



# OWN MATTERS

*Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales  
Vol.4 No.1 – February 2007*

## CONTENTS

The Missing Link .....	1
Just You Wait .....	2
Coordinators' Report .....	3
Gas & Wind Hazards .....	3
Turning Point .....	4
Remember When .....	4-5
ACOSS Congress .....	5
At & Beyond The Rocks .....	6 & 7
Sydney .....	6
Southern Highlands .....	6-7
Penrith .....	7
Great Plague of 2006 .....	7
Update on Elder Abuse .....	7
Aboriginal Support Circle Issues .....	8 & 9
CDEP Changes Spark Fears .....	8
Clover calls for CDEP Consultation .....	8
Friends of Tranby .....	9
\$40K Challenge on Aboriginal Health ..	9
Letters to the Editor .....	10&11
Important Addresses .....	12
Fun & Festivity in February .....	12
Osteoporosis Treatment For Over-70s ..	13
Dieting & Bone Density .....	13
Soya Under Scrutiny .....	13
Then & Now .....	14
The Silly Season .....	14
Christmas Dinner .....	15
A Child is Born .....	15
Christmas Incarceration .....	15
Christmas Past .....	16
Emotional Kaleidoscope .....	16
Vovler by Almodovar .....	16
Questions You Need to Ask .....	17
Notices .....	19
Sydney Notices .....	20

## *The Missing Link*

Since the introduction of the much publicized Welfare to Work legislation in July 2006, there has been an increasing pressure placed on the more vulnerable members of our society to not only define their position, but justify any claim for income support. Regularly our OWN office receives calls from women distressed by their interactions with Centrelink as it seeks to 'reposition' them within the system, and 'initiate appropriate measures' to 'enable their uptake of employment opportunities by the market'.

For women who have maintained very traditional roles within the community, often as carers for partners or other family members - if this situation changes - often due to the death of their charge, they find themselves suddenly alone. But unlike a worker retiring from years on the job, there is no superannuation, no send off party, no gold watch. In some cases depending on their age, these women in their late 50's and early 60's will have to brace themselves for life under Newstart.

In a frenzy of bureaucracy, these women will be processed through a series of interviews and assessments - that for anyone who has not experienced recent contact with the employment sector - may seem more like a series of interrogations. In some cases literally - perhaps the Government, inspired by Guantánamo Bay, provide no public toilets. Staff say this is a policy decision.

What is missing in this Welfare to Work process is a recognition of the vulnerability of the client group - quite apart from the implementation of this appalling legislation - there is no requirement on the part of the service provider: Centrelink, to ensure that all their staff are adequately trained and equipped to interact with clients forced to seek assistance, or those fighting to retain it. Staff may lack the expertise to enact the legislation they are being asked to enforce. Some struggle with compliance, with the systems, with communication between offices and officers. Unfortunately this variance of competence creates further hostility and barriers between staff and clients if documentation is lost, files unable to be accessed, or computer systems are down. If this level of ineffectiveness were evident in the community or private sector, a service would cease to exist. Yet here we have a service making critical determinations about people's welfare - their very existence.

We need to change how we design these agencies so that they reflect and support the sort of society that we want to create. We must develop policy that promotes optimism and trust.

We need to move away from the Dickensian notion of the 'grateful poor' and acknowledge that for some members of the community there will always be a need for support. In a compassionate society we should not be lining them up in the town square and burning them as witches, lighting their funeral pyres with their Newstart forms, but rather giving them the best opportunity to live a full and satisfying life now, and making damn sure we don't inflict this disaster on future generations of women.

*Beth Eldridge*

Older Women's Network NSW 87 Lower Fort Street Millers Point, NSW 2000

Phone: 02 9247 7046 Fax: 02 9247 4202 email: info@ownnsw.org.au web:www.ownnsw.org.au

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## Who Are We?

The Older Women's Network (OWN) NSW is the peak body for 19 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 interest and concern to older women.

*OWN Matters* is the newsletter of the Older Women's Network NSW. It is published 11 times a year. The annual subscription for individuals is \$22 and \$40 for organisations & includes GST.

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 Tuesday of each month.

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### Editorial Team

Beth Eldridge, Daphne Lera, June West, Helen Young, Helen Vincent, Lorraine Inglis and Judith Mustard.

### Layout and Design

Beth Eldridge and Enid Leighton.

### Membership & Subscriptions

Ermes Solari and Maureen King.

### Mailout Team

Pat Rayne, Noel Carpenter, Marie Williams, Mary McCusker, Elaine Reynolds, Lola Cummings, Bev Cameron, Joyce Henwood and Trudy Davis.

# POINT of VIEW

## Just You Wait!

Last Monday *OWN Matters* and good news arrived together. The good news of another Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party infuses some hope that the disastrous decade just passed will become a matter for history books; and I have heard hope expressed in unexpected places. The next year will be an exciting one.

And *OWN Matters* was exciting too — from Beth's thoughts on nuclear energy to Carol Devine's warning on Breastscreens. I was 75 when my cancer was detected in 1975.

Louise's view of violence against women stirs those who have experienced this nerve and personality assault, and those who know victims of it too. Then there are Enid Harrison's ideas of 'happiness in a pill'. Please Enid don't disparage antidepressants; they are most helpful in the management of chronic pain, not Prozac and others like, it but the tricyclic antidepressants. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2003, I was full of them or I would not have been able to join the quarter million demonstrators against this hopeless tragedy in Iraq, and many other demos, when I was unhappy about something. Now I still have them for my chronic pain, but a neighbor is suffering and her family are too worried because of a high minded refusal to take them for her severe pain.

Now stop this skiting.

Geraniums are wonderful, and don't need much water. Those who were educated here will remember Mrs Spicer in Henry Lawson's great short story '*Water Them Geraniums*'.

The Summer Lift out can stay where it is. I'm 'frail aged' now though I hope to join the 'pensioners' rush for the freebie of *Keating*.

Our OWN Writers: every one had some significance for me, but especially Lorraine Inglis' ideas on eccentricity and bells rang in my ancient skull. Those are my sentiments, twenty years ago. Just you wait Lorraine Inglis, just you wait! Any Blues gig you enjoy could be from some electronic device with top tune "Don't Get Around Much Anymore". As for food, Meals on Wheels? Frozen stuff from supermarket? And your drinking days may be over. Exercises? How about 'gentle exercises' close to home. As for painting your toenails, you will be lucky if you can reach them. Those pot plants might be gone the same way as that relaxing scotch in the evening, and you make do with 'snugglepot' in bed with a bag of heated wheat. Reading all day will be one of those memories. You will not have time; self care is damned hard work and time consuming. Walks round the block will satisfy your yearning for movement. Learning will be there while you still have your wits. But don't worry; you will be eccentric like all of our Network. As for Bev Cameron's account of being lost, experiences like that can be had anytime. If you are still up to using a word processor you might make as many typos as I have done typing this.

Helen Monaghan

# OWN NSW

## Coordinators' Report

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In March 2006 we "Lived Life" and in July we not only "Kicked Up Autumn Leaves" but also "Kicked Up and Kicked On."

So what about 2007? The Management Team is going a bit "Sound of Music" this year as we try harder than ever at "Getting To Know You." Starting with the Southern Regions get together, being hosted this February by the Southern Highlands. Their invitation / program has just arrived and like everything they do in the Southern Highlands, it sounds delightful. It promises to be a day where we will all be able to share the experiences of the groups since the last meeting and to tell of plans we have for the coming year in a day of celebration and fun. I am looking forward to it and hoping to meet up with many group members from the Southern Regions.

Later in the year there will be other group get togethers, the conference and the "Wrap With Love" program that will allow the MT to get to know many more OWN members and this excites us all.

Do I hear some ask, what is "Wrap with love"? Last year the ABC ran a community based project where woolen squares were knitted by women all over the State and in July at an open day in the Ultimo studios they had a wonderful morning of celebration where women from all different areas came together, brought their squares and sat together talking, knitting and sewing together thousands

of squares that are stored ready to be sent to areas overseas where there has been a tragedy and the population are in desperate need of protection from the cold. Barbara Burnham organized for some members from OWN to attend in 2006 and we had a great time. This year I am hoping that many more OWN members will participate and that there will be a huge group under our banner all doing their bit. The event finishes at 11am so a lunch is planned for afterwards and later maybe a show or other activity before we return to our homes.

For 2007 we will be looking for a new venue for our State Conference as the Women's College will not be available to us. It will be a challenge for the Management Team to find a place as convenient, charming and so right for us, as the Women's College has been over the years. I know you will all share our deep disappointment at this development. Let's hope we come up with a venue that will live up to the high expectations our members have as to where our conference will be held and how it will be structured. The conference is always the highlight of my year and another opportunity of "Getting To Know You."

The Management Team would like to wish you all the very best wishes for the coming New Year and promises to work hard to make this a year to remember for all OWN Members. Happy New Year and Welcome Back.

*Barbara Malcolm*

### Gas and Wind Hazards

I sat back in the recliner chair watching the mid-day news. Husband was doing a quick milk run, and the Gumbo was simmering peacefully on our stovetop. Feeling a bit sleepy, I nodded off...

Perhaps 15 minutes later, in comes Husband. "Good Heavens!" he sez. "What's been going on in here?"

"What", sez I, sleepily?.

"The house is filled with natural gas! Can't you smell it?"

Well no, I couldn't. It was probably partly that my sense of smell is failing in my dotage, but was also that the low flame on the stove blew out without my notice, and perhaps the methane contributed to my drowsiness.

But it was a wake-up call for me.

With some difficulty I found a fairly inexpensive gas leak detector and ordered it by phone from the manufacturer in West Australia who then shipped it to a Sydney distributor. It just plugs in to a power point near the stove and will sound

an alarm when there is gas, before the level which would be likely to cause an explosive flash fire. The company also sells a more complex system requiring a plumber to install which detects the gas and then will turn off the gas mains.

It was so hard to find a simple gas leak detector, it seems a good idea to pass on the source to others who may have a bit less olfactory sense that in our youth – or who may get sleepy around mealtimes.

GasTech Australia Pty Ltd

6 Deakin St

Forrestville NSW

Telephone (02) 9451 0054, FAX (02) 9451 2255

**(Attention: Andrew)**

One GTA-910 gas leak detector RRP Price \$60.00 plus \$6.00 GST

*Helen Vincent*

# Turning Point

*Time like an ever-rolling stream*

*bears old ideas away,*

*Supplanting all with thoughts born new*

*To fit our children's day.*

*[To tune of "O God our help..."]*

It's two days before Christmas. My family is gathering at my home today for the big annual celebration. I've been in charge of this event for the last thirty five years. Because my adult sons and daughters-in-law are now all caught up with both work and family, they have not taken on this tradition, leaving it to me. If I don't do it, the only family togetherness we have each year will not happen. I am rueful that I'm in charge again, but cannot bear the thought of not seeing them all together at least once each year. As usual, I have spent considerable time and energy shopping, cooking and preparing. This year, the task seems a little more onerous. I wonder if at 67, I'm really past it, but push that thought away.

Family members begin to arrive. My daughter-in-law blurts out, "Mum's just told my sister and me that she can't manage Christmas this year. My sister and I have got two days to organise it! I'm still in shock!"

I look at her 36 year old, sweet, friendly and suddenly tired face. I feel for her. But I also feel relieved. I'm not the only grandmother who's struggling to cope.

Other family members arrive. My elderly mother is glad to sit quietly in an out-of-the-way place as three already very excited young grandchildren buzz about, scarcely able to contain their anticipation of the gifts to come. My dear spouse has been coping well with chauffeuring and is now supervising drinks, photography and the sink. I am feeling slightly manic, receiving family contributions to the meal, rearranging our small fridge and setting out snacks and savouries while trying to appear unflurried and sociable. Family members keep telling me to sit down and relax, but also continue to need help finding things in the kitchen. An unwelcome Catch-22 situation! I determine to remain pleasant.

Gift opening time brings a period of relief from small children's chaotic activity in our smallish town-house, but does nothing to reduce the decibel level. I watch briefly before returning to the challenge of meal preparation. The seven and eight year olds are now in my room, my "sacred space." There is nowhere else for them to play on this wet and now dark early evening. I listen on tenterhooks, as I wait for a crash, a yell or a flood of tears whilst I'm setting out food.

We all settle around the makeshift table, chairs gathered from every room in the house to accommodate everyone. The four year old decides she doesn't like anything from the wide variety of festive food. Now not only tired but

also hungry, she loses the plot entirely, throwing an intense and dramatic tantrum. Her father pacifies her and looks apologetically at me, asking if a favourite dish of pasta could be prepared. I comply.

Hours pass. By now the seven and eight year old are shrieking, laughing, running up and down the stairs, throwing gliders and having a whale of a time. Concentration for this grandmother is next to impossible. The ninety year old great grandmother has lapsed into numbed silence. My devoted spouse drives her home while other family members continue in dialogue. I am glad they are so involved, though wondering how long I can last as I survey the shambles of my once orderly domain.

At last my older son and his daughters, the last to leave, depart amidst much gathering up of goodies, kitchen equipment and surplus food. He mentions he will be spending Christmas lunch with his former wife at a hotel that caters for children so the adults can talk to each other. They did that last year and it was most relaxing.

Something in me clicks into place. I wonder why he didn't mention that idea before. "That's the answer!" my inner voice says. "No rush, no fuss, no angst for anyone. AND we can ALL talk to each other." I look at my now wilted spouse, sagging in an armchair. "We're not doing that again," I say, with new confidence gained born of sudden acceptance of my aging reality. "I'm way past it. Thirty five years has got to be enough."

He listens thoughtfully to my proposal.

*Bev Cameron*

## Remember When . . .

One of the more pleasant aspects of growing older is that we all have a deep well of memories to draw on, many of which are well worth sharing. We would welcome your glimpses back into the past, if only to give the present a bit of a lift.

Let's start with **Marjorie O'Loughlin's** memory of the late 1940s:

Years before it underwent gentrification, Paddington was a suburb with a fascinating mix of people, but it was also home to a number of horses! These well-loved beasts drew carts, such as those belonging to the Lion Laundry, throughout the surrounding suburbs.

One of my fondest memories is that of 'assisting' my father (I was about 4 or 5 years old) to feed and groom those magical creatures – for they were truly amazing to my young eyes on Sunday mornings. At Christmas time they enjoyed their special treat of apples and sugar lumps, though they seemed less impressed with the chocolate I offered them from my Christmas stocking!

**Louise Anike** writes

Washing day was a big job. Light the copper full of water with twists of paper and small pieces of wood. Boil the bed

linens and white articles in the copper. Take out clothes after washing other articles in a cement trough, rinse, and then use hand wringer squeezing out water turned blue by a Recketts blue bag. Make starch with boiling water and starch the collars of men's shirts, doilies, tablecloths, pillow shams.

Peg out the clothes on lines strung between two clothes props across the yard, putting undies in a position where they cannot be seen easily. When dry, bring inside and sort out. Starched articles then dampened by water using the fingers and rolled up. Non-electric irons heated on top of wood-fired stove. Test heat of the iron by putting finger wetted by spit on the face, quickly. If the iron should mark by scorching, wipe the face of the iron with a piece of beeswax.

Oh bliss! It will happen again next week, the week after, and the week after, and the week ... always on Monday.

**Pat Zinn** remembers New Year's Day in Cape Town, South Africa:

Where I grew up, the streets were filled with colour, music and song. It was a tradition that started before I was born, when troops of "coloured people" (people of mixed race) dressed in vividly coloured satins, guitars strumming in quick rhythm, voices singing, marched down the hill from where they lived to the city centre and on to an open area where they competed for awards. What an exciting way to start the New Year! Sadly, the Nationalist Government moved the people out, under the notorious Group Areas Act. They may have moved into new and better housing, but the spirit was gone and New Year's Day became as bleak and dreary as the apartheid years.

**Judith Mustard** fondly recalls:

Where is the general store of my childhood in Randwick, and its wonderful smells of bacon and cheese mixed with old, polished wood and sawdust? I loved to watch the aproned person behind the counter cut the cheese with the fine wire cutter – two ounces or one pound, the cut was accurate. Then the butter tossed and molded between two wooden pats before being wrapped in fine paper. The large square biscuit tins decorated with parrots and other birds, lifted down and crisp brown paper bags filled with the chosen biscuits – one or two surreptitiously passed to the wide eyed child across the counter. The open bags of dried beans, rice and other goodies were a tempting invitation for small hands to paddle in the contents. Legs of bacon and smoked sausages hung from the ceiling, and sometimes strips of onions. For me it was an Aladdin's cave of delights, far from the soulless supermarkets of the present day.



## **ACOSS Congress Australia Fair – Advance or Retreat?**

This enjoyable conference looked at Australian society today and the many areas where inequality and unfairness persist. Unfortunately older people and issues of concern to older women as such were hardly mentioned. Speakers covered the following topics:

- **Aboriginal Issues: A Fair Start for All Children**  
Here Mal Brough announced the controversial policy of quarantining part of welfare payments for children's needs
- **Boom or bust?**  
Will the economic surplus last? Speaker explored affordable housing, education and opportunities from childhood to retirement (however it only covered the period up to retirement, not after).
- **Americanisation of welfare**  
This showed the difficulties of organising conference speakers as not one of 3 speakers in this session actually spoke on the topic!
- **Early childhood development**  
Speakers addressed the essentials of life and who lacks them. Professor Tony Vinson told us that early disadvantage persists and increases as the child grows, and we were shocked to hear that the prison authorities in Indianapolis, USA, base their plans for future growth on the test results of children entering school!
- **Fair work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**  
Poverty post codes; culture of fear or fairness? Is a fair society a happy society? Michele Levine, from Roy Morgan Research, noted that 91% of Australians rate the principle of "a fair go" as important or very important. Bob Cummins, from the Australian Centre of Quality of Life, [www.acqol.deakin.edu.au](http://www.acqol.deakin.edu.au) stated that "Quality of Life" is composed of both objective (e.g. physical health) and subjective (e.g. wellbeing) indicators.

Great emphasis was placed on early intervention with families in poverty and the need for early childhood development programs for families at risk (Fraser Mustard, Thinker in Residence at University of Adelaide, was excellent).

*Pat Carlton*

# At and Beyond the Rocks

## JOLLIFICATIONS! OWN Sydney Celebrates

Anyone passing 87 Lower Fort Street about midday on December 8 2006, would have known that a jolly Christmas party was in full swing. More than 50 OWN members, some a little frail, some hale and hearty, some not seeing so well, some sound in limb and sight - but every single one greeting and talking - packed the OWN office to overflowing. Indeed some of the greeting and talking was in Greek since we had the bonus presence of OWN Greek members from Ashfield, which was a particular delight since besides their own lively presence they contributed marvelous Greek food and delicacies.

You know the OWN office fits about 30 people comfortably so the squeeze was tight. Volunteers led by our wonderful Kris had decorated the office cheerfully. Beth bounced out to collect those who could not get to the party otherwise. Pyramids of food balanced on the desks and tables in the kitchen. There was much stretching of hands and waving to those too far to reach, and CHATTER, CHATTER, CHATTER, while we awaited the start of the program.

After proper acknowledgment of country, Cate Turner, welcomed everyone, then announced that nine OWN members - who had made significant contributions to OWN - were to be recognised with special Certificates of Appreciation. They are:

Ermes Solari  
Joy Ross

Betty Johnson  
Merle Highet  
Louise Anike  
Jan Monson  
Judith Mustard  
Noreen Hewett  
Peggy Hewett

Not every one of these nine great OWN achievers could be present but most were, and each was called forward and presented with a beautiful certificate and flowers in the appropriate OWN colours. All nine are now Life Members of OWN.

We then began the "entertainment" which included among others an energetic rendition of *"When I am an old Woman"* provided by Margaret Sargeant, then Judith Mustard moved us with an *"Ode to a Dead Mouse"*, items from Theatre Group members Brigid Sen who read an wonderful piece of political humour by Mike Carlton and joined Joan Modder to lead everyone in a rollicking Trinidadian song *"Shame and Scandal in the Family."*

Every one was now ready for lunch and what a feast it was. There was so much and such variety that you were sure it would never be finished. But OWN members rose to the task and as a result several are several grams heavier. Red and white wine and soft drinks, and a spread of colourful desserts accompanied cheerful conversations under the tree outside.

Thank you to all the volunteers the staff and OWN members and may 2007 give us plenty to celebrate.

Joan Modder

## Southern Highlands

2006 was a busy, successful year for SHOWN.

With forty new members joining our group in the year, we now have eighty-seven financial members.

In addition to our normal monthly meetings, we had two very good celebration meetings - our Fourth Anniversary and our Christmas Party. On both of these days, members from Wollondilly, Penrith and Illawarra OWN joined us for entertainment, good food and lots of fun. We really appreciate their support.

We received funding from the NSW Government for our 2006 Seniors Week event - "It's Never Too Late to Learn"; and funding from Wingecarribee Shire Council for St John First Aid Classes for women over fifty. We continued our Tai Chi classes throughout the year and we went on two bus trips and a few train trips. We sent delegates to Southern Region Get Togethers, to OWN NSW quarterly meetings and to OWN NSW's Annual Conference.

Our application for funding for 2007 Seniors Week wasn't successful but, not-to-be-stopped, we are looking at ways of still holding an event, even if on a slightly reduced scale.

In 2005, we started giving small donations to local charities at our Anniversary and Christmas Parties. In 2006, we gave donations of \$100 each to the Southern Highlands Renal Appeal, Wingecarribee Palliative Care Unit, and Wingecarribee Animal Shelter. In addition, we decided to share the joy of our Christmas Party and raise money for the Drought Relief Fund set up by Moss

# At and Beyond the Rocks

Vale Catholic Women's League to assist families with children at schools in Tottenham, Trangie and Tullamore. In that one afternoon, we raised \$655 with a collection box, the proceeds of the Christmas Bring and Buy Table plus \$100 from our funds. This made a total of almost \$1000 worth of assistance we gave to others in 2006! A good effort for a small group!

Along with all that, we have had great times together, making new friends, enjoying each other's company and keeping ourselves informed on health issues.

Already 2007 is shaping up as a busy year. We start with our AGM on the 1<sup>st</sup> February, then the following week we have the Quarterly Meeting in Sydney, Tai Chi resumes and we will be hosting the Southern Region Get Together. After that, there is International Women's Day, then Seniors Week and several outings. Who said life stopped when you retired?

*Robyn Smith*

## Penrith

The last few months have continued to be enjoyed by our members. Our weekday activities of yoga, international dancing, aquarobics, tai chi and gentle exercise have been well attended.

Our dance group entertained at the Campbelltown Senior Citizen's Club in August 2006 and was very enthusiastically received.

There is now a Depression Support Group meeting fortnightly in our offices at the Community Connection Centre in Penrith.

We also held a celebration for our Drop-in Centre, which we

have been operating for six years.

Speakers at our monthly meetings have been most informative. They have included a speaker from the NRMA covering safety driving for Seniors, a food presentation, a speaker from the Cancer Council and a very interesting talk from the organizer of the "Hawkesbury Healing Garden" at the University of Western Sydney, Richmond. The aim of the garden project is to provide meaningful and purposeful activity in the horticultural context for people with mental illness and/or disabilities.

Penrith City Council are organizing for the 2007 Senior's Week, and Thelma Anderson, Rae Paine and Aileen Rees have been chosen to join the planning committee for the events next year.

*Irene Jenkins*

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS \* NEWS GROU

## *The Great Plague of 2006*

Have you ever noticed that one plague seems to follow another, albeit it several years apart. I can remember the great plague of the wire coat hanger. I would open the door of my wardrobe one day and there they would be, dozens of them, hanging quietly grinning at me. Gently swaying to some dance music only they could hear while I scratched my head and wondered how they got there.

Next came the plastic carry bag. They were everywhere. So many in our homes we had to invent other bags to put them in. We thought that if you made a long skinny sausage of cotton or some such, that would at least keep them tidy and it did up to a point but they still escaped from all sorts of places and ended up in the waterways, gardens and stuck to the radiators of our cars till we shouted, "ENOUGH."

So along came the green environmentally friendly shopping bag. And what has happened? They are the new plague. My car is full of them, they are in cupboards, left near doors ready to be forgotten on the way to the shops, holding other green bags and generally breeding like beetles at Christmas time. I am surrounded by them and look around me to wonder what the next great plague will be. My mind boggles as I wait.

*Barbara Malcolm*

## Sydney OWN International Women's Day

FOR BREAKFAST

**Louise Anike -  
Honoured Speaker**

Meet 9.30am, at 87 Lower  
Fort Street, Saturday

March 10, 2007

When we grow old we shall  
wear purple !!!

## Update on Elder Abuse

One of the meetings I attended on behalf of OWN was about the proposed re-establishment of the Australian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (ANPEA). A meeting of about 30 people took place and Pam Routledge handed out a few copies of the Draft NSW Protocols on Elder Abuse. Various people spoke about what is happening in their states. Sarah Fogg also spoke.

I was then invited to talk about what it is that each of the States are doing and how this fits in to what is happening at a Federal level. There are gaps too, of course.

*Betty Johnson*

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS \* NEWS FROM THE GROUPS \* NEWS FROM THE GROUPS \* NEWS FROM THE GROUPS \* NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

# Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

## CDEP changes spark fears

The Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) is to be changed, revealed by a discussion paper released by Kevin Andrews, Federal Employment and Workplace Relations Minister. At least 40 of the 210 Indigenous CDEP organisations across Australia will cease operations on the 30th June, 2007 and will have to compete in the mainstream to become a 'Structured Training and Employment Project' (STEP) broker. There were consultation meetings with people affected until the 15th December, 2006.

The aim is to improve jobs and move people into real and meaningful work. STEP brokers will work with employers to identify their recruitment needs and would arrange training for suitable Indigenous job seekers to acquire the skills needed for the jobs available, either by pre-employment training, on-the-job training, and/or accredited training. In NSW areas affected will be Newcastle, the Hunter region, Armidale, Cowra, Griffith, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga.

There are many positives to these changes, as in many areas, the CDEP has not led to people acquiring skills or real jobs. Under the STEP program, Country Energy has expanded a recruitment and career development strategy, whereby 50 new Indigenous apprentices will be employed before next September, while it has already created approximately 40 apprenticeships and traineeships that have been taken up by Indigenous people wanting to work in their local communities.

However, there would be no impact on CDEP service providers in remote and some regional locations with weak labour markets. Indigenous workers who are not fit and healthy would not be able to obtain employment, and would have to go back to being on some sort of benefit or pension. Mark Edwards, chairman of the CDEP Co-Operative Association in suburban Melbourne, believes that about 50-60% Indigenous participants will be affected.

**Pat Zinn**

## Clover Moore MP, calls for wider consultation before CDEP changes implemented

*Extract from CLOVER'S eNEWS - Friday 19 January 2007 - No. 330*

### INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY AT RISK

Indigenous Australians have not benefited from recent high employment rates to the same extent as other Australians. The high participation rate in the Indigenous based Community Development Employment Project programs (CDEP) shows that, while many Indigenous Australians want to work, barriers prevent them from obtaining mainstream employment. ...

While this report has the stated aim of improving employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians, it fails to provide any framework to overcome barriers to employment which many Indigenous Australians face. Instead, it relies on the employment market to provide opportunities despite considerable evidence that it has not done so in the past.

In inner Sydney, the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation (RAC) has operated CDEP since 1991 with employment support for up to 100 participants at a time. While the RAC assists participants to obtain mainstream employment and provides mentoring services once employed, it also helps those unable to get mainstream employment.

I share community concern that removing CDEP from inner Sydney will deny disadvantaged Indigenous Australians access to specialist programs and support. Unlike CDEP, Indigenous organisations might not provide STEP and I have recommended that the Government continue to fund community-based organisations to provide culturally sensitive employment and mentoring services, and I have called for wider consultation before changes are finalised.

**Copies of Clover Moore's submission are available from the Bligh office.**



# Aboriginal Support Circle Issues

## Reintroduction of Friends of Tranby Aboriginal College



On 13 September I attended the above meeting in support of Aboriginal self determination in life-long education. I intend to continue

my advocacy, and will report on developments and coming events for others in *OWN* who are like-minded.

Plans are underway for events to celebrate fifty years in maintaining Tranby. These events will be held throughout 2007 and they be advertised in *OWN Matters* as we become aware of them. If you would like to find out more about this group, contact The Director of Operations, Maurice Shipp: email [mauriceshipp@tranby.edu.au](mailto:mauriceshipp@tranby.edu.au)

*Elaine Cohen*

## \$40,000 to Challenge Governments About Aboriginal Health

This is how you get it into the media...pay lots of money. This is the only way you can do it.

A number of medical and social welfare groups pay that kind of money. They paid for a full page to challenge the governments of Australia to put the necessary money into bringing the health of the original Australians up to the health of other Australians. What they want is for the various governments to take up the challenge from Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. In his report Tom Calma said that the State, Territory and Federal Governments should put a time frame on achieving equality of health and life expectancy for indigenous Australians. One generation - 25 years. This is what he asked for. He reported on

those practices that are working and those that are not. He says that \$300 million per year would achieve it. He wants the governments to commit to measurable targets because then they would be accountable.

"Government is not really listening to what Aboriginal people and the medical profession are saying," Tom Calma said.

"We need to be able to get the Government to focus a lot more on setting some fairly realistic and achievable targets, benchmarks and time frames."

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has had a letter writing campaign for some time on the issue of Aboriginal health, and I am sure that many other organisations and individuals have been writing letters. Magazines like *OWN Matters* have been publishing articles about the problems. It has been publicized by organisations like Oxfam and WHO and United Nations. But has it been widely publicized in the general media of Australia? It certainly has not made headline news. And considering the scale of the problem, it should have, long ago. So these organisations were prepared to pay to get the challenge into the eye of the public and politicians.

The medical and social welfare groups that paid the money to get that open letter into a national newspaper must have decided that this is an appropriate time, with impending Federal and State elections, and a new man at the helm of Labour. So this is the time for us to follow up with letters and emails and phone calls to Health Ministers and Shadow Health Ministers. We need to push for policies that take up Tom Calma's challenge.

Should you feel the need to communicate with members of parliament, either state or federal, to find out about their policies on these matters, or suggest what these should be, please check with the insert with some of the information on their postal and email addresses.

*Lorraine Inglis*



# Letters to the Editor

## A Life Membership – WOW!

Thanks to all – my beloveds – who bestowed the great honour of NSW OWN life membership on me at the special event before Christmas. And congratulations to my sisters who also received the precious award.

Sorry I wasn't there for the occasion. I probably wouldn't have been able to croak out the word thanks if I had been!

Respect from my peers, and most especially those in OWN, has always been the achievement of my dreams. In my book, it supersedes all the awards handed out by governments who continue to ignore the quiet achievers among volunteers caring for families and communities and activists for socially worthy causes.

I've been privileged to receive three life memberships now. One from NSW Pensioners & Superannuants Association, one from the Australian Pensioners & Superannuants – and one as probably the only woman made a life member of the Retired Mineworkers' Association.

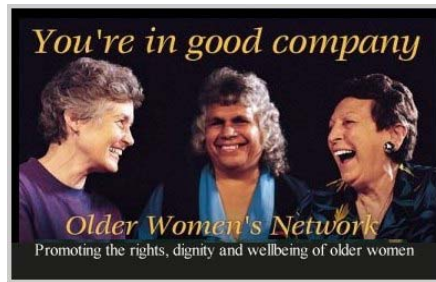
Those are my prized possessions for work achieved with thousands of colleagues. In loving thoughts I share my awards with them all!

*Noreen Hewett*

## OWN Husbands

I was interested to read about the older men's group in Bankstown OWN Matters December 2006 – *Older Men Reach 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, as it was my husband, Jack, and several other men, who formed OM:NI - Older Men: New Ideas when he was working as a project officer at COTA (Council of the Ageing). It became a great success, with interest from other States, and I'm glad to hear that John Hanrahan's group is going strong.

*Pat Zinn*



## Kindness of Strangers

Driving home after a recent Sydney storm, I had just entered the rear lane which accesses my garage, when I reversed slightly to make way for a car exiting the lane. As a result, the back wheel of my vehicle became wedged in a culvert, which was filled with swiftly flowing storm water.

What to do? There I was stuck in a very inconvenient position, which ruled out summoning the NRMA as they can take up to forty-five minutes to respond. Fortunately I had my mobile with me, so I appealed to my mechanic, but he wasn't able to extricate me for another half-hour. There seemed no alternative, other than to sit in my car and wait.

Almost immediately – as if by magic – a man riding a bicycle approached and noticed my predicament. "Need a hand?" he said, dismounting, and proceeded to search for a large rock to place under the rear wheel. He borrowed one from an adjacent garden, enlisted a passing stranger for extra man-power, and then instructed me to put my car into reverse. Together, they managed to lift my car out of the culvert on their second attempt.

Both amazed and impressed, I expressed my heartfelt gratitude. "No worries," said the man on the bike, before continuing on his way.

It was wonderful to experience the unexpected kindness of strangers in this busy, seemingly impersonal city of ours.

*June West*

## Senators Vote for 7% Pay Rise

The Senate voted 52 to 5 recently against a Greens motion to limit MPs' pay increases to 2.5% rather than 7% per annum. The 7% pay rise, announced late in the afternoon of the last parliamentary sittings, gives backbenchers an extra \$7,800 and the Prime Minister an extra \$20,000 a year.

Greens Senator Brown noted that MPs' pay since 1999 has risen 39.1% compared to a 23.2% rise in the CPI.

The other parties rejected Senator Brown's call for MPs' pay to be assessed by the government's Fair Pay Commission rather than the Remuneration Tribunal, which he described as 'political'.

*This Greens media release was contributed by Ebony Bennett*

## They're Happy Little Vegemites!

Under Howard's extreme industrial relations laws workers have to give up 46 award conditions, including paid overtime, paid public holidays, shift penalties and leave loadings, meal and travel allowances and other long standing arrangements that have been bitterly fought for and won by the workers over many years.

On the other side of the fence (I have just read in the The Sydney Morning Herald) St George Bank, recorded its first one billion dollar profit in 2006 and rewarded its CEO, Gail Kelly, with a bonus of \$4,331,000!

This bonus was a mere bagatelle when compared with at least a dozen other CEOs. Alan Moss, head of Macquarie Bank, received between \$10 and \$20 million.

One hopes that their staffs were left with enough to pay the mortgage!

Just thought you'd like to know!

*Muriel Hortin*

# Letters to the Editor

## Telstra's Next G

Lots of Hoo-Hah about Telstra's new baby around the traps at present. Just beware. I received a call from a lovely young thing called Josh, from Telstra, with a very smooth, very fast line in patter, appearing to offer to send me some "information" about "Next G".

After sifting through all the spin about "3 free months" and nothing to pay till whenever stuff, I thought I might agree to read more about it, and started to give him my details. However, during this process I started to hear other words, like an "information KIT would be sent by courier" instead of just "information" and that there would be "a 10-day cooling off period". Hang on, I said, you'd better confirm that this deal is a "no" until I say "yes", not a "yes" until I say "no", situation. Of course, it wasn't – the deal is that Telstra will send you a Kit which contains all you need to connect to broadband, and unless you say "no" within 10 days, you're in!!!!

I instantly withdrew my interest, and told him that older people don't like to do business that way. It always pays to read the fine print! Telstra Next G might be the best thing since sliced bread, but its marketing strategy stinks!

*Pat Carlton*

## Whose Family Values?

To read that a man at a compulsory marriage counseling clinic in New Delhi with his still-bruised wife said that his punches were just routine marital discipline is a strong indication of the position of a male partner in his culture (SMH 13 November 2006)

In the article in December *OWN Matters* a quote was used from a recently read book which included an extract dealing with males' violent murders of women because of "social indignity."

If women stood in law courts of compulsory counseling clinics with

these kinds of excuses on similar charges, it is unimaginable that the excuses would be accepted in Australia, or in a region in Russia.

In our multi-cultured population there have been cases of "honor" killings and murders of wives and children because the partner was deeply offended by his wife's attitude and/or behavior.

Older women were often born in a time when the words 'domestic violence' were not used.

Language is important. Opinions are influenced and shaped by language. People have been verbally seduced into making themselves into suicide bombs, and many people have been lulled into believing that romantic, unreal ideas about families and harmonious living with partners, children and the community can last forever.

The Chamber's dictionary interpretations of 'domestic' include: private, tame, servant, belonging to the house, and home-made articles. Violence is not domesticated – it is often the irrational rage of a male partner over trivial misdemeanors such as burning the dinner.

People's attitudes and Government funding for efficacious and reliable legal action, suitable alternative accommodation for safe housing and financial and social support can and should take into account the influence of cultural family traditions and how language can form views about family values.

*Louise Anike*

## Have We Lost Our Way?

I attended the white ribbon morning tea and was very impressed with the speakers, they were both excellent.

What did not impress was the number of women who attended. I belong to a network, set up to support women in all aspects of their lives. I thought that this would mean being

there to listen to what is being done to further the cause of wiping out domestic violence.

I know that not all women have known violence in their lives, but that does not mean that one should not be listening to women who spend their days fighting for the rights and the preservation of human dignity for women.

There should have been a much larger attendance and if this is how we respond to calls for support, it makes you wonder if, somewhere along the road, we are losing our way.

*Josie Jackson*

## V-Day Performance: *The Vagina Monologues*

**V-Day** is a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. V-Day was born in 1998 as an outgrowth of Eve Ensler's Obie-Award winning play, *The Vagina Monologues*. As Eve performed the piece in small towns and large cities all around the world, she saw and heard first hand the destructive personal, social, political and economic consequences violence against women has for many nations. **V-Day's** mission is simple.

It demands that the violence must end. It proclaims Valentine's Day as V-Day until the violence stops. When all women live in safety, no longer fearing violence or the threat of violence, then V-Day will be known as Victory Over Violence Day.

Celebrate women, raise awareness and envision a world without violence.

**TWO NIGHTS ONLY!**

Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd  
March, 2007 at 8.00pm

Cost: \$55

Proceeds go to Dymphna House  
Sydney Theatre at Walsh Bay  
Box Office (02) 9250 1999

## IMPORTANT EMAIL & POSTAL ADDRESSES

For you to use during the year should you wish to harass members of state or federal parliaments about their present or possible future policies.

### Premier NSW **Morris Iemma**

Postal: Level 40 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Email: [lakemba@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lakemba@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

### State Minister for Health **John Hatzistergos**

Postal: Level 31 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Email: [minjust@hatzistergos.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:minjust@hatzistergos.minister.nsw.gov.au)

### State Leader of Opposition **Peter Debnam**

Postal: P.O. Box 960  
Bondi Junction NSW 2022  
Email: [peter.debnam@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:peter.debnam@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

### State Shadow Minister for Health **Jillian Skinner**

Postal: Suite 3, 40 Yeo St  
Neutral Bay NSW 2089  
Email: [northshore@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:northshore@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

### Prime Minister **John Howard**

Postal: P.O. Box 336  
Gladesville NSW 2111

### Federal Minister for Health and Ageing **Tony Abbott**

Postal: P.O. Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [Tony.Abbott.MP@aph.gov](mailto:Tony.Abbott.MP@aph.gov)

### Federal Opposition Leader **Kevin Rudd**

Postal: P.O. Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [Kevin.Rudd.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Kevin.Rudd.MP@aph.gov.au)

### Federal Shadow Minister for Health **Nicola Roxon**

Postal: P.O. Box 6022  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [Nicola.Roxon.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Nicola.Roxon.MP@aph.gov.au)

### Federal Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs **Jenny Macklin**

Postal: P.O. Box 6022  
House of Representatives

## Fun & Festivity in February

### Chinese New Year - The Year of the Pig

**Feb 10/11** Belmore Park From 5 pm  
Try delicious Asian foods while enjoying entertainment from local and international acrobats, musicians and traditional dancers  
**Feb 11** Chinese New Year Parade 11:00am to 12:30pm  
Town Hall to Chinatown, grab a spot to watch the parade  
**Feb 24 and 25** Dragon Boat Races Darling Harbour 8:00 am to 5:00pm  
Boats filled with up to 22 paddlers from more than 100 teams. On shore roving Chinese entertainers, decorations & tasty Asian treats from the food stalls

### State Library Movies

Fridays 12:00 Metcalfe Auditorium  
**Feb 2** Gentlemen Prefer Blondes  
**Feb 16** Dance Theatre of Harlem

### Talks and Squawks

**Feb 6** 12:45 to 1:15 Customs House Library Lunchtime Reading with David Malouf  
**Feb 7** 1:00pm to 2:00pm Hutley Hall 200 Miller St North Sydney John Pilger talks about his book *Freedom Next Time*  
**Feb 8** 6:30 to 8:00pm Australian Museum *Dementia: A Case of Use It or Lose It*  
Dr Michael Valenzuela \$18/12  
**Feb 14** 12:30pm to 1:30pm Sydney Mechanic' School of Arts Pitt St Eva Cox & Miriam Lyon  
*Shopping for Happiness: Are We Shoppers or Consumers*  
**Feb 21** Museum Sydney (cnr Phillip & Bridge) Floor talk on *History Sydney Harbour Bridge*  
Bridging Sydney. Free with museum entry

### Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras 2007

**Feb 18** 10:00am to 8:00pm **Fairday** Victoria Park  
Stalls, dancing, great line-up on stage  
**March 3** Parade begins at Hyde Park end of Oxford St

### Norfolk Hotel Jazz

Saturdays 4:00pm to 7:00pm

### Art Gallery of NSW

Open 10am to 5pm  
**Dec 21 to Mar 21** Gifted : Contemporary Aboriginal Art  
**Jan 31 to Feb 18** Contemporary Aboriginal Art Film Series  
Weds 2pm and 7:15pm, Sun 2pm  
**Mar 3 to May 13** Archibald, Wynne and Suleman  
Guided tours Daily 12 noon, 1pm, 3pm, Weds 7:15pm

### Queen Mary II Visit

**Feb 20** Arrives 6:30am Queen Elizabeth II arrives in evening. First time these two queens have been here together since WW2 when the originals were troop carriers.



## **PBS Will Cover All Osteoporosis Treatment For Over-70s**

The Commonwealth Government has extended the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listing of the osteoporosis medication, alendronate.

From 1 April 2007, alendronate (in the form of Fosamax Once Weekly and Alendro Once Weekly) will be available on the PBS for patients aged 70 years and over who have osteoporosis and are at high risk of fracture as measured by a bone mineral density test. Alendronate is already available on the PBS for patients with osteoporosis who have suffered a bone fracture following minimal trauma. After 1 April 2007, all patients will pay their usual PBS co-payment amount, currently \$4

To coincide with this extension, bone mineral density tests for **all** patients aged 70 years and over will be covered by Medicare from 1 April 2007; previously Medicare cover was only provided for patients with existing osteoporosis who had suffered a bone fracture following minimal trauma.

## **Dieting & Bone Density**

Exercise can stop bone density loss during dieting. Dieting without exercise could make you lose more than just fat.

Research in the Archives of Internal Medicine this week shows that people who cut calories and don't exercise lose bone density, but losing weight through exercise doesn't have this effect. The study involved 48 overweight men and women with an average age of 57.

They were divided into three groups: a calorie-restricted group, an exercise group and a control group. The calorie-restricted group decreased their energy intake by 16 per cent for three months, then by 20 per cent for nine months. The exercise group ate the same number of calories, but exercised to increase their energy output by 16



per cent for three months, then by 20 per cent for nine months. The control group simply received information on leading a healthy lifestyle. After one year, those in the calorie-restricted and exercise groups lost an average of 8.2 and 6.7kg respectively, but only those in the calorie-restricted group lost bone density. They lost an average of 2 per cent of their bone density in three high-risk fracture sites - lower spine, hip and top of the thigh bone.

*extract: Archive Internal Medicine 2006;166:2502-2510 (Villareal DT, et al)*

## **Soya Under Scrutiny**

Food fads come and go ... remember how eggs got a bad name as a cholesterol source and were subsequently reinstated in dieticians' esteem? Conversely soya, long considered an ideal food, is now under suspicion.

Whether you know it or not, you'll probably be eating soya today. It's in 60% of all processed food, from baby formula to biscuits. But should it carry a health warning?

Doubts about soya began in 1991, when multimillionaire American lawyer Richard James turned up at a New Zealand laboratory stating that he was sure that soya beans were killing his rare birds. Chicks fed on a soya feed had become infertile or had died; other young male birds aged prematurely or reached puberty years early. Laboratory staff thought he was crazy, but money talks, so consultant toxicologist Dr Mike Fitzpatrick set to work studying soya and its effects. An exhaustive review of the scientific literature ruled out chemicals such as pesticides as the cause of the hormone disruption reported by Richard James; however, the finger of suspicion pointed to isoflavones, a group of compounds in soya protein. Isoflavones produce biological effects in humans, and have been marketed



since the early '80s as an antidote to menopausal hot flushes and osteoporosis, also as a protective ingredient against cardiovascular disease and hormone-related cancers.

These health claims were based on the low rates of heart disease and certain cancers such as breast and prostate cancer in east Asian populations consuming soya-rich diets. However, in its expert report, published in 2000, on Endocrine-disrupting Chemicals, the Royal Society concluded that the lower risk of certain cancers among Asian populations might be due to other factors – their high consumption of fish, for instance.

And what of babies fed on soya milk? The Food Standards Agency advice is that soya's potential to have an adverse effect on babies' hormonal development is still controversial, but recommends that soya formula should not be given to infants under 12 months old except under exceptional circumstances. This is supported by Professor Richard Sharpe, head of the Medical Research Council's human reproductive sciences unit at Edinburgh University, who has been studying the decline in male fertility over the past half-century. His recently completed studies on the effects of soya milk on young male monkeys showed that it interferes with testosterone levels.

World demand for soya has increased to the extent that 34 million tonnes a year of soya oil is being consumed. To feed demand, new agricultural frontiers are being opened up in Brazil, where labour is cheap and where large areas of virgin rainforest have been illegally felled to make room for the crop. Meanwhile the US subsidises its soya farmers to the tune of \$13 billion a year.

And so another food fad comes into doubt. Maybe one could compare the millionaire's dead birds to canaries in a coal mine.

*Helen Young (condensed from The Guardian Weekly)*

# Our OWN Writers

## *Then and Now*

When my mother was pregnant back in the 1920s, she would not leave the house until it was dark. She didn't want the neighbors to know that she was pregnant. In those days, our lives were still influenced by the proximity of neighbors and we were told to observe the current mores of taking heed of, "what will the neighbors say", or "Don't let the neighbors hear", which later still had a damaging effect where there was domestic violence.

The attitudes of people were affected by shame – the humiliating feeling of a perceived shortcoming, offence, or unseemly exposure, and fear of incurring disgrace or dishonor.

In some countries, the concept of "losing face" encourages lying, bribing, pretending and procrastination. In some cultures, this shamed feeling often lead to suicide as in the Japanese Hari Kiri – ripping the belly. Others asked friends to behead them. In Western cultures, men jumped from windows after financial failures, or hanged themselves, or shot themselves.

Women these days in Australia proudly flaunt their "baby bump" during pregnancies by wearing tight clothing, and what the neighbors think, or what opinions they may have no longer matters very much.

But still, in countries and cultures where men keep tight control over women about the way they dress, their education or lack of it, their behavior and habits, men often resort to violence as their right, if they think their women did something contrary to their dictates. Their violence against women is often abysmal. "Honor" killings happen. Killings sometimes happen in India when the man or his family think the size of dowry was a social indignity and that they should get more dowry. Using such weasel words as *social indignity* in relation to such horrific violence is itself horrific.

While we boast that Australia is a wonderful country to live in, there are men who kill, or employ someone else to kill, their wives for a variety of reasons. More tragically, there are some men who have killed their own children and then committed suicide.

Approximately one third of all murders in Australia have women as victims – killed by their intimate partners because of jealousy, possessiveness and violence. These murders were not spontaneous. They were planned and deliberate – often occurring around separation and divorce.

*Louise Anike*

\*From the Newsletter 26 from the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, article, "The Social Context of Femicide in Victoria" by Damon Muller, University of Melbourne.

## *The Silly Season*

Deck the halls with costly folly, spend a lot on lotsa lolly, Tra La La La La Lala La la. Wrap the gifts with glittery paper, then tear it off for the bin. Pin on gift tags with abandon, on gifts which cost less than the trappings. Granny take the kids for photos with Santa. Hear them yowl at the red-faced, cottonwool garlanded Santa. Cluck and goo as the littlies scream at the weirdo, sweaty man, about whom they have been told as a strange man to beware. 'Tis the season to be silly, Tra La La La La Lala La la.

Invite the rellies you want to impress for the stuffed chook and Xmas Pud. Pay too much for the turkey, ham, sparkling wine, the nuts, the brandy cream, then to be told on arrival they are vegetarian teetotallers.

Hide your chagrin when you give them a big box of Lindts, and they hand you back an Xmas tea towel, especially when they stow the chocs in their bag for later.

Where is the pine scent from the Xmas trees? (Shush, don't tell the supermarkets or else they will pipe the smell next year into the air conditioners).

The plastic leaves are adorned with baubles of mauve, fuchsia and silver this year, this does nothing for the memories of majestic Norfolk Pines of yore decorated in the backyard.

It has been reported with concern that the oldies are now getting into debt with their credit cards, together with the news that pokies are to be installed in supermarkets. So how's about that massive credit debt on high interest rates to meet in the New Year? Where are the Toys R Us brigade? One does not see them playing in the park so much. They are at the Supermarkets being conditioned to be another fat silly consumer society.

Me? What a downright hypocrite! I had a Wow of a Chrissie. Danced to a keyboard thumping out, "Rock Around the Clock" at geriatrics' lunch. Didn't exactly rock 'til the broad daylight' but was congratulated by a nostalgic woman at the next table telling me that, "You were wonderful"! Oh? But then I had two Complete Carers on each side on the floor to prevent me falling on my face. Fed that face with special chook cooked to perfection by the visitor rellie, followed by a steamed plum pudding and brandy custard. Going to the pictures to see *The Queen* with that wonderful actress Helen Mirren, a very interesting film. We forget that She is also an "Older Woman". I do not stay up for the New Year – it depresses me. All good wishes to OWN members for 2007.

*Enid Harrison*

# Our OWN Writers

## *Christmas Dinner*

Belonging to a family of seven meant Christmas became a large celebration with various friends and visitors sitting around our food-laden table. I remember enjoying the chicken because it was only at Christmas we had it. It tasted better, because it came straight out of our chicken pen. I remember that mum had to chop its head off and I recall it hanging from the clothesline, blood dripping everywhere.

One fond memory: After the meal was finished and cleared away mum would leave dried fruit and nuts for afternoon nibbles on the table. My eldest sister and I spied a platter of unusual looking dates. "Yummy!" They were filled with a creamy concoction that we gusted ourselves on, 'till they were nearly all gone. And we paid in full by being very ill and then got into trouble from our mother.

"Serves you right. That will teach you to be so greedy", she said.

I remember it well.

*Peggy Hewett*

## *A Child is Born*

Just before last Christmas our Church invited the local primary schools to participate in our annual Pavement Art competition. About 160 children did their drawings and, walking along the pavement later, I was amazed at the talent of the pupils and the quality of their drawings. Many depicted the Christmas story, and one I particularly noticed was of a mother and child with the caption 'I told Mary she would have a son'. Perhaps the child just couldn't spell 'the Angel Gabriel'.

During Christmas week all we heard at Church and in advertising was the Christmas story, of there being no room at the inn, and of a very special babe being born in a stable. The birth, we are told, was attended by Mary's husband, Joseph, and watched by the animals. Thinking out loud, a friend said, 'I wonder what would have happened if there had been a problem with the birth'.

This got me thinking of the wonder, joy and spectacle of birth and of the many I had witnessed. Most of them were normal, but there was always the need to be aware and ready for an emergency. Somehow there always seemed to be less anxiety at Christmas, but I do remember the rush and drama of a Christmas day at a small country hospital when it became necessary for an emergency caesarean section, and the relief when all was well. No drinks and nibbles that Christmas morning.

*Mona Wacker*

## *Christmas Incarceration*

I was five years old when, 10 days before Christmas, I became ill; despite this I was still looking forward to the magic of Christmas Day with my family. Even at that age I was taken to midnight Mass and reveled in the music, the carols and the ritual. After Mass we had milk and a mince pie and then bed. The excitement and anticipation of a visit from Santa Claus never kept me awake.

Some days before Christmas the doctor ordered me to hospital. As I heard him speak I thought, 'I'll pretend to be asleep and then they can't take me'. Alas, it made no difference to the ambulance men, who made light work of lifting me onto their trolley. Imagine my dismay; when in hospital I was put into a COT. A big girl of five in a baby's cot! My mother came into the room and sat beside me. She stroked my forehead and whispered 'Calm down, my sweet, you'll soon be better'. As always I believed her and stopped crying.

Then she was gone and I was alone in a way I had never been before. The next few days were a blur of strange faces and strange hands pulling me about, giving me medicine and – most shaming of all – I was wearing napkins. Then I was moved into a huge ward of other children, some in bed, some running around, some crying and calling for mummies and daddies.

Sunday; the ward cleaned, beds made, children warned to be good or Mummy and Daddy would not be allowed to visit. The less said about that day the better. The apprehension, the anticipation, and finally the loved faces at the bedside. All too soon the visit ended and then a cacophony of crying, screaming children some climbing out of bed trying to run after their parents, the smaller ones looking frightened out of their wits as that one wanted to cuddle and soothe them.

But, then it was Christmas Eve and the ward was transformed. I awoke early to streamers, balloons and a huge – or so it seemed – Christmas tree festooned with baubles and coloured lights and the star on the top. Underneath was the crèche, a magical stable with all the animals and figures of the Christmas story and, central to all, the baby Jesus. To my five year old eyes, it was so beautiful and comforting to see this – in a hospital too.

That day and the next, Christmas day, passed in a daze of party atmosphere, carols, mysterious parcels, parents' visits, excitement and the awful, empty feeling of seeing the parents wave a smiling goodbye. But nothing could equal the feeling of safety that swept over me as I opened my eyes to the magic of that decorated morning ward, to the familiar story, its promise of Christmas fantasy for all the sleeping children.

*Judith Mustard*

# Our OWN Writers

## *Christmast Past*

I suppose we all remember well what Christmas was like when we were young. The smell from that pine tree branch that was the 'tree' filled the house for a couple of weeks. We used the same decorations for years and years.

I do remember we decided what we wanted for Christmas from a catalogue, so that my mother could lay-by one such present each, and the Christmas pillow slips had many things my mother thought we needed like boring socks and undies, and any new clothes for the summer. My mother bought a Christmas hamper each year, ordered from the same catalogue. Shopping was very different then.

For a start there were no supermarkets, so the big spend was limited, at the corner grocers. They did not sell many perishables there. The ice, milk, bread, fruit, veggies, and eggs were all delivered. My mother ordered the full ham from the butcher and had him halve it ... one half was left at the butcher's for Easter, the other half stayed in a 'ham bag' in the fridge until all eaten.

I remember how hot the house got from the traditional baked dinner with all the trims.

The salads of today, from the huge range of food available, make those of that time look boring. The sea foods of today were not available at the either the "ham and beef shop", as it was called (the forerunner of today's deli) or the fish shop. We had an ice chest, and later a kerosene fridge, with only a small freezer that held those small ice cube trays, so mum made ice cream from carnation milk and froze it in the trays. We hung out for the 'ice-cream man'. But I don't remember whether he came on Christmas Day. I remember Boxing Day breakfast was always thick slices of fried ham and eggs.

*Lorraine Inglis*

## *Emotional Kaleidoscope*

My childhood's Christmas emotions were like a twisting kaleidoscope. Indigo longing of impatient waiting, tinged perhaps with a silver edge of secret anticipation flowed easily into cheerful yellow and orange delight on gazing at intricately folded tissue paper bells and balls, linked by pretty tissue streamers converting our Spartan 1940's home into an Aladdin's cave of enticing promise. Barely awake very early on Christmas morning, waiting for parents to wake and join my sister and me before diving into our pillow-slips full of gifts, my misty inner world was pre-dawn pink and lilac with slowly surfacing expectations. These soon gave way to brilliant gold and red explosions of anticipation fulfilled in the reality of hoped-for treasures.

Inevitably, as day wore on, my sister and I would grow mutually envious of our respective goodies. My kaleidoscope revealed patterns of dismal green and grey. These would

pass, but only slowly, with the struggle to accept the peace of looking beyond the pain of the moment. Later, joining the family around the lunch table, enjoying the lavish dishes reserved for Christmas in those somewhat austere years, my inner colours moved again to warm browns and soft reds, knowing I was loved. At day's end, tucked between the sheets, eyes softly closing, all the colours of my Christmas kaleidoscope merged into slumber's welcome darkness and shifting shadows of childhood's dreams.

*Bev Cameron*

## *'Volver' by Almodovar*

I think this is the first time in months, perhaps years, that I've seen a film I want to write about. It is called 'Volver' and I hope it's still around for a while so that you get a chance to see it, if you haven't already done so.

You could say that this wonderfully rich, colourful film is about death, I suppose, but it is also very much about life in this feminised world where work, survival and love between mothers and daughters is paramount. The film is set in a small Spanish village where death is regarded as part of everyday life, not tragic and often funny. Every person's death is an occasion for celebration of the life.

The story is about three women of the same family, one of whom, Raimunda, is played by the very beautiful Penelope Cruz. Paula, Raimunda's daughter, accidentally kills her father, the lay-about, out-of-work Paco, as he is about to rape her. He tells her he is not her real father so everything is "all right". Paula grabs a kitchen knife and stabs him. He dies. Raimunda comes on the scene and reassures her daughter, telling her to say nothing. She, Raimunda, will take care of everything. And she does. Very successfully.

So begins this complex story which becomes more and more interesting. You think it might be a surreal tale when Raimunda and her sister Lola's dead mother, Irine, turn up, (in a very corporeal state) and things get complicated, often funny and very moving. There are some wonderful scenes, one of which shows the ailing Aunt Paula, who lives alone and refuses to move. Although unable to look after herself, she nevertheless always seems to have food in the house when Raimunda and Lola visit her every day. She is a wonderful character. The scene where she dies of dementia I found completely heart-rending.

All the characters are women, from young to aged. The men are irrelevant.

This film is the best I have seen of Almodovar, poignant, funny, emotional, very colorful and sensual and Penelope Cruz is brilliant. I could watch her all day.

I just wanted 'Volver' to go on and on.

*Muriel Hortin*

# OWN ADVOCACY

## The Questions You Need To Ask When Choosing an Aged Care Facility

Some of you will remember Josephine Conway, one of our long standing members.

Josephine's passion for women's issues has never waned despite being in a nursing home and being restricted by poor eyesight and physical disabilities.

One of the advocacy issues she continues to work on is to improve the quality of care given to the aged. She has researched the changes that are occurring within the health system and warns we must all be vigilant in keeping the government honest in his area.

She has compiled a list of questions that she feels anyone entering an aged care facility would do well to ask and I submit them here with Josephine's blessing for your perusal.

### *In diet matters*

- Are residents with food allergies provided for?
- Are processed foods used?
- Are fresh vegetables on the menu?
- Is fresh fruit provided and if so in what quantity?
- Are residents given a choice between butter and margarine?
- Are fruit drinks provided?
- Are residents given the choice of having their meals in their own rooms?
- Are meals prepared on the premises?
- Are the kitchen staff permanent?

### *Within the facility*

- Do all staff wear name tags?
- Are provisions able to be made to deal with the problem of chemicals that are used in the kitchen and laundry that have an impact on the lives of residents who have allergies?
- Are water and power saving devices used?

### *Health services available*

- How will a resident be treated if he/she takes ill in their own room or unit?
- Is there a registered nurse on call?
- Are hearing and eyesight tests available?
- Are there doctors on call?
- Are complimentary/alternative medicines or therapies allowed?
- Have residents access to physiotherapist's, reflexologist's, hairdressers, podiatrist's and other services?

### *Clothes*

- What are the laundry procedures?
- Residents need to be aware of the importance of wearing cardigans, flat shoes and other clothing that is easy to manage.
- A bag should be kept packed and in an accessible place so that it can be taken with the resident should they need to evacuate because of fire, a trip to hospital or other emergency. The green environmentally friendly bags are ideal for this purpose.

*Contributed by Josephine Conway*

I thank Josephine for this contribution and urge you all to cut this out and keep it somewhere accessible in case you or a friend need to know what type of facility you are dealing with. These are all things you need to know.

*Barbara Malcolm*



# NOTICES

## REMINDER

10:30 am, 2nd  
February OWN Sydney  
Working Group Meeting

## OWN Sydney Quarterly Meeting

10:30 Thursday, 8th  
February

**WILL YOU STILL  
NEED ME,  
WILL YOU STILL  
FEED ME  
WHEN I'M  
74...84...94 ?**

**Speaker:**

**Barbara Squires**

Caring... in our community,  
by our community, for our  
community.

Following the Workshop,  
the OWN Sydney  
Quarterly Meeting will be  
held. This is your  
opportunity to hear the  
plan for Sydney in 2007.

## Avoca Press Short Story Competition For Seniors

Closing Date 30 June 2007

Submissions are invited for short stories, either fiction or non-fiction, up to 10,000 words in length. Authors must be 50 years or over on 1 January 2007, and the aim is to encourage the act of writing. Please submit new works, and tell your friends about it. Entry fee is \$10, with a maximum of three entries per author.

Every entry in the competition will be reviewed and each entrant will receive a short critical evaluation of their work by an experienced author. A minimum of 20 winners will be chosen, and a book will be commercially published containing all winning entries. All royalties from the book will be shared equally among its authors.

For further information and entry forms, contact Avoca Press at [competitions@avocapress.com.au](mailto:competitions@avocapress.com.au), or write to Avoca Press, P.O. Box 6790, Baulkam Hills BC NSW 2153. Phone 0425 330 303

## DISCLAIMER

*The views expressed in OWN Matters are not necessarily those of the Older Women's Network NSW, and we do not guarantee the accuracy of the facts in articles supplied by members. The Older Women's Network NSW accepts no responsibility for any loss occasioned to any person acting, or not acting, upon any material in OWN Matters.*

## 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's 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 .....% of my estate to  
the Older Women's Network for  
its general purpose or the specific  
purpose of

.....  
.....  
.....

**The gift you make to OWN  
will be an enduring record of  
your generosity.**

## MEMORY LOSS PROGRAM

Would you like a better understanding of what is happening to you and be able to talk to others going through a similar experience?

In a group format, participants have the opportunity to:

- Tell their story of memory loss
- Reflect on the impact of their diagnosis
- Develop an understanding of the importance of self-care
- Enhance their skills for communication with others, and for problem-solving
- Extend their knowledge about legal and financial issues

**This program is FREE OF CHARGE.** It runs for 7 weeks on the same day each week. Each session runs in the morning for 2 hours. Light refreshments are included at no charge.

When Each Tuesday for 7 weeks 13 March to 24 April 2007

Time: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Where: Willow Park Community Centre  
25 Edgeworth David Ave, Hornsby

Enquiries: Please ring **Scott Whiteway** on **(02) 9888 4216** or send e-mail to [swhiteway@alznsw.asn.au](mailto:swhiteway@alznsw.asn.au)

**Bookings are essential**

# OWN Sydney Notices

## Subscribe NOW!

Subscription to *OWN Matters* is \$22 per year, these are due every JULY 1. So pay now for 6 or 18 months: \$11 or \$33

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I enclose a chq/money order for 6 mths \$11 -to Jun30, 2007  
 or 18 mths \$33 -to Jun30, 2008 made payable to OWNNSW OR

Please debit the following credit card for \$11/\$33

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Members and friends are welcome to attend all activities.

## Wellness on Wednesdays

9.30am-11.45am every Wednesday

Held in Mott Hall, Argyle St., Millers Point.

## Film Discussion group

Tuesday, 13 January

You are invited to join with us to see *Little Children*, recommended *Notes on a Scandal*, *Babel* and *Je T'aime*. Please ring Yetty on 9665 2050 to check details.

## Creative Movement

Thursdays, at Mott Hall, 10.15am. Meredith Lucy will guide the class.

## OWN UP — Unashamedly Political Discussion Group

10.30am to 1.00pm, Friday 9 February 2007

The group will meet again at 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point.

Have an early cuppa with us and bring a sandwich for lunch.

Contact Pearlie on (02) 4285 5373 or e-mail

[pearliej@bigpond.net.au](mailto:pearliej@bigpond.net.au)

## Inner-West Networking Group - IWNG

· **Every 2nd Saturday** from 2-4pm **IWNG Meeting** - Leichhardt Market Place, Cnr Marion & Flood Streets, (Community Room ground floor behind Tandy), Networking, mutual support, sharing interests, social activities.

Buses serving the area are: 470, 435, 436, 437, and 438

All OWN members are welcome. Just turn up, or contact the OWN office on 9247 7046 or Jan on 9692 9400. OWN Members from other areas are welcome!

**Jubilation! OWN Retirees** - all OWN members welcome

*Discussion on the Positive Aspects of Ageing*

Bring along your ideas for further discussion topics. Friday 16

February 2007 at 6pm 87 Lower Fort St Millers Point All

members and friends welcome. Please bring a plate or a bottle to

share. Contact Terry 0419 441 766

**IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO:  
Older Women's Network NSW Inc.  
87 Lower Fort Street  
Millers Point NSW 2000**

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