prizes in her lifetime (1873-1959). Late in life she set up the Housewife's Association of NSW and actively campaigned for equal pay and the right of women to hold public office.

Portia's sister, Florence Geach, established the memorial prize to support and encourage women painters. She gave \$18,000 "...for the best portraits painted from life of some man or woman distinguished in Art, Letters or the Sciences by any female artist resident in Australia during the twelve months preceding the date set by the Trustees for sending in the picture."

Since its establishment in 1965, the award has become important in acknowledging feminist history and art patronage and is now nationwide. Each year the exhibition is shown at the S H Ervin Gallery, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill, The Rocks.

This year's winner was Kim Spooner with a stunning painting of Eva Cox.

Ernes Solari

Building on the Gains of International Year of Older Persons

Like all good communities, the umbrella group of NSW International Year of Older Persons (IYOP) organisations, Coalition '99, of which OWN is a partner, is evaluating IYOP. It's been a long and busy one and a good experience for OWN in networking and forming partnerships.

So, where to from here? Like previous United Nations years (Disabled and Women), the outcomes often take years to develop. On November 24, Minister Faye Lo Po launched the NSW Platform for Action, which will be a springboard to future action. Linked to the government's Healthy Ageing Framework, the Platform for Action document will be circulated to all parliamentarians. Coalition '99 will also draw on the decisions of the Meeting of Generations Conference (see p.)

OWN is already preparing to participate in keeping the issues 'hot' through our Wellness Resource Project, the Peer Support and Advocacy Network and a Supportive Neighbourhood project (the last will be discussed at an OWN meeting on Tuesday, December 7th at 1.30pm.)

A final event for IYOP will be the Rediscovery Tour organised by the Ageing and Disability Department on December 10th, 11th and 12th, which was publicised in our last newsletter. The tour concludes with a free concert at the Opera House forecourt on the Sunday 12 - 4 pm. Ring Kiersten Fishburn 9273 6623 for information

Joy Ross

GLOBALISATION: What is it and how does it affect us?

A small but dedicated group tackled this tricky topic at our November Discussion Group. We thought that 'globalisation' crept into the language with the arrival of the Internet. The Internet gives the impression that we are not many different people, but part of a global village, although in reality a majority of the world's population is not on the Internet.

Modern telecommunication enables us to communicate instantly, and fast travel means we can be immediately immersed in another culture. Another plus of globalisation is being able to enjoy the 'fruits of our labour', not only from our own economy, but from many overseas countries.

However, wages across the world are not the same, and while globalisation might be good in many respects for developing countries, there are many problems.

Joan Hook

January Discussion Group

Our next discussion group will be on Monday 17 January, 2000.

The topic will be 'Medical Technology: its benefits and intrusions.'

We chose this topic because there has been increasing media attention about technologies used to prolong life.

By 'technologies' we mean those methods that are used to keep very premature babies alive, and invasive treatments for people who are close to death.

**Borrow money from
pessimists - they don't
expect it back!**

Dear OWN Friends,

I've been having a wonderful time reading the Newsletter and finding out how many great active women there are and realising how powerful OWN has become!

I went to Byron Bay where the Home Birth Association had their two-day conference. The highlight for me was listening and watching Germaine Greer. She has a deep spirituality, expresses her views with clarity, has a great sense of humour and is a very relaxed and good-looking woman (which one would never realise from media photos!) Love her books and ideas and am now re-reading her latest "The Whole Woman". A disturbing book but one with many positive ideas.

A few days later I was in Brisbane for the Baha'i International Women's Group's Conference listening to, amongst many brilliant, delightful women, Dale Spender and Jocelyn Scutt.

I thought you might be interested in the information I'm enclosing on World March of Women 2000.

Best Wishes, NWN HTP

World March of Women 2000

The World March of Women 2000 is a pacifist, collective action to improve women's living conditions, with specific demands centred on issues of poverty and violence against women.

The actions begin March 8, 2000 and end on October 17, 2000 with a world rally. Those who want to keep abreast of how the project is unfolding are urged to visit our Web site <http://www.ffq.qc.ca> regularly, or contact a participating organisation

In Australia, it's Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, GPO Box 2094, Adelaide SA 5001, phone 08 8296 4357.

Thanks for your support...

The Public Tenants' Council, having read in our newsletter that funding had been cut to OWN (A), wrote the following letter to the Prime Minister with copies to Jocelyn Newman, Peter Costello and Brownyn Bishop.

Dear Prime Minister,

How could you! Here it is, the International Year of Older Persons and you in your wisdom have decided to defund the Older Women's Network (Australia). What happened to equal rights? You continue to fund men's organisations, yet an organisation which speaks for older women, and goes in to bat for those on low incomes on Health, Welfare, Safety and Rights, is not considered worthy.

As a group which also deals with low income people, we are appalled to think that you will fund Business and Professional Women, who can earn a wage, yet those who work to assist pensioners on a voluntary basis are not considered worthy enough.

Perhaps you could explain to us the rationale behind this decision so that we can explain to our older women and others why you do not consider that their rights should be protected.

We await with interest your reply.

Henny Cahill

MILLERS POINT

'Millers Point' was originally called 'Jack the Miller's Point' after John Leighton, who had a windmill there to grind the colony's grain. His end was typical of millers who drank. Emboldened by alcohol, he ignored the hazards of climbing a windmill's sails.

The 'Sydney Gazette' reported the coroner's inquest on "the body of John Leighton, the proprietor of a flour mill, who came to his death in consequence of a fall of upwards of 20 feet from a ladder while in a state of intoxication".

So Leighton's mill is not a figment of fantasy and, if any further proof is needed, Windmill Street is still there today. Back in the 1830's when much of the Rocks district had a distinctly seedy reputation, Windmill Street was a desirable address. According to one writer of the time, "a number of respectable dwelling houses have lately been erected...and are mostly occupied by opulent persons...it is probably one of the best neighbourhoods in Sydney".

Helen Creak

Ref. 'Philip Geeves presents Cazneaux's Sydney 1904-1934'

GLAUCOMA - WATCH OUT!

I had occasion to go to the optometrist last week, and she told me of a patient she had seen in the office the week before. He was an older man who had not visited the optometrist for eight years. The bad news was that he had Glaucoma, and had lost 50% of his sight. Even worse for him was that his sight loss was irreversible. The insidious thing is that he had not noticed any deterioration, such is the sneaky nature of Glaucoma.

Glaucoma tends to run in families. It also tends to be associated with Diabetes, migraines, short sightedness, high blood pressure or eye injuries. It gradually destroys the optic nerve at the back of the eye.

The good news is that there is treatment for Glaucoma, but it needs to be discovered early on. Even better news is that everyone is eligible for one free visit to the optometrist each year. This is timely enough to diagnose the condition early enough for treatment to begin and prevent sight loss. If your optometrist does not suggest it, ask him or her about having your eyes tested for Glaucoma. Sometimes they need reminding!

This was a salutary reminder to me to have that annual check up, and prompted me to find out more about Glaucoma. You can do the same by contacting Glaucoma Australia on 9906 6640 or by visiting their website at www.glaucoma.org.au.

Pauline Reynolds

A Family Story

MEET ... *Sam Smart*

Working Committee member
Wellness Project Coordinator

Where is your favourite place to go?

Up in the back corner of the garden.

What do you like to do the most?

Be at home (if only!)

What is the one thing you never want to have to do again?

Paid work

What gives you your greatest sense of satisfaction?

Completing a project that has value

What is the best thing you get from the Network?

An opportunity to make a contribution to something more worthwhile than I can do on my own

What is your greatest contribution to the Network?

Working on Wellness

What do you think is the single most important issue for older women?

Personal contentment

What are you most passionate about?

Helping others to get what they want.

What causes you most distress?

Frustrations of voluntary work

What do you wish you had done that you haven't done yet?

Spent more time at home

It all started with a leaking bathroom.

My parents are 90. They still live in the house I grew up in. I can see why they don't want to leave. Their neighbours pop in to say hello and offer shopping, or light bulb changing. And you can hear the sea - the beach is just at the end of the street - though the only 'view' is from my sister's former upstairs bedroom window. Even if the salt has rusted half the windows shut, the sea-breeze is a joy in summer. My mother's sight has dimmed but she still arranges her favourite flowers for the dining table and the lounge room. She likes blue, especially hydrangeas and navy-centred daisies. They've lived in that house for fifty years.

So it's not surprising it's in need of a few repairs. For months, perhaps years, the walls were wet and starting to blister. Successive plumbers and tilers' efforts had resulted in periodic spidery and sometimes chilly stints of showering in the laundry out the back. But they had failed to fix the problem. One day I arrived to find an electrician's van outside. The fuses had blown and the old wiring had gone. It was getting dangerous. More comprehensive measures were called for.

Electricians and builders met, and a plan was devised. They could fix the wiring straight away, so at least there would be lighting on the stairs and in the kitchen. But the damaged plaster would have to be chipped off, the old damp linen cupboard with its familiar musty smell would have to be removed and the double-brick cavity walls exposed while they dried out completely. It would take months. But they would get a new bathroom. My father's Depression thriftiness was invoked when he saw it would all cost (admittedly in today's dollars) more than he'd originally paid for the house. Still, there was no alternative - if they wanted to stay in the house, it had to be safe.

The renovations have taken centre stage. With the linen cupboard removed, the cavity wall is now laid open. An undesirable rodent had been seen. Baits were laid.

Now it has always been my mother's habit to make as few trips up and down stairs as possible during the day. She is even more careful about this since a bout of sciatica a few years ago. She and my father - and the people who help them in the house - put things on the stairs ready to take with them when they next go up.

While her central vision is not good, my mother can still see the outline of things well enough. On her way upstairs to bed the other day, with the improved lighting she noticed a pair of my father's grey socks sitting in a ball on the stairs. She reached down to pick it up. But it didn't feel woolly - it felt furry...and warm. She let out a murderous shriek. My father came to her rescue as fast as he could.

The story goes that he gave chase, took a running drop kick at the offending animal and it disappeared down the cavity wall never to be seen again. But discarded socks in that house will continue to be objects of suspicion, at least until the repairs are completed.

Ros Gordon

The Limp and the Laughable... The anti-impotent drug VIAGRA has inspired many things, including these spin-offs:

PROJECTRA: Men given this experimental new drug were far more likely to actually finish a household repair project.

VEGA-SPORTAGRA: This drug has the strange effect of making men want to turn off televised sport and actually converse with other family members.

CHILDAGRA: Men taking this drug reported a sudden overwhelming urge to perform more child care tasks, especially cleaning up spills, and "little accidents".

CONVERSATION AND DEBATE

I am currently reading a book called 'Conversation', composed of six talks given by Theodore Zeldin for the BBC in 1997 or '98. It is a small, fascinating book, intriguing for the pictures as well as the words. Delicate paintings, which Zeldin calls 'pictorial equivalents of aphrodisiacs' are scattered throughout the book. Aphrodisiacs for the imagination, in turn are used to suggest thirty-six possible topics of conversation. I bought the book for the text, so the beautiful paintings are a bonus. It's not quite like any book I've encountered before.

It's not a book about how to conduct a conversation nor about polishing conversational skills. No, Zeldin is interested in 'how conversation changes the way you see the world, and even changes the world.' He explores conversation in which 'you start with a willingness to emerge a slightly different person'.

I hope I've said enough to cause you to seek out the book at your local library or bookshop. But I haven't said all I want to say, there's something more.

Last week on television I saw and heard John Howard reacting to the Vatican's refusal to allow an order of nuns to participate in a trial of safe injecting rooms for drug addicts. I heard him welcome the intervention and I heard him say that he had never approved of the idea of safe injecting rooms 'and I never will'. I am not commenting here on whether or not the Vatican should intervene in Australian domestic affairs nor on the merits or otherwise of safe injecting rooms. What strikes me as significant is that a lot of thoughtful and honourable people have considered the matter and have come to different conclusions. It seems to me that thoughtful and honourable people should be able to hold conversations in which they listen to each other with respect and from which they may emerge 'slightly different'.

I am distressed that the leader of this country apparently cannot or will not hold such conversations, who does not choose to listen to other opinions with respect, who does not seem willing to risk becoming 'slightly different', who takes up positions from which he 'never will' change. I don't much like the idea of a leader with a closed mind. I much prefer a leader willing to change.

I looked up 'conversation' in the Shorter Oxford and among several meanings was 'an interchange of thoughts and words'. Interchange, mutual and reciprocal giving and receiving. Yes, that's more the idea.

And then I remembered that John Howard was a champion debater in his youth and that the place where he has spent a major part of his life is a forum for debates, they're actually called 'parliamentary debates'. So back to the dictionary to see what it said about 'debate'. Again several meanings, with the appropriate one being 'to dispute about, argue...'

Not only John Howard, but most of our politicians, most of our public figures, most of the members of our society perhaps, are reared on a diet of debate. And debate is about disagreement, about marshalling your arguments, making your points, standing firm in your opinions, winning the argument. It's about victory. Conversation contains the possibility of agreement, and is about listening and being listened to, acquiring new knowledge perhaps, being willing to move, seeing things from a different viewpoint. It's about understanding.

I wonder how we could get a bit more conversation and a bit less debate? And do you think I should send a copy of Theodore Zeldin's 'Conversation' to John Howard for Christmas?

Everald Garner

International Folk Dancing

Get-Together

The International Folk Dance Group are meeting in January 2000 for a little dancing, followed by eating and talking, followed by lovely videos of dances from around the world.

DATE: Saturday 15th January 2000

TIME: 11am onwards

VENUE: Alita's place, level 4, 6-8 Holden St. Ashfield. (5 mins walk to station). A sketch of "how to get there" is available from Alita, phone 9798 9169.

BRING: A small plate of food to share- salads will be provided.

*Despite the cost of
living, have you
noticed how popular
it remains?*

AGED-CARE RIGHTS SERVICE

The Aged-Care Rights Service (TARS) is a community based organisation set up to provide help for people 55 years and over who live in, or who have lived in, supported accommodation in NSW.

Services include free legal advice, information, consultancy, research and reform.

We can be contacted Monday to Friday between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm for appointments.

Telephone advice is available Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

Phone (02) 9281 3600.

Country Residents 1 800 424 079

Aristophanes at Balmoral

As I ran along the beach the building above me glowed in the early morning light. We recently moved to Balmoral and this miracle, the amphitheatre, had not long been built. Somehow it seemed right that this symbol of an ancient Greek civilisation should be here in a country full of light, where rock formations became amphitheatres. But it lasted barely 30 years, as local bureaucracy at the time preferred red brick.

When perusing Jacqueline Jackson's wonderful biography *Art is Life*, about her father, James Jackson, the painting of Balmoral jumped out at me. There was the amphitheatre, looking as though the dramas of Aristophanes or Euripides might have been played in that magical place.

But no, it was the respected Theosophists who conjured up the building with members paying thousands of pounds a seat to watch for a Messiah coming through the Heads. Today millions would be paid for such a view. However, the Messiah, a charming Indian called Krishnamurti, hardly acknowledged them and gradually the building fell into disrepair. Today it would have been preserved. After the Theosophists, a vaudeville company led by Humphrey Bishop, took over. And that was a sybaritic time for the residents of Mosman. Aristophanes would have approved of the vaudeville, the quips and cranks. He might even have approved of the ballets danced by women. After all, he did write *Lysistrata*.

In ancient Greek drama roles were played by men, and women, unless they were hetaerae, could not attend the performance. Even they had to sit in the back row.

Greek dancing in the fashion of Isadora Duncan, was popular in the 1930's, and a sister of mine, who was trained in classical as well as Greek dancing, produced dances in the amphitheatre. On a slumberous evening nothing could have been

more delightful than to be seated there, with a cushion to assist, watching the actors, the musicians, the dancers. When the vaudeville faded mini-golf took its place. It seemed like sacrilege, but it was a craze enjoyed by many.

Photos of the amphitheatre have abounded in recent years, but a painting was rare. Are there any others, I wonder?

Barbara Storey

RACISM: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

A writer on the Internet offered the following points as a way of identifying some of the daily effects of white privilege.

1. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
2. I can be pretty sure that my neighbours in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
3. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
4. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
5. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
6. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
7. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.

8. Whether I use cheques, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin's colour not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.

9. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.

10. I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.

“Revisioning Ageing: Empowerment and Older Women”

The FEMINIST BOOKSHOP invites you to the book launch of *Revisioning Ageing: Empowerment and Older Women*.

Meet the editors Jenny Onyx, Rosemary Leonard and Rosslyn Reed and some of the contributors.

An important new book, a collection of writings that challenge dominant attitudes that discriminate against older women

“Older women are increasingly refusing to be marginalised, we have a voice, and have a right to use it, loudly “:Dr Jocelyne Scutt.

4:00 pm, SATURDAY, 4 December
Shop 9 Orange Grove Plaza Lilyfield
(02) 9810 2666

COMPUTER CLASSES
at GLEBE LEICHARDT PCYC

On MONDAYS and THURSDAYS between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm, the Glebe Police Citizens' Youth Club's computer room is available for use by older people.

Volunteers will try to be on hand at these times to provide computer tutorials.

You must be a member of the PCYC to take part. There is a fee of \$2 per visit, which goes towards buying stationery, coffee and tea.

Bi-monthly meetings will be organised with guest speakers. .

Where: 2-4 Minogue Crescent Glebe (opp Harold Park Paceway)

Phone 9660 2557 for more details.

Hate Crime Conference

What is 'hate crime'?

What do we know about harassment, vilification and violence that is based on race, religion, sexuality, gender, disability or ethnicity?

How does the law respond to these problems?

9 and 10 December

Contact

Department of Gender Studies

University of Sydney

93513638

**OLDER WOMEN'S WELLNESS CENTRE
NORTHSIDE**

Join us for a celebration of Wellness

Christmas lunch

11.30 - 2.00

Wednesday, 15 December, 1999

The Annex, Dougherty Centre, 15 Victor Street, Chatwood.

Please food to share

'Taking Charge – Decision Making for Later Life'

A forum at the Ageing and Disability Department, Level 13, 83 Clarence Street Sydney.

Wednesday, 15 December

Please RSVP to Geraldine Carswell 9367 6481.

THE BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

will present three special Matinees of Bangarra's women, choreographed by Frances Ring together with Pitjantjatjara women inspired by the ancient bond between women and the land.

THURSDAY 2nd, TUESDAY 7th and THURSDAY 9th of DECEMBER at 1.00 pm.

BANGARRA STUDIO THEATRE, Pier 4, Hickson Road, Walsh Bay - \$12 per ticket.

Bookings through STC Box Office, tel 9250 1777, Ticketek 9266 4800

Oops

Would the person who submitted the article called 'Deportation from Dilli' please contact the Editor, Judith Mustard, at the office as we don't have the author's name or contact number.

Please note:

Contributions for the next Sydney Newsletter must be received no later than Monday, 17 January 2000

MEMBERSHIP OF THE OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK INC. IS OPEN TO ALL OLDER WOMEN.

Annual fees:

Membership including Newsletter.....\$20.00 (from 1 January 2000)

Newsletter only (for Gov't Depts. institutions and organisations)\$25.00

Send your cheque, name, address and phone number to:

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