

## **We're on the way ...**

Our two-day state conference at Sancta Sophia College on 27 and 28 June was very successful with lots of friendly catch-ups, interesting discussions, clear decisions and a fun party at the end of day one. Altogether, twenty-three delegates and forty non-delegates attended from thirteen groups across NSW.

Nancy Brown warmly welcomed us on the first day, calling on everyone to enjoy the experience of sharing ideas, concerns and visions about creating an organisation that will more effectively reflect OWN's peak body status.

Noreen Hewett, founding member of OWN, long-time advocate for women's rights and distinguished speaker, gave an inspirational keynote address covering a broad sweep of OWN's history, highlighting a range of important achievements over the past thirteen years and ending with the invitation to "be proud of yourselves, accepting of others and have fun!"

Sam Smart, Pam Ledden and Hedi Roggeveen skilfully chaired different sessions over the two days. In the first session, conference participants identified the advantages of having a properly constituted OWN NSW. The long list included greater lobbying power and a stronger voice for older women; rural issues being included in state-wide policies; better resourcing of NSW groups; more effective media coverage with more spokeswomen available; a greater ability to attract private and government funding and bequests; having public liability insurance that will cover all NSW groups; and an increase in OWN's collaboration with governments and others on particular projects. Many of these advantages were premised on finding extra funds to employ a NSW outreach community development worker to support volunteers to "make it all happen".

Sam reassured participants that the separation of OWN Sydney from OWN NSW will make little immediate difference to members as membership and newsletter subscription will remain the same (\$20 per year) while a draft constitution is being written for OWN NSW.

An Interim Steering Committee with representatives from Penrith, Woy Woy, Nowra, Blue Mountains, Newcastle, Northern Rivers and Sydney has already met once to begin writing a draft constitution and to more generally oversee the process of forming OWN NSW. Members of OWN Inc. will have an opportunity to discuss the draft constitution at a special General Meeting before OWN NSW is incorporated, which will probably not be until next year.

In the meantime, catch up on more details of the conference by reading the 'NSW State Conference Report', available from the OWN office on 9247 7046.

### **Feedback from Illawarra**

The conference was well organised, and it was good to meet other women from different regions. Everyone was invited to share their thoughts and info about the issues raised. The food and accommodation was exceptionally good. Background material was thorough and helpful for discussions. We'll be looking forward to receiving the report from the conference, and to be able to discuss the changes with our group. Hopefully, we will be able to give some input into the formation of the new peak body.

*Joan Hilton and Arlene Little*

### **And from Gosford**

Hope you have all recovered from the conference. As we came home we thought, "At last – after all the meetings and discussions, we did it!" There's still lots of work but at least it is on the way: *Nancy Brown*

*Dorothy Cora*

### **Our OWN Olympic break**

Those who are supposed to know about such things say that The Rocks area is going to be one of the most crowded during the Olympic Games, which begin 15 September and ends on 1 October. As a precaution, we have decided not to have any activities or meetings at OWN during this time. However, the office will be open daily from 10 am to 2 pm.

## A LESSON LEARNED

My head's still reeling from the two days spent at the OWN Conference in June, where I managed to make a complete ass of myself.

Arriving late, I could blame the trains, but must admit it was my own fault as I went to the wrong address, arriving just in time to join the first workshop and split into four groups. Not having taken part in a workshop before, I was completely unaware what they were supposed to be, and when someone asked if anyone would take notes, and no one put their hand up, I did. New lesson learned. If you don't know what's going on, keep your head down and your trap shut.

The discussion proceeded around me, with me taking notes of all that was said in the order it was said, and me thinking this was OK. I had no idea we were supposed to be following some plan and putting down constructive thoughts, just kept writing away. Someone said, "Five minutes," then five minutes later, "Time's up", and we all joined back into one group again.

Horror of horrors, I was asked to speak first. No one said anything about speaking when they asked for a volunteer to take notes. When I stood in front of the mike and felt fairly comfortable, I was dumbfounded to be asked what our group thought the aims of the State body were. I looked frantically at my notes, all sorts of words written, but I couldn't get a clue as to what they thought these aims should be. Did they discuss that? Made a few mutterings, mixed with stutterings, when our chairperson rescued me and said I could speak last. This I did, to no avail. I was amazed as I listened to the other speakers list all their thoughts, which had been written and numbered on sheets of paper for consideration back at H.Q. at a later date. That's when I realised we had so lacked direction, we were lucky we had found our chairs in the first place.

Still, it was a lesson learned, and I now know what a workshop means, and how important it is to follow the sheets that are given out as a guide for discussion. From then on, I tried to keep out of trouble and only speak when I thought I could add something to the conversation. The whole procedure was so different to last year's conference, it was an entirely new world, as far as I was concerned.

The thing I did learn was that, though we do not have an OWN group in Wollondilly, we are doing it all here. I was very involved in the IYOP program that was implemented in our Shire, and most of the activities that were already in place were noted. It is pleasing to say that these friendship groups, as we call them, play a big part in the lives of all the older residents of the twenty-nine towns and villages that go into make up the Wollondilly Shire.

Though most of these groups are not gender specific, women are the main participants. The group at the Oaks, which is called "The Oaks Women's Group", is only for women, and was started simply as a means of

giving the women in that area who felt isolated a chance to meet regularly, go on outings they could afford, and generally support each other. Our dance groups, chat groups, poetry groups, etc., are all venues treasured by those that take part in them.

Our next plan is to form a core group, which will join OWN NSW Inc. when it is formed. We hope to be able to help in some way, to keep the high standards set by Sydney OWN going, and to add something of value, the least of which could be other voices who will champion the causes of women's issues and raise our profiles with our local community, local government, State and Federal governments.

So, thank you to the hard working Sydney OWN group who arranged the conference, for inviting me, for your magazine which informs me, and for every benefit we have received by your hard work. I can only hope that NSW OWN Inc. will be able to keep the high standard set by the founders of OWN.

Barbara Malcolm

## Coordinators' Report

Congratulations to everyone involved in making the State Conference such a success! The conference rooms at Sancta Sophia College met our needs perfectly with a number of different areas for small workshops, ample space and great acoustics for the Theatre Group's performance (what an amazing group they are!) and a roaring fire in our after-hours party room.

The Interim Steering Committee had its first meeting on July 18. The primary focus was clarifying our role, deciding when and where to meet and deciding on the best approach to writing the draft constitution. We decided to start with the OWN (Inc) constitution and see what we want to keep and change. We discussed at length the aims and objectives and moved on to the membership issues relating to OWN NSW.

The committee members are open to members' ideas about this process. Putting those ideas forward is probably best done by contacting your local representatives or writing to the Steering Committee at 87 Lower Fort Street. The members are Jutte Dale, Hedi Roggeveen, Pam Ledden, Gwenda Fulford, Nancy North, Anne Warner, June Lord, Enid Harrison, Vonnie Russell, Ruth Kearney and Helen Smith. In Pam's absence throughout August, Cate Turner will be the person to contact.

The Housing, Transport and Health Groups also had further successful meetings through the month.

Pam Ledden and Joy Ross

# OWN Transport Group

## **Comment, Construction, Concessions and Contention**

Sure enough, structure emerged as one of the most interesting, if slippery, issues of the 5 July meeting of the OWN Transport Group - right at the end of our two allotted hours of lively discussion.

Realising that so much of what we were discussing related to other vital issues that concern OWN members - especially supportive neighbourhoods - we felt we needed a more organic, interlinked structure to draw on this knowledge and experience. We decided to set time aside to see how we could more effectively link into the subcommittee "silos" in OWN that could contribute to our deliberations. We'd love to hear from anyone with constructive suggestions on this issue.

The meeting enjoyed a report from Hedi Roggeveen on a workshop of the Western Sydney Community Forum. It seems Queensland is actually trialling several models for community transport which try to solve transport problems as expressed by the members of the target community through consultation. "Safe mobility for life" was the pithy motto of Martin Thomsett of Queensland Transport who sagely suggests we need to talk more about transit and less about transport. In other words - look at why and how people need to travel as part of their lives. Long term planning - a 25 year time frame - is needed to implement programs, he says. Political election terms are too short a frame.

Of course, no OWN group is complete without a good contentious issue. We certainly found one in the political hot potato of the NSW government's Transport Concession Review. This review was due to be completed in December last year. It was to make a recommendation on how the government should act on the seniors' transport concession, which, at \$1.10 (with GST) for a day's travel within Sydney, is very economically desirable for those who have it. But it is currently available only to the small proportion of NSW seniors who live within a limited part of Sydney. The government has yet to make the report and its recommendation public, and is clearly in a cost/equity dilemma on the matter. After substantial discussion we decided to pursue this issue further at the next meeting so we can make a detailed written recommendation to OWN's management committee.

Jacqui Graham presented a summary of part of a ground-breaking paper on the connection between some health issues and some forms of transport by Chloe Mason. Due to lack of time she will complete this at the next meeting but Jacqui has reported on this paper elsewhere in the Newsletter. Also to be considered is a NSW government document on medical considerations in the transport of older people.

Next meeting will be on Monday 31 July at 11 a.m. All welcome - bring your lunch and stay for a chat.

Ros Gordon

### **Looking for a good read?**

Barbara Kingslover's book 'The Poisonwood Bible' is a brilliant epic spanning three decades, most of it set in the Belgian Congo from 1959 onward. A bible-bashing Evangelical American Pastor takes his family to a small village in the Congo where he intends to convert 'the savages' to Christianity. The family suffers drought, floods, poverty, isolation, but his tunnel vision teaches him nothing about human beings or the culture of a nation. We read of revolution and its horrors, the senseless American intervention, the assassination of Lumumba - a history that comes back to you as you read.

Each member of the family tell their story and the development of the characters involves you utterly in their lives.

Barbara Kingslover has written other books. I can recommend 'Pigs in Heaven'.

Joan Johns

Older Women's Wellness Centre Northside

### **RAFFLE PRIZES**

1<sup>ST</sup> PRIZE

A BASKET OF BLACKMORE'S PRODUCTS

(Basket of goodies to the value of \$250)

2<sup>ND</sup> PRIZE

AROMATHERAPY SURVIVAL KIT

(Basket includes oil burner and insomnia kit)

Tickets 1 for 50c

3 for \$1

20 for \$5

The raffle will be drawn on 6<sup>th</sup> September at  
OWWCN- Chatswood

You can buy tickets from OWN, 87 Lower Fort St

If you are interested in selling tickets, please phone  
92522040

## A Cautionary Tale: To volunteer or not

This question is one which most older people, generally women, face when they retire from paid work, or bringing up a family, or both. So what do I do now? The idea of being useful appeals, because that is what they have been engaged in all their lives. But the old adage 'Look before you leap' should be taken seriously; it behoves one to be cautious, because there are many traps for the unwary. This is particularly so in the case of those caring, well-meaning souls who are prepared to offer their services in a 'voluntary' capacity.

What does the word 'voluntary' really mean? The answer is that it has many varied meanings. One of these, according to the CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY is that it is a 'spontaneous' action taken by a person of his/her own freewill: another meaning, under law, it is an act 'made without compunction in money or other consideration'.

There is one particular aspect of volunteer work which I find abhorrent, and am continually speaking of, and that is the practice of Government and non-Government institutions, such as schools and other training establishments, asking for volunteers in their programmes. It seems to me to be just another method of reducing paid employment at the same time it exploits those well-meaning older people in the community who so willingly offer their experience and skills. Because these older people wish to be useful, and because their sympathies frequently are directed to the children who are disadvantaged by the system in many ways, it is quite simple to manipulate and misguide their voluntary offer of assistance.

This kind of 'volunteer' work demonstrates very clearly the 'domino' effect of all human actions. For example, if we willingly offer our services 'without compensation in money or other consideration' to an organisation where there is a shortage of paid employees, it must surely follow that we add to the percentage of unemployed, which has already been aggravated by the technological revolution. For my part, I refuse to undertake this kind of 'volunteer' work.

None of the above should be taken to mean that I am against 'volunteer' work. What I'm against is volunteers taking jobs that should be paid.

I am one small cog in the wheel which turns to keep the community radio broadcaster 2RPH, Sydney's Radio Reading Service for the Print Handicapped on the air.

Beryl Winter.

## Volunteering – Marie Fox

Marie Fox, who is the chief executive officer of Volunteering New South Wales, addressed a small meeting of interested OWN members on 12<sup>th</sup> July at Lower Fort Street.

Marie gave us a description of the workings of her organisation and the problems they are encountering as they head into the International Year of Volunteering. She told us that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines a volunteer as "someone who works for at least four hours a week in a non-profit organisation and is not paid for their work". This very narrow definition necessarily excludes many people who give their labour to friends or family in a domestic setting.

Nowhere does the work of volunteers get recognition in monetary terms, even though Marie has calculated that if those volunteers counted by the ABS were paid at baby-sitting rates they would be paid a total of \$8 billion a year.

A recent study undertaken in the USA has provided the information that all people have five social needs in life: a loving friend, a healthy start, a safe place to meet and express ideas, the opportunity to work and the opportunity to give back.

Disconnection and disintegration of communities has been recognised as a global problem and some are seeing the rise of volunteering as being a way to begin the task of 'reconnection'.

Following Marie's talk there was a broad discussion of how OWN manages volunteering and a look at the way in which we are an organisation run entirely by volunteers and how well we cope with that state of affairs.

We have decided to investigate what membership of Volunteering NSW might mean to OWN and whether it is an organisation that may provide some strategic links in the coming year.

Coincidentally we received a copy of "Community Link," a publication of the National Bank that offers awards to volunteer organisations each year.

They published a list of "Do's and Don'ts" for volunteers. Some of these are reproduced on the following page to provoke us into thinking about what it is we do well for each other as volunteers and what we don't do so well.

Pam Ledden

## **Volunteering: “Do’s and Don’ts”**

### **DO**

- Have social events with volunteers that involve good fun and laughter
- Provide backup support and feedback to volunteers
- Take advantage of outside expertise
- Use the talents of all team members
- Keep volunteers informed
- Recognise and value the dedication of volunteers
- Say thank you
- Treat volunteers as the valuable resource that they are
- Ensure that clear policies and guidelines are in place for volunteers
- Identify enthusiastic group leaders
- Include high profile models if possible
- Build pride in the organisation
- Maintain professional attitudes at all times
- Look after members, they’re an asset
- Think outside the square, innovation can make a project more effective
- Define areas of accountability
- Give volunteers tasks to fulfill
- Offer rewards for good work
- Value teamwork and democratic decision-making
- Acknowledge volunteer input
- Give volunteers a chance to share their experiences
- Ensure they have adequate debriefing opportunities
- Be aware of any apprehension in volunteers
- Form working parties
- Hold regular meetings
- Fully share knowledge of the organisation
- Respect a volunteer’s right to withdraw labour
- Resolve conflict by mediation
- Communicate regularly with volunteers by phone or letter
- Recognise volunteer efforts by media coverage
- Let volunteers decide how much time to give
- Give adequate training and instruction
- Always accept offers of assistance from volunteers
- Match the needs of the organisation with the skills and interests of the volunteers
- Have an identified volunteer coordinator

### **DON’T**

- Underestimate the importance of communication
- Send volunteers to work with inadequate training
- Exclude volunteers from programme development
- Try to accomplish too much too quickly
- Make tasks appear more complicated than they are
- Be patronising
- Isolate volunteers within the organisation
- Ignore training and information needs
- Under-use volunteers experience
- Put volunteers in uncomfortable situations
- Disregard new ideas
- Criticise others
- Think one person can do it all
- Ignore others’ input
- Expect everyone to have the same view of the world
- Always be so serious
- Undervalue volunteers drive and professionalism
- Assume people always understand the project
- Overwork volunteers
- Lose respect for cultural and individual values
- Leave volunteers out there too long without contact
- Blur roles of volunteers

## Aboriginal Support Circle

On Monday 3 July, our guest speaker, Susan Phillips, a NSW Barrister specialising in Native Title Law, spoke to us about 'AN ABORIGINAL TREATY'.

Susan managed to simplify a very complex subject, demonstrating an energetic commitment to, and a comprehensive knowledge of, both the complex legal history and the 'grass roots' problems facing Aboriginal Communities preparing Native Title claims.

She began by explaining the concept of a treaty, which provides for sovereignty to shift from the present Common Law into the Prevailing Law (domestic law).

A treaty would accommodate both parties on a local level, and would express the means by which future contracts and negotiations are made. The demands for a treaty spring from the universal need for Aboriginal people to protect their cultural sites and values, which are bound to the land.

Susan went on briefly to explain the development of black/white relationships in NSW since the arrival of Captain Cook, who was charged to take dominion over the new found country, sovereignty being held by the Crown in Britain. Unlike Canada and New Zealand, no consideration was given to the prevailing Aboriginal Law, and no Treaty was drawn up.

Under the International Laws on Racial Discrimination (to which Australia is a signatory), sovereignty is not enforceable unless placed into domestic law in the interests of both parties. Ultimately today, it is this law alone which protects the Native Title claimants.

As a result of the Federal Constitution, 1901, Aborigines were denied citizenship and the vote. Sovereignty was moved from the Crown (Britain) to "the people" (Commonwealth) and the power of the 'rule of law' was transferred to the states, who had control of Aboriginal affairs. Each state had their own policy of containment, most Aborigines being dislocated and forced onto reserves or Missions, thus losing continuous connection to country (a requirement for all present Native Title claims.) Full Citizenship was finally granted to Aborigines in the 1967 Federal referendum.

Susan outlined the concept of Native Title and the Ten Point Plan, which passed into Federal law without any Aboriginal consultation. Sadly, these have been considerably weakened in recent years, with the inclusion of the Threshold clause. (Aboriginal claimants must prove their case before coming to Court) and reducing the powers of Native Title holders to negotiate their own resolutions with the developers.

A treaty therefore would guarantee greater protection of land and culture for Aborigines.

Brenda Palma

## CORROBOREE 2000

*dedicated to Neil Walker, Aboriginal Warrior*

TOGETHER WE WALKED ACROSS THE BRIDGE  
WE WALKED FOR RECONCILIATION  
FOR THE TRUTH OF AUSTRALIA'S HISTORY  
FOR THE CHANCE TO BE ONE NATION.

WE WALKED FOR STOLEN GENERATIONS  
THOUGH HERRON DENIES THEY EXIST  
WE ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR PAIN AND HEARTACHE  
DESPITE HIS WARPED ANALYSIS

WE WALKED FOR THE DEATHS IN CUSTODY  
FOR THE INFANT MORTALITY RATE  
FOR THE MANDATORY SENTENCE IN DARWIN  
FOR THE PAIN WHICH CAN NEVER ABATE

WE WALKED WITH THE SPIRITS OF HEROES  
OF PEMULWAY AND OODGEROO  
EDDIE MABO AND NAMATJIRA  
WERE PART OF OUR COMPANY TOO

WE WALKED WITH ALL THE RACES OF PEOPLE  
WITH A GREAT SORRY WRITTEN IN THE SKY  
WE WERE BATHED IN A RARE KIND OF GLORY  
WE ALL WISHED TO IDENTIFY

YET ONE *LITTLE MAN* WAS NOT WALKING  
WHO CARES, *HE* WILL NEVER BE MISSED  
FOR ON THE BRIDGE OF UNDERSTANDING  
*HE* WILL NOT EVER EXIST

Shirley Murphy

## Racism Awareness Workshop 9:30am Saturday 12 August

This workshop will enable participants to develop strategies within their own lives and communities to foster the vision and practicalities of a just reconciliation.

Tranby Aboriginal College 9660 3444

Lilyana Theodossiou  
email [awdev@ozemail.com.au](mailto:awdev@ozemail.com.au)

Older Women's Network Newsletter  
August 2000

## John Howard Says Sorry

*No! No! I can't be hearing this! That rich, well-articulated voice saying, "My name is John Howard" This cannot be, cannot surely be, the negative, "vegemite-curdled monotone" of the Prime Minister speaking the words we have all been wishing and waiting for, so fruitlessly. Words, which, if spoken sincerely on behalf of all of us, would truly begin the real process of reconciliation.*

*This John Howard was the superb actor, so well known to Sydneysiders from stage and TV. He was on "The Games", that brilliant John Clarke satire screened on Monday nights on Channel 2.*

*Here is the text. We wish it was for real.*

"Good evening.

"My name is John Howard and I'm speaking to you from Sydney, Australia, host city of the year 2000 Olympic Games.

"Australia, like many countries in the New World, is intensely proud of what it has achieved in the past 200 years. We're a vibrant and resourceful people. We share a freedom born in the abundance of nature, the richness of the earth, the bounty of the sea. We are the world's biggest island. We have the world's longest coastline. We are a fabric woven of many colours, and it is this that has given us our strength.

"However, these achievements have come at great cost. We've been here for 200 years, but before that there was a people living here. For over 40,000 years they lived in perfect balance with the land. There were many Aboriginal nations, just as there were many Indian nations in North America and across Canada, as there were many Maori tribes in New Zealand, and Incan and Mayan peoples in South America.

"These indigenous Australians lived in areas as different from one another as Scotland is from Ethiopia. They lived in an area the size of Western Europe. They didn't even share a common language. Yet they had their own laws, their own beliefs, their own ways of understanding.

"We destroyed this world. We often didn't mean to do it. Our forebears, fighting to establish themselves in what they saw as a harsh environment, were creating a national economy. But the Aboriginal world was decimated.

"A pattern of disease and dispossession was established. Alcohol was introduced. Social and racial differences were allowed to become fault lines. Aboriginal families were broken up. Sadly, Aboriginal health and education are responsibilities we have still to address successfully.

"I speak for all Australians in expressing a profound sorrow to the Aboriginal people. I am sorry. We are sorry. Let the world know and understand that it is with this sorrow that we, as a nation, will grow and seek a better, a fairer and a wiser future. Thank you."

*P.S. This delicious piece of invective, "vegemite-curdled monotone", came from Bob Ellis's new book, a collection of his speeches and essays, called "So it Goes".*

Comments by Muriel Hortin

## Who are 'Australians'?

The Prime Minister's alternative reconciliation document says:

'As we walk the journey of healing, Australians express their sorrow and profoundly regret the injustices of the past and recognise the continuing trauma and hurt still suffered by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.'

One might question whether the Prime Minister is one of the 'we' walking the 'journey of healing'.

One might also question the use of the word 'Australians'. Who does he mean?

Would it be 'Australians, including Aboriginal Australians'? Aboriginal Australians are to express their sorrow and regret to themselves? If this is the case, maybe they could go further and say sorry to themselves?

Or would it be 'Australians, not including Aboriginal Australians'? Aboriginal Australians are not included because they are not really Australians? If this is the case, when were they excluded? Why? And by whom?

Is the Prime Minister simply illogical or has he inadvertently let slip his true thoughts about who are 'Australians'?

Everald Garner

## **Aged Care Accommodation: What is Important To Me?**

I wrote this after reading an article of the same name in the OWN July Newsletter. The title prompted me to think about what is important to me.

I want to have control of my life. This means making a conscious and thoughtful choice about where I will live, rather than clinging to the family home and garden which inevitably becomes a burden to maintain, and loses its meaning as children grow up and move away.

Staying put often goes on for too long until it becomes impossible to continue without a considerable amount of assistance, which gives a false sense of independence. The showdown comes when this cannot continue, and leading up to this point there must be a considerable amount of stress, which must take its toll. Autonomy is lost when somebody has failed to acknowledge the ageing process and make an appropriate choice of accommodation, and eventually has to be put in a nursing home.

It is my plan to live in a retirement village in which other of my friends are also planning to settle. I can live independently but with the knowledge that there is help available if I need it, and this also means I can live longer in my own abode. I have heard it said that only about 2% of people who live in retirement villages or hostels go into a nursing home.

It becomes more difficult to make new friends as we age, and a village provides a social framework within a community. I think it will be important to prevent loneliness, which may in turn prevent dementia. The Sydney Morning Herald recently reported on a study in Scandinavia which found that people who are lonely are more likely to suffer from dementia.

There are positive advantages of planning and choosing ones future with a sound knowledge of the alternatives. This entails looking ahead realistically at the consequences of ageing when thinking about accommodation choices. It is important to me to go on feeling positive about life and make of it another interesting chapter.

I am disturbed that retirement villages never seem to get good press. In articles on aged accommodation the options are presented as choosing to live in one's own home, or being placed in a nursing home which of course nobody would choose.

Retirement villages are grouped with nursing homes and I hear friends using the term "nursing home" when they mean "village". There is a world of difference. Perhaps we should all make a point of visiting somebody we know who is in a village to see what they are like. I am impressed that these people always sound so full of life.

Patricia Buick.

## **Education: Does it Matter?**

The subject for this months discussion was "Education: does it matter?" Many ideas were exchanged as we examined the topic in depth. We all agreed that education, whether of a formal or practical nature, is all-important. Formal education of any kind trains the mind to absorb new material so that confronted with a new subject the educated mind will grasp the essentials much faster than the uneducated mind.

In addition to "chalk and talk" education there is the enormous field of practical instruction e.g., from a mother teaching her child not to play with matches to a Qantas pilot learning to handle the latest jumbo jet.

Today a formal education resulting in the acquisition of a degree, diploma or other qualification has become almost essential for advancement in one's career. The opportunity for higher education amongst women during the past century has had radical effects upon the society in which we live. Today more than 50% of graduates from medical schools are women.

Education whether formal or informal is something we can enjoy throughout our lives, as many older women know only too well. Yes, we decided, education does matter. It matters tremendously, and we need to take up all opportunities to improve our own.

The next meeting of the discussion group will be Monday 21st August, 10.30am 75 Windmill Street. The subject "How important is Truth?"

Joan Hook.

## Theatre Group Report

1st July dawned bleak and gray but that didn't stop us performing to an appreciative audience of 500 at an anti-GST rally in front of the Sydney Town Hall. With the police blocking off half the street we clambered aboard the back of a truck and to much acclaim sang our protest songs about bank fees, cuts in hospital services, and the effect the GST will have on lower income groups.

Our next engagement was a communal lunch at Waverley Library hosted by the ECHO Neighbourhood Centre and OWN's Neighbourhood Groups Project. Many women approached us after the show to congratulate us on our energetic presentation and to say how much they had enjoyed it.

Sydney Leadership, a Benevolent Society project to establish social capital amongst different stratas of society, asked us to perform at their program day on Family titled "Family and its Contribution to the Civil Society". This was a great success with representatives from banks, health services, insurance companies and community groups lauding us and even taking up a surprising and unsolicited collection in appreciation of our presentation. (Maybe we should try busking!!)

Brigid Sen, one of our more adventurous members, is off to China for 18 months to teach English. Have a happy sojourn, Brigid, and come back safe and well. Peg Hewett and Janet Waters are both booked into hospital for repairs and maintenance during the next month; our well wishes go with both of you and we expect great things on your return.

We warmly welcomed two new members to the Theatre Group in July, Norma Bastock, who travels all the way from Nowra to participate and Valda Marshall, a talented musician.

Our present show "WOW! 2000", with its topical, satirical content regarding everyday issues confronting both young and old in today's society, has been a great success with our diverse audiences throughout the year. Congratulations to Louise Anike on her scriptwriting and directing skills.

Due to the Olympics, rehearsals will be cancelled 12th, 19th and 26th September. We will resume on 3rd October.

Lucy Porter

## What's Bugging Me?

Well, it doesn't exactly "bug" me. That's not the word. It actually frightens the life out of me! The news that broke this week about the Federal Government considering 'favorably' using Pine Gap as an electronic spy base for the proposed American \$60 billion dollar missile defence shield.

I found it chilling to see the Australian Defence Minister shaking hands very warmly on T.V. with the American Defence Secretary who was saying that the U.S. expects Australia to share the responsibility for "keeping the peace" and that Australia must spend more money on modernising our armed forces to keep them "interoperable" with those of the U.S.!

Surely we are not going to see another arms race begin! But I was pleased to read this morning that the foreign affairs spokesman for the Opposition said "National missile defences are a thoroughly unhelpful development... and the deployment of such a system could lead to an escalation of nuclear proliferation at a time when the goal should be nuclear disarmament."

I would like the Working Committee to send a note from OWN to the Hon. L. Brereton supporting his statement, and another to the Government deploring theirs.

Muriel Hortin

### Older Women Out There!

The Rural Women's Network reports that there has been wonderful feedback for the 'Older Women Out There' radio programs.

The ABC Radio Sunday programs are now complete. Each session has been recorded on CD, so if you are interested in purchasing a copy of the six 'Older Women Out There' programs, please contact Sonia Muir on 02 6391 3611.

## World March of Women 2000 – Australia

Last March, members of the Union of Australian Women met with members of OWN and representatives from local organisations in the Manly Warringah and Pittwater areas to hear a report by Dorothy Buckland-Fuller about the World March of Women (WMW). Dorothy is an OWN member and also very involved in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

We agreed to assist in the distribution of cards addressed to the United Nation as supporting the demands of the WMW. So far, over 60,000 cards are being circulated within Australia. Cards can be signed by women and men.

**Who is taking part in WMW?** Women from more than 143 countries are demanding that the UN and its member States take concrete measures to:

ELIMINATE poverty and ENSURE a fair distribution of the planet's wealth between the rich and the poor, and between women and men.

ELIMINATE violence against women and ENSURE equality between women and men.

**When and Where?** Internationally the seventh month "march" will culminate on October 17, the International Day for the Elimination of Poverty, with a World Rally in New York. Millions of the signed support cards will be presented to Secretary General Kofi Annan at UN Headquarters in New York. We will be represented in New York at the World Rally by a representative group of Australian women.

In Australia, a national committee is co-ordinating our response for WMW 2000. Events in will include Women's Song and Dance Fests, which will include indigenous and ethnic groups (cultural sharings) around the country on October 7.

Help organise a Song and Dance Fest in your locality on October 7, or join up with a group already underway. The Manly-Warringah group is moving ahead with tentative bookings for an event, a group in Newcastle is being formed and we are seeking to form groups in other areas.

Other events have been organised by women's organisations, for example, the Trade Union

Women's Congress in August will focus on WMW 2000, and the Australian Education Union is distributing an information kit to Australian schools. They have also produced a poster, which is available on request.

Join us in WMW2000 by signing and returning a postcard and distributing cards among your friends. Copies of the card can be downloaded at [www.uq.net.au/march2000/](http://www.uq.net.au/march2000/) or by contacting Dorothy Buckland-Fuller on (02)9968 3910..

For further information contact Dorothy (02) 9968 3910, Sylvia (02)9913 7364 or Merle (02)9569 3836

Merle Highet

### SLEEP RESEARCH

Is the quality of your sleep influenced by the time you spend in sunlight?

I am interested in researching this question with people over 65 years of age who are living independently.

To be part of the study you would need to:

1. Record details of your sleep for one week in a diary which will be provided,
2. Wear a special wristwatch for the same week and
3. Collect saliva in a small tube several times a day that week.

Everything will be personally delivered and collected again.

If you would like to help, and live in the Sydney area, please ring Sandra West at the Faculty of Nursing, University of Sydney on 93510564, or email me on [swest@nursing.usyd.edu.a](mailto:swest@nursing.usyd.edu.a).

Sandra West

## OUR HEALTH AND THE IMPACT OF TRANSPORT CHOICE

At the last Transport Committee meeting, a challenging article written by Chloe Mason (published in the Medical Journal of Australia, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2000) was discussed. She examined the impact that choice of transport type, planners' decisions about transport, land use and infrastructure have on users' health. There are many points significant to older woman transport users. This brief summary will highlight them.

Over the past fifty years, car usage has increased, and walking bicycle use and use of public transport has decreased. Vehicular flow is usually given priority, resulting in difficulty and risk for pedestrians and bicycles, as well as air and noise pollution, global warming and adverse effects on individuals' health.

Preventing and protective health benefits can be achieved by the use of "Active Transport" - walking, cycling, or the use of public transport. "Active Transport" can lead to health benefits such as prevention of cardiac disease, prevention of colon cancer, reduced risk of obesity, osteoporosis and adult onset diabetes, retention of mobility and independence for older people. Walking or cycling can be fitted into everyday life activities, and is available to most of us, regardless of income, location, or age. Thirty minutes of brisk walking every day can provide a level of protection and health benefit even for those with a past sedentary history. Walking rarely causes injury, gives streets vitality, and with more people walking, increases personal security, makes efficient use of urban space, reduces air pollution by less use of cold start vehicles travelling short distances

City and regional planners are also beginning to recognise that land use and urban design can reduce motor vehicle transport. The creation of neighbourhoods and communities with residential areas and services located together are less dependent on cars. These "mixed use neighbourhoods" are easily accessible on foot. Effective, efficient public transport can also link the neighbourhoods.

Further positive effects from the mixed use neighbourhoods are that they reduce greenhouse emissions:

- Conventional neighbourhoods that depend on vehicular transport to access services produce 3.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per dwelling.
- Mixed use neighbourhoods produce using "Active Transport" means to easily access services produce 1.6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per dwelling - 57% reduction.
- Mixed use neighbourhoods produce both individual physical global environmental health benefits.

In conclusion, the article suggests ways that the health sector can encourage "Active Transport" and a healthier transport agenda:

- In clinical practice, people should be encouraged to walk, cycle or use public transport. The practice should also run educational programs on "Active Transport".
- Medical administration is encouraged to persuade people to use "Active Transport" and produce guides to show access via routes alternative to car travel, such as walking tracks and public transport routes.
- Health advocacy to become involved in community education and policy development about land use and transport infrastructure, and highlight the health impacts of the transport system.

Whilst the article specifically addresses health professionals, encouraging their involvement in the debate about transport and health, we could all improve the impact of transport by choosing "Active Transport" and contributing to positive health effects on ourselves and the environment.

Jacqui Graham

## Book Review

Looking for a worthwhile book to give your grandchild in the 8 - 12 age range? In this atmosphere of 'Reconciliation' you couldn't go past **The Fat and Juicy Place** by Diana Kidd. First published in 1992, it won the Australian Multicultural Children's Book Award, and has been reprinted several times, which attests to its lasting popularity.

It is the story of Jack, an urban Aboriginal school-boy, who gradually discovers his ancestral culture through his meeting and subsequent caring relationship with an old Aborigine from the outback, "Birdman". The story also contains a mystery regarding Jack's father, which keeps up the reader's interest right through to an emotional ending.

It is told in Jack's own words, which is a mixture of Aboriginal dialect and school-boy slang. This way the young reader is directly drawn into the world of one of his pals. A message of racial tolerance and reconciliation is contained in the plot itself.

It may be of interest to OWN members that the author is a white Australian older woman, who formerly taught at schools with a large number of Aborigine children. She wrote her book after extensive consultations with Aborigines and had it endorsed by them before its publication.

Trudy Davis

# notice

## Banking Made Easy

If you are over 55 and would like to know how to use new banking technology but never had the opportunity to ask, come along to The Crows Nest Centre, 2 Ernest Place, Crows Nest on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2000.

10am Displays and video presentation  
10.30 Presentation by Geoff Green, Commonwealth Bank  
11.30 Practice using the new technologies in a safe environment

RSVP to Vicki Britton, 94395122

## Women's Drumming Classes

Beginners Welcome.  
Drums supplied.  
Daytime or evening  
at  
Haberfield

For more info, please  
phone Liz on  
9797 9663

## Food for the Taking

Wouldn't you like to feed the hungry for FREE? Sounds crazy, but now you can. The Hunger site will allow you to feed a hungry person every day at no cost to yourself. Anyone can do it. You can feed one hungry person every day just by going to the website and clicking a button. The food is paid for by corporate sponsors. This is an easy way to do a really good deed. Please visit today and pass the word.

<http://www.thehungersite.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/HungerSite>

## If you are on the net ...

Check out this great site for people over fifty. It covers lots of issues similar to those that we face in Australia e.g. low pensions and high taxes, ageism, lack of employment opportunities, conservative voices of some older people's organisations, and so on. It's a very interactive site where everyone is invited to have an opinion!

<http://www.idf50.co.uk/>

## OWN (Australia)

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE

September 4, 5 and 6

**Venue:** Point Walter Conference Centre on the banks of the Swan River at Bicton, near Fremantle, WA

**Theme:** The theme of this year's conference, in this International Year of the Culture of Peace and Non-violence, is 'Getting the Cultures Together'.

**Cost:** \$45 per day, which includes all meals and accommodation.

Information brochures and registration forms are available from OWN Sydney on 9247 7046 or phone the Western Australian OWN office on (08) 9227 8195.

# board

## September OWN Newsletter

Since the office is only open for limited hours during September, and most OWN activities will be severely curtailed during because of the Olympics, we have decided to produce one bumper issue of the Newsletter for September and October.

We need lots of material between now and Monday, August 21, the final date for contributions.

Please send in your short stories, articles, notices and your views on current issues that concern you to the Editor, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000.

**Deadline: Monday, 21 August**

### CHAIRS WANTED

Have readers any chairs in good, safe condition which they wish to see in a welcoming home, namely the office at 87 Lower Fort Street ?

*All donations gratefully received.*

Can I take your photo?

I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> year female student at Ultimo TAFE, doing photography.

I am interested in taking photos of women in their own environment (either in doors or backyards) with their favourite objects or pets. I'm planning this as part of my major portfolio.

As I work full time, I would only be able to take photos on weekends. If you would like to be part of my project, please contact me on 9389 1018.

If I'm not at home, please leave a contact number.

Kye Thompson

## Launch of PLATFORM FOR ACTION

by Tom Uren OA  
in November.

**More details in the next Newsletter.**  
A copy of the Platform for Action can be obtained from the OWN office.

### Company B Belvoir Theatre Free Matinees

The Ham Funeral  
Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September  
The Unexpected Man  
Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October  
Twelfth Night  
Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December

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

#### Annual fees:

Membership, including Newsletter.....\$20.00

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

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

Tel: (02) 9247 7046 Fax: (02) 9247 4202 email: ownnsw@zip.com.au  
Web site: <http://www.zip.com.au/~ownnsw>