

OLD
August
1999

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Older **W**omen's **N**etwork



Sydney Newsletter

AUGUST 1999

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ANY MEMBER WHO WISHES TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER WITH ITEMS OF INTEREST TO OLDER WOMEN, PLEASE FORWARD TO OWN, MARKED "FOR NEWSLETTER". PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND PHONE NUMBER. DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF CONTRIBUTIONS IS NOW THE SECOND MONDAY OF EACH MONTH.

DIARY PAGE

AUGUST 1999 PLEASE PHONE FOR INFORMATION ON THE ACTIVITY PROGRAMS OF THE BANKSTOWN AND NORTHSIDE OLDER WOMEN'S WELLNESS CENTRES

2	Monday 10.30 -1	Aboriginal Support Circle - Betty Little will be speaking on 'Koori Women's Identity' - 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point
2	Monday 10 am	Platform for Action meeting: 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point
3	Tuesday 11-3	Theatre Group meeting and rehearsal, Mott Hall, Argyle Place
4	Wednesday 10.30	NSW Groups Quarterly meeting.: Please RSVP by Friday 30 July
5	Thursday 10 am	Creative Movement, Mott Hall
5	Thursday 1 pm	Painting for Beginners, 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point
7	Saturday 10.30	International Folk Dancing, Mott Hall
10	Tuesday 11-3	Theatre Group meeting and rehearsal, Mott Hall, Argyle Place
12	Thursday 10am	Creative Movement, Mott Hall
12	Thursday 1pm	Painting for Beginners, 75 Windmill Street
13	Friday 1.30	Creative Writing, 87 Lower Fort Street
16	Monday 10.30	Discussion Group: Grandparenting (please see flyer)
17	Tuesday 10am	Health Group, 75 Windmill Street
17	Tuesday 11-3	Theatre Group meeting and rehearsal, Mott Hall, Argyle Place
18	Wednesday 10am	OWN Annual General Meeting - please see flyer
19	Thursday 10am	Creative Movement, 87 Lower Fort Street
19	Thursday 1pm	Painting for beginners, 75 Windmill Street
20	Friday 10.30	Music Group, 75 Windmill Street - see Newsletter Notice Board.
21	Saturday, 10.30	International Folk Dancing, Mott Hall
24	Tuesday 10am	Special Meeting: Working Committee and Theatre Group
26	Thursday 9am	Newsletter collation - all welcome
26	Thursday 10am	Creative Movement, Mott Hall
26	Thursday 1pm	Painting for Beginners, 75 Windmill Street
27	Friday 1.30	Reading Group: Bring 'novel of choice'.
28	Saturday 10	<i>There's a place for everyone...</i> Theatre Group Workshops (please see page 1 of this newsletter)

Please NOTE:

Your payment renewal date is shown on the label of your Newsletter. You will be notified when your subscription is due by a separate notice of renewal.

They've broken the mould that's marked 'too old'!

The OWN Theatre Group goes from strength to strength. Established in 1988 to change stereotyped attitudes to older women, this year – International Year of Older Persons – has definitely been one of its most successful years. Members of the Theatre Group have performed at a high school, at Government House, at geriatric, health and violence conferences, at two Premier's Forums and at a number of community festivals. For two of their performances, they travelled to the South Coast and Queanbeyan.

The highlight this year has undoubtedly been the first ever performance at a school - Burwood Girls High. The Principal, having seen their performance at Government House, was very excited by the concept of older women singing and performing the reality of their lives. She felt that the girls would love to see and hear creative and socially involved older woman. The Theatre Group performed their 20 minute IYOP show to a loud and enthusiastic audience. The heart-warming responses gave them a sense that they had achieved one of the major objectives of IYOP - to establish stronger links between the generations.

IYOP is not over yet! In late September the Theatre Group has been invited to tour the Murray-Mallee area in South Australia for twelve performances over six days, and in November will be performing in seven towns throughout the NSW Southern Highlands.

There are currently ten women involved in the Theatre Group, but more are needed! The majority of performers have had no previous stage experience prior to joining the Group but all are willing to laugh at themselves as they 'have a go'. There's also room in the Theatre Group for non-performers such as script-writers, 'roadies' and prop-mistresses. Members of the Theatre Group do it all: they write their own lyrics and skits, sing and dance, and prepare props and costumes. When funds are available, professional people are employed to teach a range of skills to ensure that their feisty and original skits and songs are also highly polished.

The Theatre Group meets on Tuesdays between 11 and 3 for social contact and rehearsals. It's a big commitment but there's no doubt that belonging to the OWN Theatre Group is a great experience: it expands opportunities for friendship, creates a fuller understanding of older women's issues and is also lots of fun!

Editor

If you are an older woman who wants to present a positive image of ageing, to educate, inform and entertain, to explore your talents and participate in all aspects of theatre work, then think about joining the Theatre Group and enjoying life to the fullest!

There's a place for everyone ...

On Saturday, 28th August from 10.30 to 3pm join the Theatre Group in action!

There will be workshops on theatre craft, singing exercises, a singalong, brainstorming of new scripts and lyric-writing to a chosen tune.

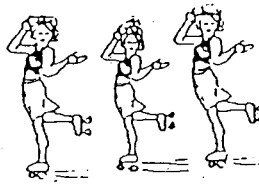
Everyone is welcome.

This will be a fun day, whether you see yourself as talented or not! Be there!

A delicious lunch will be served.

Please phone 9247 7046 to register

Coordinators' Report



Since our last Newsletter there have been many to-ing and fro-ings by some of the people who frequent 87 Lower Fort St to and from all sorts of weird and wondrous places. Three members of the Theatre Group went southwest to run a workshop on script/song writing (report elsewhere); our Treasurer and one of our Coordinators went all the way north to sip champagne on the very tip of our continent; another Coordinator went part of the way north to enjoy family and the rain in Maclean; our third Coordinator managed, and is recovering from, a fabulously successful Wellness Forum (full report next month); one of our workers started her seventh decade and took a week to celebrate it; another of our workers travelled south to the other end of our continent for a fix from her grandson and his mum and dad and one of our rostered volunteers claimed total seduction by, but nevertheless came back from, a trip to Ireland. In the meantime it was business as usual and our IYOP Coordinator and our rostered volunteers kept the doors open and the seats warm. Wow! What a month!

Our Annual General Meeting: Wednesday 18 August. At the AGM, we will be electing a treasurer, two coordinators and seven ordinary members.

If you would like to make a positive and practical contribution to the management of OWN don't forget to nominate for the Working Committee. Even if you haven't had experience on a committee before, your life experience will have provided you with many valuable skills. The one essential is a commitment to OWN's aims and Guiding Principles. In addition to management, we need members who want to make a difference to the lot of older women generally and who would like to represent OWN at a variety of committees and activities in our town. If you know a member of OWN who could make such a contribution, discuss with her the possibility of her nominating for the Committee.

Of course, being on the Working Committee is not only about making a contribution. It is also about the satisfaction of keeping a great organisation going, of introducing new ideas that benefit our members and older women generally, of knowing that OWN influences policy makers in State and Local Governments to give older women a better deal and of putting a positive spin on being an ageing woman.

Peer Support Advocacy Network: Database training is continuing. If you can type and/or have data entry skills, please contact the office as we are anxious for this aspect of the project to be completed as quickly as possible.

OWN's definition of peer support advocacy is as follows:

The primary characteristic of 'Peer Support' is mutual trust, which is achieved by respecting difference, being non-judgmental, valuing clear communication and sharing skills and knowledge. Peer support advocacy involves two or more people acting together to bring about change or to prevent change for individuals, groups or communities.

Margaret, Sam and Renai

WOMEN LAUGHING

Out of their rich being,
Their bearing, their losing,
From cherishing and suffering
Or standing back and watching
(Wryly, astonished, convulsed)
Uprushes such laughter
From fifty years of prudence
Suddenly freed, singly and in groups –
Laughter of wise women.

Moriet R. D'Ombrain

More Successes for OWN's IYOP

Our Winter Solstice Party on June 19 was extremely successful; the pleasant company, the varied program and weather-wise. Looking around the Mott Hall full of noisy and energetic older women connecting with each other, we knew this social day would be a winner.

Decorating the walls and setting the scene were paintings by the drawing and painting group and enlarged photos of OWN's activities. Regular members of the International Folk Dancing Group demonstrated their skills before others joined in – and then the Creative Movement group did the same thing. There was lots of gaiety, freedom and creativity, drumming feet, patting hands and waving arms. Then the Theatre Group added its touch of commentary and irreverence with its "IYOP Show". Finally, Muriel Hortin launched 'Ripe for Repetition'. 'Made by OWN' - we had done it again!

The lunch of ten International Soups was a great novelty and really delicious. Served with lots of cheese, crusty bread, fruit and cakes, it made a 'souper' meal. Thank you to everyone (there are too many to name) who made this mid-winter day such a warm one.

The 2-day Wellness Forum was another 'first' in the progress of OWN's wellness practices. Sam Smart and Betty Murphy from OWN's health committee had worked for eight months on the project with representatives of four NSW Departments. With co-ordinator Jacklynn Draper, they didn't overlook one detail. Well done! See report elsewhere in the newsletter.

The 'Reclaim the Night' collective would like older women to consider being part of this year's activities, held in October. If anyone is interested would you give me a call on 9252 2040, or leave a message on 9247 7046.

We are looking forward to hearing about the issues you think are important to older women in the Platform for Action Submissions, which are due on 13 August. If you have mislaid the form, please ring me and I'll send another one out to you.

Joy Ross, IYOP coordinator

A FITTING CELEBRATION FOR IYOP

Greater protection for the many thousands of older women who have self-funded supported accommodation in Retirement Villages.

For more than 10 years residents have waged a struggle to have consumer protection legislation strengthened so that it can be applied in a more meaningful way to solve and prevent the many problems that have appeared and been unresolved because of the unsatisfactory and inadequate non-penalising law and voluntary Code of Practice.

The New South Wales Government, after two years of consultation and review process conducted throughout the industry, has, as a consequence, released an "Exposure Draft" for final consultation before being placed before Parliament during the Spring sitting for passage as "The Retirement Villages Bill of 1999".

This new act sets out wide ranging requirements from village operators and will carry set penalties for non compliance. It will also simplify greatly the procedures for dispute resolution, aimed at eliminating lengthy and costly court proceedings. Instead, it will place greater authority with the Residency Tribunal under the administration of the Director General of Fair Trading.

The enactment of the new Bill, whilst not being able to undo some costly and stressful experiences of the past, will nevertheless be applied to all establishments either pre-existing or intended, so that even contracts which contained some of the most unconscionable clauses will henceforth have to comply with the conditions laid down in the new Act in order to operate.

This achievement for residents can thus be heralded as a fitting celebration for IYOP in that this section of older people in our community, the great majority of them women, can be more secure and freed from the indignities that some operators have imposed on them by denial of rights and by unrestricted, unregulated and unfair management practices.

We are urging support from all members of Parliament for the passage of the Bill and for its earliest possible implementation.

Barbara Burnham,
(extract from the Retirement Villages Resident Association newsletter)

Community Care Services

Because many older people are unable to get needed home and community care services, the Older Women's Network (OWN) and Combined Pensioners & Superannuants' Association (CPSA) have set up a Working Party to examine complaints and trends towards higher fees and privatisation. Collaboration has resulted in valuable exchanges of information about individual cases and agencies' responses to complaints about waiting lists.

Members of the working party are pursuing individually investigations through local agencies and may become involved in consumer representation at regional or local level.

The working party met for the third time on July 1, when other organisations were also present to hear Paul Sadler (Ageing and Disability Department) provide information and answer questions.

Major issues were apprehension about referrals to private providers, the impact on NSW services and fees of Federal Government funding policies and the need for growth funds instead of cost cutting just to maintain existing service levels.

Early release from hospitals was raised. Services which allow recovery at home relieve hospitals of high acute care costs but the Health Department makes no ongoing budgetary contribution towards these services which generally come out of HCC funds. If they aren't adequate, evidence shows that some patients return to the hospital with an aggravated medical condition.

There was support at the meeting for a central information point through which consumers could find out how to access the system anywhere within NSW. This may prevent consumer confusion on how to get services. An effective complaints system which collated data on complaints at all levels, using it to monitor and rectify inadequacies in services, was also supported.

Caroline Eggington, Betty Johnson, Hedi Rogeeven and I have attended Working Party meetings up to date representing OWN. I believe our contributions have been useful and welcomed. We

hope to set up a network of members in both CPSA and OWN who will become regional consumer advocates and inform us regularly of what is happening among service providers and recipients.

If you want more information, please contact OWN representatives on the Working Party through Sydney OWN.

Noreen Hewitt

SOLSTICE THANK YOU NOTES

I would like to send a note of appreciation to all concerned for the wonderful event held on Saturday - Winter Solstice and IYOP.

It was such a happy day and I really enjoyed myself - good company, good food, and great entertainment. That soup was just yummy!

I bought the book, "Ripe for Repetition, a positive book and most enjoyable.

Thanks, one and all, for the work and effort put into the day.

Pam Burke

Dear Chief Soup Makers, Bottle Washers and Consummate Planners of a memorable Winter Solstice Party.

I could have kicked up my heels more (my difficult right knee prevented that) but the food and the entertainment, the camaraderie, and of course 'Ripe for Repetition' lifted my spirits hugely.

Thank you, dear OWN friends.

Nina Walton

JUST DO IT!

That's what it's all about; older women defining a need, working out and putting the strategy into practice.

Thus Colleen Cawood encapsulated this aspect of wellness when she told the story of how "Koori WAVES" came into being.

She was speaking to a packed audience at Sydney University's Women's College during the two-day Wellness Forum that was initiated by OWN with the cooperation of the Benevolent Society and NSW Government Departments - Health, Sport and Recreation, Ageing and Disability and Women.

In Colleen's Aboriginal Community there was a great need to improve the health of their older women. Many were very unfit, suffering from cardio-vascular problems, diabetes and obesity. The need for improvement in general health and fitness was great, and something had to be done.

It was decided that Colleen would undertake training as a fitness instructor, which she did for the next six months.

When she qualified, she started a class of warm water exercises for the older Aboriginal women. Much encouragement was needed before they would venture in the pool. At first they were overcome by shyness, but gradually were persuaded to enter the water wearing their shorts and Tee shirts.

Two terms later, however, they had gained enough confidence to wear swimsuits. Now, happy and confident, they are guaranteed privacy and security. They have the pool entirely to themselves and no outsiders are allowed to approach it during the classes.

There are now five sessions per week with ten women in each class. "Koori WAVES" has contributed greatly to the health and wellbeing of participants.

Colleen is the only instructor at the moment so she is overworked, and more so as she has had to use her car as a bus, because transport is a problem. Home Care has apparently come to the rescue just recently.

"Koori WAVES" has received a number of awards, including one from the Premier and another from Randwick Council.

I found this address of Colleen's to be the most inspiring in two days of many interesting talks.

We heard reports of the many and varied wellness activities around the state; Penrith OWN working in partnership with local agencies; likewise Lismore OWN. And Carly Rose, who with her partner is "growing old disgracefully", although I must say their promotion of 'SKI' holidays for older women would not be something many fond mothers of some of my acquaintance would want to do. (SKI means Spending the Kids Inheritance).

It was rewarding to see representatives from Government departments and agencies at the Forum and realise that finally "Wellness" as a concept has taken root and is being taken seriously by professionals and government bureaucrats.

After all, the wellness and wellbeing of the ageing population is an economically sound proposition.

Muriel Horton

PS Those Wretched Acronyms!

They're getting worse! When I sat down to write about "Koori WAVES" I didn't know what "WAVES" stood for. I rang the South Sydney Health Service from where "WAVES" operates, but, "Sorry, don't know. The instructor isn't here at the moment."

I rang the RPA Health Unit, who also conduct "WAVES" classes, "Sorry, we don't know."

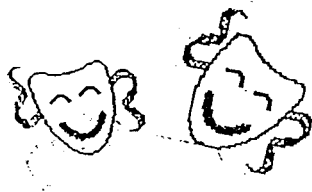
I then rang WIRS (which stands for Women's Information and Referral Service) but no luck, "Very sorry".

Then I rang 9247 7046! They, who know everything! Did they? No, sorry, they didn't. Well really!

PPS: South Sydney Health have just rung to tell me they found out. It means "Water Activities for Vitality in the Eastern Suburbs." Muriel

AAA (Action Against Acronyms)

THEATRE GROUP



Wonderful Wagga Wagga Workshop

We are delighted to have the lead article in this month's newsletter focussed on the work of the Theatre Group. The more publicity we get, the more empowered we feel to get out there and challenge those negative attitudes that can make our lives a misery.

The Theatre Group joined in the fun at the "Ripe for Repetition" launch on 19 June with a performance of our International Year of Older Person show to an appreciative audience.

In July we performed at the Older Women's Wellness Forum at Women's College, Sydney University, to a large and really enthusiastic and receptive audience.

Two days later, at the same venue, we took to the stage to perform at the "Beijing + 5 Conference" to a packed hall. And what a responsive audience! Right from the opening song the delegates from as far away as New Zealand, Bouganville, Tonga and the Cook Islands, clapped and laughed, yelled and stamped. They particularly related to the Centrelink skit where we send up the new system of making a telephone call and getting a recorded message, and the excessive wait to hear a human voice. They gave us a standing ovation at the end. Many said afterwards that they appreciated the messages and the boldness of the presentation.

It is heartening to have such a response from younger audiences. This year has seen us meeting audiences of quite a few younger women. Often we hear "Can't wait to get old enough to join you!"

See you on Saturday, 28 August from 10am to 3 pm at our Open Day Workshop at the Abraham Mott Hall, Argyle Street, Millers Point. Come along to breathe and blow to improve your voice, sing along with us and help us put together more lyrics and scripts, or just come along to enjoy yourself!

See you there!

Peggy Hewett

From the welcome at Wagga airport on Tuesday night to the farewell dinner on Thursday night, the three representatives of the Sydney OWN Theatre Group were overwhelmed by the warmth and hospitality shown by the women of Wagga, who had invited us to conduct a theatre skills workshop in anticipation of setting up an OWN Theatre Group.

On the first day of our workshop some apprehension was felt by the participants, as we commenced with vocal exercises and continued on with stage techniques, lyric writing and script writing. Soon, excited and keen to learn, they joined in enthusiastically and with laughter and snatches of song set a receptive atmosphere for the brainstorming session.

Lack of transport, banks, health, grandparenting, loneliness and isolation were some of the issues raised and the material they wrote reflected their concerns.

The next day the groups polished their scripts, allocated and rehearsed their roles and each group then performed their show to an appreciative audience. Their scriptwriting, tap dancing, whistling, acting and singing revealed a depth of untapped talent.

We came home exhausted but exhilarated at the potential shown by our country sisters. Thank you again all you wonderful women of Wagga.

Lucy Porter



MORE ON THE CHANGES FOR THE CONSUMERS OF BASIC UTILITIES

The pursuance of Competition Policy and its application to the Gas, Electricity and Water supplies, marches on, some industries being further down the track than others.

For we domestic consumers the most immediate area of interest is in representing our views and needs whilst measures for protection are being set in place.

Aspects of the changes being addressed are including -

*Findings from the activities of the Government appointed Independent Price Authority (IPART). These will have bearing for us on the tariffs we pay.

- Environmental factors and in whose hands will be the control.
- Regulations which can guarantee supply, safety and quality.
- Avenues for complaint and redress for correcting faults or shortcomings in service.
- Structures to enable community input.
- Mechanisms for distributing information on changes of Technology in the area of supply delivery.
- Cost distribution and tariffs.

Much of the groundwork is still in the very early planning stages. Things like boundaries of areas of distribution facilities are still unknown to anyone authority.

So while there is not much of the early stage development for opening up these industries to all competitors there would seem limited opportunity for the humble consumers input. However, the operation of the "Utilities Consumer Advocacy Program" (UCAP) is a project funded under the auspices of "The Public Interest Advocacy Centre

(PIAC), it is operating energetically in our interests and can provide an overview of developments. OWN is represented on this committee

They are closely analysing and enquiring into how and why decisions are being made.

There has been collaboration and exchange of views with existing key operators such as Australian Gas Light Co. and Energy Australia.,

We can have access to the Newsletter "Well Connected" produced by UCAP which will keep you informed of developments. Ask to see the copy in OWN files.

Through OWN's Data Bank I hope we will also have knowledge of any member's participation in these areas of community interest where Consumer Councils exist or are being developed. There are vacancies occurring and we need to know of members interested in becoming involved.

Barbara Burnham

To all the phenomenal women out there ...

An English professor wrote on the blackboard the words, "A woman without her man is nothing," and directed the students to punctuate it correctly.

The men wrote, "A woman, without her man, is nothing."

The women wrote, "A woman: without her, man is nothing."

Send this story to other phenomenal women today in celebration of Women's History Month.

Frances Sodaro

AGEING AND WELLNESS

Members attending the monthly discussion group on Monday 19th July became very involved in examining all aspects of ageing and then exploring wellness in relation to this.

It was acknowledged that there are certain realities associated with ageing. Our skin does lose elasticity and wrinkles to develop, muscle strength weakens, hearing and sight may begin to fail. All of this to different degrees for different individuals to different times. Regardless of this, most of us are not like the media presented stereotype of older women being - frail, feeble minded, in need of institutional care!!!

Collectively, it was rewarding to be able to identify many positive factors that we associate with ageing. We have accumulated large amounts of knowledge, experience, insight and skill. As well, we've developed ability to face and work with challenge and change.

Moving on to "wellness" we found that although we each may view "wellness" differently, we could satisfactorily fulfil our own "well" self-prescription. There were, however, some common factors seen as being essential to wellness:-

- * A high self esteem and self confidence
- * Willingness to live in the "here and now"
- * Holding a positive frame of mine ("glass half full not half empty")
- * Retaining a healthy sense of humour

We concluded that the "wellness" approach to prevention was much more desirable than the traditional "illness" cure model and thanks to OWN we can use the "wellness centres" services. We also realised that we had just participated in an enjoyable and stimulating wellness activity by our involvement in the discussion.

Next month's discussion is on Monday 16th August on "Grandparenting in the '90's". Facilitators Yetty Windt and Helene Gonski.

Jacqui Graham

GENE-ETHICS NETWORK

It was good to read Frayda Myers Cooper's article on Genetically Modified (GM) food in the July Newsletter. Older women who are concerned about this issue are part of a groundswell of resistance. It is important to us for two reasons.

- (1) We are all affected. These GM foods are being foisted on us by huge multinational agri-businesses and the necrophilic effects will be wide-ranging and long-lasting, and
- (2) Like OWN, the movement against GM food has grown from grassroots networking.

I started learning about GM a few years ago, through the Seed-Savers' Network, various organic farming newsletters and the publications Earth Garden and Grass Roots. Bits of information began to fit together - about the loss of biodiversity, laws that allow the patenting of plants and developments in genetic engineering.

The completed picture is alarming. If we don't resist actively, control of the world's food supplies will pass from a multitude of local farmers and gardeners to a few giant agri-business companies. The most sinister development is the terminator gene which renders sterile seeds produced by crops.

Unfortunately, in Australia, the government is dodging its best to accommodate agri-business. It has lifted the level of glyphosphate (Roundup) allowed in soybeans, to allow the importing of US Round-up Ready soybeans. Also, the Australian New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) is resisting consumer demands for clear labelling of foods containing GM ingredients.

If you join the Gene-Ethics Network, you will receive regular updates on genetic engineering and information about how to make an impact on government and businesses. Your actions can make a difference. For example, two years ago I wrote to Sanitarium. The reply: GM foods are safe. I phoned and wrote again. Now Sanitarium is saying that after, "one hundred enquires from customers", it has decided to switch to non-GM soybeans.

Any woman who cares about this issue can join:

Gene-Ethics Network, C/- 340 Gore Street, Fitzroy 3065
- Membership \$12

'Seed Savers' Network, Box 975 Byron Bay, 2481 -
Membership \$25

Janet Grevillea

Trude Kallir suggests that we voice our concern by ringing supermarkets and asking if they sell GM foods and, asking if so, are they labelled?

Coles: 1800 061 562

Woolworths: 1800 007 700

Franklins: 1800 621 111

TIPS FOR OWN ADVOCATES

ON COMMITTEES, at CONSULTATION or as SPEAKERS.

Take a risk – have a go – become an OWN representative!

If you are representing OWN at a meeting it's a good idea to check the OWN policy on issues likely to be covered and also OWN's Guiding Principles.

It would also help to talk with an OWN member with particular experience in the area. Once the Peer Support Advocacy Network Database is operating, you can quickly be connected with someone who is willing to offer support and information about the issues you are interested in.

The following may help:

- Rely on values that guide you in your own life, such as your commitment to people and their quality of life.
- Get to know who else is on the committee and whether they may be possible allies on issues.
- Don't be put down by meeting procedures or jargon. Persistently challenging points of view which are against the interests of older women can gain you respect.
- Where issues are unclear on committees, don't hesitate to ask questions. By doing this you help others.
- OWN has resources you can draw on such as existing policy documents, committees (eg Health and Working Committee) and a vast range of relevant written material, often with a summary at the beginning, which can help.
- Ask for OWN group workshops to be held on particular issues to foster supportive action.
- If you wish to present a view in written form, please talk this over with OWN Co-ordinators to check that it reflects OWN policy.
- Try to secure action to achieve objectives.
- Grassroots experience counts. Telling of your experiences can secure sympathy and support.

Noreen Hewett

Transport Concessions review

The Public Transport Authority are to hold an inquiry into the extension of the availability of the pensioner excursion ticket (usually called the \$1 ticket) to users of private buses, and the effectiveness of the \$2 Countrylink ticket.

This is an opportunity to present submissions or personal experiences supporting the wider availability of this important public transport ticket for pensioners outside the Sydney city area.

An issues paper will be released in late July, for a copy please contact your local OWN group, or Rob Lake on 02 9754 1811. Deadlines have not yet been set, it is expected about 6 weeks will be allowed for comment

Dear Editor,

I find a certain amount of smugness in the letter to you from Margaret Mayo.

It's reasonably easy to self-fund your retirement from a secure well paid job. It's not so easy when you work in a factory on an assembly line and the worry is to earn sufficient to buy enough food and pay the rent. Or you work from home making garments for a pittance. These are the majority of women workers. The majority of women workers have also faced inequality in wages and still do.

In the 1960's and 70's big struggles took place to gain some equality in wages. We gained a little then but women's wages are still below the male rate.

The NSW Government has recently issued a Pay Equity Strategy report which addresses the problem of inequity in women's wages in NSW. The report found inequity in female dominated industries such as child care workers, hairdressers and beauty therapists, seafood processors, librarians and clothing outworkers. Worst affected were female dominated industries such as process work, childcare and clothing.

We still have a long way to go to achieve some kind of wages equity and before women can plan for retirement. This may be possible where retirement plans are part of the wages we receive when we start a job. There is still a long way to go before we are independent of a pension when our working days are over.

Gwen George



I CAME SECOND....

We arrived in Australia from England in June 1951, £10 migrants. Our eldest son, Andrew, was four and a half years old. Bobby, our eldest daughter, was two and a half, too young for school. Two more children, Howard and Naomi, arrived during the next few years.

Andrew started school immediately, and seemed to take to it straight away. I don't remember whether the children were provided with school lunches or whether we had to make sandwiches for them, but imagine my astonishment when on the second day, Andrew arrived home unexpectedly at lunch time. He said the teacher had told the children that all those who were going home for lunch should go. So he did.

Some weeks later, on his arrival home from school in the afternoon, he was overwhelmed by a sudden rush of affection for me, and gave me a great bear hug and some big wet kisses. "Oh, Mum," he said fervently, "You're the second best mother in the whole world." "Oh?" I said, frostily. "And who's the first?" "Oh, Mum," he said wistfully, "The Queen, of course."

I think that was when I first decided I was a Republican.

Renee Simons



Alone - I may appear Powerless.
Alone - I may lose my voice.
But as a member of Older Women's Circle
I again have found my voice.....

Gathered here as Women - united in our cause,
Encouraging each other to open up new doors.
Let our 'light' of knowledge become a flame so bright
From this moment on, our aim to "win" the fight....

The sharing and giving of "Wellness" - attitudes of
"Beingness",
Living as Women in our full trueness,
Aiming to reach for the unreachable - Focus on our
Goal.

Just to be, who we are.....Women - A BODY - A
MIND - A SOUL.

Marnie Malcom

Dear Creature

When I was young I always wanted
Children of my own
I wanted to be 'Mother';
And couldn't wait to see them grown.

I finished up with five of them
Three daughters and two boys.
The house filled up with all of their friends
And a hell of a lot of noise.

The phone bills getting bigger
The budget getting blown
Gosh, I wish those bloody kids of mine
Would move out on their own.

The day arrived, I shut the door,
They lived at home no more,
As I listened on the phone,
My son had got the sack.

My body started trembling
My son was coming back.
I put the phone upon the stand
Amid some heavy sighs
If I only had some needles
I'd stick them in my eyes!

I love my kids, don't get me wrong
I honestly do care,
But somewhere in the last few years
I've really done my share.

One son and two of my daughters
Moved back and forth for years
Until, at last, they married
And settled all my fears.

I thought, at last, I'm on my own,
My life was now my feature,
Until my son got his divorce
Now I'm stuck with the dear creature!

Josephine Jackson



GETTING OLD, BUT . . .-

The right arm was aching as before but now it has the
right hand to deal with, as well.

The left hand is stiff; with certain movements the pain
is encouraging a scream.

There is a bruise on my backside, the top of my left leg
is aching so much, and every time I take a step, I actually
cry. Never before in my life, have I realised what old
age really is!

In the past years, I said many times, "I'm getting old,"
but only now, as I try to climb rocks, I feel I am really
getting old. The brain tells me, "Go from this rock to
that one....easy now...." Oh, I used to jump like a
bird....but this time, as I follow the order from the brain,
I don't account for the age of the body....Bang....!

Like a bag of potatoes, I land with my bum on a pointed
rock, the leg twisted, the hand on the oysters....the little
fish caught on the line, laughing his head off....

I am moving like a snail, full of pain and aches, telling
myself, "You can't jump on the rocks any more, you are
getting older...."

**BUT.....THE FISH DINNER WAS LOVELY AND
I'M FEELING YOUNG ENOUGH!**

Silvana Gruber

Touch, smile, gentle kiss
Laughing, hugging, whispered words,
My friend is near me.

* *

Grey thrush swoops, swiftly
Searches tree bark, deftly pecks
Tree top insect meal

* *

Ecstatic tail wag
Body curving, tongue licking,
Hello! Kelpie dog

* *

Nonchalant half moon
Sees rattling old Toyota
Climb through the valley.

Joan Johns

NOTICE

IYOP events and publications

- 8 Aug. 12.30pm Celebrating our Giftedness, ecumenical gathering for IYOP
The ruins of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Victoria Rd., Parramatta
ph. Daphne or Marie (02) 9631 9163
- 11 Aug. 2pm I Keep losing my keys! Do I have Alzheimer's Disease?
Thomas & Rachel Moore Auditorium, Liverpool Hospital
Book by 4 August, Helen or Claudine 9828 6205
- 11 Aug 5.30pm Evening seminar for people with a physical disability
Grd Flr., Bankstown City Library, 62 The Mall Bankstown
The Physical Disability Council of NSW 1800 688 831
- 24 Aug. 11am Grandparents Storytime, grandparents are invited to bring your
favourite preschooler to storytime,
Leichhardt library, bookings essential, 9367 9266
- 28 Aug, 10am Open Day at the Royal Blind Society,
4 Mitchell St., Enfield, enquiries Glenda 9334 3229
- 30 August Loss and Grief in later life,
Masonic Centre, Goulburn St., Sydney, ph. 9988 3376

'The Journey of Life' IYOP website

<http://www.nsw.gov.au>

NSW Fire Brigade

A fire safety video is available to educate older people in the community.

Office of the Public Guardian

Has begun a statewide education campaign to inform the community about new enduring guardian-ship provision contained in the recent amendment to the NSW Guardianship Act 1987. For details call 9265 1443.

'CONSUMING INTEREST'

The Autumn 1999 edition is focused on genetically modified foods with articles on consumer rights, what food manufacturers know about gene foods, a report on the Consensus Conference concerning gene food and 'how safe is safe'? We have a copy at the office, so please call in when you have time and read all about it!



BOARD

Write Out

A Performance Forum presented by Playworks will be held at the Riverside Theatre on Saturday 11 and Sunday, 12 September from 9am to 6pm. There will be a panel of speakers, hands-on writing workshops and performances. Cost is \$40 and includes refreshments and a light lunch. Please contact Fiona Winning: telephone 92648414 or email playwks@ozemail.com.au

WANTED

An Advocate for Beverley

Citizen Advocacy is a registered charity at Ryde. They are looking for a caring member of the local community to take an interest in Beverley, who is 42, and has an intellectual disability. Beverley needs a mature and assertive woman to speak up for her, who will take an interest in her as a person and encourage accountability from her paid carers. Please contact Ester Swiech on 9808 5500 for more information.

SELF AWARENESS GROUP

Would you like to increase your self esteem and be more in charge of your life? A new 6 week group, facilitated by Irenie Rennie, will commence on Thursday 26 August from 1 pm to 2.30 pm at 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point. A small fee will be charged. For more information, please phone Irenie on 9818 4686.

OWN'S MUSIC GROUP

Our next get together on the 20th August will be held at 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point at 10.30. You are invited to come along and join our small group of music enthusiasts.

House Sharing

OWN member would like a compatible woman to share her attractive 50 year old house which is in the leafy upper North Shore area. Write briefly c/- OWN, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000 or ring Moya 9487 1705.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK INC.

IS OPEN TO ALL OLDER WOMEN.

Annual fees:

Membership including Newsletter.....\$15.00

Newsletter only (for Gov't Depts.
institutions and organisations\$20.00

Send your cheque, name, address and phone number to:
Older Women's Network
87 Lower Fort Street
Millers Point NSW 2000

Tel: (02) 9247 7046

Fax: (02) 9247 4202

email: ownnsw@zip.com.au

Web site: <http://www.zip.com.au/~ownnsw>