



OWN MATTERS

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

No. 32 August 2004

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Towards a New Five-Year Policy on Ageing

The NSW Minister for Ageing, Ms Carmel Tebbutt, has called for public submissions for the NSW Forum on Ageing to be held in September this year.

Ms Tebbutt said:

"This is an opportunity for people to discuss ways of enhancing the role of older people in the community and to inform Government on issues relating to the ageing of our population.

I invite community organisations and members of the public –*especially seniors* – to make submissions about the things they feel are important for meeting the needs of older people in NSW.

The submissions will be used as the basis of discussion for delegates at the NSW Forum on Ageing which will be held at Parliament House on Tuesday, 28 September 2004.

The Forum will enable older people, key stakeholders, government agencies, unions and business and other members of the community to have a say on the future directions of ageing policy. This will lead to agreement on strategies to include in the new five-year policy on ageing which is currently under development."

Public submissions to the NSW Forum on Ageing should be typed and be up to 1500 words in length. Submissions can be lodged at ageingforum@dadhc.nsw.gov.au or sent to NSW Forum on Ageing Secretariat, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Level 4, 83 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Submissions close 13 August 2004. For more information please call 8270 2000 or visit www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/ageing_forum/

A REMINDER

Have you sent in your evaluation of the OWN NSW State Conference yet?

OWN Matters

is the Newsletter of the Older Women's Network (OWN) NSW. It is published 11 times a year. Subscriptions are \$20.

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

Who Are We?

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

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

Contributions

Members of all 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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Point of View

Médecins Sans Frontières

Sarah Elliot, a qualified nurse and field worker with Médecins Sans Frontières, was the guest speaker at OWN Sydney's Winter Solstice event in June.

With a lump in my throat, I listened to her story of how more than 700 sick, emaciated, starving children were gathered up in Angola after the 2002 war and taken to 'feeding centres' set up by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), or Doctors Without Borders. Sarah said that this was the most suffering she had ever seen and she still found it difficult to talk about.

Driven by her passion and her revulsion against the cruelty and barbarism suffered by the African people through the wars and massacres of the past two decades, Sarah has spent the last four years as a volunteer in Angola, Sierra Leone and Liberia with this wonderful, humanitarian organisation. When her leave is up, Sarah will go back to another African country, to hard, exhausting work in a camp with a makeshift hospital, possibly with only one doctor, three nurses, a logistician and as many local women as she can recruit. They will provide medical aid and succour to an impoverished people in a country ravaged by AIDS and diseases caused by famine and poverty. She could sometimes be working fifteen hours a day and she and her staff would be dropping from exhaustion, but never stopping because the need is so great. During her term in Liberia, half her staff of local women were raped or suffered violence and abuse.

Sarah also emphasised the human side as well as the horror. She is enriched, she says, by experiencing such a diversity of life. She has learnt to appreciate the different peoples, their languages, lifestyles, crafts, food, and the friends she has made. She has learnt to 'sweet talk' brutal armed border guards, and sometimes she can even 'humanise' them a little.

Médecins Sans Frontières was founded by an independent group of French doctors during the 1971 Biafran war. They go wherever emergency help is needed to alleviate human suffering during a crisis, and were the only aid agency that stayed in Rwanda during the genocide, giving aid in the midst of the barbarism and atrocities perpetrated every day.

Eighty percent of MSF funding comes from donations by ordinary people in every country of the world. OWN members at the Winter Solstice meeting in June were deeply moved by Sarah's account and immediately donated over \$200. For myself, I intend to make a regular monthly donation because I can surely do without a small luxury now and again. Donations, whether small or large, and sent regularly, align us with caring, civilised people all over the world who help Médecins Sans Frontières to stay alive. Donations can be sent to Médecins Sans Frontières, PO Box 847, Broadway, Sydney, 2007. All donors receive a regular newsletter.

Muriel Hortin

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

Older women are still mostly invisible in the media, and despite our wonderful Theatre Group and the Aboriginal Support Circle's new book, so is the Older Women's Network. So, we were very pleased to be asked to contribute a story about OWN to *Womenspace*, the newsletter of the NSW Office for Women (previously the Department for Women.) The June issue focused exclusively on older women, and featured an inspiring story about OWN written by Cate Turner. Called *Older and Much Bolder*, Cate's article highlighted the role that members of the Older Women's Network have played in dispelling the many myths surrounding ageing, and also described our ongoing struggle to improve older women's lives. Her article convincingly captured the strength, humour and wisdom that our members possess and share.

We view with concern reports that there will be funding cuts to the National Women's Health Program. This could adversely affect our Wellness Centres and subsequently many areas of healthy ageing. We will follow this up and we urge groups and individuals to also take this issue up with local health authorities and politicians.

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) have advised us that Seniors Week 2005 will be held from 13-20 March. There are two types of grants available for events and activities across NSW: one for \$500 and one for \$1000, a set amount which must be matched in cash or in kind by the recipient. Applications must be received by 24 September 2004. If groups would like to apply for a Seniors Week Grant, contact the Project Manager at DADHC on 9338 5536.

We are sorry to farewell two of our stalwarts from the Management Team, Louise Anike and Isobel MacCallum, who will not be standing for the 2004-2005 Management Team. Their wisdom and expertise has been highly valued and we will miss them.

We have just purchased a new photocopier, which will fold and staple our newsletter! Technology is a wonderful thing – sometimes. The new copier will lessen the load on Wilhelmina Van Dorp, our dependable volunteer who has almost single-handedly folded the newsletter by hand (well, actually, sometimes they were *sat on* to ensure that lovely crease you all appreciate!).

Unfortunately, the Advocacy Coordination Group has gone into temporary recess, due to falling numbers and ill-health amongst members. Advocacy is a very important activity and older women really need to maintain a strong voice out there, as we have done for over a decade. OWN members represent older women on many different consumer committees, and are often guest speakers at forums and conferences, so that an active and supportive Advocacy Coordination Group is essential.

We thank our staff members, Dorothy Cora and Kris Ferguson, for their continued dedication, patience and perseverance during the last year. In often trying circumstances, they always came up with the goods!

The 2003–2004 Coordinators thank everyone for their support during the year and warmly welcome the 2004–2005 team. We wish you vim, vigour and vitality for the many exciting challenges that you will meet in the coming year.

Lucy Porter, Cate Turner and Anne Warren

There's still time to say "NO"

How many of our democratic systems are corrupted by the interests of corporate wealth? Private negotiations, never ratified by the people, now give global corporations the power to override our laws and cultural systems!

The future health of our political system will be measured by the health of our community. Our soil, water, air, conservation of our unique flora and fauna, intellectual property, culture and education, are all threatened by a US-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Before the FTA comes into effect, enabling legislation must be passed by Australia's parliament. This means it must pass the Senate. The Greens and Democrats have stated that they won't pass such legislation, but the ALP has so far sat on the fence, not deciding either way.

Has the ALP the courage to stand up for the people?

Mark Latham and Shadow Trade Minister Stephen Conroy said they would block the implementing legislation if it undermined the PBS and Australian content in new media, and if it did not deliver significant economic benefits for Australia.

There is now a debate in the ALP about whether to keep this pledge.

Show them how many Australians oppose this trade agreement by visiting www.nofta.org, or send a letter to Opposition Leader, Mark Latham, asking that the ALP join other parties in the Senate to oppose legislation enabling the FTA.

This is our last chance to stop this destructive agreement which could become law by August!

Mary Jensen

Theatre Group Report

Well, we have had a bit of a mixed-up time these past few weeks. Our last show was in the Annandale Neighbourhood Centre. We were performing in the area being used for a kind of child care centre, so we had to wait until the kids were removed and taken home before we could set up our equipment. We even finished up helping serve their lunch, to which we were invited, so that things would hum along a little faster.

Most people who ask us to perform have no idea about the time it takes us to set up and take down our mikes and such. Our show went off really well and we had a very enthusiastic audience. We were even given a flower as a memento of the day – very nice.

Our pianist, dear Ann, is away again. She asked me to say she was overseas, as it sounds better than saying she's having another operation. Have a good time, Ann!

We have been very fortunate in finding a temporary replacement for Ann. Her name is Claire and she is a delightful woman with a whole mass of talent. She said to us, at her first full rehearsal, that she was nervous because she had never played for a group like us before. When we said to prepare for half a dozen women saying,

"The music is too fast, too slow, too loud, too soft," she just laughed and said she thought she would cope. Our first full rehearsal went off really well, so we are very lucky.

We are off to Batemans Bay on 30 July and we were getting worried about an accompanist as we don't have a capella at all well! The organiser of the trip to Bateman's Bay sent an email saying there was a big surprise waiting for us when we get off the bus – such suspense! We are all thrilled about the trip now. We have a musician, rehearsals are going well, we have upped the dose of Valium for Louise, so what could go wrong?

After the trip down the coast, we must knuckle down and prepare for another tour. There are no more *Women on Wheels* tours now that the department has had its funding so drastically cut, which is a great shame because the tours (and our performances) were really great for people in country areas. And we always had such fun meeting all those wonderfully friendly country women – oh, well, never mind, there's not much we can do about it now that the polities have made their decision to chop the Department for Women off at the knees.

Josie Jackson

Policy on Authorship and Intellectual Property Rights

The Management Team is currently formalising a policy on Authorship and Intellectual Property Rights. At present we have a policy to cover material produced by our employees, but not material produced by volunteers.

If any members have an interest in issues around ownership of material produced for or on behalf of OWN NSW (or one of its projects, for example, the Theatre Group) please contact the office and we will send you a copy of a draft policy currently under discussion.

The Tin Leg

*Hanging above the bar
I see an old tin leg.
I'm crushed between two men.
We wait for rum and coke.
One is garrulous and thin,
One is silent and fat.
Will I ask the fat one
just for fun, challenge him?
"Hi there, is that a leg
up there above the bar?"
Startled eyes look at me,
I smile encouragement.
His cigarette butt moves,
It slides across his mouth.
I hear a grunt or two,
I'll wait, my smile is fixed.
His mouth moves just a trace.
"Yeah, it's old Bob's spare.
Made it 'imself, 'e did.
From 'is downpipe. His wood
one got et by white ants.
'E died last year, old Bob."
He grabs his beer, leaves me,
Hurries to a safer place.
In Queensland outback pub.*

Joan Johns



Three Wise Women

Do you know what would have happened if it had been Three Wise Women instead of Three Wise Men?

They would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, brought practical gifts...and there would be Peace on Earth.



Human rights education kit

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre has launched a new community education kit on Protecting Human Rights in Australia. The kit contains fact sheets, including one on health rights, which illustrate international human rights standards and how human rights protection in Australia could be improved. Further information is available at www.piac.asn.au or by phoning 9299 7833.

The Golden Road to Samarkand

What a privilege it is to realise unlikely wishes! I have flown across, and seen the Himalayas. I have travelled on the Old Silk Road, I have walked in desert sand, I have been onto the steppes of Central Asia, and I have seen the famous city of Samarkand.

In May this year, I travelled to Uzbekistan, a Muslim country overrun in the past by Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and others. It is now an independent republic, once ruled by Russia. It has no oil, but alas, it has been a major supplier of cotton that is killing the Aral Sea. Australians can relate to that problem. Few Americans visit Uzbekistan because, our guide said, "It's the 'wrong' religion."

Before I set out with a small tour group, friends feared for my welfare. I was offered shawls to wear (it's a Muslim country), pills to prevent illness, and advised on avoiding acts of terrorism. I was even complimented on my bravery. I ignored the fuss and the truth was wonderfully different.

The people are lovely, clothing is colourful and religion is nominal. There are disused mosques in every city, works of great art and architecture and there are decorations on private homes and craft stalls in the market places. Roses and hollyhocks flowered beside the roads where apricot and mulberry trees partly protected them from the dry heat, about 40 degrees in summer and freezing in winter. In May and September, it is pleasantly hot.



As we drove along a bitumen road, the guide said, "We are now on the Old Silk Road of cobblestones." In my mind, I was in a caravan bumping along on wooden wheels led by camels from Tashkent through the undulating green hills on the golden road to Samarkand, one of the most ancient cities in the world.

With its magnificent mosques, tombs and dazzling ensembles of ceramic tiles, Samarkand was once a central market place and a centre for learning. The great Registan is a mosque with a Madrassah, a Muslim high educational institution where students used to live. It must have contained a great library, where it is now believed Marco Polo read up on China. And went no farther.

In Bukhara, the next town, we came across the remains of an old caravanserai, a 'hotel' where fifty camels and their traders were housed at one time. Bukhara was a carpet-trading city.

Although Uzbekistan is a poor country, it is rich in its respect for the past. Statues of poets, philosophers, mathematicians and astronomers are cared for, as are the wonderful decorative tiles. And the tomatoes are REAL.

Frances Heathfield

"Stan" means a place where people live, for instance, Uzbeki, Afghani and Paki.

Older People and Poverty

The recently released *Poverty Report*, sent to OWN by NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS), found that the wealth of older Australians increased between 1986 and 1997, but that the increased wealth is concentrated in the richest 5% of this population.

The wealth of all other older Australians either declined or only slightly increased. Another finding shows that older and impoverished women, with no private income,

are more likely to be in private rental accommodation.

The report also identified ill health as a cause of poverty, and that insufficient income support can lead to ill-health, thus entrenching a cycle of poverty.

The report exposes the myth that if you create good enough economic conditions, then the benefits will trickle down to all.

The main recommendations in the *Poverty Report* include a

statement that older people should have access to improved income support, health care and aged care services.

NCOSS has commented that the recommendations are good, but seem to avoid direct Commonwealth responsibility for some actions by either shifting responsibility to the older person, to the private sector, or the community.

June West

Improving women's lives

I thought other OWN members might be interested in the *Women's Election Platform*, which was developed at the Women's Electoral Lobby's national conference in June.

Many women, both young and old, believe women's issues have fallen off the political agenda in recent years, so we decided to remind political parties that women often differ from men on the issues we see as important. Remember, a few thousand of our votes could decide the Federal election!

WEL priorities affecting older women include dissuading doctors from charging additional fees to concession cardholders by making such services ineligible for reimbursement from Medicare. This measure would soon find almost all doctors, general practitioners and specialists, choosing to bulk bill concession cardholders, rather than the present situation where large numbers of doctors, particularly specialists, do not bulk bill concession cardholders.

Another priority is a redirection of the \$3.7 billion taxpayer subsidy given to welloff people who can afford private insurance, to areas of need such as public hospitals, health services for Aboriginal people and community health centres.

Eradicating violence against women is also a priority, and amongst other things, WEL wants increased funds for emergency accommodation services for women experiencing domestic violence.

Cate Turner

ETHICAL INVESTMENTS

If you are one of the lucky ones with some money to invest, you might like to consider Australian Ethical Investment Ltd. The company has been trading since 1994 and its motto is "for investors, society and the environment". Its Charter defines the company's guiding philosophy, which is to seek out investments which support, amongst others, such concepts as workers' participation, appropriate technologies, amelioration of wasteful/polluting practices, sustainable land use, and alleviation of poverty.

Correspondingly the company has a list of types of investments which it avoids, e.g. those which involve polluting practices, discrimination in any form, militarism, and human rights abuses.

Naturally, you can't afford to be benevolent with your money, and you need to check carefully on the company's returns, but as long as you're not worse off, why not at least have your money doing some good in the world?

Since 1997 the company has also been making donations to community groups from its profits, with \$135,000 going to more than 160 conservation, benevolent and charitable organisations.

If you want more information you can contact them on 1800 021 227, email: centre@austethical.com.au or check their website www.austethical.com.au.

I also find their newsletter, *Aim High*, is worth getting.

Pat Carlton

Losing myself

I just weighed myself and discovered that I have lost a few kilos. Am I dieting? No. Am I exercising more? No. Then how can I lose weight?

The reason I am losing weight is because I am losing my memory. I go upstairs, get to the top and forget what I went up there for, so I come down again and then remember that I was going to the loo, so I go back up again. Then I return downstairs. I go upstairs to make my bed and the telephone rings, but I have forgotten to take the portable phone upstairs with me, so I run downstairs to answer it, then I go back upstairs to finish making my bed.

The front door bell rings because I forgot to leave the door open for my neighbour, who comes in for morning tea, so I go downstairs again. We have morning tea and my neighbour asks if I have finished with the book she loaned me. I go upstairs and get it from my bedroom. I then go to the corner shop but have forgotten my list so I go back home again. I go into the kitchen and just stand there. Am I hungry or was I just going to make a cuppa? Oh, no, I remember the washing has finished and I have to hang it out.

When I told my daughter about all these things and asked did she think I was getting Alzheimer's, she said, "Don't be daft Mum, if you remember that you have forgotten something then you are OK – it's when you don't remember that you've forgotten something that you have to worry." Then she added, "If you get to that point, you won't remember that you haven't always lived in the old people's home."

Very reassuring!

Josie Jackson

What did you do in the war, Grandma?

Well, gather round, my little dears, while I tell you. I left my Bank job in the bush and a nice farmer boyfriend, and I joined the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force. I look better in navy ... and anyway, I wanted to fall in love with a pilot. After months of training, I became a Corporal in the Cypher Unit at RAAF Headquarters, Melbourne.

We WAAFs sat at huge noisy X machines, turning jumbled five-letter gobbledy-gook into perfectly understandable English. My friend Alice once deciphered a message saying that her brother was lost in a bombing raid over Berlin. He turned up later, though.

We worked eight-hour shifts around the clock, the hardest being the dogwatch (10pm to 6am). We'd come off duty hysterical with relief. We lived in tin huts – 28 to a hut – with no doors on showers or toilets, no sheets, just straw palliasses and thick grey blankets, heavy as lead. Mum made me the first sleeping bag anyone had ever heard of. She'd cadged bits of left-over wool from her farmer friends ... or else she went out in the paddocks picking it off fences. You know how sheep rub their itchy backsides on fences? It felt a bit sheepy ... but there was nothing in the many WAAF rules to say one couldn't smell like a sheep.

How I longed for an affair with a Yank, but the day we arrived in Melbourne, General MacArthur moved all his troops north! Going home on leave on the Spirit of Progress, I met a Yank at last. He helped me heave my kitbag onto the luggage rack. We swapped stories and photos, batted eyelashes, then he took me to dinner in the dining car. We flirted madly over dinner, then in no time at all, back in our seats, we were wrapped in each other's arms, as the train thundered through tunnel – but who needs the darkness of tunnels? This was wartime, and blackouts, and besides, who cares?

At Harden Station, where I had to change trains for Cowra – he was bound for Sydney – there were long, lingering kisses, greatcoat pressed to greatcoat and heartbreaking farewells as the train pulled away from the station. The whistle keened, the mist swirled, but who knows which was mist and which were tears?

Letters followed, aching with longing, and plans were made. We must spend our next leaves together...all our leaves, in fact! Until that fateful day when he accidentally enclosed a photo...of his wedding day! From a few months back! And that, my little dears, was THAT! Exit Dwayne.

Dorothy Cox

A matter of life or death _____

Into the well-worn debate on euthanasia is a new book with the unpromising title of *The Right to Die? An examination of the Euthanasia Debate*.

The author is a journalist at *The Australian*, Miriam Cosic. She doesn't advocate a position, doesn't distort the statistics, but lays them out in all their complexity. She actually finds some common ground amongst those for and against, and acknowledges both the moral sincerity and medical truth, which makes it useful reading for us all.

Muriel Hortin

What would they do without us?

I have just received a copy of Research Paper No 34, October 2003 from the Australian Institute of Family Studies, entitled *Measuring the value of unpaid household, caring and voluntary work of older Australians*.

The abstract of this paper reads:

“As the populations in many countries age, the direct financial costs to governments are expected to rise due to the income support and health costs associated with an older population. A focus on these financial costs has led to an unduly negative, problem-oriented view of the population ageing that neglects the contribution of older citizens to the social and economic wellbeing of the nation.

“This paper explores just one aspect of the contributions of older Australians and demonstrates that, as an age cohort, older people make valuable economic contributions to Australian society through the time they spend in voluntary work and in unpaid caring in their own household, to their family members in other households, and to non-family members in the wider community.

“It is estimated that Australians aged over 65 years contribute almost \$39 billion per year in unpaid caring and voluntary work, and, if the unpaid contribution of those aged 55 to 64 years is included, this contribution rises to \$74.5 billion per annum.”

If you want to get a copy, please phone (03) 9214 7888 or go to www.aifs.gov.au

Barbara Silverstone



***Oh, what a tangled web site
we weave when first we
practice***

Letters to the Editor

A Credit to all Humankind

The following letter was forwarded by someone who teaches at a small high school in country Queensland. The letter was sent to the principal's office after the school had sponsored a luncheon for the elderly. This story is a credit to all humankind. Read it, soak it in and bask in the warm feeling that it leaves you with...

Dear School,

God bless you for the beautiful radio I won at your recent senior citizen's luncheon. I am 94 years old and live in the local Community Home for the Aged. My family has long since passed away and I rarely have visitors. As a result, I have very limited contact with the outside world. This makes your gift especially welcome.

My roommate, Maggie Cook, has had her own radio for as long as I've known her. She listens to it all the time, though usually with an earplug or with the volume so low I can't hear it. For some reason, she has never wanted to share it. Last Sunday morning, while listening to her morning gospel programs, she accidentally knocked it off the shelf. It smashed into many pieces and caused her to cry. It was so sad. Fortunately I had my new radio. Knowing this, Maggie asked me if she could listen to mine. I told her to f..k off.

Edna Johnson.

Lightweight

I have some reservations about the article reprinted in last month's newsletter from the *Telegraph*, entitled *Lifting Weights Lifts Spirits Too*. Unless the older person is in good health, more

problems can arise from any strenuous activity. Great care must be taken with each individual. Perhaps their sadness goes away because they are in a group with other people and can talk and laugh together. Their spirits can soar. I consider this a rather lightweight article.

Helene Gonski

With tongue in cheek

I wrote the following letter, which was published in SMH on 5 July, because of all the rubbish written about Latham. I was wondering how far back people would go to dig up dirt, and how ridiculous it all seemed.

I have heard a very reliable rumour (that I suspect came via the Liberal Party) that Mark Latham used to brutally stomp on sandcastles made by his little friends at kindergarten, and throw his dinner from his highchair when he was a little tot.

Not only that, I understand he was very restless and used to kick a lot before he was born. This is not the sort of person to become prime minister.

Maureen King

Our Own Hearts and Minds

"As I understand it, if the free trade agreement goes ahead, the limited protection now in place for free-to-air television will not apply to any new media. With technology moving at the pace it does, we don't know how our programs will be delivered to us in ten or fifteen years time, and it would be a disaster for us."

Toni Collette, actor, from a speech given in Canberra last month.

Our Safety

Because it never hurts to be careful in this crazy world we live in, here's a safety tip: If a robber asks for your wallet or purse, don't hand it to them, throw it away from you instead. (Chances are that robbers are more interested in your money than you, and will go for your wallet or purse.) Then run like mad in the other direction!

Rhondda Kingston

Hi, Casanova!

What to watch on TV? Usually on the ABC on Friday evening, there is a thriller, or a detective drama, cops and robbers stuff. I wasn't in the mood for that. SBS advertised *The Young Casanova*, a new four-part series made in France. I turned to it. It was set in Venice, with glimpses of the Grand Canal, gondoliers and masked balls, duels and what have you. Young Casanova was dashing about from here to there and back again. I followed the jumpy plot with great difficulty.

I expected French dialogue, with English subtitles. Not so! The cast consisted of very bad actors with broad American accents, all attired in period costume, wigs and all. (Casanova was born in 1725, and lived to be about 73.)

I watched in amazement for about half an hour, shocked by the stilted acting and the dreadful script – so amateurish. The last straw came when the bewigged Young Casanova burst into the room and said jauntily, "Hi, everyone..."

I reached speedily for the remote control and changed the program.

Renee Simons

Letters to the Editor

Priorities in order

I emailed my sister Elizabeth to tell her that my son-in-law had been involved in a serious accident.

Elizabeth rang my daughter Christine to find out how her husband was, and was told that he was home, and although he was in a lot of pain and not very mobile, he...

Christine's voice went up a pitch as she yelled, "Stop him, stop him, for God's sake someone do something! He's going over, stop him, ohhhhhh noooo, he's gone over."

My sister asked what was happening, but was obviously not getting through to my daughter. When she finally managed to get an answer to the question, "What happened?" my daughter replied, "Queensland just went in for a try."

Barbara Malcolm

A favourite website

A friend told me about this website, www.bookcrossing.com, and I instantly liked the idea.

It's about sharing books with strangers. When you've read a book which you are willing to pass on, you get an ID number from the website, and record your review of the book, which can be as brief as you like. You stick a message inside the book, advising the person picking it up that it has been recorded with Bookcrossing. The new owner can, in turn, record their own review on the web site and pass on the book again.

Once you have joined Bookcrossing (which only entails adopting a name and password

and recording your email address), you receive regular newsletters and 'release alerts' about books that have been released in your area. Most people seem to 'release' their books in places like coffee shops, phone booths, etc. I've released two books so far and am waiting to see what the new owners think about them – so in one way, it's like a chatroom about books.

It's an international organisation and there was a delightful piece in a recent newsletter about 'book trees' happening in several cities in France – people festooned whole trees with released books. I think it's all rather fun. Why don't you check out the website one day?

Pat Carlton

Thank you!

Thank you to all the OWN members who sent messages via Muriel's computer to ALP leader Mark Latham.

You will be happy to know that over 4500 Australians have similarly raised their voices in protest against the Australian-US free Trade Agreement since June 1.

Thanks to people like you, the ALP has so far refused to support the agreement in the Senate. Now the ALP is waiting for the Senate Committee to report on 2 August before taking a public stand on this issue.

There is still time to record any protests and my computer is still available to send further protests. Phone 9692 8427.

Muriel Hortin

The way we were!

Canberra, 1988, and we are performing on the grass outside old Parliament House during the bicentennial celebrations. The *Australian Women's Weekly* had given the embryonic Older Women's Network \$1000 to contribute to the celebrations, and what do you think we did? We wrote some scripts and songs about the invisibility of older women, and instead of talking to the pollies, we sang to them. The Minister for Social (In)Security came across to hear us, muttering something like, "You don't look too invisible to me!"

In the lead-up to the next election, I thought readers might like to read a few lines from songs that we hoped would stir them up a bit back in '88.

We're in a bind, what's on our mind?
Housing! Health! Social Justice! And a fair go!
And even though we're grey
We'll never feel that way,
And we'll keep voicing our OWN opinions.

All I want is a home somewhere,
Nice and snug from the cold night air
No tent...low rent...heaven sent,
Oh, wouldn't it be luvverly.

Peggy Hewett



At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney

Just next month, we'll be welcoming Spring! In the meantime, we have our AGM on 21 August – please see flyer for details. We'd be tickled pink to see lots of you there, and tickled even pinker for some of you to nominate for the Working Group to help with the management and guidance of OWN Sydney in the coming year.

We would like to give a very big thank you to Cherie Thompson for running a three-month trial of Fab Fridays, which is now finished. We are grateful to Cherie for giving lots of thought, time and energy in arranging and convening these Fridays.

Our Winter Solstice will long be remembered by those present. Our guest speaker, Nurse Sarah Elliott, from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) or Doctors Without Borders, moved us deeply with her account of how the organisation is run, and with her personal experiences in deprived and devastated countries such as Angola and Sierra Leone. Her talk brought home to us, very forcefully, how fortunate we are in what we have and where we live. Sarah's gentle humour and humane values were very heart-warming. Two of our members were so touched, they have already joined MSF as volunteers. We were able to hand Sarah just on \$200 in donations and proceeds from our raffle for MSF. (Please see Muriel Hortin's article on Sarah's talk in Point of View, p2. Ed.)

We're pleased to be able to return to Mott Hall again for our activities, and are delighted with the new polished floor.

We thank all of you who sent donations along with your renewal of membership and subscription to OWN Matters. We are always open to suggestions as to what our membership would like to see happen, and welcome new ideas.

Joy Ross is away on a well-earned holiday, and will be on deck again at the end of July. Welcome home, Joy!

Flying solo this time,

Louise Anike

Monster Rally in Canberra

On the first day of Federal Parliament, Tuesday, 3 August, there will be a monster rally in Canberra, outside Parliament House, to ask Labor Senators not to pass the Free Trade Agreement with America.

The organisers, from the Australian National University, want lots of older women to join the protest, carrying their present prescriptions and presenting a large cardboard cheque (organised by the Canberra people) made out to American Pharmaceutical companies.

The press will be there, and we will attract their attention!

If you can go to Canberra on that day, please contact Muriel Hortin on 9692 8427 to discuss transport arrangements.

Macarthur

Our 'Bus Trip Organiser' always comes up trumps!

In May, we had an inspection of the State Theatre, a wonderful trip back in time. Reminiscences were traded, memories revisited of a bygone era, when visiting the movies was a completely different and much more pleasurable experience. This was followed by an exploration of The Rocks, where we enjoyed lunch.

We also visited Westmead Hospital. What an inspiring place it is! Its special qualities were revealed to us by one of their dedicated volunteers, Joan, who has been a volunteer since its inception. We were privileged to meet brave little Sophie and her special friend, Fairy Lily. The mothers were there with their children, and what courageous women they are.

Whilst we were there, we visited the Careflight Helicopter Centre, which is situated near a magnificent building called Ronald MacDonald House. The Centre was very informative and educational, and many of our members took advantage of the Careflight goodies on sale.

We were overawed by our visit to the Blind Dogs Training Centre at Glossodia, where Millie, one of many gorgeous dogs, strutted her stuff. We had a hard time keeping our hands in our pockets, as dogs that are working must not be touched. Our thanks to Tracey for being so patient with all our questions.

Then it was on to Moving Magic at Pitt Town for lunch, and a fascinating exhibition and demonstration of nativity scenes with Dusty the Dog and Mr Joe, and with many (Continued p.11)

At and Beyond the Rocks

more characters, singing smoky blues numbers. Lunch was delicious, and many of us felt we could have stayed longer. Highly recommended if you feel like something different. A Christmas Show is also available.

Our group's tinned food drive for the Exodus Foundation had a great response from our members and our knitters have been industriously supporting the Angela Cattern's *Wrap with Love* for charity.

Another very successful Wellness Day was held on 9 June with thirty-four participants enjoying a smorgasbord of activities offered by seven health providers. A magic day! We had yoga, gentle exercise, meditation, eye care, holistic health and a session on *Mixing Your Medicines*. Our Melody Makers presented a short satirical item, which was well received. 'FUN' was on the official agenda, but time ran out as we were having so much fun learning how to do so many things sitting down. We hope this will be the nucleus for a Wellness Group to be formed in the near future.

As most readers will know by now, our group meets every Wednesday. If any of our OWN sisters are near Campbelltown on a Wednesday (except for the last Wednesday of the month), please visit us at the Benevolent Society, 288 Queen Street, opposite Campbelltown Mall, where you will be made most welcome.

Helen Standing

✂ **Wot's in a name?** ✂

*Tho' my hair has turned to silver,
I'm really just the same.
They may call me luv and dearie,
But I'd rather have my name!*

Peggy Hewett

A regional first!

As an OWN NSW Coordinator, one of my roles is to organise regional meetings of groups from the Illawarra to the Shoalhaven. We had our inaugural meeting on 12 July at Kiama with representatives from Wollondilly, Shellharbour City, Southern Highlands, Nowra, Illawarra and, of course, Kiama.

The meeting was very successful. We covered a whole range of issues from what we do, how we do it, and how we pay for it! One issue we explored was different ways to promote OWN in our local communities. Another was the question of giving gifts to guest speakers: Kiama OWN does not give gifts, but reimburses petrol money to those who travel a long distance; Southern Highlands give speakers an OWN pen (it costs \$8), while Illawarra gives both an OWN pen and petrol money. Guest speakers at Shellharbour City OWN are given a bunch of lavender.

Another topic we explored was the division between business and social activities, the length of our meetings, and the different ways of fitting in guest speakers with the business meeting.

Gaining and losing members is a perennial issue for most OWN groups, so we shared ideas about how to keep members. The *Welcome Kit*, from OWN NSW, has been added to by Shellharbour OWN, and now includes a letter of welcome, a description of the group, agency referrals, a community directory, information on women's issues, and local places of interest. Pamphlets placed in libraries, and free advertisements placed in local papers are always a good idea. Once new members are present, using a buddy system or, as one group does, sitting new members next to members who are chatty, can ease any discomfort for new members. And give out an evaluation form to find out why women don't return to a group!

Socialising or keeping in touch between meetings is different and similar for most groups. Members of Shellharbour regularly socialise outside the group, for example, they go to the theatre, movies, visit markets, or have picnics, and members drive each other to doctors and hospital appointments. BBQs are held at a member's home on the last Sunday of the month, for members who live alone, and issues often come up there that are not discussed at the meetings.

Meeting places are often expensive and members from Illawarra OWN asked for suggestions to find alternative cheaper accommodation for their group. They pay \$27 for two hours at Corrimal Community Centre.

Shellharbour has a topic box for days when there is no guest speaker planned, while members of Wollondilly give a mini profile of themselves if they have no guest speaker. Nowra plans ahead, so has topics prearranged for discussion.

Performance groups are an excellent group activity. A kit is currently being produced to assist groups to set up their own theatre group, and the Illawarra's SilvertOWNs said they are happy to visit and showcase their skills to groups.

Anne Warren

Viva Creative Writing!

A flat fish?

I have just finished a course by Pearlie McNeill on Life Writing and I have grave doubts that I can ever become an accomplished writer. I forget where to put commas and full stops let alone semicolons and despite taking on board Pearlie's inestimable expertise – good advice – patience – humour – empathy – heart warming honesty and craftsmanship or womanship as the case may be I still flounder like a flat fish out of water.

I am dazzled by illuminating alliteration, mixed and muddled metaphors and symbolic symmetry. Life histories need content, clarity, time, discipline and effort. I seem to possess a plausible paucity of these components.

I do like telling stories though and even if I blather and baulk, Pearlie has given me the confidence to continue writing short stories and *signing* my name to them.

Lucy Porter

A Monologue

I wrote this piece at a creative writing workshop, as a radio play. It had to be a monologue of 116 words.

"Hello, Gerald? Joan here. You sound husky. I'll give you my recipe for a kick-a-germ joy joice. Sure to get rid of it. Chop nasturtium leaves, crush garlic, lots of it – squeeze a lemon, grate the rind, add fresh ginger, honey and a teaspoon of horse radish. What? I can't hear you, spluttering away there. Boil it up, sip when warm. I gave Doug some for his cold. He was out of bed like a shot when I came in with the second pot and down in the garden in a trice. What? You're not Gerald? Wrong number? What did you call me? Really! (Hangs up). What a rude man."

Joan Johns.

A full-on experience

The three days between 10:30 am and 4:30 pm were jam-packed with information, writing exercises, heaps of handouts, as well as the reading, analysis and discussion of various texts. At 1 pm we broke for half an hours lunch, followed by another hour undertaking some personal writing practice. Sometimes these were the only breaks we had, as we were 'in the zone' and covering so much ground that it would have been a shame to lose momentum. All decisions, including when to break, were negotiated amongst the group in a democratic manner, and all of us were encouraged to participate by reading extracts of our writings, and asking questions.

Over the first two days, various ways of writing life stories were explained. Unfortunately, I missed the last day due to illness, but by chance happened to run into Margot, who was one of the participants. She was able to tell me that, at the end of the course, it was decided that as our writing was of a high standard, arrangements would be made for all interested participants to meet for another day, possibly some time in September, in order to see how the various writers were progressing with their work.

Overall, the course consisted of three very intense, interesting, and inspiring days. Thanks very much to Pearlie, and everyone at OWN who helped to organise it.

Maureen King

Telling it like it is!

Sadly our Life Writing course has come to an end. For three consecutive weeks, eighteen OWNers attended Pearlie McNeill's informative and enjoyable course.

With warmth, understanding and professionalism Pearlie helped us overcome nervousness and insecurity. She taught us about alliteration, images and idiom, to mention a few of the mysteries of writing (see Lucy's story left).

Like teachers everywhere, Pearlie gave us homework, along with handouts that contained lots of relevant examples to keep our brains active while assisting us with our assignments. She read extracts to us from her book, which was based on happenings in her life. Pearlie's stories illustrate the hardships and rocky roads many women of our generation have experienced.

On the last day of the course, we read the stories we had written. The pathos, humour and honesty contained in these stories touched every one of us. We discovered new things about each other and forged new friendships.

It would be wonderful if women who attended the course could send their stories to *OWN Matters* for publication, or write about how they felt about the course.

Peg Hewett

The Value of a Woman

This is written in the Hebrew Talmud, the book where all of the sayings and preachings of rabbis are conserved over time.

It says: "Be very careful if you make a woman cry, because God counts her tears. The woman came out of a man's rib. Not from his feet to be walked on. Not from his head to be superior, but from the side to be equal. Under the arm to be protected, and next to the heart to be loved."

Contributed by Renee Simons

More Adventure Holidays

Preparing for the Pilbara

Once the 2004 northern Dry Season starts, Mary and I itch to set off on another expedition. This year *The Wet* was good, and late, but the last cyclone, Cyclone Fay, wrecked havoc on the roads so we delayed our departure from Sydney until mid-May. Never mind! As our destination was more remote than ever, and we would be away for five months, there were still preparations to be made!

Mary, the owner and driver of the 4WD, had turned 77, and we suspected this might be our last chance to venture outback on our own – if only the WA roads dry out! The Canning Stock Route, which stretches 1700 km from near Wiluna in the south to near Halls Creek in the north, passes through uninhabited country. Generally drivers travelling in these parts join a tag-along group of two or more vehicles, but our attempt to arrange this failed. So instead we decided to take a foreshortened route through Granite Peak Station to Wells 5 and 6 and then retrace our steps.

Preparing the vehicle for this sort of exercise was crucial. Mary oversaw the changeover to suitable tyres and an upgraded suspension. She organised the installation of roof racks sufficient to carry the weight of a second 29kg spare wheel, and designed a pulley system to get a replaced wheel back up on top again! She also calculated and re-calculated our proposed distances and fuel requirements because unleaded petrol is banned from WA Aboriginal Land, and we needed to buy sufficient in advance.

Then there was the safety equipment to check. Our high frequency transceiver is our lifeline on these remote trips. Not only do we rely on it for contact with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, but we receive reports on outback road conditions and weather via VKS737, a volunteer HF radio network for 4WD drivers. The Bases in Alice Springs and Derby also log our whereabouts each day.

In addition to the radio, we packed two handheld Global Positioning System units, plus a portable self-contained radio transmitter designed for emergency use (EPIRB). When activated, it transmits an internationally recognised distress signal, which is picked up by orbiting satellites and relayed to the nearest Rescue Co-ordination Centre. Finally, there was emergency food sufficient for 14 days and jerry cans of water to stow. Nothing was left to chance. Our lives depended on attending to every detail!

Judith Hammond

Finding Inner Peace

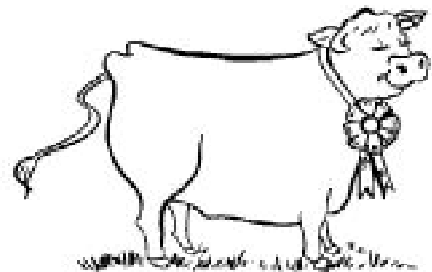
By following the simple advice I read in an article, I have finally found inner peace. The article suggested that “The way to achieve inner peace is to finish all the things you’ve started”. So I looked around to see all the things I had started and hadn’t finished. Today I have finished one bottle of vodka, a bottle of red wine, a bottle of Jack Daniel’s, some Prozac, a couple of Valium, three large boxes of chocolate and half a litre of gin. You have no idea how good I feel!

Contributed by Gabrielle Sneddon

I remember...

Way back, round about the late thirties, we could get our milk delivered. The milkman called twice a day, once very early, probably crack of dawn, and left the bottled milk on the doorstep, according to what you’d ordered.

The milk always had a thick layer of cream on the top – it wasn’t homogenised. And later in the day, he’d call again, this time with butter, bread, eggs, jam, cakes and biscuits and all sorts of tempting goodies. This was in London. We didn’t have fridges – they weren’t necessary. I suppose he would have called at weekends, too, but I’m not too sure of that.



What I do recall with certainty is that when you were a new arrival in the street, all the different dairymen would seek your custom. A couple of names which come to mind are United Dairies and Stapletons. They vied for your custom, offering you free gifts, such as a tea set, a vase, whatever. I remember one of the milk vendors – Stapletons, I think – running up to my mother as we left the house, holding a bottle of milk – “Feel it,” he said, “It’s still warm, fresh from the cow...”

Renee Simons

“Remember, no matter who wins the rat race, you’re still a rat!”

“It’s not hard to meet expenses...they’re everywhere.”

All That Activity

A few weeks ago it was my privilege to transcribe some letters, written in 1795. In one, the writer told of meeting "a good old man, bent with the infirmities of age and complicated diseases". After two hundred years, ageing is still complicated, but made more so by the wearing out of body parts that have previously served us well.

Retirement is generally regarded as a perpetual holiday, a time when we can do as we like. Up to a point that may be so, but a point is reached when we encounter the complications of ageing. Then some of us find we have a full-time job just staying alive. Our waking hours are occupied progressing from one appointment to another or being busy around the house or flat, and everything takes twice as long to do.

And we must exercise! Exercise can become a burden to those not physically inclined to it. Half an hour's walking can be taken in shorter times, two of fifteen minutes, or three of ten minutes. But beware, the last, the third ten minutes can be lost in the day's happenings. Even at rest we are on the move. Toes must be wiggled, ankles flexed, fingers stretched with rubber bands or closed over hard rubber balls. There are weights to be lifted too. All these can be done while watching the increasingly banal television, but trying to do them while reading or listening to the radio is not successful. Those activities require attention. People who meditate must find time for it. Though it's done sitting still, it is not rest and should not be relaxation; that must be practised some other time. And let us not forget our pelvic floor exercises. They can be done any time, on the train, waiting for a bus, watering the garden, watching, listening, even reading. If there is time for it.

Helen Monaghan

Are you about to retire?

If you are investing in financial products to fund your retirement, there are things that you need to know to ensure that you do the correct thing with your tax.

Financial records must be kept for five years from 31 October of the year in which you lodge your tax return.

You do not need to pay tax on inherited money, only on interest or income earned for that money.

What happens if you win Lotto? You do not pay tax on the windfall but on any earnings from that money is taxable.

If you are over age pension age you may be entitled to a reduction in tax through a tax offset, called the Senior Australian Tax Offset.

For more questions and answers, see the Australian Tax Office book, *Understanding Tax in Retirement*. Phone the Seniors Information Service on 13 12 44 for a free copy.

Are you a safe older driver?

People 75 years and over make up a fast growing part of the Australian population. Freedom to travel by car plays an important part in the quality of life, independence and freedom.

The RTA is the licensing authority in NSW and is required by law to ensure that all drivers are medically fit and able to drive safely. To do this the RTA requires older drivers, on reaching a certain age, to do a driving test and provide a medical certificate.

Growing older should not be taken as an indicator of reduced driving ability. In fact, older drivers represent a wide range of abilities, and no drivers should have their licence taken away from them

solely because of age. However, there is evidence that, for many drivers, the skills begin to decline at about age 60 and decline quickly after age 75. There is also a lot of evidence that older drivers



can cope safely with this decline. While you cannot stop ageing, you can try to limit the way any change in function affects your driving.

Some older drivers want to stop driving, as they feel more and more uncomfortable when driving

and realise that they are a hazard to themselves and others on the road. If you no longer want to drive, it is best to return your driver's licence to your nearest registry. You may also wish to retain your licence but restrict your driving. These restrictions may include driving within a certain time of the day or within a certain distance from home. If you decide on this option, you must see your doctor at the time of your compulsory test.

If you would like to receive a very useful free booklet called *Older Drivers Handbook*, which includes a chapter on testing your own performance, and other helpful topics, phone the Seniors Information Service on 13 12 44.

Balm for the soul who wants to turn back time

“Remember,” she said, her voice taking on the timbre of prophetic admonishment, “Your face starts here”, pointing to a place just above an imaginary nipple-to-nipple line. “Mmmm,” I muttered, looking down. “That’s a funny place for a face.”

Ground floor of David Jones, where the gleam quantum is overwhelming. Glass, mirrors and Mr Sheen. Beautiful packaging, pastel shades, clean lines. And salespeople so well groomed and blemish-free – do they get fired if a zit appears? So keen to see you, can’t wait to serve you. Just want to show you this teeny-weeny, powdery-blue sachet of ultra-refined filtered air-blended seaweed retrieved from the floor, yes the floor, of the Mediterranean. Yes, it’s your own free gift in its own matching bag, if you (just) buy \$500 worth of products (tragically easy to do) within the next 30 minutes. Time starts...now.

What won’t you pay to “get back what time took away”? To “turn back the clock” to allow “the years to slip away”. No accident that Old Mother Time features prominently in the promotions reinforced by the product names. “Anti-wrinkle”, “firming” cream called Plenitude, suggesting both fullness and attitude. With “the seven visible signs of ageing”, who can forget there’s no time to waste? Au contraire, we have time to make up for.

There’s a narrative being constructed here. Responsibility is being given to us. It’s our skin. Respond positively to the challenge, spend up big, invest time and commitment, and bingo – the skin they’ve been telling us that we always dreamed of will be ours.

Tempus fugit. Gravity falleth. Youthfulness is expensive. You get what you pay for. Who needs Botox? Line up here for your bottled elixirs.

It’s a fine line between ritual and tyranny. Cleanse, tone, then moisturise. Or is it moisturise then tone? The sequence is my undoing. Why can’t they bundle them up as one? They managed it with triple antigen and pizza toppings.

New verbs appear, targeting men. An amazingly coiffed hunkoid assistant told me “scruffing” is the same as “clarifying” for women. But “the boys need their own word”. Remember the balms - lip and eye. What about soul balm? What’s wrong with no-frills Sorbolene plus no-frills blockout from Price-Right, Buy-Lo or Reach-Down, or any other place named after a phrasal verb?

And when it doesn’t work, it’s our fault. That’s where “should” comes in - to lubricate the tyranny, fuel the universal regret. We should’ve started the regimen sooner, spent more money, used more product. We should go back for more, try again, change product, spend up big, and this time we should have more faith.

I’m sick of the ravages of ageing. Of those awful “bl-” words - blemishes, blotches, blackheads, blocked this-and-that. Isn’t it enough that we age? Must we also angst and anguish in anticipation?

Sorbolene plus blockout. The rest is heredity. Choose your parents well.

Ruth Wajnryb

From *Spectrum, Sydney Morning Herald*, April 17-18, 2004
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Pathways to Progress

I recently attended a very interesting talk by Professor Tony Vinson on social cohesion.

The statistics, collected for over 30 years and painstakingly researched and presented by Professor Vinson, indicate that there is a strong correlation between disadvantage, poverty and poor health problems, inadequate schooling, child abuse, domestic abuse, imprisonment, low birth weight in babies, psychiatric problems and high mortality rates.

The research was based on postcodes and the latest statistics, recorded in 2003, show that the areas of disadvantage have grown considerably since the previous research was undertaken in 1999.

Windale, a suburb of Newcastle was identified as the most disadvantaged suburb in NSW. Government funding was granted to fund a program centred on the local school as a community centre and was based on professionals, counsellors and volunteers working together. It was a resounding success, with anger management and literacy courses, mentoring, parenting and sporting programs, support for young mothers and involvement of fathers in community affairs. Major roles were played by the Aboriginal Health Service, Department of Housing, and local police. Child abuse cases were dramatically reduced, as were low birth weights. Social cohesion was strengthened and community involvement increased.

Sadly, funding for this wonderful prevention program has been cut. Without funding, this community is unlikely to be able to maintain the programs that have made such a difference in their lives.

Lucy Porter

The Government Giveth and the Government Taketh Away, or

The Sad Story of Sleight of Hand and Forked Tongue

The Women's Information and Referral Service (WIRS) was initiated by OWN in the early 90s, within the former Ministry for the Status and Advancement of Woman. It was set up as an important resource for the women of NSW, to have access to information on issues such as health, education and training, the portrayal of women in the media, support groups to suit particular communities, Anti-Discrimination, accommodation, child care, legal advice, domestic violence, Government services and employment.

The OWN Sydney *Older Women's Right to Safety at Home* Committee wrote to the Premier, with a copy to Sandra Nori, Minister for Women, about the restructure of the Department for Women and its new incarnation, the Office for Women. This letter conveyed our disappointment at the change, as well as our concern about the importance of the continuation of WIRS, and asked for reassurance that this service to women in NSW would not suffer.

In the answer received from Ms Nori, among other concerns, she states, "The Women's Information Referral Service continues. The same telephone will remain being used." The answer from Mr Gellatly, Director-General Premier's Department says, among other things, "I am also advised that the Government will continue the functions of the Womans (sic) Information Referral Service."

On a Freecall to WIRS 1800 817 227, you will hear a recorded message telling you that you can reach Law Access New South Wales, or FPA (not given a full title, but presumably the Family Planning Association) for health, or you can check with the

Department for Women about its grants program. You are then told that you will be put through to Law Access NSW.

This is not the WIRS we were led to understand would stay, nor the one we need! It is an extremely truncated and unsatisfactory version of a valuable resource for women, particularly women in rural and isolated areas, who do not have ready access to alternative sources of information.

Rumour has it that this change was made because WIRS was duplicating other available services – reasoning which has little or no merit.

Please take action! Voice your protest against the changes to WIRS in a hand-written letter to the Premier, Bob Carr, the Minister for Women, Sandra Nori, and send copies of your letter to your local MP, asking for a reply.

Louise Anike

SIMPLE STEPS COULD SAVE YOUR SIGHT

The major reason for blindness in Australia 30 years ago was diabetes. It was rare to find macular degeneration (MD). Today, the condition has overtaken diabetes. Two-thirds of those who lose their vision today are blind due to macular degeneration.

Research shows a potential tripling of macular degeneration in the next 25 years, with one in seven Australians over 50 suffering from the disease. This is a disease which affects all age groups, and can send you blind within days without proper diagnosis or treatment, yet most Australians don't even know the name of the disease let alone the symptoms.

Distorted vision can be an early sign of macular degeneration. Possible warning signs include: straight lines appear distorted or wavy, images appear blurry, colours are hard to distinguish or central or detailed vision is blocked by dark or empty spaces.

While the causes of MD are relatively unknown, the following easy steps can help Australians reduce the risk of irreversible blindness:

Regular check-ups with an eye care specialist *** Stop smoking ***
Wear sunglasses when outside *** Eat a diet rich in antioxidant vitamins A and E and mineral zinc *** Eat a diet rich in lutein, including bright coloured and leafy green vegetables *** Eat a diet rich in fish and reduce vegetable-oil intake*

** Dr Paul Beaumont from the Macular Degeneration Foundation has been studying the link between vegetable oil and macular degeneration. He says that a recent study shows that patients with the disease and those eating too much vegetable oil degenerated at 3.8 times the rate of those eating a little vegetable oil.*

For more information contact the Macular Degeneration Foundation on 1800 111 709 or visit www.mdfoundation.com.au

A Heroine of Mine

She was a highborn lady from the gentry of the land
She never had known poverty, but she seemed to understand
That her privilege depended on the labour of the poor
And she spent her life in working just to even up the score.
She married a young lawyer, a Chief Justice he became
She could have spent her whole life in the shelter of this name
But not for her the glory of reflections in the glass
She saw the vast injustice and she couldn't let it pass.

Chorus:

*She was an inspiration to the women of her time
And Jessie Street will always be a heroine of mine.*

She never had to work but she still fought for equal pay
And she fought for Aborigines, to the silvertails' dismay
She was a woman for the people, her commitment clear and strong
And she used her wealth and influence to help the cause along
She saw the waste of human life in wars that make men rich
Her work for peace was endless but they put her on the list
They branded her a traitor, called her Communist and more
But Jessie's voice was never still against the crime of war.

Chorus:

And Jessie your example helps us all along the way
Foundations that were laid back then, we're building on today
And the struggle isn't over, there are mountains still to climb
But the legacy you and your sisters left is our lifeline

Judy Small, singer, songwriter.

Planning Ahead

OWN has just received from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC), the new and updated version of their kit *Planning Ahead*. This kit incorporates recent reforms, as well as all the necessary information about enduring power of attorney. It also includes resources for managing financial, health and lifestyle decisions into the future. We have copies at OWN, so please phone 9247 7046 if you want one.

Another useful booklet is *Using Advance Care Directives*. There is a growing expectation that one's wishes for medical care at the end of life will be respected, even if progressive disease takes away decision-making capacity. This guide aims to assist health professionals in discussing advance care planning with patients, and to clarify how to use an advance care directive as part of that process. Available from www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs or phone 9816 0452.

Patience, Patience!

I get a letter from the RTA, telling me that they've now changed the rules for obtaining Disabled Stickers, and I have to fill in the form and get it signed by a GP. I have to produce a photograph of myself. There is \$30 to pay, so I have to fill in the appropriate numbers if I wish to pay by credit card and sign where indicated. It also says if I don't have a driving licence, I will have to produce something to identify myself, like my Medicare card and/or credit card. I fill in the form correctly, and get it signed by my doctor. My daughters escort me to the Motor Registry. The young man compares me with the photograph I produce and hands it back to me.

"Do you have a driving licence?" he asks. "No, I don't, not any more," I reply. "Did you ever have one?" "Yes, I did." Says he, "I'll just check on that."

He turns to his computer and presses a few keys. "Can I see your driving licence?" he says. I reply crossly, "I just told you I don't have one..." "Oh, well I'll need to see some identification." I produce my credit card and my Medicare cards. He examines them and takes them away, comes back with a hugely magnified copy of the Medicare card. He doesn't give me back the cards. "That'll be \$30," he says. "How do you want to pay?" I calm myself. Through gritted teeth, I say,

"I've written on the form that I want to pay by credit card. The details are on the form..." He examines the form, compares it with the card. The transaction is finally completed.

I am instructed to sit in front of the RTA camera. We wait. He calls us and hands me the card with my picture on it. We collapse, laughing uncontrollably. It was taken against a white background. White hair against a white background. I am hairless and headless. Just a toothy smile and glasses. It reminds me of the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*... I hope I'm never asked to produce it to identify myself. They'll never believe me.

Renee Simons

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.**

NOTICES

Groups for Older Women

***Mondays from 10am to noon,
commencing 2 August.***

Cost: \$35.

A six-week course in *Health And Wellbeing For Older Women*, with Margaret Davies, offers older women the chance to share their concerns and wisdom about these later years in a supportive and positive group. Each session will include information, discussion and activities including exercise, nutrition, communication and assertiveness, challenge and change. It's also an opportunity for the women to share their positive experiences about this period of their lives - the aspects of life that interest, incense, amuse, entertain and move them.

2004 Women's Gathering

***17-19 September 2004 at
Coonabarabran.***

A weekend packed with inspiring speakers, informative workshops, forums and entertainment.

www.coonabarabran.com/

Are you postmenopausal?

A study is being conducted on post-menopausal women who experience adverse changes in their sexual functioning compared to younger years.

You may qualify for this study if you are between 48 and 68 years of age and have an intact uterus (no hysterectomy); have been postmenopausal for a minimum of six months, and are experiencing decreased satisfactory sexual activity compared to younger years. You also need to be in an established sexual relationship which has lasted over six months, and be willing to take six months of hormonal treatment.

All participants who qualify for the study will receive confidential medical examinations (including self-reporting questionnaires about sexual functioning), blood tests and study medication.

For more information please call: The Sydney Menopause Centre at the Royal Hospital for Women 9382 6621

Dr Robert Zoa Manga, Clinical Research Manager Tel: 9382 6709

FREE COMPUTERS

OWN has two donated Macintosh computers (with printers and software) in good condition to give away.

If you are interested, please phone Dorothy Cora or Kris Ferguson at the office, 9247 7046.

Should the Hours Count?

The OWN Australia project report for 2003 on volunteering, *Should the Hours Count?* has been circulated to all groups.

If any individuals would like a copy, please phone the OWN office and we'll send it out.

Managing Menopause

Two evenings – 2 September and 9 September from 7 to 9pm. Cost: \$30. Speaker is Susan Broughton from Northern Sydney Women's Health Service.

Phone Susan Kennett at North Sydney Community Centre, 9922 2299, for further information.

NOTICES

Special Offer

I'm in love with Vienna!

Sydney Opera House is offering OWN members \$20 off adult and pensioner price tickets for *I'm in love with Vienna!* with the Australian Philharmonic Orchestra on 14 August at 2pm and 8pm.

To receive the \$20 discount offer when booking, phone the Box Office on 9250 7777 and quote 'Vienna Offer' or go to www.sydneyoperahouse.com and select the special offer 'Vienna' when booking.

Transport for older people: is it driving you crazy?

A seminar, presented by The Australian Association of Gerontology, will be held on Friday, 20 August 2004 8.30 am to 3.30pm at the Hornseywood Hall, Penrith RSL, 8 Tindale Street, Penrith.

For more information, contact Jill Groth on 9773 3719
Cost: \$30 concession.

A Bit of Nostalgia?

You may be interested in a concert featuring songs and duets made famous by Gladys Moncrieff, Peter Dawson and Richard Tauber.

Monday 6 September
at 11 am and 2 pm
Sydney Town Hall

Seniors \$22 Pensioners \$18
Groups of seniors, 20 Or more,
\$17.

Phone (02) 9810 3297.
(10.30.am-3.30 pm) for bookings.

Women Growing Older: Caring for Ourselves Through Change.

A women's health education program for well older women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will be held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during September.

The central theme of the workshops is change and how we deal with it; changes to the body as it ages, changes due to being a refugee or migrant or other life circumstances. Encouraging and supporting women to take care of themselves is an important part of the program.

Dates: 7, 8, 14, 15, 21 and 22
September.

Time : 9.00 am-4.30 pm
Place: *The Writers' Centre*
Rozelle Hospital.

The trainers are Louise Cox and
Lyn Pagan.

Please phone OWN on 9247 7046
for an application form which
must be returned to the trainers
by 18 August.

Cost: \$40

Lost property

A green wool scarf and a pair of sunglasses were found at Diethnes Restaurant after the EDNA's and the WEL Conference dinner. Contact Diethnes direct to arrange pickup.

OWN Sydney Activities



All our usual activities resumed in late July, following a break for the school holidays.



For details about *Wellness on Wednesdays* please see the Diary Page.



The Film Discussion Group will meet on Monday 9 August at 12.30

Film titles are not currently available.

DISCLAIMER

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

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Dorothy Cora, Phyllis Gorman, Polly Gow, Muriel Hortin, Joan Johns, Mary McCusker, Jacqueline Schofer, Renee Simons, Ermes Solari, Wilhelmina van Dorp and June West.

**SURFACE
MAIL**

**POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA**