



OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc.
No. 13 November 2002

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Entering our teens ...

This is the thirteenth issue of *OWN Matters*! We know it's supposed to be an unlucky number, but we don't care. It's an opportunity to tell you how much we appreciate your feedback, both negative and positive; to thank contributors for making *OWN Matters* a unique and vital communication between older women; and to tell you about some new ideas.

Your feedback over the year has been, overall, very positive, with many readers commenting on how diverse the content is, and how good it is to see new writers contributing. You seem to like stories and articles that are funny and revealing, especially when they focus on the 'fun' or 'weird' side of getting older. Strangely enough we get as much positive feedback about including snippets from the Internet as we get negative feedback about this practice. What to do?

Some of you say that reports are too long, and that you don't read them. Since reports are the most effective means of communicating with members on organisational matters they are indispensable, but perhaps they could be sharper and shorter?

Whether it's a report or a story, it's often very difficult to keep to less than 400 words, which is the size we prefer. Obviously, this is a guide only – many of our talented storytellers would have to stop writing for *OWN Matters* if we made it a hard and fast rule!

We'd like to encourage more storytelling. If you've thought of telling a story or writing an article about something important to older women, and have hesitated because you're unsure about whether or not your writing is 'good enough', please get in touch. We now have reporters who can collaborate with you to get you into print!

From next month, there will also be a Review Page where you can share your views of films, music, books, and even creative eating.

Editing your own work can often be a challenge – that's why you'll find an editor and/or sub-editors on any publication. Our editorial policy is that, if the Editorial Team thinks line or structural changes are necessary, the writer will be contacted and asked if she wishes to do the editing herself or wants a member of the Team to do it. If we undertake the editing, the original story plus the edited copy will be forwarded to the writer by mail or email for her agreement to publish.

Editorial Team

OWN Matters

is the Newsletter
of the Older Women's Network
New South Wales Inc.

It is published 11 times a year.
Subscriptions are \$20.

Who Are We?

OWN NSW is the peak body for
sixteen OWN groups in NSW.

OWN promotes the rights, dignity
and wellbeing of older women
through a range of activities and
resources, and advocates to
government and non-government
agencies on issues of concern to
older women.

Contributions

All members of OWN groups in
NSW are encouraged to
contribute to **OWN Matters** with
items of interest to older women
and letters to the Editor.

They can be sent by mail or email
marked 'Attention – Editorial
Team'. Please include contact
details.

Contributions must be received by
the second Monday of
each month.

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permission first.

OWN Matters is available to
subscribers on audio cassette at
no extra cost.

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Point of View

A threat to Australia's sovereignty

I believe that the implementation of General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) would be a threat to Australia's sovereignty and against the general welfare of the people. Before any Australian government would even consider signing such an agreement there should be wide-ranging discussion and debate about all its implications.

I believe that the large majority of Australians want our health, welfare and employment services run by government agencies, not by foreign companies who are keen to make a profit which they would then dispatch to their home countries.

Although our government has not signed a GATS agreement, I was alarmed to read an article by Adele Horin in the Sydney Morning Herald recently which described how an American company, Maximus Inc., has come into Australia and quietly bought out one of Australia's biggest job network companies, Leone Green and Associates. This company has 70 employment offices across the country and government contracts worth millions.

The chief executive of Mission Australia was quoted as saying, "There will be concern about an international company draining profits off-shore at the expense of disadvantaged Australians".

A spokesperson for Leone Green is quoted as saying, "Long term, Maximus' future is very much driven by the government direction in outsourcing. Ultimately, if Centrelink is privatised, Maximus would be very well suited to help". This is precisely what alarms me!

In the USA Maximus Inc. runs childcare centres, disability programs and welfare-to-work schemes. It collects and distributes \$500 million in child support payments, administers courts, runs mental health services and all at a profit of \$1 billion annually. Over the years it has attracted some negative headlines over inadequate provision of services, cronyism and financial irregularities.

My fear is that if GATS is implemented, our government could be run and controlled by foreign companies like Maximus Inc.

Is this really what the Australian people want?

Evie Dunlop

www.gatswatch.org/

NSW State Conference and AGM

If members are interested in receiving a report of the OWN NSW Annual Conference and AGM, please phone the office on 9247 7046 and we will send one out to you.

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

A number of events have occurred over the past month, which give us some optimism for the future.

This year's OWN Australia (OWN A) Conference in Canberra was held in an atmosphere of good cheer and good will. Forty delegates from Queensland, NSW, Victoria, Western Australia and the ACT deliberated on a range of issues. Five NSW affiliated groups (Sydney, Sutherland, Illawarra, Nowra, and Newcastle) and Wollondilly (an observer group) attended. Canberra was dressed in its best floral finery.

Prior to the Conference, OWN Sydney lodged a constitutional resolution concerning structural changes around membership of OWN A. The resolution was supported by the NSW Management Team, but did not proceed to a conference vote. Constitutionally, the current position will continue, with any proposals for change to be considered by the Constitution Committee after consultation and circulation of proposed changes.

At the AGM, representatives from NSW groups agreed to take up positions on OWN A committees – Cate Turner (Sydney) as Treasurer and Helen Smith (Newcastle), assistant secretary. Pam Ledden (Sydney) will sit on the Policies and Statements Committee and Pat Simpson (Illawarra) will participate on the Constitutional Committee.

Overall, the Conference was an enjoyable networking experience for all concerned, with a hopeful future predicted. The 2003 Conference will again be held in Canberra.

While half the NSW Theatre Group provided entertainment at the Canberra Conference, the

other half was busy at the Bourke 2002 Women's Gathering. Such contrasting venues are a part of the life of the Theatre Group, but splitting themselves in half is not! The cast coped admirably with different audiences and venues, while charming their audiences.

At its meeting on 14 October, the Management Team and members from Sydney and Newcastle, plus members of the Finance Committee, welcomed Virginia Henderson of the National Gallery of Australia Foundation. Virginia talked about some of the issues involved in promoting OWN more effectively and has generously offered to help us explore other means of raising funds for OWN NSW. We look forward to working with her in the immediate future.

Our practice of inviting project coordinators to speak at Management Team meetings on a quarterly basis is proving valuable. Last month, Pat Zinn, representing the Aboriginal Support Circle, brought us up to date on what their group is doing, in particular their current project which is an anthology of Aboriginal women's stories. In October, Pam Ledden, representing the Advocacy Coordination Group, spoke about some of the issues they are exploring, which are also written up for this issue of OWN Matters.

The Management Team continues to review workshop recommendations emerging from the State Conference in July. We will be able to report more fully following our November meeting, at which recommendations from the last workshop, on Communication, will be discussed.

Pat Simpson, Mollie Smith, Cate Turner and Anne Warren

Aboriginal Support Circle visits the Australian National Maritime Museum

In October, members of our group toured the Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country, guided by John Waight, Aboriginal education officer at the Museum. This delightful and knowledgeable young man explained, through a study of their art, the spiritual and legal basis of the Yolngu people's sea rights.

We were able to view these paintings with real understanding of their complexity and sophistication. Apart from depicting stories of the creator ancestors, marine life is depicted in all its complexity, including representations of Macassan praus (boats). Sacred creatures, including snakes, crocodiles, fish, turtle and birds are also depicted.

Every Yolngu person belongs to a moiety, which denotes special obligations. Through interaction and discussion with moiety members, the artist agrees on what to paint. Cross-hatching is painted in different patterns, indicating waves, calm or rough seas, fresh or salt water and features such as sandbars, shores and monsoons. The patterns are basic icons, and can be compared to email symbols, while the paintings themselves have the same religious significance as stained glass windows in churches. Some paintings depict stars and the Milky Way, which add a holographic dimension to the pictures.

It became clear to us how Yolngu culture and spirituality has been kept alive through thousands of years, and how vital it is that their environment not be destroyed.

Pat Zinn

Fortitude and Far Horizons

The Theatre Group's trip to Bourke for the 2002 Women's Gathering in September was ... WOW! What a trip! What fun! What a success!

Five members of the Theatre Group – Peg Hewett, Lucy Porter, Merle Hight, Josie Jackson and Ann Cunnyngame – invited me to be part of their show, *You Can't Beat A Woman*, because the workshop on OWN I had planned to run was cancelled due to "lack of interest".

Travelling with members of the Theatre group is never dull. Our driver, Maxine, was accompanied by her daughter, Christine, the first Aboriginal woman to study law at Sydney University. The other passenger was Sue Williams who was going to present a workshop on Native Fibre Weaving. The drive to Bourke was a heady mix of songs and laughter. It was also an education to see first hand the ravages of drought. Cattle by the roadside eating the only remaining source of feed and kangaroos and emus in abundance seeking food.

Around 350 women attended the Gathering, which was really well organised. We were accommodated in a very comfortable Bed and Breakfast cottage and were collected and driven to our various activities by smiling women who delivered us with a minimum of fuss.

Our Theatre Group was totally terrific! They sparkled and shone, engaged and touched in a stunning performance immediately after the official opening on the Saturday morning.

Because I was only a minor player, I had the opportunity to observe audience reactions and it was clear from the word go that they were rapt. As our OWN women bravely

told their personal stories of violence in the home, I could see the impact they were having, and the emotions being felt by the audience – tears, compassion and understanding. I wondered how many women in the audience had themselves been victims of domestic violence.

Everyone in the audience really connected with the material they saw performed that day. The skits on banks and hospitals drew loud laughter, while *White Hands and Black Hands*, so beautifully sung and so appropriate for a town with a 40% Aboriginal population, drew warm and appreciative applause.

At the end of the show, the entire audience rose to their feet with the most boisterous, deafening standing ovation you can imagine! Our Theatre Group truly is the Jewel in OWN's Crown.

On the Saturday night, we were disappointed that a woman was not chosen to be the after dinner speaker – there are so many women who have such wonderful tales to tell and a female speaker would have been very appropriate at a Women's Gathering.

The Theatre Group was asked to give another performance at a nursing home (to make up for the OWN workshop being cancelled!). The audience consisted of eight very frail people who seemed to enjoy hearing, and sometimes singing along with, some old-time songs.

I mentioned that the OWN workshop was cancelled. When I read the program, I could understand why. It sounded rather dull. In the future we must describe our workshops about OWN using dynamic, interesting descriptions that make people want to find out who we are and what we have to offer women. One

sentence that describes OWN! Any suggestions, please?

We agreed that if they had kept the workshop on the program after the Theatre Group's performance we would have been inundated with women craving to hear about us. For my part, it was a privilege to have journeyed to Bourke with the Theatre Group. I am so proud of the image they present of OWN.

Mollie Smith

Bouquets and Boomerangs

On the Theatre Group's recent trip to the 10th Rural Women's Gathering in Bourke, we received an S.S.O (spontaneous standing ovation) after our performance. In fact, one of the Aboriginal women at the back of the hall exclaimed, "We need more elders like those women up there!"

Among the 300 or so people who stood and cheered was a very dignified and gentle Aboriginal couple, June and Roy Barker, who were giving workshops at the Gathering. They were very impressed with our performance, and later they invited us back to their workshops where Roy presented each of us with a beautiful hand carved mulga wood boomerang and two sets of clapsticks for us to use in our performances. Roy makes his artifacts the traditional way using native wood, kangaroo sinew instead of string, resin from trees and goanna oil. He had a very impressive collection on display: carved digging sticks, axes, clubs, boomerangs and clapsticks. We were very moved by their generosity.

June told us her story. She was born a Yorta Yorta woman on the banks of the Murray River at Cummerunga Mission. Her family moved to the government-run

Continued page 5

Brewarrina Mission. June still remembers the tormented wailing of Aboriginal people from NSW, Victoria and Queensland who were forced to live on the Mission, where they were not allowed to speak their own language. It's very important for Aboriginal people to be taken back to their ancestral place when they die, and in those days they were buried in Brewarrina which was terribly distressing.

'Bells' governed life at the mission. There was a treatment bell (everyone had to line up for a painful blue swab in their eyes as treatment for trachoma and sandy blight), a rations bell for flour, tea and sugar, a meat bell (ribs and necks only), a school bell and a cocoa bell.

At June's workshop she showed us the rations that were given out to families at the Mission: a 1/4 lb tea, 3lb sugar and 8lb flour weekly. These meagre rations were supplemented by fish from the river and native food, but the Aboriginal way of life changed completely after the graziers established cattle stations on tribal land and fenced it off. Many bush foods like wild celery and wild tomatoes were trampled underfoot by the cattle. The rivers, which were strong and healthy, were neglected and contaminated. June feels deeply sad at the loss of her beloved rivers.

Aboriginal people were used to speaking several languages and many learnt to speak English very fast. These elders were often used as interpreters and the authorities sometimes gave them 'king' plates, which were worn around the neck.

At thirteen or fourteen, most young girls were sent out to work at station properties or private homes and a year later many came back pregnant. When the blonde, blue eyed babies were born they were taken from their mothers and sent away. Interestingly, Aboriginal midwives delivered most

babies in the district whether the mother was black or white.

June did not work on a cattle station; her father was able to arrange for her to work at a guest-house in Katoomba where she was well looked after by the woman owner. One day an old Aboriginal woman, Granny Lock, saw her in the street and cried, "Oh, here's our country cousin," and took her under her wing.

June said she was so sad to see Aboriginal culture lost; they could have made a big contribution to the growth and understanding of this country if things had been different.

Lucy Porter

A rare gift

You can still buy *Tell Me More: Voices of Older Women*, a publication of the Older Women's Network. This book is a collection of stories written clearly and vividly by older women who write with arresting observations on major and minor triumphs and disappointments, and on moments of enlightenment, pleasure and disillusionment in their lives. *Tell Me More* is \$10 including postage. Please send your cheque/money order to OWN, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000.

You are old

*You are old Father William the young man said
and your beard has become very white
but you incessantly stand on your head
do you think at your age it is right?*

A cautionary tale for ambitious octogenarians.

Last week, I think, I learned my lesson. During a visit to a neighbouring library I saw a notice asking for home tutors in English for new arrivals; a contact number was given. Just the thing for an older woman, decreasingly active. Here would be a chance to revive an old skill and an opportunity to observe a new culture, all in a spirit of enlightened self-interest.

An appointment was made in a western suburb not far from my own. On arrival I was given a folder of papers to read and forms to fill. One of those forms required my date of birth. Oh well! The interviewer was very kind. With a glance at my walking stick she approved of my account of past experience, "Just what we need". Then she produced a map of the suburbs her organisation serves, showing the locations of prospective pupils. Kindly still, she suggested that these places would be difficult to reach for anyone so venerable. Protestations about activity, walking stick and all were no help. If I could find a pupil or two easier to access I would be welcome to attend her training sessions.

For part of the way home I thought 'age discrimination', but then, wearier by the minute, my mind changed. That woman could not take responsibility for sending a quite elderly woman, walking stick and all, off in the blazing heat of the western suburbs. She may be unfit to teach on arrival and then – oh dear!

In Lewis Carroll's verses, the old man has the last word; but that was Wonderland.

Helen Monaghan

From Hospital to Home - Transitional Care

The Advocacy Coordination Group (ACG) is still trying to get some light on the monitoring of transitional care from hospital to home. Several members have phoned in with their stories of community care failing to meet their needs on discharge from hospital. Some tell stories of hardship and humiliation, which is terrible to contemplate, and of course throughout their stories are elements of the completely ridiculous, which would be funny if it wasn't so desperately serious. We thank the women who spoke to us and assure them that their stories will remain confidential. The ACG is as yet unsure how best to use these anecdotes to further our cause but nothing will be done without consulting the women who have contacted us.

We came up with some questions, more questions!

- Is assertiveness a factor in getting the kind of care needed post-hospitalisation?
- Is there any evaluation of how successful or not the convalescent care really is?
- Is there any person responsible for checking whether a discharge plan is working?
- Is there conflict between NSW Health and Home and Community Care?
- How many different community groups are active in providing convalescent care?
- Is information about the availability of convalescent care widely disseminated?
- Is anything about convalescent care uniform across the state?
- How many hospital/community partnerships on this issue are operating successfully?
- If a patient requires rehabilitation, is that usually more closely attended to?
- Do all hospitals have transport available for outpatient visits for those who can't access other means?
- What is the range of care facilities that hospitals may discharge convalescing patients to, apart from nursing homes and rehab hospitals?

It has become obvious that there is no systematic monitoring of the success or failure of discharge plans, although it appears that the New South Wales Council of Social Services (NCOSS) is on the case. NSW Health is also preparing policies and protocols for monitoring transitional care.

There are several departments and governmental instrumentalities involved in the provision of services to people leaving hospital: NSW Health, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, local councils, the Commonwealth Department of Health, to name the major players. Setting up a new system to monitor convalescent care is going to take time.

Margaret Kaye and Fiona Blythe, whose business is research, spoke to a small group at OWN about how we might define advocacy projects and where we might get help with obtaining the information we need to underpin our demands for change and improvement. Both Margaret and Fiona were extremely helpful and gave us some leads to follow up that may result in productive partnerships. They have also offered their help in the future.

The ACG is always looking for new participants, so if you're interested, please come along to the next meeting on 6 November at 87 Lower Fort Street. This will be a lunchtime meeting, so please bring something to eat and your wildest thoughts to exchange and discuss.

Pam Ledden

Representing older women

A recent advocacy meeting was attended by members who represent OWN NSW on various consultative committees and also members who attend similar groups as interested consumers, but have applied personally or been recruited directly. Below is a list of representatives and the committees and groups on which they serve. As you can see, their advocacy covers a wide range of community groups and government organisations, where issues such as health, housing, transport, domestic violence and aged care are on the agenda.

Several key representatives were absent from the meeting, but those who could attend willingly shared their ideas and experiences about being a consumer advocate.

There are two separate opportunities for speaking on behalf of older women. The first involves representing OWN when OWN has been asked to send a representative and the second is being invited as an individual, usually with the understanding that they are members of OWN. In either case we generally speak from personal and/or professional experience, and bring added knowledge gained through our participation in OWN.

Women who speak on behalf of OWN members have their responses to issues shaped by the OWN Guiding Principles and we believe that those members who are not, strictly speaking, representing OWN are also guided by these Principles and by OWN's overall philosophy.

Providing feedback to OWN on members' consumer representation can, unfortunately, be a bit 'hit and miss'. Regularly reporting in *OWN Matters* is an effective way of informing the

membership about advocacy issues, but this can only be done if we have the information. Although there are specially designed forms for reporting back, they are not always used by everyone. The reports that are filled in need to be regularly and individually reviewed by someone – perhaps by a designated person from the Advocacy Coordination Group – and regular reports made in *OWN Matters*.

There are limited opportunities to consult OWN members on specific issues that arise in committees. The effective dissemination of ideas on advocacy and advocacy activity depends on a wide readership of *OWN Matters*, but at present *OWN Matters* goes predominantly to Sydney women. The meeting thought it would be appropriate to approach the OWN NSW Management Team and the

Newsletter Team to discuss ways of encouraging members of regional groups to take out their own individual subscriptions to *OWN Matters*. The Management Team has since agreed to distribute one free issue of *OWN Matters* to individual members of all NSW groups with an invitation for them to take out their own subscription. This idea is being followed up at the time of writing.

Pam Ledden

Representatives on Committees and Groups

Aged Care Alliance

Betty Johnson, OWN representative

NSW Health Plan of Action

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Greater Metropolitan Transition Task Force

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Working Group on Acute care and Older People

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Chronic and Complex Care Implementation

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Personal Health Records Group

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Models of Care Implementation Group/Discharge Planning

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

NCOSS Oral Health Alliance

Pamela Sharpe, OWN representative

Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Department For Women, Peak Organisations Meetings

Dorothy Cora and Pam Ledden, OWN representatives

Falls prevention in Aged Care Facilities Reference Group

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Government/NGO Women's Health Services Quarterly Meetings

Betty Murphy, OWN representative

Health Consumers Network

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Home Care Review Reference Group

Hedi Roggeveen, OWN representative

National Clearing House for Domestic and Family Violence

Louise Anike, OWN representative

Ministerial Advisory Board, Home Care Service of NSW

Noreen Hewett, OWN representative

NSW Breast Screen Accreditation Committee

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

NSW Committee on Ageing

Betty Johnson, applied personally

NSW Cervical Screening Program

Trude Kallir, OWN representative

NSW Council of Social Services Health Policy Advisory Group

Renate Watkinson, OWN representative

NSW Dept of Health Research and Development Advisory Committee

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

NSW Council on Quality Health Care

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

NSW Ministerial Committee on Ageing

Betty Johnson, applied personally

Retirement Village Advisory Council to Minister for Fair Trading

Barbara Burnham, applied personally

Retirement Village Residents Association

Barbara Burnham, applied personally

Age Care Rights Service Management Committee

Barbara Burnham, OWN representative

South Sydney IWD Committee

Joy Ross OWN representative

South Sydney Domestic Violence Liaison Committee

Joy Ross, OWN representative

State Committee on Violence Against Women

Margaret Sargent, recruited directly

Sutherland Shire Council Seniors Sub-Committee

Barbara Burnham and Noreen Hewett, recruited directly

Training for Consumer Participation

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Western Sydney Community Forum

Hedi Roggeveen, OWN representative

Sydney University Health Policy Forum

Betty Johnson, recruited directly

Letters to the Editor

Kids in Detention

More than a year after the last boat of asylum seekers hit our shores, 94 children are still in maximum security detention in Australia, over 200 more held on Manus Island and Nauru. This is the starkest indictment of our Government's asylum seeker policies.

Please keep pressure on the Government – let them know this is not acceptable – and pressure Parliament to take action in the next sittings starting on 14 October.

Write a letter to your local Federal Member of Parliament.

This is what Dr John Yu wrote: *The Parliamentary debate on embryos and stem cell research showed the nation's concern about life, and the need for research to improve life. Yet the real human tragedy of what we are doing to living children is being ignored. Parliament must urgently discuss this matter and prohibit holding children in maximum security facilities, and to require unaccompanied children to be placed in foster or protective care.*

Howard Glenn

Undervalued and underpaid

I'd like to reply to Joan Johns' letter about doctors in public hospitals earning low salaries. I'm incensed that they are expected to work for a pittance, considering the years of study they had to put in and the responsibilities they carry. What really worries me, though, is the aggression many people have in their dealings with others. What happened to respect and appreciation? I also feel that teachers and social workers are

undervalued and underpaid. Surely health and education are uppermost when it comes to quality of life?

Pat Zinn

Distasteful Parody

Re the parody on the National Anthem which was published in the October OWN Matters. Notwithstanding the waiver/disclaimer on the back page of the magazine, such a parody is distasteful in the extreme. Most Australians respect the anthem or it would not be the National Anthem.

The Prime Minister is, by election, the head of Australia and should not be publicly lampooned as it is in this parody. It seems to me such parodies diminish the former standing of OWN.

Patricia Hampshire

Lucky Escapes

I joined the local gym and vowed to follow their program even though aqua aerobics was part of it and I have not been in the water for nearly forty years. Went and bought a cossie. Did not like it, so went and bought another. Today was the day and I had told all the family I was going to do it; I was going to aqua aerobics. When I got there I felt very brave, marched in and was so pleased when they told me it was the wrong day!

Last Tuesday my brother rang my daughter, Chris, to ask for my new phone number. Grandson Stuart answered the phone. When asked could his mother come to the phone, grandson said, "Speak louder, I can't hear you". My brother shouted. No, Stuart did not know where my number was, and Chris was a bit busy, could he call back later. It all sounded noisy. Brother rang back later. The

reason Chris could not come to the phone was that she was hosing down the front of the house and the reason Stuart could not hear was because the house was being water bombed by a helicopter hovering feet above the house. The bushfire had completely surrounded them and they were lucky to save the house.

Barbara Malcolm

It makes a difference

Just a note to express my appreciation for your encouraging letters, cards and phone calls. Being in hospital with a broken leg is no fun, but your good wishes have helped keep my spirits up. Thanks.

Frayda Cooper

Your magnificent newsletter

I would like to congratulate the editorial group and your contributors for another magnificent newsletter. I always open it with anticipation knowing that I am going to be enlightened, educated and amused by the many articles.

Thank you for your efforts and I would like you to know that they are appreciated.

Anne Barber

Doorknob turning tip

If you approach a doorknob from the side, rather than straight on, you will find it easier to turn. Ask someone to wrap the knob with wide elastic bands or adhesive backed foam tape to give you more friction. Quickset, an adhesive backed foam tape comes in a roll and is easy to use. Simply cut the tape to desired length; peel off the back and press into place.

First published in *Arthritis NSW*

The Clare Burton Memorial Lecture 2002

A Pound of Flesh: Women, Politics and Power in the New Millennium

Speaker: Moira Rayner, Acting Commissioner for Equal Opportunity Commission (WA)

5 pm Wednesday 20 November

UTS Atrium, Level 2, Building 10, Broadway

\$25 . A \$5 business card/door raffle will also be held on the evening, with all monies raised going towards the Scholarship.

In the 2002 Clare Burton lecture, Moira Rayner asks whether women in politics are being asked an extortionate fee for their glimpse of power.

Fundamental to patriarchy is the invisibility of women, the unreal nature of women's experience, the absence of women as a force to be reckoned with. She asks tough questions of some assumptions of feminism. Does it really make a difference to have a 'critical mass' of women in power? Do women use political power differently?

Moira also asks whether political activists have put too much emphasis on the minutiae of women's lives – childcare, family-friendly work practices, community, relationships – rather than the 'male' obsession with economics and technology.

Contact Richard Gilzean - 9514 4676 for a registration form.

Women's History Month, Australia

Women's History Month (WHM) was initiated in Australia by Helen Leonard, Convenor of the National Women's Media Centre. It was her vision, drive and commitment that made the establishment of WHM in Australia possible. WHM is held in March each year.

Following Helen's sudden death in October 2001, a number of her friends decided to carry on her work on WHM. The National Foundation for Australian Women agreed to auspice WHM 2002 and the Pamela Denoon Trust sponsored the launch of WHM 2002.

A major aim of WHM Australia is to raise awareness and to provide information on the rich history of women's contribution to the development and future of Australia.

In 2002, the main activities were on-line and included live on-line chats and discussions during March, led by Australian women experts from a broad range of fields.

The website was awarded the Adult Learning Australia - Website of the Month, March 2002. The website has attracted a great deal of interest and will remain in place until early 2003 when the new program will be finalised.

Website: www.trivium.net/womenshistorymonth

Telstra

Priority Assistance

Telstra has recently introduced a priority repair service. It is designed to help residential customers who have (or have someone living in their home who has) a diagnosed life-threatening medical condition and whose life may be at risk without access to a fully-operational medical service.

The Department of Health and Ageing and the Chief Medical Officer of Australia, in consultation with relevant non-government medical experts, have established criteria and an indicative list of eligible medical conditions.

Telstra will provisionally register a customer as a Priority Customer if they claim that they are eligible. This must be verified within 28 days, either

- (i) by a medical practitioner
- (ii) customer verification via statutory declaration.

The Department of Health and Ageing will be sending letters to all doctors with information about this new Telstra policy. More information can be found on the website www.telstra.co.au/accessforeveryone/afe_priority, or brochures can be obtained from Telstra shops.

Telstra residential customers may register for Priority Assistance by calling Telstra on 13 22 00.

Poetic inspiration while waiting for surgery ...

Taxi caught me on my bum
Leg fractured, elbow bruised
Trip by ambulance ensued
It's reduced daily actions' hum
Even green lighted crosswalk
Wasn't safe on my way
To Albert Street U3A

Frayda Cooper

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney Highlights

At last a breather – OWN conferences over for another year! Many thanks to Sydney delegates who played a valuable role at the OWN Australia conference in Canberra by presenting a thoughtful case for restructuring the national body's membership base and suggesting a review of its Policies and Statements. It was a positive conference, considering the difficult issues that OWN A faced last year.

Wellness on Wednesdays – what a success! The program, run by skilled and friendly facilitators, started on 16 October with good attendances by OWN members as well as local women. We've been planning a day of physical activities to complement other Sydney activities for a long time, and now it's a reality.

At the last minute, we decided to include a discussion group on the day, and to hold it while the noisier ones are banging their drums! It turned out to be a wonderful opportunity to learn about and explore our thoughts and feelings – the topic on the first day was 'owning our own feelings' and although it was personal and revealing it was not at all threatening. Keep your eyes on the diary page for future topics.

We are pleased to announce that our *Older Women's Right to Safety* quilt project has attracted City of Sydney funding. We plan to complete the already-started quilt between now and when it's launched at a forum in 2003. If you are enthusiastic about quilting and would like to be involved, please give Joy a call on 9247 7046.

Our regular activities – fish lunches, a cappella, coffee and

chat and creative movement – remain a valuable way for members to enjoy themselves and make new connections.

We've planned another exciting fish lunch, this time in Kiama. On Friday, 15 November, we're leaving Central Railway and picking up members of other OWN groups along the way. Should be a great day out! (Please see flyer.)

Please note that the a cappella group has changed from Saturdays to Thursdays. Numbers have been falling over recent months and we are hoping that the new time will attract some new participants. It's healthy and great fun, so come along.

The time has come for you, OWN Sydney members, to tell the Working Group what you think of Sydney's first twelve months. At the next quarterly members' meeting on Friday 22 November, you will have the opportunity to reflect on our progress and to map Sydney's direction for the next few years – please see flyer.

Joy Ross

Coffee and Chat

Members at our September Coffee and Chat enjoyed an animated discussion about some of our needs at this stage of life. Some of us mentioned the need to be listened to, to feel secure, to trust others and to have friends at many different levels. We agreed that it is very important to acknowledge our needs, and how OWN members are very important in meeting some of our needs.

At our October Coffee and Chat, we talked about the word 'older'

as in Older Women's Network. Opinions varied between loving the name to feeling that the name was not attractive to younger new members.

Please join us for *Telling Tales – You tell me yours and I'll tell you mine!* which is the focus for our last Coffee and Chat for the year. We are planning to enjoy a treat or two during the discussion!

**Hedi Roggeveen
and Yetty Windt**

Advocacy in Newcastle

Enthused by attendance at the NSW OWN Conference in July, some members of OWN Newcastle proposed the formation of an Advocacy Working Group to work on local issues pertinent to the forthcoming State Election. That group met for the first time on August 1, following the general meeting of Newcastle OWN, at which members had participated in a brainstorming to identify the most important issues to us. The issues were:

- hospital waiting lists
- emergency hospital access
- public transport and
- safety on the streets.

A few issues more relevant to OWN Australia were also identified at that time, and subsequently notified to OWN A for their attention. The advocacy group decided to focus on the first three issues identified by the members.

The main actions of the Advocacy Working Group to date have been:

- Letters expressing concern about long hospital waiting lists and difficulties in accessing emergency hospital treatment sent to local Hunter Area Health Service, local MPs,

At and Beyond the Rocks

Minister for Health and the Premier.

- A questionnaire distributed to all current and some past members of Newcastle OWN asking for information about difficulties they have experienced with the three services identified as the priority issues (this questionnaire form is available to any other OWN group if interested). Such information is vital to substantiate and 'flesh out' our claims.

Some members of the Advocacy Working Group have also reviewed the Draft Election Kit produced by the Aged Care Alliance, and a composite response has been sent to OWN NSW. Generally we felt the Draft Kit was a very good start and we hope that our comments are found useful.

We expect that the Advocacy Working Group will usually comprise a fairly small group, probably about four to six active people, but we believe this will be effective provided that all members have the opportunity to identify issues, provide information and advice, receive reports and comment on/ approve actions taken.

We'll let you know how we go!

Pat Carlton, Convenor

Bellingen

Hello to all from the still small Bellingen group who are always busier than we'd like when not sick or gallivanting far away. We do want to attract some more members soon to share our enthusiasms.

We have had our regular monthly 'business' meetings and several mutually supportive social gatherings and outings. The wonderful Coffs Harbour Botanic

Gardens has recently been donated a 'People Mover' so we visited, and five of us (who are not able to walk the two or three kilometres needed to explore the gardens) rode in style with the volunteer guide and driver, while three of us walked. Another outing was to a very pleasant restaurant set up by TAFE for training hospitality students in cooking and service. In July two of us enjoyed attending the OWN NSW conference in Sydney.

Cheers from us eight Regulars, and the Occasionals,

Jude Roseth

Mid-Mountains

Things are picking up apace here at MOWN! It is perhaps fair to say that after the initial enthusiasm settled, we reached a plateau phase during which we lost a few members and added some new ones. In recent months, some members have chosen to make every alternate meeting day a social occasion.

Deciding in advance where they would like to go, they meet on the train and head for their day out. Calling themselves The Train Gang, they have had some jolly times with trips to Vacluse House, Lithgow Workers' Club, the

Sydney Fish Markets and Manly. The rest of us meet as usual.

We have enjoyed a poetry day with members bringing along a poem of their choice, reading it and sharing it.

Helen gave us a talk on her 1989 trip to India from the viewpoint of an older woman alone back-packing on the sub-continent. Instalment two is to come.

One of our members, Astrid Evans, has volunteered to conduct a gentle exercise class prior to the commencement of our meeting. Those who have so far participated have welcomed the opportunity and are feeling the benefit. Thanks Astrid.

On Wednesday 16 October, we had an inspiring visit from the OWN Theatre Group. They gave us a concert we will remember for a long time to come and hopefully, as a result, we may, with a little help from them, be able to form a group of our own. Thank you ladies, thank you! You were wonderful.

MOWN'S Christmas Lunch is being held this year at the Wentworth Falls Bowling Club on 29 November. After the success of last year's event, we are repeating the Christmas party for the Parenting Young group and their little ones. This comes up on 7 December.

Sue Hardwick, our founder, has had a tough year with health problems, but stoic that she is, has endured two hip replacements in the space of three months and now, just three weeks after the second operation, is back on deck participating in meetings and activities. We wish her well and continued improvement.

Helen Craig

(Beyond the Rocks continues p12)

Wagga Wagga

We meet on the first and third Tuesdays of each month and share experiences, ideas and hopes over a 'cuppa'. Occasionally, we welcome visitors to talk to us about their special interests, for example, a young Education Officer from Juvenile Justice came and talked about her work with young boys. On other occasions our own members share their experiences of travelling to other countries.

We are interested in one another's talents, for instance, creative writings and crafts and we enjoy the laughter and relate to the sadness created by our stories of life's happenings. These stories will be put into booklet form some time in the future.

In answer to a plea in *OWN Matters* we sent a cheque to Holroyd High School towards the education of children who are refugees with Temporary Protection Visas, including an 18 year old girl Zainab. (After children turn 18 special Government Benefits cease.)

In Seniors Week our Theatre Group's performance at the closing ceremony was warmly received. Our Display in the Wagga Wagga Market Place promoted our Wellness Activity, Movement to Music, which created lots of interest.

We have received \$1000 from Council, half of which pays for Movement to Music, and the rest will be spent on Gentle Exercise.

Lately we have welcomed four new members who help us to 'Break The Mould That Says Too Old' and reminds us that 'Age Is Not a Disease'.

**Monica Chalmers &
Muriel Waddell**

Renate Watkinson joined OWN in 1990 when it was still at Combined Pensioners. At the time she was still working part-time as a counsellor and group leader. Renate was employed by OWN to run two workshops for older women, one on sexuality and the other on healthy ageing.

Later, through the OWN newsletter, Renate heard about OWN's move to 87 Lower Fort and decided to get involved as a volunteer. In her voluntary work at OWN, Renate has used her interest in health matters and her two careers – librarian and counsellor/group leader – to great effect.

Soon after she retired, Renate was recruited to the OWN Health Group where she remained as convenor for almost a decade. In 1992, with other members of the Health Group, Renate became involved in planning and conducting the very successful *Older Women, Feminism and Health* Conference. The follow-up Conference Report continues to be a valuable resource for people interested in alternative voices on older women's health, particularly the radical idea that older women can reclaim their bodies and take responsibility for their care with a minimum of medical intervention.

In 1993, Renate was centrally involved in an OWN research project, *Wellbeing: For and By Older Women*, funded by the National Women's Health Program. A key outcome of this research was a commitment to the notion that older women can be pathfinders in exploring ways towards better health rather than being merely recipients of services, information and support.

When Department of Health funding was received by OWN in 1994, to establish a wellness centre for older women, Renate facilitated an OWN seminar to explore 'wellbeing for older women'. It was here that she came up with the 'House of Wellbeing' concept, which was to become a blueprint for older women's wellness centres.

Renate was an active and valued member of the Working Committee of OWN Inc. between 1993 and 2001, apart from a two-year period when she resigned to care for her husband, Arthur, who died in 1997.

In 1995 Renate initiated the first of a very popular series of workshops on 'unmentionable' topics such as wind and water; death, dying and euthanasia; disability and ageing; sexuality, and so on.

For over a year now Renate has been a member of the Resources Group which is working to make OWN's resource material more accessible. With great attention to detail (and not a little frustration), she has been standardising the inclusion of new publications into our database and modifying the data to make the database more user-friendly and reliable.

In between her highly valuable volunteer work at OWN Renate manages to enjoy adventure travel, attending theatre and concerts, keeping (very) fit and spending time with her family and friends.

Dorothy Cora

Brain Cell Blues

Our memory recall seems strangely awry as we age. We can recall a presence and face we knew many years ago, but we cannot remember the name of one we knew last month. It is a puzzle to us why we put the milk under the sink and the detergent in the fridge. It is said that such behaviour is not exactly Alzheimer's unless it reveals a pattern of day to day behaviour. These trivial lapses bug us a bit, nonetheless.

In repeating jokes, I find it unsettling when the point of the joke is reached and I am rendered speechless. It is also disconcerting when we start off knowing what we wanted to say and then find we have lost it. We need to balance this knowledge up with the comforting thought that we still have a wealth of information attained over many years, reaching the conclusion that we are not so inarticulate.

We tend to mope about being left behind in the debating stakes. Reading is a great help. I find the potted reviews in newspaper articles on foreign affairs, literature, science, direct me to further research in books, and I find Saturday's SMH a boon. It helps to look up the meaning of words which were not invented in our school days, even if it is just to startle our peers into thinking the words dropped are tips for Randwick Races.

I must say that I envy the computer expertise of Renee Simons and the financial/political knowledge of Muriel Hortin. It is useful to take computer lessons and to follow the financial reports dished out by newspapers and television. It may be better that you don't know how the cost of

living is rising, but it seems wise to be aware of hidden agendas in reports from esteemed Treasury politicians. I find it hard sometimes now to check the change given to me in paying Peter and Paul. In writing, I have mastered, I hope, the succinct, and the need to select salient points in a mess of wordage. I know now too much explanation in speechifying is boring.

Hobbies I recognise that I would have liked to master are gone forever, such as gardening and musical expression. The gifts can still be expressed in pot plants, drumming and a cappella song. The rhythm is still in me until dizziness takes over, but there is still jiggling in jazz, and learning folk dancing from other cultures.

Keeping abreast of the political scene is not so uplifting, but it keeps you in life, and able to mix it in discussion. Your voice is still valuable.

OWN members' sensitivity to discrimination against the aged is tested in doctors' time-honoured tests for damaged brain cells. Surely they can perceive whether we are aware in our answers and questions about our bodies.

They deserve responses such as Dorothy Cox's, "Get stuffed!" It might be a good move to ask sympathetically, "Are you dyslexic too?"

If you haven't worked for many years, you don't have to think much about what day it is. Although I do apologise when giving my weight in stones and my height in feet.

I hope this diatribe has helped refresh your brain cells, and may inspire a discussion on the subject.

Enid Harrison

Older Women Speak Up Violence in the Home -

Two new Publications

Older Women Speak Up invites you to order copies of our two new reports published in October 2002: Sargent, M. and Mears, J., *More Than Survival: Project Report One for Older Women*, 2002 (48 pp) and Mears, J. and Sargent, M., *Survival Is Not Enough: Project Report Two for Professionals 2002* (56 pp).

Both reports describe our work with older women who experience violence in the home. We examine this topic of violence against older women in the home in a different way through the voices and personal experience of older women. These writings are our way of reporting back to all those who have told us their stories or have participated or helped in our work in various ways or have a special interest in this area.

This is an interactive project and we look forward to hearing your opinions on our work and ideas. Please ring or write to us, and perhaps we can together achieve greater understanding and action to reduce violence against older women.

Also available is our earlier booklet, consisting of excerpts from older women's own stories of violence, Sargent, M. and Mears, J., *Older Women Speak Up: Violence in the Home*, 2000.

There is no charge, but we would very much appreciate donations, large or small, to enable us to continue our work.

All can be obtained from: *Older Women Speak Up*, 1A Liverpool Street, Bundeena, NSW 2230, telephone Margaret 02-9523-9558, Jane 02-9772-6250 Fax 02-9660-5925 Email : msarge@zip.com.au or j.mears@uws.edu.au.

The reports may also be downloaded from the following sites: www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au, and www.mentalhealth.asn.au

Margaret Sargent

Gift Horses

I love unwrapping my Christmas gifts, but my heart sinks to receive key rings, fridge magnets, bath-salts, nylon body washers shaped like pot scourers, soap containers, nail brushes, cosmetic bags, and toilet bags. I already have a generous collection of these items, as well as drink coasters, tray cloths, table napkins, tea-towels, scarves, handbag mirrors and blossom vases from previous lives.

I don't wish to seem ungrateful, but how can I recirculate this bounty? It is sneaky to pass them on as gifts; embarrassingly, you might be found out.

Lacking a bathtub, I use the bath salts in a bucket to soak my tired feet. My unit is too small for entertaining so I have minimal use for tray cloths, napkins, drink coasters, and tea towels. I don't care for those slimy 'pot scourer' body washers and am not really a scarf person.

Perhaps I could donate these gifts to a charity for their Christmas parcels to the needy. But of what use to the 'down and out' are bath salts, cosmetic bags, handbag mirrors, key rings, fridge magnets,

drink coasters, tray cloths and fancy scarves? Even if the poor could use the toilet bags, nail brushes, face washers and tea towels, they'd have to recirculate the rest as gifts.

Every Christmas I mentally ask Santa for stationery, biros, toilet soap and matching body lotion, shampoo, panties, decent sized coin purses (I'm always losing mine), books and liquor. A kind friend gives me toilet soap and liquor but unloads all her chocolates. She knows I can resist anything except temptation. Useless to send the chocs to the charities for those parcels – the volunteer packers would scoff the lot and who could blame them?

A sneaky workmate, Margo, suddenly started to give me full length slips at Christmas instead of coffee mugs. This lasted for three years, the exact length of her marriage. The slips were gifts from her despised mother-in-law. I discovered their source accidentally, and as I liked the mother-in-law I hoped she finally won a daughter-in-law who liked slips.

My relative, Ellie, is well travelled,

lives overseas and is a real skin-flint. Each Christmas she sends me a modest gift, but adds 'freebies' from airlines or hotels. Last Christmas I received an el cheapo necklace, a shower cap and guest soap from a well known hotel chain, an airlines pack containing a small hand-mirror, sleeping mask and tiny sewing kit. In previous 'freebies' she included little packets of rice crackers from a Japanese airline.

I'd like to retaliate with some 'freebies' for Ellie but I rarely use airlines or hotels. However, by chance this year I am going to Melbourne by train. I'll keep my trash bag with the railways logo on it, their free travel magazine, and the railway shower soap.

I can also collect a fine array of paper napkins with logos from City Tattersalls Club, Silks, Easts, and Bondi Junction RSL. These tasteful treasures should fit in the railways trash bag to make a nice surprise for Ellie when she opens her Christmas parcel.

Who says I have no Christmas spirit?

Helen McMaugh

The first born

Yesterday was a day to remember, the bliss of giving birth to a short story. She liked its brevity, wit, and many layers, great title, punchy and enigmatic.

She then took a deep breath, shifted into left brain, and tackled the dreaded word-processor. For the first time, after long, dreary, nerve-wracking hours of lessons and practice, so humiliating to her confidence, she tapped in the story, managed to correct errors, improve the punctuation and prune the piece of superfluous verbiage. "Oh, joy."

She steeled her nerves yet again, and switched on the printer. Away it zoomed on both sides of the sheet, without throwing a tantrum, or sulking, or throwing up some weird, and totally unintelligible message.

There it was, complete with the baby's name, her first-born, gestated, delivered, and ready to show off to admiring relatives and friends. She studied it, crooned to it, and walked around in an ecstatic trance.

"I did it all by myself," she secretly boasted to herself, before modestly presenting it to her audience who had supported her during her long and painful labour, and who now rejoiced with her at the birth of this miraculous offspring.

Mary McCusker

Medicheck!

This happened just over twenty-nine years ago. I'm quite sure of that, because my eldest grandson was due to be born in a couple of months, and I remember that so well.

My husband had recently had a check-up at something called "Medicheck" (I think it's still there, actually), on his doctor's recommendation, and they had found he had something or other which he hadn't known about before. He insisted that I should go there, in case there was something wrong which had been overlooked.

When you arrived, you were seated at a computer screen, and the computer asked for answers to a number of questions, all of which would help them diagnose what, if anything, was wrong with you. After that, you went into a series of different rooms, where every part of you was subjected to investigation by various doctors.

A week or so later, my doctor rang me to tell me the results had arrived. Such a nice woman, probably in her forties, always dressed in red. She greeted me with excitement, holding up a small X-ray, pointing to a tiny round blob. "Look," she said, "You've got a secondary neoplasm in one of your lungs!" "What do you mean?" I asked, "Are you trying to tell me I have lung cancer?" "Yes," she said, beaming with excitement. "Go straight to the Radiologist and get a larger one done, and come back to me right away."

I drove to the X-ray clinic, hardly able to see where I was going because I was crying. I wasn't scared, just sad, thinking that I would never see my first grandchild, that my life was about to end. The clinic to me seemed like a fairground, full of screaming children, loud music playing,

people rushing around all over the place. Eventually, my turn came. The radiologist came out with the X-ray. "There's nothing showing on it," she said, "Absolutely nothing to be concerned about." Instant relief. Back to the doctor. "So what was it?" she said. "Who knows?" I said, "But it's good news."

Some months later, a relative was diagnosed with lung cancer, and I began to think about the X-ray from Medicheck. I had to have another X-ray, just to be sure. I went to a different radiologist this time. He came out looking very amused. "Nothing to worry about," he said. "It's just nipple shadow..."

Renee Simons

Creative Writers Try Creative Eating

Our OWN writing group is in temporary retirement, but we still have to eat. So, once a month we meet to wine, dine and discuss our deathless prose projects.

The second dining venture was into Spanish cuisine at the Tappas bar in Clarence Street. Carafes of sparkling Sangria stimulated the conversation and produced general jollity. A platter worthy of an Elizabethan banquet arrived, piled with myriad tappas goodies. After demolishing this, a few brave souls tried a serving of individual tappas dishes. This proved unwise for waistlines.

We had to compete conversationally with a restaurant filled with the chattering classes but all agreed it was a splendid repast. Our thanks to Polly Gow for organising this culinary treat.

Strangely, our two luncheons have been better attended than our class meetings. It must have been because of the dreaded class homework.

Bon Vivant

A dynamic example of cultural diversity

Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre (BOWWC) was recently presented with the Council on the Ageing 2002 Award for Good Practice. Competition was tough. Other finalists included Kiama Council, Parramatta Leisure and Learning Centre, Hurstville Senior Citizens and Community Care, and the Hurstville Seniors Centre.

The award is for "Outstanding practice in the implementation of a healthy ageing philosophy and for embracing and promoting cultural diversity."

The Centre's commitment to cultural diversity is particularly evident in the successful partnership between Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre and Greek OWN, which is now entering its third year. The Wellness Centre provides a Greek-speaking instructor in gentle exercise for members of Greek OWN, who also take part in other Centre activities such as Tai Chi and massage. BOWWC also has a partnership with Bankstown Community Health Centre (BCHC). The focus of the ethnic health worker at BCHC is to promote the Gentle Exercise class (facilitated by a bi-lingual instructor) within the Arabic speaking community. Members of a Maltese older women's group, which began last year, are now regular and enthusiastic participants at BOWWC.

Alongside the many English speaking participants at the Wellness Centre are older women from Malta, Lebanon, Italy, Egypt, Vietnam, Syria, Germany, Philippines, Mauritius, Lithuania and the Netherlands – all enjoying and benefiting from the exciting program that's on offer.

Dorothy Cora

My Breast Friend

A year ago I was talking on the phone to a friend who was describing her breast problem to me. As we were speaking, I was examining my breasts (as one does on occasion) and, guess what, I found a lump. Although I have lumpy breasts anyway, I knew this was something important. I said to Kay, "I've got a lump," and we both kind of laughed.

The next day I went to my GP for an examination and she sent me off for a mammogram, ultra sound, etc. The terror! Then the radiologist told me I had a Fibronoma tumor in my right breast, which is generally only found in young girls and is usually benign. She suggested that I have a core biopsy, which meant a very thick needle into my breast. I left saying, "I'll see," and she said, "I would hate to think that you weren't going to get one!" I rang my GP and told her there is no way I was having a needle in my breast without a general anaesthetic and could she please find me a breast surgeon who would take the lump out at the same time as the biopsy.

The doctor I saw agreed (thank God) that it was a good idea to remove the lump even though it was probably benign, and do the biopsy at the same time. He organised my operation for October, 2001. In between all this, September 11 came and went and I didn't know whether to panic over the world situation or my breast, but it did provide a diversion for me.

I had my operation; they performed a lumpectomy and a biopsy and said the results would take a week. A week went by and I didn't hear anything so I assumed all was fine. Ten days later the phone rang and a man's voice said, "Mrs. Chandler, this is Dr. ... I'm sorry to tell you that the tumor was cancerous and I am

recommending radiation as soon as possible". I immediately told him I wasn't interested. However, he suggested I contact the oncologist at North Shore Hospital and talk it over with him, which I did (after the urging of my doctor and friends). He assured me that radiation was painless and the most that would happen is tiredness and burning of the skin.

A six-week session every day, except weekends, started soon after that. In the meantime I was seeing my homeopath/osteopath for help to keep myself calm (homeopathic drops are amazing) and he was also helping me keep my body in line during the radiation with his methods of body alignment. I also started researching alternative ways of preventing the cancer from returning.

Each day I would go to North Shore Hospital for my treatment. I tried to look at it as an out of body experience, which I suppose helped, even though the fear of it was devastating. Staff at the hospital were marvellous and the doctor was very kind, the little I saw of him. I never imagined in my wildest dreams that I would have to expose my breasts to the whole world, as you do during the treatment, but now I can laugh about it.

Anyhow, here I am one year later and I've never felt better. I'm doing everything I did before and more. I'm still taking Noni Juice, Sharks Cartilage and Omega 3. I've cut out dairy foods and coffee and rarely eat my favourite food, bacon! I'm now eating mostly organic fruit, vegetables, meat and chicken. I still have treatments once every six weeks from my osteopath, receive Bowen Technique and Polarity treatments from my doctor almost on a weekly basis, and am doing various emotional healing

techniques with several different people. I'm also meditating most days, but I can't seem to slow down even if try.

I also want to mention Life Force Foundation which is a group started about nine years ago by Jillie Pascoe, a cancer patient at that time, who wanted to create a support group to help people after or during their treatment. I have been a volunteer with them for the last couple of years (pre-cancer), so when Jillie found out about my cancer, she immediately contacted me with great compassion and sensitivity. Jillie offered me wonderful support; for instance, she sent a masseuse to my house and referred me to a counsellor (all free of charge) and convinced me to go on a weekend retreat for people with cancer. The weekend away was on a lovely farm where we ate healthy food, meditated, participated in yoga and many spiritual healing journeys. I'm still involved in Life Force and recommend it to anyone who may have an experience with cancer to contact them for guidance, support and information. I am so grateful to my friends who have been sensational throughout this ordeal and have remained loving, dedicated, sensitive and understanding through the ups and downs of this daunting experience. My doctor, who is my friend as well, has also been kind, compassionate, supportive and giving in every way.

Sandy Chandler

A Simple Good Deed

If you go into the The Breast Cancer site www.thebreastcancersite.com and click on it daily you can assist a disadvantaged woman to have a free mammogram. This doesn't cost you a thing. Their corporate sponsors/advertisers use the number of daily visits to donate mammograms in exchange for advertising.

In a spirit of optimism

Three members from Nowra OWN – Anne Warren and I as delegates and Norma Bastock as a member of the NSW Theatre Group – attended the OWN Australia conference in Canberra in September. Around forty women attended from all over Australia.

Barbara Silverstone, Coordinator/Treasurer of OWN A, warmly welcomed us to the conference apologising for the absence of an Aboriginal Elder to welcome those present on behalf of the custodians of the land.

Amanda Vanstone, Minister assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women, officially opened the conference, by video. Carmen Lawrence, Shadow Minister on the Status of Women, also spoke on video, while Annette Ellis, Shadow Minister on Ageing and MHR Member for Canberra added her greetings in person.

We found it interesting to hear reports from a number of state representatives including Pam Ledden, who spoke about the need to focus on advocacy issues, especially Hospital Discharge and the need for reform.

Ruth Kershaw reported on her attendance at a women's conference in Ohio, and was roundly applauded for her involvement and strong approach around older women's issues.

Noreen Hewett, from Sutherland OWN, spoke positively about the role of OWN in the community and encouraged members to be pro-active in their local areas.

Gwenda Fulford from Newcastle was congratulated for publishing the OWN A newsletter, *Keeping in Touch*, every three months.

Various guest speakers spoke on topics such as Older Women and Health, Falls Prevention and Death with Dignity.

The conference dinner was a resounding success. Betty Searle, from Canberra, was an excellent after dinner speaker and the NSW Theatre Group (or half of them!) received a wild ovation from a very appreciative audience!

On the second day Meg Bishop presented her research for an OWN A project, funded by the Office for the Status of Women, on *Leadership and Capacity Building for Older Women*. Our group has a copy of the report, and is considering having a workshop on leadership in the future.

Meg also led a workshop on Story Telling, which Anne and I attended. This was based on a paper designed to assist participants understand their life history in such a way as to help them chart their futures. We were both enthusiastic about the qualities of this presentation, and will discuss the possibility of using the guidelines for our group.

The final session was *Laughter is the Best Medicine*, and so it was in this case. Led by Elizabeth Allmand, we rolled around the floor as people recounted funny incidents in their lives. The medical benefits of laughter include lower blood pressure and relief of emotional tension.

We left the conference on a happy note in the true spirit of OWN members throughout Australia.

Isabel MacCallum

Unrequited love – a sad tail

I gaze rapturously into the deep blue eyes. I feel the hot breath on my neck, a soft nuzzle at my cheek, a warm tongue searching, and a sensuous nip on my ear. My heart overflows. I swoon with love.

Baa! Baa! I kiss the little pink nose. There is an experimental nibble on my cheek. I offer the bottle, and it is off and away, tail wagging ecstatically. Two motherless poddie lambs to feed, victims of the drought. I was an hour late for the next feed, and the pathetic baa-ing and impatient nudging at the fence admonished me, so I opened the gate. They rushed out, butting my legs, baa-ing incessantly.

"I'm coming, I'm coming, little ones. Go back inside and I'll warm your bottle." Nothing would induce them to part from me, so up the steps we went, their legs clumsily disappearing down the cracks. I picked them up, wriggling and squirming, and put them down on the safety of the linoleum. Their little hooves trotted along behind me, clickety clack, like castanets.

But, ah me! We had to part. My heart is broken. Now I sadly croon, "What'll I do when you are far away, and I am blue, what'll I do?"

Joan Johns

NOTICES

Bequests to the Older Women's Network

If you would like to include a bequest to OWN in your will, the following options will guide you in its wording.

Please specify which Older Women's Network you wish to be the recipient of your gift: the Older Women's Network NSW or the Older Women's Network Sydney.

Option No. 1

I devise the sum of \$ to the Older Women Network for the general purpose of the Older Women's Network OR for the specific purpose of

such purpose being consistent with the aims and objectives of the Older Women's Network, to be administered by the Older Women's Network.

Option No 2

(for a proportional bequest)
I give to the Older Women's Network for its general purposes or the specific purpose of
...% of my estate (or ...% of the rest of my estate).

The gift you make to the Older Women's Network will be an enduring record of your generosity.

Interested in 'other' news and views?

www.foreignaccentmedia.com is an online magazine comprising ten articles selected from the best journals and newspapers in the non-Anglo parts of the world and translated into English. Local stories by local writers for local people, it's a bit of a variance on foreign correspondence from the mainstream western media.

Premier's Seniors Christmas Concert Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 December 2002 at 3pm

Tickets will be allocated on a first in, first serve basis. To register call **1300 365 699** after Monday, October 28, 9am - 5pm.

*For further information contact:
Lisa Marie Williams, 8270 2425/
0411 239 499 (24 hours)*

Festival of the Dreaming at Bicentennial Park on Saturday, 16 November – FREE!

Everyday Brave – a six-part SBS TV documentary series starting on Friday, 18 October at 7.30pm profiles indigenous Australians who have fought against discrimination, apathy and ignorance. The series can also be purchased from Film Australia, PO Box 46, Lindfield NSW 2070 Ph: (02) 9413 8763 or (02) 9413 8734

Email: sales@filmaust.com.au
Website: www.filmaust.com.au

The NSW Aged Care Alliance invites you to a Consumer Consultation on the Future of Community Care

9:30 – 11:30am
Thursday, 14 November 2002
Upstairs Room
NSW Council of Social
Service (NCOSS)

66 Albion Street, Surry Hills

For further information please contact: Carrie Hayter, Policy Officer, Aged and Community Services Association, phone 9799 0900.

Fair Trade not Free Trade: A Better World is Possible

10 am - 4 pm

Sunday, 10 November
Tom Mann Theatre, 136 Chalmers
St, Surry Hills
Speakers and Workshops
Donation: \$10 waged, \$5
unwaged. www.aftinet.org.au

Older Australians Internet survey panel

Council on the Ageing (NSW) [COTA] has established an older Australians Internet survey panel, with the objective of undertaking online surveys on issues of interest to older people. It is the only such panel in Australia.

You are invited to join the panel, which is free and without any obligation, completely confidential and thoroughly enjoyable. This is your opportunity to express your views on a wide range of matters.

The procedure is simple and user-friendly. To register, please click on: www.decisionsresearch.com.au/consumer/oairp/ and follow the instructions.

NOTICES

The Sydney Institute Australia's Ageing Population

Speaker: Professor Bob Gregory
(Research School of Social Sciences,
ANU) & the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop
(former Minister for Aged Care)
5.30 for 6.00 pm
Monday 4 November 2002
Details: 9252 3366 or fax 9252
3360 or email@sydneyins.org.au or
website: www.sydneyins.org.au

An axe to grind?

<http://www.lobby.org.au> is an
excellent website with the best
data base of politicians in Aus-
tralia – over 850 MPs in nine
parliaments and over 300 minis-
ters and shadow ministers, all in
a standard format.

Volunteer Teaching in Thailand

Jessie Street National Women's Library Lunch-hour Talk

Speaker: Dr Joan Webb, 'Volunteer Teaching in Thailand'. Joan has
been doing volunteer work in Thailand for the last 23 years. She is
presently teaching about preservation of the environment overall, the
home environment, the workplace, and the natural environment.

12 noon to 1.30 pm Thursday, 21 November 2002. Lady Mayoress'
Rooms, 2nd floor, Town Hall, George Street entry \$15 (non-members)
\$13 (members). Sandwich lunch included.

To book, contact Shirley on (02) 9876 3927 or the Library (02) 9265
9486 or email shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

Mature Workers' Policy Discussion

Level 5, 280 Pitt St Sydney

Friday 8 November 2002 1.00 - 3.00 pm

Council on the Ageing (NSW) is hosting an
informal panel discussion for members of
the public interesting in mature age
workers' policy issues.

Further information Contact: Brenda
Bailey - Phone: +61 2 9226 3860
Fax: 02 9286 3872
Email: info@cotansw.com.au

Book Launch From Holocaust to Haven: Five Countries, Five Migrations

by Nora Huppert.
Sunday, 24 November
Contact Nora on 9181 3919 for
venue details.

Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme Redfern Legal Centre

To assist women of Non-English
Speaking Backgrounds, pamphlets
entitled *Walking Through the
Courts* are now available in Arabic,
Vietnamese and Chinese as well as
English. The aim is that these
pamphlets should provide
sufficient information in an easily
understood format. Groups can
access these pamphlets by phoning
9698 7277.

Christmas Cruise

Don't have another lonely Christ-
mas! Three women wanted to
join me on a P & O cruise in a
cabin for four. Only \$1549 for 10
days of luxury, fun and relaxation
plus the bonus of a once-in-a-
lifetime Christmas on board!
Jacinta Martini 9810 8560

Sydney Poetry Festival

Saturday November 9, 2002
Barnet Long Room, Level 2
Customs House Circular Quay
10am – 4pm

Compered by Trevor Langlands
Special Guest – Merri Winter
More Information: 0402 209 2676



New Subscriptions to *OWN Matters*

Individual subscription is \$20 per year.

(Organisational rate on application)

***OWN Matters* is also available on audio tape.**

Name _____ Organisation _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Please support OWN Sydney by including a \$5 membership fee.

Please send your cheque/money order to *OWN Matters* Subscription,
Older Women's Network NSW, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000.

**IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO:
87 Lower Fort Street
Millers Point NSW 2000**

***OWN Matters*
Older Women's Network NSW Inc.**

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DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in ***OWN Matters*** are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Older Women's Network.

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