



# OWN MATTERS

*Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc.  
No. 15 February 2003*

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## ***Coming into our OWN!***

Don't sit at home and moan! Come and contribute your time, energy and skills to ensure that OWN remains a visible, viable and vital organisation making a difference in older women's lives. You'll find a stimulating, friendly and supportive atmosphere, no matter whether you're in for an hour or in for a day!

OWN is a volunteer organisation. It is managed by volunteers and it is run on a day-to-day basis by volunteers. Volunteers coordinate projects such as the Theatre Group, the Aboriginal Support Circle, the Wellness Coordination Group and the Advocacy Coordination Group. Members of the Management Team of OWN NSW and the Coordination Team (each coordinator works in the office one day a week) are volunteers. Volunteers also undertake specialised administration duties and general office work.

At present, members travel to Lower Fort Street on a regular basis from Wollongong, Nowra, Sutherland, Penrith, Parramatta and Hornsby to volunteer their time. Some women who come from out of town combine their hours at OWN with pleasurable activities like seeing a film or going to a concert.

Depending on their special interests, skills and availability, there are many different roles for volunteers in OWN NSW. We currently have vacancies for office workers, Theatre Group performers, editors and proof readers, submission writers, computer operators (database and word processing), computer trainers, and workshop facilitators. Some of these roles require a high level of skill in specific areas while other skills can be learned on the job.

The time commitment for a volunteer can vary widely. Some work requires less than five hours over two days a month, for example, coordinating the collation and posting out of *OWN Matters*. Other jobs, such as office work, require a commitment of perhaps five to six hours once a week or once a fortnight. Being involved at a management or coordination level can mean a variable time commitment, while the time required for other roles, for instance, training and facilitation, can be negotiated to suit individual needs.

Why not phone me (9247 7046) to arrange a time to come in and see how we operate, have a chat about your interests and skills and check out the role descriptions of jobs that might appeal to you?

***Dorothy Cora***

## **OWN Matters**

is the Newsletter of the  
Older Women's Network NSW 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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### **Audio Version**

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no extra cost.

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# Point of View

It's the middle of the night and I can't sleep. To distract myself, I have the radio on but it isn't helping.

I am like that woman in the fairy tale, *Rumpelstiltskin*, you know, the one who was forced each night to weave a huge pile of straw into gold before morning. In my scenario, I feel forced to sift for meaning and useful information among the endless days of commentary, rhetoric and inflated language that passes as news these days.

It seems to me that at least once a day we must learn what is "unAustralian" and what it means to be a "real Australian". My examples could comprise a long list, so I will only include here a few examples. "Real Australians have a right to feel aggrieved at the recent behaviour of refugees in detention centres", (Acting Minister for Immigration, Daryl Williams), or "Australians have had enough" (Simon Crean), or the fluid range of definitions put forth by the Prime Minister almost every week. To whom in the electorate are these politicians appealing?

We're also told that Australians 'have lost their innocence' since the dreadful loss of life in Bali, and we could be forgiven, surely, for thinking that only Australians died that night. Before Bali, we lost our innocence that fateful day, September 11, and before that it was Port Arthur (28 April 1996) and before that it was when Labor MP John Newman was assassinated by a bullet outside his home in Cabramatta on 5 September 1994. And I remember that same phrase being used after the Hilton bombings and during the Vietnam War. I'm sure there have been countless other times, too.

What is this innocence thing? Do we keep renewing our supply on a regular basis? How many times can we lose it before it's all gone? The word 'innocence' is used, too, to describe certain deaths – for example a comment like "innocent people died in this tragedy". Does this mean the world is divided up into two groups – innocent and guilty? If so, how do we know which group we are in and how can we tell one group from another?

And have you noticed the increasingly frequent use of militaristic language? How many times have you heard the term 'pre-emptive strike' used recently, and in what context? Here's one example among many. Just last week, a *Sydney Morning Herald* reviewer used the term to describe a fictional mother's attempt to change the problematic relationship between herself and her teenaged daughter. How can we explain the intention behind such a description? Is this a journalist picking up on what's in the air, or yet another example of the media helping politicians psych us up for an inevitable war?

Perhaps you too share my feeling that we are reluctant characters being swept along as part of someone else's narrative? What words can describe our experience? Where will our voices be heard?

**Pearlie McNeill**

# OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

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Your four coordinators have 'hit the ground running' in what seems to be shaping up to be a very busy and productive year for NSW OWN. We have met and finalised our duties and slotted a calendar of events into the remaining six months of our term in what we expect will be an 'eventful' year. Our agreed upon roles and responsibilities are as follows:

**Pat Simpson:** General administration, draft policy formulation, employment related matters, finance committee, liaison with *OWN Matters* team, liaison with OWN groups in Sydney, Sutherland, Macarthur and Newcastle.

**Mollie Smith:** General administration, Wellness Coordination Group liaison, Public Relations Committee, liaison with Theatre Group, liaison with OWN groups in Wagga Wagga, Bellingen, Mid-Mountains, Woy Woy and Wyong.

**Cate Turner:** General Administration, constitutional matters, representative (Treasurer) on OWN Australia National Council, liaison with Aboriginal Support Circle, liaison with OWN groups in Sydney, Bankstown (Greek) and Ashfield (Greek).

**Anne Warren:** General Administration, Advocacy Coordination Group liaison, liaison with OWN groups in Kiama, Shellharbor, Southern Highlands, Wollondilly and Nowra.

Any groups not listed above will be catered for through links with other Management Team members, whose names will be listed in the next *OWN Matters*.

'General administration' is a term that covers diverse tasks such as opening the mail and dealing with it,

letter writing, answering phone calls and making significant and insignificant decisions, and then acting on them!

OWN NSW has been successful in gaining funding for two Seniors Week projects. The first, *Fostering Wellness*, is aimed at expanding wellness activities in regional areas. The second project is smaller in funding, but large in vision. Called *Listen Up to Older Women*, it involves running training workshops in story telling and then holding storytelling events in two regions. Coordinators recently met with Sally O'Loughlin and Julianne Sanders from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) to finalise details of both projects.

All is not as bright and shiny as it could be for OWN NSW. Our submission to the director of DADHC, Margaret Allison, was unsuccessful. We had asked for funding to employ a permanent worker for four days a week to support the expansion of OWN NSW. The reply, from Bronwyn Harrison, Director of the Office for Ageing, was not entirely negative. She suggested that we might be successful at a later date, which is enough to keep our hopes alive for the time being.

Our state conference will be held at Sancta Sophia College, Sydney University on 24 and 25 July, 2003. A conference planning committee has been formed with two vacancies. If you are interested in joining it, please phone the office for information about the time and date of the first meeting.

Happy and peaceful New Year to all. Let's make 2003 a constructive and rewarding year for OWN.

**Pat Simpson, Mollie Smith, Cate Turner, Anne Warren, Coordinators**

## Messages to Politicians

As a NSW State Election must be held by 22 March at the latest, we have planned a postcard campaign to carry a message to politicians regarding our strengths, needs and contributions to community life. We urge all members to send a postcard to your local Member, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

Choose one of the comments below, or make up your own, to write on the postcards:

- ‡ Older women VOTE. Our future is your future.
- ‡ We are older women and we VOTE. More funding for OWN NSW now.
- ‡ More funding for OWN means a healthy future for older women.
- ‡ More funding for the active ageing and their support groups.

Please see the enclosed flyer which contains names, positions and addresses of relevant politicians to whom your postcards should be sent.

## Advocacy Out West

OWN members have been active on consultative committees in Western Sydney, and some of our lobbying has begun to bear fruit. For example, NSW Health has introduced a policy on community consultation and Wentworth Area Health Service (WAHS) Nepean is now actively implementing it.

In December, a draft policy framework on consumer participation was completed, and will be ratified early this year.

WAHS has also formulated a patient discharge plan and is currently working on its implementation. WAHS is a forerunner in NSW Health on this important issue.

Another area of advocacy activity where OWN members are involved is the Homecare/Home and Community Care training and development program, which is presently under review. We are involved in evaluating the program and having a say on the curriculum. If you are interested in being on a Home and Community Care advisory committee, phone the OWN office for contact details for your area.

Some readers may have received assistance from a Homecare worker and your feedback and suggestions on the service would be very helpful. Please forward them to Hedi Roggeveen, C/- OWN NSW, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point, 2000.

If you live in Sydney's west, you might also be interested in attending a "meet the candidates" sessions organised by Western Sydney Community Forum. A list of questions on, for example, transport, housing and justice has been forwarded to the candidates with a request that they respond in writing. Session dates are Liverpool City Library, 12 February, 6 – 8pm; Blacktown Workers' Club, 19 Feb, 6.30 – 8.30pm; Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre, 25 Feb, 6.30 – 8.30pm; Penrith City Library and 5-March, 6.30 – 8.30pm. For more information phone Joan Gennery, 9897 2677.

**Hedi Roggeveen**

## Advocacy in Newcastle

In the November *OWN Matters*, I reported on the activities of our newly formed Advocacy Working Group.

Our letters of concern to various politicians all ended up in the lap of the Minister for Health, Craig Knowles, who sent a reply in which he addressed the issue of access to emergency care in the Hunter region, but ignored the issue of hospital waiting lists. He did at least acknowledge an increase in demand for emergency care, particularly among people aged over 80, and he informed us about a new Emergency Department at John Hunter Hospital which opened on 24 October.

You'll be heartened to hear that the Minister stated, "I would like to assure you that age and gender are not criteria for access to emergency care. The only criterion used to assess admission is clinical priority." We'd like to believe that.

Last year we distributed simple questionnaires to our members to help identify their concerns in more detail. Although the number of questionnaires returned was disappointingly low, it seems that another area of great concern (other than health services) is public transport, particularly unfriendly bus timetables and a lack of synchronisation between bus and rail timetables. Lack of luggage space on the Newcastle-Sydney rail service was also identified. We are following up these issues with letters to appropriate bodies.

Another important initiative of the Advocacy Group is to have a Meet the Political Candidates forum, which we hope will be on 6 February. We will invite like-minded groups to send representatives, so long as they focus on issues relevant to older women – we don't want the event shanghaied.

**Pat Carlton**

PS. For more news from Newcastle OWN, please see *At and Beyond the Rocks*.

### Public Liability for OWN groups in NSW

OWN groups that are members of OWN NSW do not need to take out their own Public Liability or Products Liability Insurance as they are covered under the insurance policies of OWN NSW. Public Liability insures groups for personal injury or damage to property arising out of their activities. It covers members, visitors and the public.

In order to successfully claim against OWN, a person who has been injured or whose property has been damaged, must show that OWN, or its members, have been negligent and that the negligence caused the injury or damage.

Products Liability insures OWN for its legal liability arising out of products sold or supplied, such as food and beverages at meetings, produce sold for fundraising and so on.

For more information, please phone Kris Ferguson on 9247 7046.

## **What is a Commonwealth Carelink Centre?**

To help you live independently in your own home, Commonwealth Carelink Centres provide free information about community aged care, disability and other support services.

Centres have local knowledge about:

- \* the range of services available and how to contact them
- \* who is eligible to receive the services
- \* whether there are any costs associated with receiving the services, and
- \* aged care assessment services for access to Community Aged Care Packages or entry into aged care homes.

How to contact a Centre: You can obtain information over the phone, by mail, fax, email or visit one of the 60 shopfronts established around Australia.

Phone Freecall 1800 052 222 to be connected to your nearest Centre; to be connected to another region you want information about; to find the location of the nearest shopfront.

If you are online, go to [www.commcarelink.health.gov.au](http://www.commcarelink.health.gov.au)

## **Make choices that are right for you!**

Did you know that at present only one in ten people over 70 live in residential aged care facilities?

*What help is there to help you stay in your own home?*

Home and Community Care, Community Aged Care Packages and respite care are examples of some of the services available. They can provide help with cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing and home maintenance. They can also provide you with personal care such as bathing and dressing, banking and transport.

The services are available on the basis of degree of need. Adequacy of the available resources varies according to supply and demand in different areas and regions. Waiting lists can sometimes be long, and charges will apply, but may be determined according to your capacity to pay.

Residents living in retirement villages\* are entitled to HACC services and are also eligible for a restricted allocation of Community Aged Care Packages, but only if the retirement village has not contracted to supply a similar service.

Respite services help carers to take a break from the physically and emotionally demanding role of caring for someone in the home. These services include carer resource centres, day care centres, 'in home' respite services, short-term care in residential aged care facilities, financial assistance and activity programs.

*What if I can't remain in my own home?*

Hostels provide accommodation and personal care while nursing homes provide high level care and cater for people who are more frail.

Note! Residents in a retirement village in the same complex as a hostel or nursing home do not have automatic entry to the higher level of care. They will be assessed and enter the system according to need, on the same basis as those who do not live in the village.

If you would like more information, phone Seniors Information Service on 13 12 44 from Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

\* Retirement Villages are not Residential Aged Care Facilities. They are self-funded and self-care establishments.

## **We know you're out there!**

We are looking for women with enthusiasm, commitment and a good sense of humour to join our Theatre Group. If you would like to sing and dance, love approval and applause, come along and give it a go.

We are friendly, accepting, vital and fun-loving older women who have our say in a theatrical, satirical way about issues that affect older women, and we'd love to welcome you.

All you have to do to become a member of the 2003 cast is turn up at the Abraham Mott Hall, Millers Point, any Tuesday at 11am. If you'd like to talk to someone before coming along, ring Judith Mustard on 9560 2668.

## **Questions for Candidates**

A flyer in this month's *OWN Matters* contains thirteen questions for State candidates to answer on issues that are important to us. If you need more copies, please photocopy them or phone OWN and we will send you more.

## Theatre Group Report



Well, here we are again, the start of another year, but first I have to tell you about the last shows that we did in December 2002.

On the 5 December we entertained people at the Woolwich Village Christmas party. They were a lively bunch, laughing in all the right places, and giving us a wonderful reception along with a lovely lunch.

Next we were off to Yagoona to entertain Pat Kirby's exercise classes. Well, we thought we were energetic! You should have seen these women. It just goes to show how exercise can improve your life. It was wonderful to watch them whirling around the hall. They really enjoyed the show and thought our presentation was "terrific". We thought we were pretty good too!

Then came the show of all shows. We fronted up to entertain the *Aim for Fitness* group run by the South Sydney Community Health Program. Well, we didn't put a foot wrong and the audience appreciated everything we did, especially our chorus line kicks. We enjoyed every minute of this show and it came across to the audience, because they gave us a wonderful reception. They had invited us to lunch, and after such a good show the lunch was really appreciated.

Not all of last year was good news. We lost a very loved member of our group in a road accident, and we miss her a great deal. Then of course we had resignations from Peggy Hewett, Lucy Porter and Marie Williams, and although we are shattered at them leaving, we hope that they all enjoy their free time.

More bad news ... our musician, Ann Cunynghame, has gone into hospital for a few running repairs and Elizabeth, our other musician, is off to Cambodia for a month, and for the first time ever, we've had to cancel some shows! By March we'll be back on the road.

Well, that's it for now, except to wish us all a happy New Year and please, let us hope that it's a peaceful one.

PS. One bit of news to enjoy: Brigid Sen and her husband became grandparents for the first time – congratulations to you both.

**Josie Jackson**

### **When You've had Bad Service ...**

When you've had a bad experience, don't get mad, post it on [www.notgoodenough.org](http://www.notgoodenough.org).

## Funky Farewell Afloat

The day was fine, the air sea-laden and balmy as thirteen members of the Theatre Group and fourteen Friends of the Theatre Group gathered on the South Steyne ferry for our annual end-of-year lunch. No rehearsals today; this was our reward for working so hard throughout the year!

What a great venue! The South Steyne is really huge and could probably cater for hundreds of people, but on this day, our day, they catered for us alone. This meant that we could kick up our heels, go to town, hang from the rafters and sing to our hearts content without a care!

For nearly three hours we delighted in superb company, food and service. Our guest of honour was Bernice Lynch; our friend and talented guitarist who devoted so many years to nurturing the Theatre Group and helping it grow. Bernice retired a couple of years ago due to ill health.

After lunch, despite our full tummies, the fun and festivities continued with the new cast singing a specially composed funky farewell song to the retirees: Peg Hewett, Marie Williams and myself. What a delightful surprise! What accolades! We thought all the farewell had been done at the Sydney OWN party the week before, but how mistaken we were! Misty-eyed and laden down with multicoloured posies, warm wishes and gifts we walked away from the party feeling overwhelmed by the love and generosity of our friends. The only sad note was the absence of our musical maestro, Ann Cunynghame, who had a fall on her way to the luncheon and was taken to hospital for observation.

From the time I joined the Theatre Group in 1992, I have been enlightened, educated and inspired, and I've been supported to accomplish things I never dreamt I could ever do in the 'olden' days. Thank you from my heart for the guidance, friendship, humour, sisterhood and loyalty which we have shared.

I would sincerely like to thank the cast and the Friends of the Theatre Group (past and present) who have, with their talent, determination, sense of fun, wit and humour, contributed so much to its success.

**Lucy Porter**

## Fran Bodkin Narrates Aboriginal Stories of Sydney

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At the final meeting of the Aboriginal Support Circle for 2002, our guest speaker was Fran Bodkin. Fran learned the Dharawal language from her mother, as well as a fund of stories, which she uses as a teaching aid for her students. Her mother instructed her that a story must teach about law, must contain a lesson, and must also contain a secret. We were able to work out the laws and the lessons in the two stories that Fran told us, but we had to discover the secrets for ourselves.

To give some examples, we learned that charm will win where force will not, goannas are always cranky, and that we should stamp three times if we see a snake, to ask it to go away!

Fran was fairer skinned than her brothers and sisters. She was removed to foster parents several times, but she always managed to get back home. She left school at fourteen, as she was told she was "only suitable for menial work". Fran later enrolled at Fort Street Night School and went on to Macquarie University. Although subjects dealing with the biological sciences and the environment interested her the most, she obtained a master's degree in visual literacy. She has worked as an investigative researcher at NSW Parliament House and has also worked for Jack Lang.

Finally, Fran obtained a doctorate

in indigenous medicine at a Canadian university, mostly through correspondence via the internet. (There is no such degree course offered at an Australian university.) She has written two encyclopaedias of plants and a third book is going to be published soon. Fran now works as a park ranger and lecturer at Mount Annan and the Botanic Gardens in Sydney, and has run courses, together with her husband, for WEA.

Fran explained that there are approximately 2,000 species of native plants in the Sydney region, of which 95% are useful. According to Fran, inhaling the scent left by crushed juvenile leaves of Eucalyptus Globulus helps memory retention – but the plant has to be no more than four years old. Unfortunately, the effect does not last, but think how useful it would be to have the tree at hand, growing in a container!

**Pat Zinn**

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## Women Working For Peace

I recently attended an inspiring international women's event organised by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Auckland, New Zealand. This event lasted eight days from 28 November to 2 December. Over 90 women representing 30-odd countries discussed issues of concern and decided on future actions. It was a healing experience being with women from all parts of the world, getting to know each other, laughing together, being sad together, united by our commitment to peace and our hope for a better chance in life for all the children in the world.

Our meetings took place at a beautiful Marae, (Maori meeting house) in the grounds of Auckland University. Maori Elders welcomed us in a most impressive ceremony.

How can I do justice to describing eight days of intensive activity in so few words? How can I convey the passion in the voices of our indigenous sisters during the seminar on *The Effects of Colonisation on Indigenous Women and the Environment*? Dynamic workshops were held on culture, racism, prejudice, colonisation, militarism, violence against women and economic issues, with discussions continuing late into the night!

To complete our experience we were taken on a guided tour with a Maori woman as our guide. The tour was specially organised to help us see for ourselves the effects

of colonisation on the environment. While showing us a small harbour that was once one of their main fishing grounds, our guide explained that the colonisers had used it as a dumping ground. Thankfully this beautiful harbour is in the process of being restored.

On 30 November, the day that Sydney people were marching for peace, I suggested to women that we gather at noon in the forecourt of the Marae for our own Peace Walk. I spoke about people in Sydney and all over the world marching for peace; about the suffering of women during a war (rape, loss of home and family, and psychological trauma); about our leaders and their grandiose language, and pleaded for a press release urging them to stop their war plans. We formed a circle and sang songs of peace and unity, including *We Shall Overcome*, and danced.

I cannot stop marvelling at the women's energy that builds human bridges of compassion and friendship, counteracting the terror and alienation of militarism.

If you would like more information about WILPF, please phone 02 9699 4499 or check out our website at <http://www.dragon-amazon.net/wilpfaustralia/join/home.htm>

**Dorothy Buckland-Fuller**

# Letters to the Editor

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## Nerve Tea

I have just enjoyed reading the latest edition of *OWN Matters* and would like to make a comment regarding the article on insomnia.

For some women who would like to try a herbal remedy to help them sleep there is a wonderful concoction called Nerve Tea that can be purchased at Newton's Pharmacy which is situated in York Street, Sydney, just opposite the QVB. The tea is made up of herbs, and smells of lavender and camomile, so is quite pleasant to drink.

It used to be about \$5 per packet so it is not very expensive. It is really worth trying.

If women are on medication, it might be worthwhile consulting a doctor before using it, but it is a very mild and pleasant remedy that worked for me when I was having terrible problems sleeping several years ago.

**Maureen King**

## If you're online, please help!

The National Breast Cancer Centre is having trouble getting enough people to click on the National Breast Cancer site daily to meet our quota of donating at least one free mammogram a day to a disadvantaged woman. It takes less than a minute to go to the site and click on "donating a mammogram" (the pink window in the middle). It's free – it doesn't cost you a thing. Our corporate sponsors/advertisers use the number of daily visits to donate mammograms in exchange for advertising.

Please tell ten friends to tell ten today! Go to <http://www.thebreastcancersite.com>

**Health Promotion Coordinator**

## Did I hear this?

Shortly before Christmas 2002, I caught a glimpse of a video clip of a group of young Americans wearing Santa Claus caps singing a ghastly parody of Isaac Watts' hymn, *Joy to the World*. "We'll rule the world with tanks and guns." Did I hear that or was I hallucinating?

**Helen Monaghan**

## Let's be more provocative!

Hurrah for the letters of disagreement in last month's Letters to the Editor! I like to be stirred up!

Not that I want to read that our wonderful Theatre Group was pelted with rotten eggs on a country tour. Oh, no! But if such an absurd thing did occur, I fear it might be written up as "our appreciative audience showered us with warm hospitality and free-range eggs".

Let's not be too bland or too dull. When something funny, awful or controversial happens at meetings or conferences, on Theatre Group tours or excursions, write about it...tell it all!

**Joan Johns**

## It's a worry ...

From the SMH, Saturday, 16.11.02  
"Quotable Quotes"

**"She didn't seem to want us there"** – One of two British mental health workers who visited and chatted to a paranoid schizophrenic patient without realising she was dead. (The words in bold appeared like that in the Newspaper.)

**Renee Simons**

## Protesting is "good for you"

A study at the University of Sussex has found that as well as potentially changing the world, participation in protests and demonstrations is actually good for you.

Research by psychologist, Dr John Drury, suggests that group protests, or "collective action", may have health benefits for participants because it encourages a sense of empowerment, mutual support and unity.

The study involved more than 40 in-depth interviews with activists and protesters from a variety of backgrounds. Participants described more than 160 experiences of collective action, including traditional marches, fox hunting sabotages, anti-capitalist street parties, environmental direct action and industrial mass pickets.

Dr Drury found that the protestors experienced events as joyous occasions, almost without exception, and that they felt a deep sense of happiness and even euphoria at being involved. "Simply recounting events in interviews brought a smile to their faces," he added.

Over the last few years, psychologists have become more interested in how psychological and physical good health can be improved by positive experiences, which improve the speed of physical recovery, the ability to cope with stress and a reduction in pain, anxiety and depression.

"The take-home message from this research, therefore, might be that people should get more involved in campaigns, struggles and social movements," said Dr Drury. "Not only in the wider interest of social change, but also for their own personal good."

**From [www.sussex.ac.uk/](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/)**

## **Film Review -**

### ***Bowling for Columbine***

“Riveting and scary, *Bowling for Columbine* is a vision of a society racked by fear, riven by inequality and armed to the teeth. It is neither comforting nor easily wished away.” said the *New York Times* review.

I watched this film, weeping, for the six year old boy who took one of his grandfather's guns leaning against a wall, and took it to kindergarten. Bang, Bang, he went, and accidentally killed a little girl playmate. I also smiled, grimly, at the sardonic wit and black humour of this polemical and truly remarkable documentary.

The writer and producer, Michael Moore, is an untidy man who wears a baseball cap and glasses, and who takes us with him as he interviews many people in his graphic exposure of what is happening in America today. He has set out to examine America's obsession with violence and guns, a culture that is fuelled by military bravado, media hysteria and economic inequality. The right to bear arms is written into the American Constitution.

The title of the film comes from the shooting of twelve high school students and two teachers by two teenage boys in a small town in Michigan called Columbine.

That America is a country traumatised by terrorism, teenage shootings and economic inequality is made abundantly clear in the interviews Moore has with a wide cross section of people, from gun-toting suburbanites to militia men, to the mayor of a town called Virgin where the Council by-laws demand that every household owns a gun for self protection!

In order to get an interview with Charlton Heston, president of the National Rifle Association, he joins the organisation himself.

Heston, I might say, does not come across with the same glamour as his film persona!

Another interesting interview is with the 'evil' rock star, Marilyn Manson, who, with other bands popular with young people, is often easily blamed for teenage violence.

This is a very timely film, given what is happening today and provides much food for thought. To me this is mandatory viewing.

**Muriel Hortin**

### **Wella Longa at Sutherland**

As the beginning of the third year of our hugely successful Older Women's Network Wellness Centre, we have no security of funding after June 2003. South East Sydney Area Health budget has been cut and they can't promise us ongoing funding.

A similar situation faced the original Older Women's Network Wellness Centre in Bankstown after its second year. Then, the women sent simple, heartfelt letters to politicians saying how the Centre had affected their lives. They acted as a life raft, and in its third year, rescue came with recurrent funding.

Boosting OWN-type health maintenance programs is a low cost preventative of older age dependency.

Our experience provides the evidence needed to convince current or aspiring MP's of the value of preventative health programs as practised in all our Wellness Centres.

The current pre-election period is a vital opportunity to lobby them! Write to local MP's, candidates and to the Minister for Health to say what wellness practices have meant to us physically, mentally and emotionally. Let women-power be our life raft for financial rescue!

**Noreen Hewett**

## **Voluntary Euthanasia**

On 11 January, Dorothy Simons, Vice-President of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, talked to us about Voluntary Euthanasia.

Twenty-five of us squished into the back room at Windmill Street and out onto the patio. Dorothy passed on lots of information and answered many questions.

As older women, we have opened the door just a smidgen onto the compelling matter of our death. To continue the process, can we be so courageous as to begin unravelling the myths and tightly clutched fears surrounding our own (possible) terminal illness, and inevitable death? How might we set about creating intimate friends who could give unconditional support to us during the close of our lives? These are some of my own questions. What are yours?

Thanks to Jan Monson and Pat Zinn for arranging the meeting and to Louise Anike for being in the chair.

**Jill Robinson**

P.S. Many women present were interested in another get-together. Would continuing the process in this way be helpful to you? If you would like to meet again, contact Jan Monson, c/- OWN Sydney, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point, 2000.

## **Advanced medicine**

A British doctor says, "Medicine in my country is so advanced that we can take a brain out of one man, put it in another and have him looking for work in six weeks."

An Australian doctor says, "That's nothing, we can take a brain out of one person, put it in another and have him preparing for war in four weeks."

The American doctor, not to be outdone, says, "You guys are way behind. We just took a man with no brain out of Texas, put him in the White House, and now half the country is looking for work and the other half is preparing for war."

**Mary Jenkins**

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## **OWN Sydney Highlights**

A big welcome to 2003! Let's continue to make every effort to work together for a healthy, peaceful and just future.

OWN Sydney had its first birthday last November, and at our quarterly members' meeting we took the opportunity to look back on our progress (we thought we'd done well), and to look forward.

Our dream for 2007 is 2,000 members! Suggestions about how this growth might be achieved ranged from recognising the value of OWN both to ourselves and to the community, and promoting OWN Sydney more broadly. One way we can make ourselves more visible is through the Theatre Group, and speaking to community groups about the benefits of belonging to OWN.

There was also considerable interest in producing a promotional video about OWN, drawing on our own experiences, and including images of OWN activities. For this we need support from professionals from whom we can learn new skills. The idea has been taken up by the women who are producing our *Older Women's Right to Safety* quilt, and before Christmas, they invited Digby Duncan (OWN member and producer of our *Off The Beaten Track* video) to a meeting to share her experiences of film-making. On 15 January, we began to think about what we might talk about on the video. It was interesting to hear women's views about what OWN does for them and what they do for OWN. If you would like to participate, come along to the quilt making session on 12 February.

The quilt making itself is progressing well, giving much pleasure to women as they sew, chat and plan. Planning for the forum on 28 April, where the quilt

will be launched, is now underway. If you would like to be involved in any of the above, call Joy on 9251 9333.

The year concluded with a well attended end-of-year party, which included a spectacular operatic performance by the Theatre Group, which had us in stitches. To mark the retirement of Peg Hewett and Lucy Porter, coordinators of the Theatre Group, and to acknowledge their tremendous commitment to the Theatre Group and to OWN, OWN NSW presented them both with a scroll of honour and Sydney OWN conferred life membership upon them. OWN NSW also gave them bouquets of purple, green and white flowers in appreciation of their long years of hard work. As usual, members provided a splendid festive lunch, which we enjoyed on a fine sunny day under the Robinia tree. Passing party-goers seemed to appreciate the occasional burst of serenading and the buzzing atmosphere.

We're off to a flying start in 2003, having already held two discussion groups. Twenty five women attended an engaging discussion on Voluntary Euthanasia on January 11, addressed by Dorothy Simons, Vice-President of the Association. We remind members that Advanced Directives are available at OWN, phone 9247 7046.

The discussion on the Commonwealth Government Carelink Centres, addressed by Donnette Rigney was informative. See p. 5 for more information.

OWN Sydney's next quarterly members meeting on Tuesday, 11 February, will be addressed by Carmel Tebbutt, Minister for Ageing, Disability and Home Care. We are looking forward to seeing lots of you there to meet the Minister as she has asked to have the time to circulate amongst

members. Please take the opportunity in this pre-NSW state election period to come along and hear her and to discuss your concerns. For an outline of the meeting see the enclosed flyer.

***Louise Anike and Joy Ross***

## **Wollondilly OWN**

We've had a busy year, and I feel that we've had a fair amount of success in our endeavours.

Our meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at the Picton Community Resource Centre with around sixteen to twenty members attending. We regularly participate in a variety of local activities including gym visits, gentle exercise classes, Scottish country dancing, tai chi and drumming.

During the year we made two trips to Bundanoon for a day of circle dancing; visited Sydney to see *Copenhagen*; attended the *Classics at Thirlmere* annual performance; and hosted a lunch to which we invited members of Southern Highlands OWN. After the lunch, our Wollondilly drummers gave a performance (we know we need more practice!) and Margaret Conner from Southern Highlands led us in some circle dancing.

Later in the year, Southern Highlands invited us to their Christmas party. We had some wonderful entertainment from Illawarra OWN Silvert-OWNS and the Southern Highlands group, which are to be congratulated on hosting such a wonderful day. I think the staff at Mittagong RSL were quite impressed by us.

During 2002 we had speakers from Inner Space, NSW OWN, Macarthur Astrological Society, the Benevolent Society and WILMA Women's Health Centre.

Their talks were interesting and informative and very well received. The Macarthur Astrological Society invited us to attend one of their open night viewings from their telescopes, but it was mid-winter (the best time for star-gazing), and only one member was prepared to face the freezing cold.

In 2003 we plan to start a Drop-in Centre in Picton. Our aim is to advertise and promote OWN by having one of our group attend the Resource Centre each Wednesday to try to reach older women in the community who have not heard about us. The Centre will provide older women with a place to have a cuppa and a chat and to learn what OWN has to offer. We will have copies of *OWN Matters* on hand, which should help them understand what we are on about.

Our Christmas party was held in a small restaurant in Thirlmere on 7 December and as we had the place to ourselves we drummed our socks off! Thirlmere did not know what had hit them – one minute a sleepy village and the next, fifteen older women banging away on their drums, Argentinian style.

Our holiday plans for Myuna Bay in February 2003 are well under way. It looks as though it's going to be a fun week. We are all hoping for fine weather, but either way the itinerary will have something for everybody.

**Barbara Malcolm**

### **Macarthur OWN**

Marj Bosley, who has been awarded a Life Membership of our group, began Macarthur OWN in 1997 with support from the Benevolent Society (we call it "Ben Soc") and others in the community.

Ben Soc has been of tremendous support to our group. They let us use their photocopier (though we sometimes use our own paper) and computers, and they act as our 'mailbox'. Workers at Ben Soc

keep us informed through their newsletter of low cost classes they are running that might be of interest to our members, for example, computer classes, aromatherapy sessions, drumming groups (about ten of our members attend this) and self-esteem classes.

One of the services that Ben Soc offers is counselling and groupwork for women who are dealing with domestic violence. Older women are often referred to our group for confidence building and further support, which we are happy to offer.

Most women join our group because they are housebound and isolated. They soon feel very comfortable in the friendly and welcoming atmosphere that we have created, and the fact that our members are from different socio-economic groups and ethnic backgrounds. Everyone receives a birthday card, and a get well card if they are sick, and if they go to live in another area they usually stay in touch.

We now have a membership of 62 with up to 40 women turning up for weekly meetings and events, which are held every Wednesday. On the first Wednesday in the month we have a business meeting, on the second we might have a singalong or poetry readings, on the third we have a guest speaker on topics as diverse as local police issues, gardening and cooking, and on the fourth, we go on a bus trip somewhere.

We rent a bus for the day (it now costs each of us \$10 – it used to be \$5 when we had funding) and we hire the same bus driver each month because he has tremendous knowledge of different areas. We've been on trips to Palm Beach, Bobbin Head and the Blue Mountains and we've toured Sydney icons such as Watson's Bay, the Conservatorium of Music and the Jewish Museum.

One of the challenges for the committee which organises social

outings and other activities for Macarthur OWN is to plan activities that keep our members happy and involved. They almost always succeed!

At a Christmas concert, *Thank You for the Music and All that Jazz*, some of our members performed skits and songs before a large audience. Ben Soc made a video of the concert and has promised us a copy. Viewing the video will be high on our agenda for 2003!

**Margaret Baker**

### **Newcastle OWN**

Late last year we had an interesting speaker from the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service and were able to present a raffle collection of \$50 as a donation to the important work of this Service.

Our group had some problems achieving stability in its Committee during the last year, but we have started the New Year with a full complement of members, and with myself in one of the coordination roles. We have an interesting program of activities planned for the first six months of the year, including speakers at general meetings, social outings, a special lunch to celebrate International Women's Day, an information stall at a major shopping centre during Seniors' Week, monthly discussion groups and a craft group. We are also looking into the possibility of holding a Wellness Day to celebrate our tenth anniversary in September.

Several of our members are already talking about attending OWN NSW and OWN Australia Conferences in 2003 – so the place is buzzing! There is much to do, especially actions to achieve publicity and promotion aimed at increasing our membership, which has dwindled of late, and raising our profile. These two aims, of course, go hand in hand.

**Pat Carlton**

## Keeping our feet on the ground!

There is a desperate need to protect our cities and towns from being ravished by developers, especially by developers who advertise units "for adults only".

Is this a healthy trend in any society? Is it a form of discrimination? Older women who are grandparents often care for children during school holidays. Quite a number regularly act as carers of their grandchildren to enable their parents to work and some even become permanent carers when marriages break down.

"The only way is up," developers cry. But not everyone agrees. Recently, a twenty-seven storey tower was submitted to Gosford Council to "bring back population" to the area. Local people reacted to the proposal in a township which fronts the broadwaters of Broken Bay as they did not want this sort of development there. Council voted for a revised proposal on a lower scale.

Residents of Lindfield (that Northern suburbs enclave of gracious homes and rolling lawns) also rose up to voice their concerns about unit development in their area. They waved placards and spoke out in defence of the 'backyard' as many Sydney-siders know it.

Politicians are forever blathering about keeping the nuclear family intact. What role does the backyard play in their policies? The backyard is the home of the barbie lunch and ball games and it's also a private place for reading the newspaper in a plastic chair in the morning sun! Are there good reasons for not retaining the backyard in density-affected Sydney? Or am I nostalgic for something that is lost forever?

As land becomes scarcer, preservation of historic buildings is also threatened by local Councils.

Regional OWN members could take note of how their local Councillors are voting, and pay heed to who they elect. (Some time ago, Mountains OWN worked with others to keep McDonalds out of their mountain scenery area and succeeded!)

**Enid Harrison**

## Doing Well

*Grandma reached the age of ninety seven  
Full of grit, fun, wisdom  
And sound mind.  
Her memory was intact.  
I was impressed with that until it came to me  
She only needed three  
Real facts for short term –  
Age, address and gender.  
And only one of them a number.*

*She remembered her past with diamond clarity.  
By ninety seven there were few around to  
Dispute her long term recollections  
Except five of her fourteen children  
Whose names she never knew  
But called everyone in turn  
Until one came –  
Marjorie winifred barbaraviole t may.*

*I, on the other hand  
Am struggling at sixty seven.  
I know my name,  
Recognise my street,  
Can name my friends and relatives  
Without a pause.  
Mostly.*

*It's not health or wealth  
Or lack of it that frightens me  
And makes me lose my grip.*

*It's numbers.  
Grandma never had to wrestle with them.  
To prove or disprove her sanity and youth.  
But if I forget my bankcard password  
Email number, drivers licence, passport number  
Medicare  
I'm almost there, certified unfit  
To live alone.*

*If I don't wear my date of birth  
Mobile number, motor registration  
On my person in my backpack or my wallet  
Camouflaged discreetly  
I'm at risk of being looked at with disdain by someone younger.  
If I stumble on a digit I relinquish to her insolent young gaze,  
The dignity of age.*

*I ask myself how Grandma would have fared  
In such fierce contact with the world  
So many numbers to remember, file, or carry  
Simply to survive.  
How lucid would she be at ninety three  
With tax file numbers, pension numbers, frequent flyer numbers  
Jostling in her head?*

*Not good I think.  
The next time I'm reminded of her superhuman strength  
And mental health  
I'll think of this.  
Perhaps I'm not so bad as I'd suspected  
Although I got a nasty jolt the other day  
Trying to release my bike chain  
With the letters of my email code.  
It didn't work.  
But then of course,  
Grandma didn't ride a bike at sixty,  
Did she?  
And if she had she wouldn't have to chain it to a post  
To keep it safe.*

*All in all I think I'm doing well.  
Don't you?*

**Ruth Richmond**

## Christmas Day on Bondi Beach

It's about 8.30 am on Christmas Day, 2002, and one of the radio announcers is talking about the great hordes of people coming to Bondi Beach to enjoy the day, and what an institution it has become for tourists to spend Christmas Day on Bondi Beach.

My mind immediately flashed back to Christmas Day in 1951, just a few months after I arrived in Australia. It was hot and windy. The beach was deserted. I was alone except for my children. My husband wasn't with me. He was probably doing some spare time work, even though it was Christmas Day, to earn a bit of extra money. My two eldest children, then aged 5 and 3 respectively, were having a wonderful time. I had nothing to shelter me from the blazing heat. I had no swimming costume. I didn't own one, hadn't thought I would need it. The sand was hot. It was getting into my clothing, into our food. And there were flies. Lots of them.

I was used to the cold English Christmas weather, where sitting on beaches was the furthest thing from our minds. It was a surprise to find buckets and spades in the stores, and swimming costumes.

I was unhappy, to say the least. Everything was so unfamiliar. Added to that, there was a plague of fleas in Sydney, and many food items were in short supply. I had no family of my own here. Just my husband's relatives, and I didn't know them very well. I wanted to go back to London. But we had no money. We were £10 immigrants, and had given up our passports. We had to stay two years or repay our full fare. I hated the place. I cried.

That was fifty-one years ago. Having been back to London in the winter, some years ago, I think I prefer Christmas in Australia. And I prefer living in Australia, too!

*Renee Simons*

## Making 'friends' with the locals

The old Queensland pub was crowded with merrymakers celebrating the opening of the all-weather airport. The Flying Doctor could land at any time – a great comfort to the people living in this isolated area. At the bar, I was wedged between a garrulous weather-beaten youth and a large-stomached farmer, who was the soul of brevity. The young man insisted on buying me a Bundie, Queensland's famous rum, and kept telling me I reminded him of his granny, while the farmer chewed on his roll-your-own cigarette, grunting occasionally. I was determined to get him talking, and thought that a direct question would do the trick.

Above the bar, in typical Queensland fashion, hung various interesting objects, one of which particularly fascinated me. I swivelled around to face my neighbour, looked him firmly in the eye, and enquired, "Is that an artificial leg I see up there?" A long pause, a grunt, then he tipped his wide-brimmed hat back on his head, opened his mouth slightly without disturbing the cigarette, and mumbled, "Yep – it's old Joe 'orner's, 'is spare – made it 'imself from a bit of downpipe – old Joe died last year." And with that marathon effort, he grabbed his overflowing beer and walked away to safer territory. Garrulous youth and I were served our rums.

"'Ave a dance?" he said. So, we wriggled through the throng of thirsty customers and did a few energetic turns on the dance floor. Above the din, I heard about his Flying Doctor experience. "Me 'orse threw me onto a tree stump – a bit of wood stuck in me thigh. Me 'usband ... (my mind and my feet did a double flip) sawed through the stake and the Flying Doctor fixed me up." *He* is a woman! Ye gods! I sympathised profusely with 'her', imagining the grisly scene, and quickly adjusted to the sex change.

It could only happen in a Queensland pub!

*Joan Johns*

## March is Women's History Month

*Every time a girl reads a womanless history she learns she is worth less.*

Myra and David Sadker

During the 1970s many people looking at Australia's history found that the stories of women who had fought for the vote, equal pay, better access to education and other important social justice issues were being lost, or forgotten. History taught in schools often didn't mention or acknowledge these women.

To counteract this lack, Helen Leonard, who was Convenor of the National Women's Media Centre initiated Women's History Month (WHM) in March 2000. Following Helen's sudden death in October 2001, a number of her friends decided to carry on her work on WHM.

Women's History Month defines history very broadly to include not only political and economic history but also broader cultural and social elements. For the first

couple of years, WHM in Australia has been mainly web-based, but that is changing as the focus broadens to celebrate women's lives through live events.

Every day there will be a new woman featured on website at [www.trivium.net/womenshistorymonth](http://www.trivium.net/womenshistorymonth).

We need you to nominate women. Nomination forms and more information from Danielle Hyndes at [dhyndes@webone.com.au](mailto:dhyndes@webone.com.au).

## Book Reviews

### ***The Seven Sisters***

Another surprise for readers is why novelists of good standing write some books. One of these is *The Seven Sisters* by Margaret Drabble. The novel is cast in the form of a diary kept by a middle-aged housewife who has left her seemingly perfect husband to begin a new life in one of London's shabbier suburbs, a world of supermarkets, dreary health clubs and single person households.

The reader may soon become impatient with Candida, the self-pitying, self-deprecating diarist/protagonist, her existence only enlivened by some adult education in which she re-visits the sixth book of Virgil's Aeneid. She dreams of tracing Aeneas' journey and is able to realise it by unexpected good fortune. This enables her to gather four former friends, her new and aged Latin teacher and a charismatic tour guide – the seven sisters of the title – to be her companions on the journey through North Africa and Southern Italy. This interlude, the only pleasing part of the novel, proves to be the time when Candida 'finds herself' in the company of this disparate group. A cynic may feel justified in seeing this as contingent upon Candida's comparative wealth.

This book is disappointing coming after Margaret Drabble's two recent brilliant novels, *The Witch of Exmoor* and *The Peppered Moth*.

**Helen Monaghan**

### ***Time to be in Earnest***

Sometimes I am surprised at how few 'borrowings' some books have in municipal libraries. One of these is P.D. James' memoirs, *Time to be Earnest*, which has been borrowed only four times since its acquisition in year 2000. This is

surprising considering the popularity of her novels.

In her seventy-eighth year, Phyllis James recalls her passage from bureaucrat to baroness, pausing for a few personal reminiscences and accounts of the publication of some of her books. It is 1997, and she captures the mood of the times: in her admission of relief at not travelling on the same flight as Salman Rushdie, and her perception that in the mass grief of the British population for the death of the Princess of Wales, there was a spirit that was not benign.

Her account of her journeys for lectures and book launches on both sides of the Atlantic leaves at least one of her female readers wondering how a woman seventy-seven years old could undertake such a program. Many readers will appreciate her devotion to the Anglican liturgy embodied in the 1606 *Book of Common Prayer*. She admits a preference for reading biography rather than fiction, but we are left with the feeling that her own fiction is better than this attempt at autobiography. Though an easy and pleasant read, it is, on the whole, pedestrian.

**Helen Monaghan**

### ***Eat First–You Don't Know What They'll Give You: The Adventures of an Immigrant Family and Their Feminist Daughter***

Sonia Pressman Fuentes published *Eat First–You Don't Know What They'll Give You: The Adventures of an Immigrant Family and Their Feminist Daughter*, when she was 71 years old.

Sonia Pressman Fuentes played a major role in the birth of the women's movement, and her tales of its early days will delight historians and those who are curious about the beginnings of this great social movement. She is

a born storyteller with a particular knack for seeing the humorous aspects of her life.

*Eat First–You Don't Know What They'll Give You* is published in paperback by Xlibris Corporation. If you have access to the internet, more information is available at [www.erraticimpact.com/fuentes](http://www.erraticimpact.com/fuentes), or ask your local bookshop to order it for you.

**Bernice Sandler**

### **Women Writers' Group**

*Love, Life and Laughter*, an anthology of women's voices, is the title of the women writers' anthology, which will be launched at the Festival for International Women's Day, 8 March 2003, at Richmond Park.

Orders can be taken in advance through Women's Cottage, 22 Bosworth Street, Richmond, phone 4578 4190.

**Sharon Payne**

### **Creative Writers' Festive Feasting**

Our fifth lunch, a pre-Christmas outing, was to City of Sydney RSL. The meal was memorable for the copious carafes of wine and an enormous plate of potato wedges. We all tried gamely to reduce the mountain of spuds but it defeated us. Fish was the main choice.

With the Silly Season looming, little or no deathless prose is being churned out, except by stalwart Jean. Your Bon Vivant reporter had unwisely made another date for pre-dinner drinks at City Tatts. With fuzzy head from the vino she tottered up to St Andrew's cathedral to recover in the dim and peaceful interior. Alas, the place was swarming with school children practising carols for some event. Feeling punished by the deities who disapprove of over-imbibers, Bon Vivant tottered onwards to City Tatts.

**Bon Vivant**

## Look at me!

They say that older people can't cope with a PC,  
Well, let's show them that they're wrong. Look at me.  
I sit here in my armchair from morning until night  
And when I press a button it turns off the light.

When I wake up in the morning and press number three,  
I see this person on the screen and he reads the news to me.  
When I am feeling poorly and I press number four,  
The doctor writes a script for me and sends it to my door.  
When I want to get my pension, or just a small amount,  
I just press a button and it goes straight into my account.

My friends know I'm too busy so they don't visit me.  
They all go to some boring place like the beach, and have some tea.  
My legs are pretty swollen now, I really don't know why.  
I need some information, I'll give number five a try.

The web site says I need to move and get some exercise.  
That's a bit old fashioned, I'm not sure that it applies.  
I need to get some shopping so I'll press number nine.  
I'm not eating that much lately, but I'm sure that I'll be fine.

I watch the movies on DVD, it's attached to my PC.  
I don't need friends to talk to because as you can see,  
I lead a full life here at home, although I'm all alone.  
My voice is getting weaker, I don't use it all that much.

If my friends don't have computers, well, we just can't stay in touch.  
I've moved everything that I need to use into my bedroom because I'm sure  
It's better to be lying down than my feet being on the floor.

I know all that's going on in all parts of the world.  
I can see the stories about the wars and watch as they unfurl.

There are lots and lots of buttons as far as you can see,  
But the buttons never smile or make a joke with me.  
These buttons have no feelings, they don't care when I get sad.  
They don't reach out with a helping hand and say, now don't feel bad.

I cannot share my thoughts with a keyboard made of plastic.  
It cannot shake my hand and say, hey, you are fantastic.  
I lead a very silent life, machines don't answer back,  
And contact with someone who cares is something that I lack.

My body is so weak now from lack of use you see,  
And I really want my old life back, it really suited me.  
I never thought technology, embraced by all the nation,  
Would find me living in such total isolation.  
I thought that all this modern stuff was just the cat's pyjamas,  
But I've found out much too late that it can really harm us!

**Josie Jackson**

## Haiku

Wind breathes on river  
Sparkling crystal dance begins  
Sunlight on Murray

**Joan Johns**

## Testing Ethics

How do we know whether or not that our actions are ethical?  
There's an overall way to "test" them, known as the Sunshine Test.

The idea is that you ask yourself if you would be happy for your friends and peers to know what you are doing. If the answer is no, then it's a fair bet that what you are doing is unethical.

The beauty of the test is that it implicitly takes into account society's values – as expressed by your friends/peers.

**Anon.**

## A Statement for Peace

A statement for peace developed by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is available at the OWN office for you to sign.

The statement is also available on the WILPF website [www.dragon-amazon.net/wilpfaustralia/](http://www.dragon-amazon.net/wilpfaustralia/)

## Tanka

A tanka is an extended haiku, in which a reference to nature is linked with a human response. The extra two lines are traditionally of seven syllables each, although there is some flexibility, as there is in haiku. Here are two examples. Have a go at some yourself.

*Kaleidoscope*

*of autumn splendour  
mellowed by the fading light.  
My passions ran high once –  
what was it all about?*

*Sculptor's chisel*

*revealing inner beauty  
contained in stone –  
your love and understanding  
works wonders for me.*

**Trudy Davis**

## Wedding Guest Blues

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Wearing a fixed smile, I teeter on the sloping lawn. Will the bride never arrive? I can think of only three reasons for a bride to be late, (1) she has a sudden gastric attack or (2) she has a nasty accident to her wedding dress or (3) she has changed her mind about getting married.

It is as hot as Hades. There are no drinks to ease the tedium of waiting.

I am in a beautiful garden in a far-flung Melbourne suburb with no means of escape. The only familiar faces belong to the bridegroom, my sister, her ex-husband and his present wife, my two nieces and their children. My nieces flit off to schmooze with younger fry and I've mislaid my sister.

I make small talk with my sister's ex-husband. He declares smugly that he and his present wife are ardent Creationists. They believe there is insufficient evidence for evolution. My smile becomes more fixed and I long for a drink.

The very nervous groom walks by. I wish him well. It's his second marriage so he should be used to it. I find my sister in a chair near the rotunda. She is slowly recovering from a brain aneurysm and not enjoying herself. She'd rather have a cuppa tea, a Bex and a good lie down. The presence of her ex-husband the Creationist and his wife irritate her. I fix her corsage and we swelter together in the hot sun. The men sweat in suits but the women are adorned in summery gear.

Finally the bride appears, statuesque in beige lace, supremely confident. She shows no contrition for her lateness. Perhaps that is why the groom looks so apprehensive.

Mercifully the celebrant's service is short, but the dreary photo sessions follow, inside and outside

the rotunda. Children blow bubbles from plastic dispensers.

Relentlessly the bridal caravanserai heads for a nearby glade for group photos. There are endless variations with relatives, of which the bride seems to have multitudes. I hide behind a tree with a couple but nobody invites me for photos anyway. Finally the bridal pair run out of kin and we are released to the reception venue, held in what was formerly a grand country home.

At last, we have drinks and yummy finger food, then sit at tables with lacy cloths. The caterers would come last in Food Serving in the Olympics. We wait ages for soup, having long ago devoured our one bread roll out of boredom.

The M.C, a family friend, has as much personality as a three-toed sloth, with unmemorable repartee. I am seated with my sister, a niece, the couple from behind the tree, and a genteel, twitty woman, all friends of my sister. The husband sits in

### Glucosamine sulphate 'might' help

For the first time, glucosamine has been shown to slow down the progression of joint degeneration in osteo-arthritis over a three-year period as well as reducing symptoms, according to a new study published in *The Lancet*.

Previous, smaller studies have shown that the food supplement may have a mild painkilling effect in the short to medium term. Researchers found that glucosamine appeared to be as effective at relieving the symptoms of osteo-arthritis in the knee as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), a class of painkillers commonly prescribed

to treat the condition.

morose silence so his wife talks to me. She expresses a poor opinion of marriage. My niece cruises other tables and my sister tires of the long waiting. With her impaired memory she wonders which course she has last eaten.

The speeches are finally over and the cake is wheeled out as we endure more photo sessions. Finally dessert is served.

A niece drives me to a nearby station and I have a long, tedious journey to Flinders Street station. There is rail work on the Loop and I don't know which tram to get to Spencer Street. Fortunately, the free tram arrives and it rattles me slowly around the city perimeter to Spencer Street. At last, a cuppa and a good lie down in my modest hotel room.

The most memorable wedding I've attended was in the 1980s in a Woolloomooloo terrace house. It was a riot of laughter, no speeches, no formal photos. A dodgy wedding guest stole several bottles of the groom's whisky. The couple eventually divorced because of the groom's alcoholism. But that wedding was fun.

*Helen McMaugh*

to treat the condition.

A spokesman for the UK's Arthritis Research Campaign said, "Trials on glucosamine sulphate show differing results, with some showing that it helps reduce symptoms and even progression of knee osteoarthritis, while others reveal it to be no more effective than a placebo.

On balance, from what we know so far, glucosamine does appear to offer pain relief for people with mild to moderate osteoarthritis of the knee."

**Arthritis Research Campaign**  
<http://www.arc.org.uk>

## Memory training

According to a report in the UK journal *Neuropsychology*, researchers have found that systematic memory training can help some patients with early-stage Alzheimer's disease.

At the beginning of the study, participants were tested for general intellectual ability, memory, naming, spatial perception, attention and executive brain function. Mood, behaviour and insight into memory problems were also evaluated. All of the participants were found to have impairment on at least one of the memory tests and some had difficulty performing the naming and perceptual tasks.

The patients who had difficulty with naming tasks were then given memory training. This comprised a set of twelve photos that included people in the patients' social network and famous people. They learnt one face-name association per week until they had learnt a total of six faces. Practising continued until a one-month follow-up test of what had been learned. Further tests of learning were carried out at three, six and twelve months after the end of the post-training trials.

Memory training improved performance on free recall of the trained items and the benefits remained six months after the training. At twelve months, scores remained above that seen at the beginning of the study, even without further practice. Some patients improved more than others. Those patients who were more aware of their memory problems were more likely to respond favourably to the memory training.

From [www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=2813](http://www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=2813)

## Aspects of Aboriginal Culture

Next year Ryde College will be offering a course entitled 'Aspects of Aboriginal Culture' for people wishing to learn more about Aboriginal culture.

The course will include an Introduction, Protocol, Identity, Traditional Living and Learning and Assimilation, Consultation, Reconciliation.

This course is for anyone who wants to extend their awareness of Aboriginal culture for personal or work-related reasons. It is conducted in a combination of evenings and Saturdays over 18 weeks.

The cost is the standard TAFE Administration fee for certificate courses and is payable at the time of enrolment. This course will also incur a material charge.

For more information phone Ryde College 9448 6278

## Putting Colds and Flu to Bed

The chances are most of us will have a cold this year – and some of us may even get the flu. But, what's the difference?

A cold starts slowly. Your appetite is normal, you might have a slight temperature after the first 24 hours, there's often a slight headache, a blocked or runny nose, sneezing, sore throat and general tiredness.

On the other hand, flu comes on rapidly. You'll have a high temperature in the first 24 hours, and for three to five days you will have a severe headache, muscular aches and pains all over, nausea (sometimes with vomiting), a feeling of exhaustion and poor appetite.

Despite the ever-growing spectrum of suggested preventers and treatments; there is no proven cure for colds or flu but time.

**Jo Hickman**

## George Bush's War on Women

Everyone knows about the US war on terrorism, and the war against Iraq on which it seems so intent. Less well known is what the *New York Times*, in an editorial this week, described as the Bush administration's "war against women".

On his first day in office two years ago, President Bush reimposed the "global gag" rule (first instituted by Ronald Reagan, then lifted by Bill Clinton), that bars any aid agency receiving American money if, as part of its services, it tells women where they can get an abortion, even in countries where abortion is legal.

Last year the US announced it would no longer support an international agreement on population control unless the terms "reproductive rights" and "reproductive health services" were removed from it.

At a recent UN special session on children, American delegates opposed measures to help girls who had been raped in war, because they were concerned that such assistance might include advice about emergency contraception or abortion.

"Most Americans would be shocked at the lengths American representatives are going to in their international war against women's rights to control their own bodies," the *New York Times* editorial said. It described the administration's preoccupation with undermining women's reproductive freedom as "second only, perhaps, to the war on terrorism".

You can read the full article at: [theage.com.au/articles/2003/01/16/1042520724084.html](http://theage.com.au/articles/2003/01/16/1042520724084.html).

## Anti-War Action

Candlelight Vigil every Friday at 5.30, Sydney Town Hall Square.

# 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:

*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  
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  
purpose 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.**

### Know the Risks

#### ***Preventing and Managing Heart Disease***

Dr Amanda Nagel, National Heart  
Foundation

10:30, Friday, 7 February, 2003

COTA (NSW)

Level 5, 280 Pitt Street Sydney.

Bookings are essential.

RSVP on 9286 3860

### Reconciliation/Treaty: The Way Forward?

Explore the need for a treaty,  
covenant or agreement to advance  
the reconciliation process.

5 pm to 9pm, Sunday, 16  
February

Robertson Village (Southern  
Highlands)

The main speaker will be Mr  
Michael Organ MHR, newly  
elected Federal Member for the  
South Coast seat of Cunningham.  
The event begins with a "Picnic  
Cuppa" on the Village Common,  
Robertson Heritage Railway  
Station Precinct, Yarranga Street,  
Robertson at 5pm.

To assist us with the catering for  
this function, we would invite you  
to RSVP by 9 February to 0248-  
851-394 (phone), fax 0248-851-  
334, or email  
[dtranter@acenet.com.au](mailto:dtranter@acenet.com.au).

Wingecarribee Reconciliation  
Group

### Jessie Street National Women's Library Lunch- hour Talk

Thursday, 20th February 2003.

Lady Mayoress' Rooms, Town  
Hall, George Street.

12 noon to 1.30 pm Entry \$20  
(non-members), \$15 (members).

Sandwich lunch included.

Speaker: Susan Steggall will  
discuss her book *Alpine  
Beach: A Family Adventure*, the  
story of the ten years she, her  
husband John, and children,  
Zeke and Zali, spent in the  
Haute-Savoie region of the  
French Alps.

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

### Window on Women

[www.windowonwomen.gov.au/  
wdw/index.jsp](http://www.windowonwomen.gov.au/wdw/index.jsp), is part of the  
Commonwealth Government 2001-  
02 Budget initiative - 'Informed  
Choices for Australian Women'.

It is a unique, single reference point  
designed to provide free access to  
integrated statistical data about  
women's needs and circumstances  
through a women's data warehouse  
facility.

It will allow you to search for  
historical and current data in key  
areas such as work, economic  
resources, education and training,  
health, culture, families, crime and  
safety.

### 'Australian Eco-coffins'

If you were interested in the article "The El Cheapo Funeral – a reply" on the Letters Page August *OWN MATTERS*, but had no luck with the address given, we have at last tracked down the suppliers and been provided with an information sheet. If you would like a copy please phone OWN on 9247 7046.

# Notices

## **International Women's Day Breakfast**

Saturday 8 March 2003, 8.30 am – 10.30 am

Ballroom, Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour

Tickets are \$39 (\$35 concession) or \$350 for a table of 10.

This is the 11th annual fundraising breakfast for the International Women's Development Agency. Guest speaker is Helen Hakena, Director of Leitana Women's Development Agency, a IWDA Project Partner in Bougainville.

IWDA promotes the equitable growth of people and communities, and the just distribution of basic resources and respect for the human rights of women.

The Older Women's Network will have a table at the breakfast.

If you would like to join us, please ensure that we receive your \$35 by 28 February.

Contact Joy Ross, 9247 7046, for more information.

## **Images of older women**

A photographer is looking for images of older women, eg from Theatre Group/Wellness participants, etc. to sell to a Computer Software Company. If successful, you will be paid for the photo sessions. Contact Sheridan Davey 0414998147.

## **Morning Ceremony**

8am, Sunday, 26 January.

Australia Day this year will begin with a morning cleansing ceremony at Woggan-ma-gule, or Farm Cove, in the Royal Botanic Gardens.

## **Kissing Frogs**

Glen Street Theatre, Belrose.

21 January - 9 February

Glynn Nicholas and Ross Nobel with Christine Anu and Geoff Paine.

With stories that resonate right across the nation, this unassuming play hits deep into the heart of drought-stricken Australia.

A solo exhibition by Ernie Gerzabek in the foyer of Glen Street Theatre shows more than 25 paintings, and runs concurrently with *Kissing Frogs*.

Ring the Box Office 9975 1455 for further information, or book online at [www.glenstreet.com.au/boxoffice/index.asp](http://www.glenstreet.com.au/boxoffice/index.asp)

## **Walk Against the War**

Sunday 16 Feb

12 midday, Hyde Park North

Organised by the Walk Against the War coalition.

### **Annual Subscription to *OWN Matters* is \$20.**

Please send your payment to:

*OWN Matters*, OWN NSW, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point NSW 2000.

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please accept my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a cheque for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ made payable to OWN NSW

Please debit the following credit card for \$ \_\_\_\_\_  Visa  Mastercard  Bankcard

Card number: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Exp. date \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

Name on card (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**Print Post Approved  
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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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**SURFACE  
MAIL**

**POSTAGE  
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AUSTRALIA**