



# OWN MATTERS

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

**No. 19 June 2003**

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## Parallel Strands

Derived from the central principle of OWN – upholding the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women in the community – the practice of wellness is achieved by OWN in two different, but interconnected and complementary, ways.

The first concerns the development of OWN groups which provide for friendships which spring from common interests, a need to learn, a need to express and a need to share. Breaking down social isolation and providing for intellectual and emotional wellbeing is a clear function of our OWN groups.

The second concerns the physical body. It rests upon the belief that older women should have access to exercise programs tailored to our specific needs that are gender specific and suitable for our age. It also provides for cultural diversity that embraces not only Anglo-Celtic origins but other ethnic derivations through, for example, the introduction of International Dancing.

Physical activities were developed as a twin or parallel strand to expand the concept of wellbeing. Much of the history of this development can be gleaned from the book that describes the establishment of the Bankstown Wellness Centre, *A Picture of Wellness*, which is still available from the OWN office.

Although there has been some discussion over the years as to which strand is paramount, it is now clearly accepted within OWN that they are interconnected. Both are necessary for the organisation to function with a definite difference from other women's groups, and of course are both consistent with the original intention of fostering older women's wellbeing.

This year, the Fostering Wellness project conducted by NSW OWN has encouraged regional groups to investigate setting up their own wellness programs, similarly, we may be witnessing the formation of another OWN group. Our conjoined twins are growing!

**Pat Simpson**

## **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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no extra cost.

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# Point of View

## **A 'free' trade off?**

Well after the 'love-in' between John Howard and George W Bush at his Texas ranch after the Americans stopped bombing Iraq, Australians will be happy to know that, as a reward for our help, we are now in line for an accelerated free trade agreement with the USA.

We haven't actually been told just how this will benefit us or whether it will be a good thing! In fact we haven't even been asked and it certainly hasn't been freely discussed, either in parliament or elsewhere, officially.

However, many concerned people's groups and organisations throughout Australia have been demanding clarification and a plebiscite about the implications of free trade ever since the World Trade Organisation started their talks, first in Seattle, then Doha and very recently in Homebush. A free trade agreement for Australia with USA will leave us wide open to a take over of our health, education, public services and media resources. How will our farmers view the possibility of surrendering their valuable wheat exports to Iraq to our 'friendly' American farmers? And so it goes...

The invasion of Iraq has exposed the underlying agendas of the military-corporate system.

While the bombs were dropping, boardroom executives were planning the privatisation of Iraq's natural assets and public services, decisions that will be set in place long before the Iraqi people will have any democratic say in their economic and democratic future.

The 'liberation' of Iraq, piously repeated over and over by Bush, Howard and Blair, goes hand in hand with free trade agreements, privatisation and the market fundamentalism that has been on their agenda for years.

Recently Australia commenced negotiations for a free trade agreement, with clear indication of it being linked to our participation in the invasion of Iraq.

Surely we are being a little naïve to expect benefit from such an agreement, when it is well known that the USA is prepared to act quite selectively against the free trade rules when it suits its national interests?

**Russ Aroney**

# OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

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Our Constitution provides for thirteen members on the Management Team; a maximum of six nominated from the regions and a maximum of seven from Sydney. The Management Team for 2002-2003 has been composed of the maximum number of members from regional groups, whose support for a statewide structure is obviously very strong. For a healthy continuation of our State body we encourage the participation of members who can lead us to further achievements in 2003-2004.

Nominations for election to the Management Team may be made at, or prior to, the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on the second day of the Conference, Friday 25 July, where the new Team will be endorsed. Nomination forms are enclosed with this issue of *OWN Matters*.

To encourage a large turnout at the conference, we will be paying two delegates' overnight accommodation, meals and transport costs. We are also offering to subsidise members

from each group to attend the Conference – please see details on the non-delegate registration form enclosed. The topics for workshop sessions on the first day of the conference are up to you, so please think about what issues are important to you, as a member of OWN, and send in your ideas and suggestions.

OWN Conferences are stimulating, thought provoking and lots of fun. It's a wonderful opportunity to hear what's happening across the State, explore some of the issues that we are facing, plan for the future and enjoy the ambience produced when 60-plus older women get together.

We have received \$3,500 from the Federal Department for Health and Ageing to run a Computer Skills for Volunteers program. Training will be being offered to those members who already work for an OWN group or the state body, and those who would like to do volunteer work but need to learn new skills, upgrade existing skills or learn new ones. Please contact Dorothy Cora if you are

## **Formation of OWN at Parramatta**

Preparations are going full steam ahead for setting up an OWN group in Parramatta. The first meeting will be held at Parramatta Town Hall, Church Street, Parramatta, on Monday, 23 June from 10.00am to approximately 12.30pm.

The historic Parramatta Town Hall is in the centre of Parramatta CBD and very close to Parramatta Railway Station and buses. The Theatre Group will be performing and will, as usual, enthuse the audience.

Information on the meeting is being circulated amongst various community groups in the area, for example, the Iranian Community Association, Aboriginal Community Group and a Chinese Group. It will be splendid if we can attract women from different cultures to OWN Parramatta.

If you know of any women in Western Sydney interested in coming to the first meeting, please refer them to me on 9630 5681.

**Mollie Smith**

interested in participating in this project.

The NSW Groups' Quarterly meeting was held on the 6 May. As representatives from groups gave their reports, it became very obvious that there are some problems that are shared more widely than was thought.

For instance, most groups report that they find it all but impossible to find suitable, low cost rooms for larger meetings and Wellness activities. Some groups are subsidised by local Councils or other organisations, while others are currently paying exorbitant costs to use Council facilities.

What was most valuable was to hear the varied experiences and clever ways that some groups had of minimising costs to their members.

By now the Federal Budget will have had an airing and members will be working through the fine detail to see how it affects us. Bring your concerns to your local group and the Management Team so that we can make representations on your behalf. As people say, 'the devil is in the detail'.

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

## **Australian eco-coffins**

We've had many requests for information about eco-coffins since the last notice in *OWN Matters*. Here is some more information.

You can buy low cost, bio-degradable, flat pack eco coffins from Tasmania. They are manufactured entirely from waste, recycled or sustainable lumber products, and are 98% degradable.

For further information contact Final Indulgence, 1425 Forester Road, Scottsdale, Tasmania 7261, phone (07) 5529 8617 or check their website [www.tascraft.com.au](http://www.tascraft.com.au)

## Older Women's Right to Safety at Home

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Congratulations to OWN Sydney for a superbly planned, informative and dynamic Forum on *Older Women's Right to Safety at Home* held on Monday, 28 April. More than 100 women (and a handful of men) listened to a panel of speakers talk about types of abuse, legal issues, police responses, medical ignorance, emergency accommodation and prevention.

Aboriginal Elder and OWN member, Betty Little, opened the Forum with an acknowledgement of country, saying she wished she could have seen some of her Aboriginal sisters in the audience.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon, Chairperson on the NSW Council on Violence Against Women, spoke about the important work being done at a grass roots level and the need for violence prevention strategies.

Dorothy then introduced Ann Symonds, a Member of the Legislative Council for 16 years until she retired in 1998, who launched the *Right to Safety at Home* quilts made by OWN Sydney women. Ann reflected back to 1975 as a year of opportunities and a decade of action for women. She recounted her thrill when she saw a woman driving a bus for the first time as a result of the Anti-Discrimination Act, and how impressed she was in 1985 to find that there were 300,000 pamphlets about Domestic Violence available in ten community languages. Ann congratulated the quilt-makers, and suggested that the quilts could be displayed in the Town Hall and in Parliament House.

Following Meg Bishop's explanation of the process of making of quilts and the inclusion of the peace symbol, we were once again thoroughly engaged by the OWN Theatre Group, whose approach to Domestic Violence issues is so personally and politically powerful.

Our keynote speaker, Joy Fuller, is the Older Women's Project Worker at Western Sydney Sole Women's Accommodation Service. A triumphant survivor of domestic violence herself, Joy is passionate about issues for older women in domestic violence situations. She outlined the many reasons for older women being reluctant to reveal abuse they are subjected to from adult children, relatives or partners, citing the case history of a woman who, after many consultations, finally accepted shelter in the refuge to avoid abuse at the hands of her daughter. This was a particularly poignant story. Joy initiated an Older Women's Project in order to provide resources and support for older women and said that many agencies are reporting that more and more older women are accessing their services. It is

part of Joy's role to educate these agencies on the needs of older women. She concluded her address with a poem she wrote to her mother-in-law, realising too late that she also had been subjected to the violence Joy experienced from the son.

Senior Constable Angela Cooke of Redfern Police recounted how, when she joined the police in 1994, she was called to a home where they found a woman with a broken jaw, children on the floor, and both parents drunk! At the time, she was utterly bewildered and didn't know what to do. Police now recognise the many forms that violence can take – financial, verbal, physical, sexual or even neglect – and are able to provide victims with information and resources to assist them.

Dr. Linda Mann, who has been in general practice for many years, believes that even the best doctor can miss signs of abuse. Apparently, over 50% of people who have been abused have never been asked about abuse by their doctors, and since patients do not readily reveal abuse, doctors must look for the signs and believe what patients tell them.

Monica Neville, a solicitor with the Domestic Violence Advocacy Service, outlined some key issues for older women in abusive situations. Many are in a long relationship and feel it is too late to do anything, they may not recognise that what is happening to them is actually abuse and often have the attitude that they married for better or for worse and they've got the 'worse'! Some women are fearful of the unknown – of being alone – and where the abusers are children or grandchildren, women are very hesitant to take proceedings against them.

Some suggestions from the floor, and from the panel, included increasing services for older women, educating magistrates, judges and lawyers, forming groups where women can share experiences, and asking the Department for Women to produce special brochures and posters. Importantly, we should ask politicians to stop talking about 'the burden of an ageing population' and support the Theatre Group to continue speaking out about this incredibly important issue!

**Cate Turner**

“Often we are so busy playing the lead in our own personal drama, that we forget there are other actors in the play.”

**Anon**

# Theatre Group Report

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April finished on a high note. We were honoured to be asked to perform at OWN Sydney's *Older Women's Right to Safety at Home* Forum and launch of the quilts on 28 April. The three quilts are truly a credit to all those involved in their making. From all reports, we did not disgrace ourselves in the illustrious company of well-known and excellent speakers, and it was obvious that our songs and the personal stories of the cast touched many in the very large audience. We were grateful to make it to our final song and get off the stage without losing any cast members to the cords, props, chairs and amplifiers crowding the performance space.

We *are* making the big time, honey! *These Pretty Faces are Going Places\** is TRUE. Andrew Denton, after having seen our video, *Off the Beaten Track*, thought he might like us on his show, *Enough Rope*. He sent his producer, Jon Casimir, along to a rehearsal on 6 May and after a brief performance and much discussion, he started talking about filming dates, taxis, overnight accommodation, plus! A week later he contacted us and we record for the show on Monday, 16 June at 8pm! Apparently the show is recorded a week prior to being screened – keep an eye open for us!

On 8 May, we did a show for St. Vincent's Community Health Centre organised for people in the community. First, panic because of late public transport! Then confusion because we had an incorrect street address (my apologies). Finally, we found the change room, a hallway, this time. (White, which we all wear for performances, attracts dirt so

easily!) Again, domestic violence was the theme with three of the Theatre Group telling their personal stories. These obviously resonated with the audience as some could be seen fighting back tears. Fortunately, they were able to laugh later on when we did our hairy legs and pants song.

Louise was the guest speaker. Her extensive knowledge of domestic violence provided carers, particularly the younger women, with useful background information to help them understand some of the difficulties that older women have in simply acknowledging abusive situations they might be experiencing. As often happens,

the program was running behind schedule, so despite being offered lunch, most of us were too hungry to wait for it and took ourselves off to Bondi Junction to debrief and re-energise with a hot meal.

Next, we took a selection of our 'politically pertinent' songs and skits to two performances for volunteers and members of St. Helen's Community Centre at Glebe as *entertainment* for their Mother's Day celebration.

The opening number, *Makin' Whoopee*, got a rousing response from the women, but I don't know whether the men appreciated the gender role changes in *Wouldn't it be Fun!* The volunteering song was hailed by all, however. All in all, the response was very warm and we were asked for an encore. They gave us a wonderful hot lunch between the shows and a stem of flowers each.

'Back of the Backdrop' again... Welcome to Monique Reiher, who recently joined the Theatre Group. Ann, our pianist who had

a knee operation in January, might not be ready for *Knees up, Mother Brown* yet, but in the best tradition of show biz she has come through for all rehearsals and performances. And our director, Louise, is again on deck, even though she is battling aches, pains *and* us. We are most grateful to them both, though, of course, we'd never tell them face to face.

**Marjorie Moffat**

\* From *Makin' Whoopee*

*a a a*

## A loving goodbye

Our dear old friend Eilie Dimse died on Saturday 3 May at the age of 92. Eilie was an active member of OWN for over a decade. She was our icon, and also our inspiration for living a life with such dignity and zest.

She was a regular dancer at Ellin Krinsley's Creative Movement class in the Mott Hall until she was 90! "The best day of the week," she used to say.

Every Wednesday, until a few weeks before she died, Eilie came to Northside Wellness at Chatswood bearing a luscious, but healthy, cake for morning tea. After the weekly discussion group, I sometimes asked her, "Did you hear that, Eilie"? "Not a word," came the firm reply. Eilie's deafness couldn't deter her indomitable spirit, and at 90, she completed a computer course for Northside Wellness organised by Cara McDougall.

On the Thursday following Eilie's death, we danced her a loving goodbye in Ellin's class. Ellin encouraged us to not only express our feelings about Eilie, but to feel the loving friendship we feel for each other.

**Joan Johns**

## Strong Aboriginal Women say, No!

"Irati Wanti – The Poison Leave it! No radioactive dump in our ngura – in our country"

Peter Garrett, President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, hosted a special ceremony at the Sydney Observatory on Tuesday 15 April, to honour two South Australian Aboriginal women elders, Eileen Kampakuta Brown and Eileen Wani Wingfield, the recipients of the 2003 Goldman Environmental Prize. These women from the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta, the Senior Aboriginal Women's Council, Coober Pedy, won the prize by working with other council members to protect Aboriginal communities from the proposed Federal Government's plan to dump nuclear waste on their land. Eileen Brown, in accepting the award, made a speech in her own language which was interpreted by her granddaughter. "My people are still talking, still strong. My people know their culture, their language and how to live in their own land. I will carry on this fight for the sake of my descendants, and ultimately, for everyone".

Bob Brown, who won the Goldman Prize in 1990, challenged the Australian people to support the two prize winners in their fight to stop their country being used as a dumping ground for nuclear waste from Sydney's Lucas Heights reactor. The waste would be stored in the ground in an 'out of sight, out of mind' plan. The Bureau of Science admits that this process will not prevent leakage of water, nor human, animal or plant intrusion into the waste material. In fact, the Government is even considering using this area to dump nuclear waste from other countries! The Government has given no recognition to the women's custody of their land, nor has it been listening to the

Aboriginal communities concerns. Bob stressed that the culture and history of this land must be honoured and preserved.

Aboriginal people have successfully lived in the desert for over forty thousand years. The women said, "The land is us, and we are the land, it is our cultural responsibility to protect the land." Despite being exposed to the British atom bomb blasts at Maralinga and the consequent deaths and disease that ensued, the people and the land have survived with their own language, art and cultural practices.

At the ceremony Sylvia Scott, respected elder Wiradjuri woman from NSW, gave the welcome to the land followed by talented Yorta Yorta woman, Betty Little, who sang her own original composition, *I Come From a Land of Strong Koori Women*. It's an inspiring song illustrating the strong roles that Aboriginal women undertake in their communities. Betty followed this with a hauntingly sad song she wrote about the death of Mother Earth due to the damage done by modern civilisation.

The morning ended with the women elders playing the clapsticks and singing in their own language. Their message was, "We've been fighting this radioactive waste dump, this poison for many years. Arguing about it, talking to many people, asking people to help us. They might help us, but they'll also be helping themselves. Whitefellas have got kids too. We all have to live in this country."

You can send a message of support to KPKT C/- Campaign Office, PO Box 1043, Coober Pedy SA 5723 or email [kungkatjuta@iratiwanti.org](mailto:kungkatjuta@iratiwanti.org).

**Lucy Porter**

## Edna Ryan Awards, 2003

Feminism was alive and WEL at the Edna Ryan award presentations by the Women's Electoral Lobby on 2 May.

Two of the fourteen Edna awards went to OWN members, Betty Johnson and Cate Turner, for "feminist activity in the community".

Since Betty Johnson retired in 1992 and joined the Older Women's Network, she has worked tirelessly to promote the rights of older women throughout Australia. In her role as Convenor and, later, Secretary, of OWN Australia, Betty has employed her considerable skills in policy development, planning, and implementation of housing, health and community services programs to benefit older women. The depth and breadth of her contributions has led to a wider understanding of the potential for older women to become actively involved in community, state and national affairs.

Cate Turner has been an active member of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) for over ten years and a member of OWN for nearly as long. In WEL she undertook the roles of Convenor, Treasurer, and Editor of the WEL Newsletter at various times, as well as representing WEL on numerous committees. Cate is an active member of the Older Women's Network and has served on the OWN NSW Management Team and been a Coordinator since 2002. She is currently Treasurer of OWN Australia. Cate is a wonderful role model and mentor who gives tireless support to women of all ages.

Liz O'Brien and Vicki Potempa also received awards for feminist activity in the community.

The Arts Award for creative feminism went to Denise Ferris and

Roseleen Healy, while Susan Kendall was acknowledged for feminist activity in the Political Sphere.

For making a feminist difference in the workplace and improving conditions for women workers, awards were made to Jean Slarke, Rebecca Reilly, Suzan Virago, Fran Hayes and Aileen Beaver.

Grand Stirrer awards were made posthumously to Di Graham, dedicated Women's Liberation and WEL activist who died in 1999 just short of her 90th birthday, and to Clare Burton, who provided outstanding leadership in many ways, including leadership in the field of Equal Employment Opportunity.

Clare's daughter received the award on behalf of her late mother, saying, "I absolutely love feminists' *refusal* to forget their feminist sisters' achievements and I absolutely love feminists' dogged insistence on discovering, recognising and celebrating the lives and work of our feminist mothers, sisters, friends and colleagues."

Who would disagree?

**Dorothy Cora**

### **Creative Writers Make the Manly Scene**

In May, *Creative Writers* were a thousand miles from care, at beautiful Manly. The rain ran off to Spain and we enjoyed a stroll along the Corso, encountering some colourful local characters.

The venue was the Steyne Hotel, with a free view of the grey-blue Pacific. Our choice of "vittles" included Shepherds Pie, Lasagne, Minestrone soup and fish. The only jarring note was a wandering pigeon in the dining room which perched on the salad bar, inspecting the offerings. However, this did not affect our enjoyment of the excellent cuisine.

Jean Wurlod is a busy, inventive writer and we read her homework assignment for her new class. Helen McMaugh has finished an entry for a competition and is working on another piece to bring in cold hard cash. The others have more excuses than the legendary *Greenbottle*.

Thanks to Polly Gow for organising this luncheon.

**Bon Vivant**

### **Meetings...**

You meet people all the time, but for the life of me, I can't think of many encounters that have made an impact on my life, except of course the one which led to my marriage.

How far back does one go? To my teens, when I met Tchaikovsky's grandson in Normandy? To my much later years, when the washing machine serviceman tried to make a pass at me in the laundry? To the lovely old bearded gentleman who was my examiner when I went for my pianoforte exams in my very early years? To the handsome middle aged Italian who was the boss of the gang building the extension to our home way back in the sixties? He used to stride around outside my kitchen window, on the dusty floor of the unroofed extension, bronzed, bare-chested, hairy, singing operatic arias at the top of his great baritone voice, his hand constantly diving into the apron he wore all day which had a pocket for nails, pushing the apron and his shorts lower and lower with each dive. "Orright, Mrs. Simons?" he would call out to me between arias, with a great smile and a display of his flashing white teeth. I was always worried that the apron just might slip a bit too low, but it never did. He and his wife were great fans of the Royal family, and his children were named after them – Elizabeth,

Margaret, Phillip, Charles...

Tchaikovsky's grandson wasn't at all interesting. He was a very skinny, morose young man with a thin moustache. He never smiled. He hardly spoke. His English was very limited. We met when my friend and I were on holiday in France before the war. He used to growl at me now and again, "Avez vous froid?" "Avez vous chaud?" I never heard him say anything else. And there was Jean, the sailor, who said, in French, that I was as pretty as a fairy.

Of course, there were lots of other meetings during my life, some romantic ones, including my husband. We had a long, happy marriage. Neither of us could recall our first meeting.

**Renee Simons**

### **Affinity**

*Your mellow gold of honey,  
your ruby-red of wine:  
a canopy of merging tints  
through which the sunbeams  
shine.*

*Above your crown a firmament  
of boldly glowing blue,  
suggesting scores of other  
worlds  
existing out of view.*

*Your gentle swaying in the  
breeze  
evokes a languid mood;  
my memories begin to stir –  
I don't let them intrude.*

*Be they sweet or painful ones,  
it hardly matters now;  
the kindly veil of time gone by  
has evened all somehow.*

*My dear companions, autumn  
leaves,  
approaching my last day,  
I wish and hope to emulate  
your beauty in decay.*

**Trudy Davis**

## Letters to the Editor

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### **Dying and Dignity**

My friend Eilie Dimse, who died last week aged 92, was a patient in a private room in a private hospital until two days before she died. Because they could do nothing for her medically, the hospital transferred Eilie to an aged care facility where she was placed in a five-bed ward in the hospital section. What does this say about our society? Compassionate? I don't think so. I think we're probably considered a nuisance when we are dying.

On the other hand, when Eilie's daughter contacted the University of NSW, to whom Eilie had left her body for research purposes, she had a pleasant surprise. The University people were sympathetic and sensitive. They organised a room at a funeral parlour and provided a celebrant for her memorial service, explaining that after seven years they would scatter her ashes at Rookwood Cemetery, as she had requested. Eilie wanted a cheap funeral (she saved thousands!), no fuss, no flowers and no tears.

**Joan Johns**

### **Bras for Bougainville**

Thanks very much to women who sent me bras to send to Bougainville. They will be greatly appreciated! Bras are quite difficult to get in Bougainville and, like lots of things, are expensive. Many of the women are big breasted, so they do need them. It is a very practical way to help women in a country torn apart by conflict and violence.

If anyone has bras that are ready to be replaced, but they are still ok, please send them to me at 94 Molonglo River Drive CARWOOLA NSW 2620.

**Chris Frances**

### **Older women needing emergency accommodation**

Where do older women needing emergency accommodation go? Not often to refuges because these mostly have a policy of admitting young women with children escaping domestic violence.

OWN is about to conduct a study of all the women's refuges in NSW. We are looking for women who have experienced needing urgent accommodation and found it difficult to find. We would like to hear their story, and promise to treat it as strictly confidential. These stories would be of great help to us in carrying out this study. They would help us persuade the government and all concerned that it is time to cater for older women needing emergency accommodation.

The investigation will be carried out by the OWN NSW Advocacy Coordination Group and coordinated by Margaret Sargent, 02-9523-9558. Please ring.

**Margaret Sargent**

### **Not means tested?**

Howard says that his new health system will not be means tested.

What else but a means test is the requirement to show a health care card to get a discount?

As non-health-care card holders, how will modestly self-funded retirees fare in Howard's user-pays health system? They have paid their taxes all through the 20 year life of Medicare, and still do, yet at the time of life when some ill health is not unusual they are on their own!

Once again, Howard has found a little thing to appeal to the populace and dressed it up in a

burdensome package. Of course everyone wants to abolish the silly system of patient clerical work and pay up before rebate. But you don't need to kill off Medicare to do that.

**Barbara McGarity**

### **A Frightening Frog**

Did you ever think of a frog as a burglar alarm?

No, not a live frog, but a large green plastic one you buy from the gardening section of your supermarket.

Whilst walking through our local K-Mart with my three great-grandchildren, I had chanced to remark, "I must get one of these frogs."

Yes, you guessed it, that was my next present from them. They presented it to me with due formality as my Christmas present. They inserted the batteries in its back, placed it near my front door, then one by one they walked past it. It emitted the loudest croaks you have ever heard.

Now every time I walk near my front door or anyone crosses the threshold, the alarm is sounded, and how it is sounded! It would frighten anyone away, much less a potential burglar. The croaks continue until you move away.

I can recommend it as a burglar alarm. I don't know about your nerves, however.

**Mildred Horsby**

## Letters to the Editor

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### Without Comment...

Many weeks ago, I sent in a claim by mail to Medicare – I can't make it to the local Branch Office since Bondi Junction got all churned up. It was my last claim form, so I attached a note which asked, in extra big letters, for some more claim forms to be sent to me as I couldn't go in person to the Branch.

Yesterday, 12 May, tired of waiting, I rang Medicare – and I must say, to their credit, an actual human being answered – no button pressing required! The pleasant woman who took my call asked if I was on the Net, and suggested that I should print out some claim forms from [www.hic.gov.au/yourhealth](http://www.hic.gov.au/yourhealth). I didn't know you could do that, and was very pleased to do so. A revelation!

Anyway, today, 13 May, in the mail arrived a very thick package containing about twenty very damp, mouldy-smelling claim forms, together with a slip stamped HIC Ulladulla – 7 May 2003 which also had printed on it, State Headquarters, Health Insurance Commission, Colonial Tower, 150 George Street, Parramatta...

**Renee Simons**

### Leg Spreaders

I've been commuting by train for over 20 years and in that period have sat thigh to thigh and knee to knee with all kinds of males – sometimes sandwiched between two leg spreaders.

Believe it or not, I've actually noticed a change for the better in the way men are now sitting beside women. Once they used to throw themselves down with a thump into the vacant space and auto-

matically spread their legs without even looking at whoever was next to them. Then I would withdraw my leg and press myself up against the window. It didn't bother me all that much. If I'd thought about it I might have put flopping down and leg spreading in the category of a nervous tic.

But when I got to see it as an expression of power I decided not to tolerate it any more. So every time a male thigh thumped up against mine, I would turn to the chap and say, "Excuse me, your leg's hogging my space." They were always shocked, by their own temerity, of course. But they always withdrew their leg without demur.

I haven't had to make any protest of that sort for a long time now, and I've noticed that more and more men are sitting with their legs together. I wonder if it has something to do with using laptops in the train?

**Maryrose Liverani**

### A witch hunt?

Hi there! Please hear my cry!

I believe that the second witch hunt against women healers is currently being orchestrated by the Church hierarchy, the medical profession and the drug companies.

I believe that nurse training, midwifery and herbal courses are being managed by the powerful medical profession, with awful results.

Neither do I trust many of these research groups, either. Especially cancer research.

Does anyone else care what's happening?

**Josephine Conway**

### Trading Australia Away?

Do you realise that the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement being negotiated will be a legally binding agreement to remove all trade barriers between USA and Australia? There are no areas off limits in the negotiation.

Here is one of the possible effects of this very unequal bargaining relationship that we could find ourselves committed to: the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

We use bulk purchases of medicines from USA to provide affordable medicines to low income earners and pensioners.

The US companies we buy from want higher prices for their products.

Under this Agreement they will be able to set price levels to suit themselves. This is a vital health and social equity policy which should not be negotiated in a trade agreement.

**Muriel Hortin**

### The Rise of the Lefties!

Has anyone else noticed the increase in left-handers in banks, shops, on TV and in the movies?

As a 'leftie' – the only one in a large country school – I was continually reprimanded, as if I was committing a crime!

However, with a strong-minded left-handed mother and grandmother, and a great book called the *Natural Superiority of Left-Handers*, I survived with self-esteem intact. Time may see the 'left handers' outnumber the 'right handers' – then who will be the 'wrong handers'?

**Nancy Brown**

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## Sydney OWN

The highlight this month was our forum, *Older Women's Right to Safety at Home*, held during Stop Domestic Violence Week, which began on April 26. Once again, the issue of older women and domestic violence was placed firmly on the agenda, and OWN's profile was broadened to a more diverse audience.

The Forum featured the launch of the '*Older Women's Right to Safety at Home*' quilt, the OWN Theatre Group and a range of presenters who spoke of the incidence and hidden nature of domestic violence against older women. You can read more about the forum in Cate Turner's article on page 4 and presenters' papers are available from Joy Ross, phone 9251 9333.

A special note about the quilts. The idea for a quilt was creatively conceived by Joy Ross prior to the 1992 OWN NSW State Conference and introduced by Louise Anike at the Conference. Around sixty members from OWN groups all

over NSW created messages on small calico squares at the conference and, following the creation of additional messages by OWN Sydney women, the squares were made into three quilts. (Unfortunately, a few of weeks ago Louise had a serious fall and was unable to be at the official launch of the quilt.) While the messages on the quilts are very moving and extremely important, the process of creating the quilts was also important: women's relationships with each other, the learning and the sharing.

Arrangements are now being made to hang the quilt at '87', and we are also seeking other venues – some OWNs are already asking to see it, and the Theatre Group is asking to take one of the panels on their next tour. Other suggestions are the Town Hall foyer and Parliament House! Next stop, the Opera House?

Special thanks to the City of Sydney for funding the quilt and the launch, and also the many volunteers who worked hard to make the day a success.

We are pleased to announce that OWN-Sydney has received a grant of \$2000 from the Federal Department of Family and Community Services to train older women in a range of creative and humorous techniques e.g. cartooning and satirical art. The aim is to produce a range of materials such as posters, cards, calico bags and T-shirts, which will challenge stereotypical images of older women.

Congratulations to Linda Burney, new MP for Marrickville, the first Aboriginal person to be elected to the NSW Parliament. Congratulations also to three OWN Sydney members: Beryl Winter (Centenary Award) for support of the Trade Union movement, Betty Johnson (Edna Award) for feminist activity in the community and Joy Ross (Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program) for dedication and commitment to the prevention of domestic violence.

**Louise Anike and Joy Ross**

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## Sutherland OWN

Four of us joined Illawarra OWN for their birthday celebration last month and had a most enjoyable day. We were very interested to hear about their Seniors Week project involving local schoolgirls.

On another day, we attended the Older Women's Right to Safety Forum and launch of the quilt made by OWN Sydney members. The speakers were excellent, and the personal stories told by members of the Theatre Group were very moving.

With a view to getting more

publicity for our groups and hopefully building membership, we contacted our local Community Radio and arranged an interview for 3 June.

Recently we were contacted by Caringbah Neighbour Aid and asked if we would give a talk to a group of people with disabilities. They had read about our Seniors Week storytelling project *Listen up Older Women* in the local press and thought we'd have something to offer those who use their services. We've set a date for Wednesday, 7 June.

At our last meeting, we agreed to elect two Social Conveners in the hope that this will lead to more discussion groups and functions being held to promote Sutherland OWN in the community. We also agreed to start a small newsletter for occasional publication, as funds permit.

Unfortunately, we did not get our grant from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, so our planned program, *"Breaking the Stereotypes"*, has been put on hold till next year.

**Barbara Whiteman**

# At and Beyond the Rocks

## Macarthur OWN

With a membership of between 60 and 70, and meeting every week for social events, guest speakers, fund-raising and excursions, life can become quite hectic at times for members of Macarthur OWN.

Our coordinator, Marge Bosley, and our youngest member, bus-trip-organiser extraordinaire, Carol Hammond, were recently invited to a Mayoral Reception where our group was honoured with the Premier's Community Award in recognition of our organisation's "outstanding service to the community and to NSW".

In Seniors Week we had an interesting speaker from our local Aged Care Respite Day Centre and in April enjoyed a speaker from Wurrumburra Sanctuary. Of course, we also held our traditional Easter Hat Parade and in May held a belated Mother's Day event. April also saw us exploring new ground with our first Wellness Day, with speakers on Aromatherapy, Reiki, Reflexology, Pedicures and Iridology making it an outstanding success.

Variety is essential for the survival of any group, and our latest bus trip proved just that, with a full busload wandering through the Powerhouse Museum. The contrast between periods of time was fascinating, whilst the power of the steam trains took some of us back to Boarding School days when children would travel back to school courtesy of the 'dog box' on the Kempsey Mail. Better to have lived during that time than to have been a convict incarcerated in the Hyde Park Barracks. What a fascinating place, with the history of those days presented in such a way as to keep on interested. The mice were most industrious and one could only marvel at some of the items in their 'treasure chests'.

Macarthur OWN celebrated its sixth birthday on 7 May with morning tea, a few speeches, lots of chatter and laughs, and later on a birthday lunch at the Top One restaurant. Dorothy Cora and Judith Mustard from Sydney, and some former members, who have relocated elsewhere but love coming back for special events, joined us. We also welcomed Vicki May-Franks from Campbelltown City Council and Robyn Brookes and Sheilah Bartlett from the Benevolent Society, without whose support we would not be able to function.

Some of our members have joined the Benevolent Society 'Drama Queens' and are busy rehearsing items of wit and ingenuity to be performed at the *Winter Dreams* Fair on Thursday, 19 June. Sure to be a crowd pleaser! Our hardworking Coordinator, Marge Bosley, who is also our Catering Manager, has taken on the role of Wardrobe Mistress for one of the performance groups in the Drama Queens, and has proven once again that there is no end to her talents. We would be lost without her.

As you can see, it's all go-go-go in Macarthur, but are we having fun!

**Helen Standing**

## Connections...

On a beautiful, sunny day in May, Dorothy Cora and I joined around fifty dynamic and friendly women gathered in the grounds of the Benevolent Society to celebrate Macarthur OWN's sixth birthday celebrations.

Following an hour or so of members' informally exchanging news, chatting and reminiscing about their time in the organisation, Marge Bosley, the current coordinator, welcomed everyone and gave a short rundown on Macarthur OWN since its inception. The 'formal' part of the morning ended with a scrumptious home-made morning tea, and the cutting of the birthday cake.

Members of the Drama Queens then treated us to a couple of songs, amidst much laughter since they were unprepared to perform. I had met some of them when they visited our OWN Theatre Group rehearsal earlier this year and loved their enthusiasm.

At eleven thirty we moved to a local restaurant where we were treated to a smorgasbord lunch, and a further, sometimes hilarious, chat and exchange of views. We left them with good feelings of friendship and hopes for further close contact.

**Judith Mustard**

### ***Harp in the South - Still Plays Well***

On the Writers' Festival web page, Fiona McGregor describes her favourite book as Ruth Park's *The Harp in the South*, published in 1947. "It's a vibrant portrait of Surry Hills in the 40s ... a prism of a time and place forgotten or unknown

by most of us and as fresh as today. Pungent dialogue, hot-blooded characters, sentimental and brutal in equal measures. If I could mythologise Sydney half as much as Park has, I would die happy".

# At and Beyond the Rocks

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## **Wollondilly OWN**

Wollondilly has 35 members and is expanding! One of our pleasures in May was attending Southern Highlands' birthday celebrations.

At a recent planning meeting we decided to go places at weekends, and have holidays together more often! So far we've planned a weekend away at Bundanoon Youth Hostel in June, a week in Jindabyne in September and a Berry holiday in November. We'd love to have members from other groups join us for our holidays, so keep an eye out for details in future newsletters.

In addition to our monthly meetings, we have a range of social activities planned which include fish and chips at Wollongong, a visit to the movies, a trip to Nan Tien Temple and a cruise on the Parramatta River Cat.

Our drummers continue to be popular with recent performances at the opening of Shire Day at Bargo, an Australia Day event and twice at International Women's Day events in the area. The locals must like us. We have two future bookings – one for Argentina Day and the other at a school fete.

In between all these fun and games we do have discussions about various issues of interest to us. A charming young man from the Pump House Gym ran a recent session on the proper use of Dyna Bands, those latex exercise bands that give you a good hiding if you let them go too quickly!

**Elizabeth Otterson**

## **Kiama OWN**

Our group is planning to be very active this year. Not only has one of our members volunteered to lead us in a walking group, but we will be practising Tai Chi from March for about 6-8 weeks! In order to balance out all these physical endeavours, we plan to hold discussions about book readings as well as invite guest speakers to our meetings.

One of our members wrote to Joanna Gash, Federal MP for our area, last year about war widows not receiving full veterans affairs benefits if their husbands have not died from a war related illness. Her response was that this matter would be brought up in Parliament this year. Members will follow up on this later in the year.

It was decided late last year that the computer we bought with a Year of the Volunteer grant would be brought along to meetings so that members could familiarise themselves with it.

**Jeanette Hindmarsh**

## **Shellharbour OWN**

This is not a report as such, but just a short message to say we are currently meeting twice a month, have had a very busy schedule over the past few months, have great plans for the future and will write a full report for the next issue of *OWN Matters*.

**Nan Pitt**

## **Nowra OWN ... A Day Out With the Gumnuts**

As I boarded the train at Bomaderry, followed by seventeen excited, happy women from Nowra OWN, I felt a little like the Pied Piper of Hamelin. However, our quest wasn't for rats, but Big Bad Banksia Men and Snugglepot and Cuddlepie in the Big Bad City. We were off to visit Nutcote at Neutral Bay, the home of May Gibbs, celebrated author of many Australian children's classics.

The ferry trip from Circular Quay to Neutral Bay Wharf added to the magic of the day. After a short walk we arrived at 5 Wallaringa Avenue, where we were welcomed and encouraged to watch two short videos depicting May's life and works.

Volunteers provided us with a light, nourishing lunch. We then took a tour of the really lovely cottage which May and her husband, James Ossoli Kelly, built in the early 1930s. Many beautiful Australian timbers were used, and most of the windows open out to a lovely harbour view. The gardens, well maintained, have many old roses and plants. May lived in the house for forty-four years. She died in the late 60s aged 90 years.

For many of us, it was a trip down the memory lanes of childhood, to when our imaginations and eyes for beauty were in their formative stages. We hope people continue to visit Nutcote, and are grateful to all the volunteers who keep the dream alive.

## **A Contented Little Gumnut**



## Mother's Day Early 21C

Mothers' Day, like any other Sunday, begins with washing hair and clothes. I try to send a couple of emails, but cyberspace seems crowded. No success. Typed a paragraph about older people's intolerance of noise. Printer jammed so mobile phone call to hi-tech grandson; not a good idea on Sunday morning: "Just pull it grandma." "Which way?" "Any way."

We don't celebrate Mothers' Day in our family. My mother, born in 1895, was most averse to the notion that mothers needed a special day. "Every day should be mothers' day," was her cry.

In moments of exasperation she would claim, "Any fool can be a mother" or in extreme exasperation, "Only a fool would be a mother." My daughters and I have continued in this non-recognition of Mothers' Day as far as possible.

So I am not perturbed when a call to a daughter in the country is cut short by my son-in-law's M's Day call to his mother.

It is midday and I want to listen to Radio National and have a little lunch. Five minutes into the program a sick old neighbour, J.W. rings; her hot water system is leaking. These tanks, 35 years old, are likely to burst at any time and flood the whole flat. J's son, a plumber, has just been in to give her M's Day flowers and food, then taken off with his wife to give her mother M's Day lunch at some lousy club. Anyhow he did not have tools with him. Had telephoned emergency plumber who would not come unless for 'real emergency'. Then came J's account of her personal plumbing problems, i.e. bowels and bladder, but would I get 'our plumber'.

'Our plumber' changes frequently and I do not have the current number, so rouse my next door

neighbour, a religious sister and therefore an honorary mother, who is sleeping off the effects of her Mothers' Day Champagne Breakfast. Though half inebriated she manages to produce the number. By now I have had enough so call in another neighbour who is on the board of management for these flats. M.B has just returned from her M's Day lunch and was hoping for a bit of quiet. She did not want to be disturbed till reminded that J's flat is above the office with its valuable electronic equipment. I give J. the good news that 'something will be done' owing to the danger to management's computers.

It's 2pm, lunch is a sandwich with sardines from a 'no frills' tin, which upsets my reflux. My brush rollers are digging into my scalp, must find hair dryer. 4.30 M. appears at my door holding a box of OMO; she has mopped up water in the office with old towels, now in washing machine. Would I mind taking them out and putting them in dryer? I would do so. J's son had returned with tools and turned the tank off. 6pm, a grandson rings: "Am I breaking tradition if I ask if you had a good Mothers' Day? I rang at lunch time but you were out."

*Helen Monaghan*

## Mothers Make Men

The idea of Mother's Day has been traced to Julia Ward Howe, an American mother of six, who suggested it in 1872 in the aftermath of the Civil War when the United States and Europe were bloodied and brutalised.

She wanted Mother's Day dedicated to peace: "We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies. Our husbands shall not come to us reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from

us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy, and patience. We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."

We all know how the deep emotional connections between a mother and her son have been demonised for generations, with mothers (and fathers) persisting in the belief that a mother's love and protection is evidence of a dangerous maternal attachment that will somehow weaken or emasculate their boys.

However, things might be changing. Peggy Drexler, an American research psychologist, has observed how 'maverick' mothers – single mums, divorcees, lesbian mothers – are quietly providing a new model for raising well-rounded boys. They are not just bringing up masculine boys without the help of fathers or other male role models; their sons are also vibrant, courageous individuals, busily constructing their sense of self amid ordinary family love and extraordinary social change. Boys she studied from 'mothering families' are articulate, thoughtful and deeply aware of their own emotional lives.

Peggy says that all mothers should claim their rightful and assertive role in shaping their sons' lives without worrying about 'smotherlove' or about turning them into that worst-of-all-possible male – the 'mummy's boy'. Mothers should, instead, strive to engender in their sons a masculine power that includes greater generosity and a love of peace.

Next year, Mother's Day could be an opportunity to restore what Howe called "the august dignity of motherhood and its terrible responsibilities".

*From [www.womensenews.org](http://www.womensenews.org)*

# Characteristics of Fascism

*Dr. Lawrence Britt, a political scientist, studied the fascist regimes of Hitler (Germany), Mussolini (Italy), Franco (Spain), Suharto (Indonesia), and Pinochet (Chile). He found they all had fourteen things in common, and he calls these the identifying characteristics of fascism. The article is titled Fascism Anyone? and appears in the Spring 2003 issue of *Free Inquiry's*.*

The fourteen characteristics are:

1. Powerful and Continuing Nationalism – Fascist regimes tend to make constant use of patriotic mottos, slogans, symbols, songs, and other paraphernalia. Flags are seen everywhere, as are flag symbols on clothing and in public displays.

2. Disdain for the Recognition of Human Rights – Because of fear of enemies and the need for security, the people in fascist regimes are persuaded that human rights can be ignored in certain cases because of 'need'. The people tend to 'look the other way' or even approve of torture, summary executions, assassinations, long incarcerations of prisoners, etc.

3. Identification of Enemies/ Scapegoats as a Unifying Cause – The people are rallied into a unifying patriotic frenzy over the need to eliminate a perceived common threat or foe: racial, ethnic or religious minorities; liberals; communists; socialists, terrorists, etc.

4. Supremacy of the Military – Even when there are widespread domestic problems, the military is given a disproportionate amount of government funding, and the domestic agenda is neglected. Soldiers and military service are glamorized.

5. Rampant Sexism – The governments of fascist nations tend to be almost exclusively male-dominated. Under fascist regimes, traditional gender roles are made

more rigid. Opposition to abortion is high, as is homophobia and anti-gay legislation and national policy.

6. Controlled Mass Media – Sometimes the media is directly controlled by the government, but in other cases, the media is indirectly controlled by government regulation, or through sympathetic media spokespeople and executives. Censorship, especially in wartime, is very common.

7. Obsession with National Security – Fear is used as a motivational tool by the government over the masses.

8. Religion and Government are Intertwined – Governments in fascist nations tend to use the most common religion in the nation as a tool to manipulate public opinion. Religious rhetoric and terminology is common from government leaders, even when the major tenets of the religion are diametrically opposed to the government's policies or actions.

9. Corporate Power is Protected – The industrial and business aristocracy of a fascist nation often are the ones who put the government leaders into power, creating a mutually beneficial business/government relationship and power elite.

10. Labour Power is Suppressed – Because the organizing power of labour is the only real threat to a fascist government, labour unions are either eliminated entirely or are severely suppressed.

11. Disdain for Intellectuals and the Arts – Fascist nations tend to promote and tolerate open hostility to higher education, and academia. It is not uncommon for professors and other academics to be censored or even arrested. Free expression in the arts is openly attacked, and governments often refuse to fund the arts.

12. Obsession with Crime and Punishment – Under fascist regimes, the police are given almost limitless power to enforce laws. The people are often willing to overlook police abuses, and even forego civil liberties, in the name of patriotism. There is often a national police force with virtually unlimited power in fascist nations.

13. Rampant Cronyism and Corruption – Fascist regimes almost always are governed by groups of friends and associates who appoint each other to government positions, and who use governmental power and authority to protect their friends from accountability. It is not uncommon in fascist regimes for national resources and even treasures to be appropriated or even outright stolen by government leaders.

14. Fraudulent Elections – Sometimes elections in fascist nations are a complete sham. Other times elections are manipulated by smear campaigns against (or even the assassination of) opposition candidates, the use of legislation to control voting numbers or political district boundaries, and the manipulation of the media. Fascist nations also typically use their judiciaries to manipulate or control elections.

History reveals how the worst violence, the most bloody and unjustifiable violence, continues to be unleashed in the name of peace. **Anon.**

## Her Baton Carried Forward

Jean Arnot was born in 1903 and worked at the State Library for 47 years. She gave a lifetime commitment to the advancement of the status of women. While playing an active role in her trade union and professional associations, Jean received many awards for her contributions to the professions of librarianship, achieved a Public Service Association gold medal for her contribution to the struggle for equal pay and was later awarded an MBE.

Jean's life and work are celebrated through The Jean Arnot Memorial Fellowship Award which is announced each year at a Memorial Luncheon held by the National Council of Women NSW and the Australian Federation of Business & Professional Women.

This year, the award was won jointly by two librarians: Irene Bonella, Librarian at Wollongong City Library, who wrote an essay on the history of pay equity in NSW and Kate Burnham, Library Manager, NSW Attorney General's Library, for her essay, *The Librarian's Pay Equity Case 2002: Not Just a Pay Rise*.

Kate's wrote from the leading role Jean played in the pursuit of the ground-breaking case for pay equity for the predominantly female profession of Librarians under the Equal Remuneration Principle. The case succeeded, and has set the precedent that other predominantly female professions and industries will follow as they seek to overturn the system that has allowed the continuation of the undervaluing of work on the sole basis of gender.

This is the centenary year of the birth of Jean Arnot and it is fitting that this case has seen her struggle for equality for women carried forward.

***Kate's proud Mum***

## Save Medicare Alliance

The aim of the Save Medicare Alliance is to restore and improve Medicare; the Pensioner Benefits Scheme and the public hospital system. The broad objectives of the Save Medicare Alliance are as follows:

- The maintenance and extension of the universal and affordable health care system, available to all, including universal access to bulk-billing.
- Increase of the Medicare levy.
- Abolish tax incentives (including private health insurance rebates) to high income earners.
- Rebate for medical practitioners working in rural communities to be higher than for metropolitan medical practitioners.
- Doctors who bulk-bill should receive an increased and adequate rebate.
- Dental treatment to be included in Medicare.
- Australian Commonwealth-State Health Care Agreements should be calculated as a percentage of GNP.
- The maintenance of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and the public hospital system.
- Centrelink's Pharmaceutical Allowance to be increased to be the equivalent of one script per week for each Centrelink Pharmaceutical Allowance recipient.

The Save Medicare Alliance is open to any individual and not-for-profit non-party-political organisation which agrees with its aim and objectives. For more information, contact Megan Lee (02) 9281 3588 or check the website [www.labor.net.au](http://www.labor.net.au).

## The Medicines Line

It is estimated that 80,000 admissions to Australian hospitals each year are due to mistakes with medicines. The *Medicines Line* is a national telephone information service providing independent and up-to-date information about all types of medicines including prescription, over-the-counter and alternative/complementary medicines.

The most common concerns that prompt a call are from people who have developed a worrying side effect, have not been given adequate information, want a second opinion, are confused about the information given and who read something about the medicine and its use in the media.

The questions most frequently asked include the short and long term side effects of taking the medicine, whether the treatment is appropriate for the condition, the possible interactions of the medicine with other medicines, how the medicine works, and the risks and benefits of taking the medicine.

Call 1300 888 763 for cost of a local call

## So now we know

Remember International Year of Volunteers in 2001? Well, the official NSW Report and Recommendations by the Committee has finally appeared. (The Report is in our office if you wish to read it.)

This glossy Report of 56 pages acknowledges the 2000 million hours of time donated by volunteers and the strong volunteer culture in this country. It outlines major projects and activities undertaken during the year, lists recipients of the Premier's Awards, the Volunteer Expos that took place, the assistance given by State Government to volunteer work, as well as pages of community activities that go on day after day. All very interesting.

A plan of action for the future is outlined in four key areas with which we are already familiar. Nothing startlingly new, just the usual urging of local government to support volunteering in their communities and the need for more core funding by the State government.

According to Volunteers Australia, 4.4 million people currently volunteer in Australia throughout the year, generating \$42 billion a year for the Australian economy. This is an astonishing statistic and makes us even more aware of how important volunteers are to the community. As a small example, just think how many hours members of OWN donate to the cause of older women.

A run down of a typical week at OWN NSW would include, on various days, three volunteers on computers. One would be updating subscriptions and other financial details, another writing letters and reports and a third updating the database with research material and new literature which has already been assessed by our

librarian. The Theatre Group will be rehearsing, writing new material and responding to requests for performances, the editors of *OWN Matters* will be reading, discussing, and editing newsletter material, while others are answering the office phones, sending out information packages and generally doing whatever needs doing. Each month of course the newsletter is designed and laid out, proof read, printed, folded, labelled and bundled into postal districts to be taken to Print Post at Waterloo. All very labour intensive. Add to this the hours spent by members organising seminars and meetings, wellness activities and anything else that concerns the health and welfare of older women.

In one week we will have notched up much more than a hundred hours. At, say, \$15 an hour (a cleaner's wage), you can imagine the total cost for a year!

Now, nobody wants to be paid for what is given so freely and generously, in OWN and in all those other groups that contribute so much to social capital in our communities, but we were pleased to read this official, appreciative Report on the work of volunteers.

**Muriel Hortin**

### Amazing!

What is the most efficient and cheapest computer available?

Answer: Your brain.

And, what's more, it is portable, does not need to be upgraded, and is free. The more you use it, the better it works.

Truly amazing.

**Joan Johns**

## Put that Mars Bar back!

Although chocolate is not a health food, it does contain interesting compounds, which confectionery manufacturers would love to convince us are healthy!

Cocoa beans have high levels of antioxidants, known as flavonoids. Flavonoids can soak up free radicals which are formed naturally in small amounts when oxygen is used to generate energy. Free radical damage is also important in the development of heart disease. This process is termed oxidation, and oxidised cholesterol is more likely to be deposited in the wall of blood vessels. This becomes what is called a plaque which thickens blood vessel walls and eventually leads to blockages that can cause heart attacks and strokes.

Flavonoids have two important actions that reduce the risks of developing heart disease. The first is that they can reduce the formation of oxidised cholesterol. The second is that they may lower the strength of the body's inflammatory responses, reducing the activation and accumulation of immune cells on blood vessel walls.

So, that's the theory! Dark chocolate has the highest flavonoid content and in small amounts adds to the pleasure of life. However, don't imagine it's going to clean up your arteries and never forget that chocolate is energy-dense and weight-gaining.

***Journal of the Dietetic Association 2003;103:215-223***

## **The Red Skirt**

I wake up at the usual time: five minutes before the Kapo's harsh 'Auf! Auf!' signalling another day of hard labour and abuse in the German labour camp. Only today, no one comes to rouse me from my bunk. As I lie there, I hear an unusual hum of excitement outside.

Someone bursts into our dormitory, shouting, "We are free! The Germans fled overnight. The Russians are here!"

I cannot feel anything. After three months of inhuman treatment at Auschwitz and then eight in the slave labour camp, I am not used to thinking or feeling any more. I had been reduced to an order-obeying machine. *Can I really do as I like, today? What do I want to do?*

My mother is quicker off the mark. "Get up, Trudy. Let's see what we can find." Food is our first preference. With no one to hand us our usual meagre rations, we head for the Kapos' quarters. Too late. Others have already ransacked them.

Opening drawers in one of the rooms, mother finds a neat little box – a sewing kit! Mother's ever-practical eyes dart around and fall upon the only object left – too bulky to remove – a doona with a red cotton cover. "There's plenty of material for a lovely skirt for you, just the right colour to please our Russian liberators," she exclaims.

The scissors from the sewing kit are already snipping along the seams. The liberated feather-down promptly starts flying all over the room, resembling a snowstorm. By the time the operation is finished, feathers are sticking to us everywhere.

On our way out, we meet Rosie and Eva whom we have befriended over the last few months. "We're off to town," they tell us. "Wouldn't you like to join us?" I

can just *go to town*, as I please?

Mother, however, has different ideas. "No thanks. I'll get on with the skirt." Even in these first moments of freedom her choice is a loving act for me.

The path to the small township leads through fields of corn and potatoes. Even the weather, liberated from its shackles of winter gloom, seems to join our celebration of freedom. The air never felt so fresh and the sky has put on its brightest blue, punctuated by wispy white clouds, floating in the light breeze. I feel afloat with them... Then I come down to earth, skipping, running around like a child. I feel I am a reborn today.

One of Rosie's dark memories intrudes. "Remember, on our marches through here some women dared to sneak out of line to grab a precious potato from the field, and the Kapo let the dogs loose on them?" I am not in the mood to let such thoughts spoil my day. "Let's not dwell on the past. Look to the future!"

In town, we find a weird scene: everything is locked up, shutters are down, houses look deserted. The Germans have fled. A few emaciated, scantily dressed folk, like us, are roaming about amid Russian soldiers on the rampage,

breaking into buildings and emerging loaded with loot.

Our hunger compels us, and we enter a house; the sight of a comfortably furnished home is like an old dream returning. After nearly a year of living in sub-human conditions, *this* doesn't seem real any more. To test its reality, I lower myself into one of the large, padded armchairs and feel its softness gently caressing my bony body. I close my eyes and drift off...

"Look what's here!" Eva's excited voice makes me jump up. A pantry! Although depleted, it still has stacks of treasures for us. I dip into a sugar-bowl and let spoonfuls of this delicacy dissolve on my tongue. The place is just too good to leave. Who would want to return to the dismal camp from this haven? We'll spend a few days here, recovering somewhat before our journey home to Czechoslovakia.

I rush back to collect mother. "Your new skirt is ready to wear, darling," she beams. It's a beauty, and all hand-stitched. I put it on eagerly. For many years it remained my favourite garment, a potent symbol of mother's love. When it finally became too tattered to wear, I gave it a tearful burial.

**Trudy Davis**

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## **What makes life 100%?**

Ever wonder about those people who say they are giving more than 100%? How about achieving 103%? Here's a little math that might prove helpful.

If: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z is represented as:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26.

Then: H A R D W O R K = 8 1 18 4 23 15 18 11 = 98%

K N O W L E D G E = 11 14 15 23 12 5 4 7 5 = 96%

But, A T T I T U D E = 1 20 20 9 20 21 4 5 = 100%

And, B U L L S H I T = 2 21 12 12 19 8 9 20 = 103%

So, it stands to reason that hard work and knowledge will get you close, attitude will get you there, and bullshit will put you over the top.

## 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.**

## Depression may 'worsen' age-related macular degeneration

Depression, although not actually responsible for worsening underlying eye conditions, makes a person's vision seem worse than it is, say US researchers.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a common cause of deteriorating vision in older people.

Researchers suggest that as depression is a treatable disorder, people with AMD should be able to look forward to improved outcomes.

[www.macular-degeneration.org/](http://www.macular-degeneration.org/)

## Raising awareness about a 'hidden killer'

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) kills more than 2.75 million people throughout the world every year, making it the world's fourth-leading cause of death after heart disease, stroke and pneumonia. The problem is that an estimated 50 percent of sufferers remain undiagnosed.

COPD progressively restricts the ability to breathe and is characterised by symptoms such as wheezing and coughing. The Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) aims to reduce global levels of death and disability by encouraging people with symptoms to see their doctor for earlier diagnosis and treatment.

Doctors cannot cure COPD, but they can help people to improve symptoms and slow the damage to their lungs. Breathing exercises can help strengthen the muscles you need for breathing, and walking and exercising regularly also helps.

[www.goldcopd.com/](http://www.goldcopd.com/)

## A simple test for stroke

A stroke can have a bewildering array of manifestations, including loss of speech, paralysis, poor balance and many other neurological problems. It's difficult for the average person to make a diagnosis, especially if the person only seems to be mildly affected.

A team of researchers has devised a one-minute test that can be used by ordinary people to diagnose stroke.

If someone collapses with a suspected stroke, first ask them to show their teeth and smile. This 'smile test' is used to check for one-sided facial weakness – a classic sign of stroke. Then ask the person to close their eyes and raise their arms. Stroke patients usually cannot raise both arms to the same height, a sign of arm weakness.

Finally, ask them to repeat a simple sentence to check for slurring of speech, which is another sign of stroke. To make it easier to remember, the test can be summarised as "smile, wave, talk".

This simple test will help determine if the person has suffered a stroke and thereby speed up effective care.

[www.strokeconference.org/](http://www.strokeconference.org/)

## Have a Laugh

What's The Difference Between  
Roast Beef And Pea Soup?  
*Anyone Can Roast Beef.*

How Do You Get Holy Water?  
*You Boil The Hell Out Of It.*

What Do You Call Santa's Helpers?  
*Subordinate Clauses.*

What do You Get From a Pampered  
Cow?  
*Spoiled Milk.*

# NOTICES

*There is a wind  
Blowing voices to me  
Memories of how I arrive  
Journeys by air, land and sea...*

From

## **'A BETTER LIFE'**

proudly presented by the  
Illawarra Multicultural  
Women's Performing Group.

Adults \$8 Concession \$4

Inner West Cultural  
Services 9519 0815

New Theatre 9519 3403

11 am Tuesday 10 June  
11 am Wednesday 11 June  
NEW THEATRE  
542 King St. Newtown

## **Motherless daughters**

Tarryn O'Loughlin, who is in Year 12 at Balmain High wants help in finding some motherless daughters for a survey she is doing as a project.

She would like to talk to women who became motherless either from birth or up to about 20. If anyone in OWN would be willing to fill out her survey on the effects of their loss, she can be contacted at [tarrynoloughlin@yahoo.com.au](mailto:tarrynoloughlin@yahoo.com.au) or through her teacher, Bridget Cleaver, on 9810 0471.

## **Jessie Street National Women's Library**

### **Lunch-hour Talk**

12 noon to 1.30 pm Thursday, 19 June, 2003.

Lady Mayoress' Rooms, Town Hall, George Street

Entry \$20 (non-members \$15 (members)).

Sandwich lunch included.

Speaker: Deirdre Macpherson "Betty Archdale: Her Life and Impact on Women's Education". Deirdre is a writer and journalist and at present a teacher of gifted and talented children. She talks about Betty Archdale, feminist, sportswoman and acclaimed educationalist. Her biography of Betty was published last year.

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

## **Hearing victims voices**

PEPPA (Promotion of Ethical Practice to Prevent Abuse)

*Opening our Hearts and Minds* to people who have experienced abuse.

Gwen Scotman: Deputy Chair Australian Mental Health Consumer Network.

Josie Jackson: Older Women's Network

Teresa Petric: Manager of Clinical Services Transcultural Mental Health Centre

Robyn Shields: Aboriginal Mental Health

Tricia Mayne: TAMAR ( Towards A More Appropriate Response ), a group of Anglican women working to raise awareness of sexual abuse issues in the church.

Dr. Joanna Penglase: CLAN (Careleavers of Australia Network)

Facilitator: Merrilyn Walton, Associate Professor of Ethical Practice, Department of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, University of Sydney

### **6.30pm-8pm, 18 June 2003**

Room C3.01 Faculty of Nursing, University of Sydney, 88 Mallet Street Camperdown RSVP by 16 June Leah 95578290

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