

# NEWSLETTER

## JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

Vol 13 No 2  
May 2002

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### PARLIAMENTARY LUNCHEON GUEST SPEAKER: SANDRA YATES

This year's guest speaker at the Parliamentary luncheon is Sandra Yates, whose immensely successful career will interest us all. From modest beginnings as a secretary and sole parent of two children, to her present position as Chair of Saatchi & Saatchi Australia, Sandra's life has been full of unexpected turns.

Sandra's early life will resonate with many women. She was born in Queensland, left school at 15, married at 18, became a mother at 20 and was raising her two children a few years later as a sole parent. After moving to Sydney in 1977, she began a long involvement with media advertising and marketing. She was employed by the John Fairfax organisation in 1980 and, following a successful turnaround of the advertising sales performance of the magazine group, was appointed Deputy to the Chief Executive of Fairfax Magazines, a position she held until she left for New York in 1988. Here she was President and CEO of Matilda Publications Inc, a company which she and her business partner, Anne Summers, founded. The two raised \$20 million on Wall Street and completed the second woman-led Leveraged Buy-Out in US corporate history.

Back in Australia, Sandra was publisher of *Time* magazine from 1990-1993. She not only led it to its current position as the No.1 news and business magazine in Australia, but increased its advertising revenue by 50%. She is now Chair of Saatchi & Saatchi Australia, a major multi-national advertising agency, and also chairs the publishing company,

terraplanet Limited, the NSW TAFE Commission Board and the Sydney Writer's Festival.

Just to keep herself busy, she is managing director of her family company, The Demeter Group Pty Ltd, a consulting practice providing strategic advice to management on marketing and communications.

Sandra has taken an active role in women's rights. She chaired the Australian Council for Women, the advisory body set up by the Australian government in 1944 to prepare for the 4th UN Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Sandra was government adviser and delegate to the Conference.

Although she has now achieved many of her personal and career goals, Sandra still has minor regrets that she was unable to finish her secondary education or to sit for her final music exam. She is remedying this by learning to play the harpsichord.

PARLIAMENTARY LUNCHEON  
MONDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2002  
BOOKING FORM ENCLOSED BOOK EARLY!

### JSNWL FUNCTIONS

#### Lunch-Hour Talks, 2002

**Venue** The Lady Mayoress' Rooms, 2nd Floor, Town Hall  
**Date and Time** Third Thursday in the month from 12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**Entry** \$15 (non-members) \$13 (members). Light lunch included

For catering purposes, please let us know you are coming. Contact: (02) 9876 3927 or (02) 9265 9486 or email [shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au](mailto:shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au)

**May Talk — Thursday 16th**  
**Suzanne Falkiner — *Lost Women: Retrieving the Lives of Little-known Women from between the Lines of History***

Suzanne talks of the challenges she encountered in trying to find information about the women she was researching for her three published and two as yet unpublished biographies.

**June Talk — Thursday 20th**  
**Linda Burney — *Self-Determination: What it Really Means to Aboriginal People***

Aboriginal people want recognition and attainment of both their inherent rights and their citizenship rights. Linda discusses how Aborigines think these might best be obtained.

**July Talk — Thursday 18th**  
**Commander Lola Scott —**  
[Topic to be announced.]  
Commander Scott is Assistant Commissioner in the NSW Police Service and Director of Strategic Operations. She is Liaison Officer with the Women's Victims Advisory Board.

**August Talk — Thursday 15th**  
**Jennifer Sanders, Deputy Director of the Powerhouse Museum.**

## JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

The Library is open to the public Monday to Friday, 10 am to 3 pm

*Australia's national women's library is a specialist library with its sole focus on collecting and preserving the literary and cultural heritage of women.*

### Aims

- to heighten awareness of women's issues
- to preserve documents on women's lives and activities
- to support the field of women's history
- to highlight women's contribution to this country's development

### Borrowing Policy

The public may borrow items on interlibrary loan. A loan collection is available to financial members of JSNWL.

**Location:** Level 1, Town Hall House  
456 Kent Street, Sydney

### Public Transport Services

**Trains** Town Hall Station

**Buses** Queen Victoria Building,  
George St, York St and Drutt St

## LAUNCH OF ANNUAL JSNWL ESSAY PRIZE

On International Women's Day, Saturday, 9 March, the Library launched its annual Essay Prize. A small group gathered in the Library to hear the Hon Elizabeth Evatt, our patron, officially launch the competition. Elizabeth, who has generously donated this year's prize, presented us with a cheque for \$1000.

The Essay Prize is attracting considerable attention from schools, individual schoolgirls and writing groups within schools. We are looking forward to receiving a large number of outstanding entries. We will be publishing some of the best essays, in a booklet that we plan to have ready by early next year.

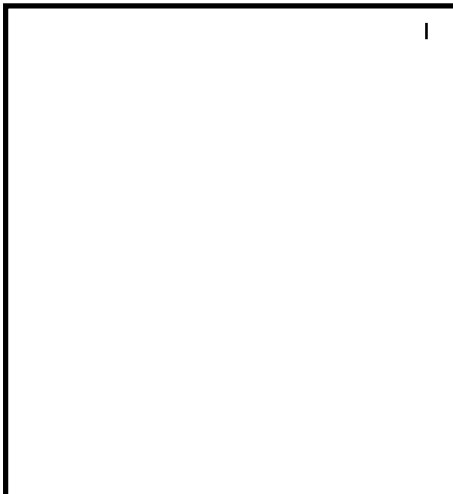
The Hon Elizabeth Evatt also took the opportunity of presenting the Library with a copy of the newly published biography of Dame Roma Mitchell, entitled, *Roma Mitchell: Glimpses of a Glorious Life*.

*The Hon Elizabeth Evatt opening a small gift from the Library presented to her by Shirley Jones*

STOP PRESS

We are thrilled to report receipt on 9 May, of the first entry in the Essay Prize competition.

## PRIZES IN OUR PARLIAMENTARY RAFFLE



### FIRST PRIZE

A large zircon set in a gold ring, valued at \$695, donated by the House of Cerrone in Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

This is the seventh year in succession that the House of Cerrone has donated jewellery for first prize. We are very grateful for their generosity.

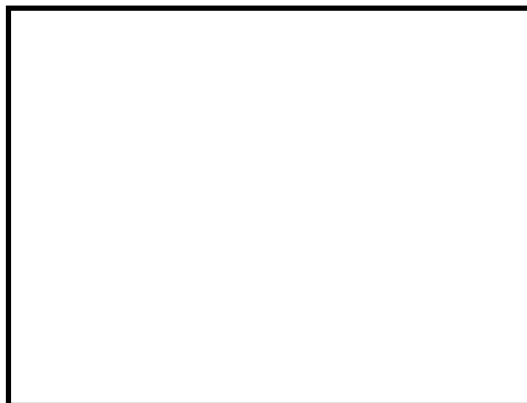


### SECOND PRIZE

A delightful pair of original watercolours of the Gloucester River in New South Wales, value \$350. These have been donated by artist Mary Rees. Mary has been painting all her life and has had several portraits entered in the Portia Geach awards.

### THIRD PRIZE

Book tokens to the value of \$200.



### RAFFLE TICKETS

A book of five raffle tickets is enclosed.

Please support the Library by buying generously

*To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful – Ursula Le Guin*

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## LIBRARY MATTERS

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### ARCHIVES NEWS

#### Farewells

We were very sad to say farewell to Mary Potter who has been working with us since 1994. Mary is one of our most valued and committed volunteers, who combines great computer skills with a meticulous approach to her work. Mary and a friend are taking a 4-wheel drive vehicle to the Kimberley in May for four months. We wish her a wonderful holiday, but hope that at some time in the future, she may be prevailed upon to rejoin our volunteer group.

#### Visits to the Library

The number of visitors to the library is increasing steadily. Several expressed gratitude for our services. They had attempted to get a particular book at other libraries, before finding what they wanted with us. One man said he had visited 10 libraries in Sydney without success, and was delighted that we were able to put in front of him the book he was looking for.

Two different groups of students from TAFE Ultimo, who are doing a library information course, visited the Library. A group of seven students came on Monday 8 April, and a second group of two came on 30 April. As part of their course they are required to do a survey on a library and these groups had chosen JSNWL. What attracted the groups was the fact that we are a *women's* library. Each group spent some time at the Library, getting information about the organisation, its back-ground, the material it holds, lending policies, responsibilities of the Board, etc. and were very interested in seeing the collection.

#### New Volunteers

JSNWL seems to have become internationally attractive. Overseas volunteers who have joined our ranks are **Marjan Ashna** from Iran who joined us early this year. At the moment Marjan is attending an English course for migrants, but comes in periodically to help with general tasks. She will be back on a more regular basis when her course finishes. **Claire Eden** learned of the existence of Jessie Street National Women's Library through the website. Recently arrived from London, where she was employed by a major charity organisation, she is taking charge of the Fact Files and setting this lapsed

initiative in motion. Her friend **Annie Tollafield** has also joined us. Annie is giving us a more streamlined website, which will make for easier updating.

#### Additions to the Collection

Between February and May this year we have added nearly 100 books to the collection. Individuals have donated some valuable out-of-print books and, as usual, publishing companies have generously responded to our requests for donations of newly published material. (See Book Review on p 7 for a review of a newly received book.)

#### Donations of Theses

We are very grateful to the following three members, who recently donated copies of their theses, to augment our small but growing collection.

**Katie Bird** — *Confined to the Mainland? Australia Women War Correspondents reporting from Overseas in the Second World War.* Katie received 1st class honours for her thesis, which was submitted for a BA (Hons) degree in Modern History at Macquarie University.

**Jan Hopkins** — *The Silver Trail. A Cultural History of Older Women in Australian History: 1950-1980.*

Jan's thesis was submitted for a BA (Hons) degree at Wollongong University in the History of Politics Program.

**Susan Steggall** — *To Carve an Identity. An Appreciation of the Careers of Early 20th Century Australian Women Sculptors.*

Sue's thesis was submitted for the degree of MA in the College of Fine Arts at the University of New South Wales.

#### Have You Written A Thesis? —

or a dissertation or an unpublished monograph on a woman-related topic? If so, can you spare us a copy? Our collection of theses, though small, covers a range of subjects. Theses, especially those with bibliographies, are a useful starting point for researchers reading about a particular subject.

*Phoebe Basson*  
*Library Administrator*

#### Recent Acquisitions

Frances Phoenix has donated an impressive collection of 120 slides of the Pine Gap 'Double Our Numbers Banner Project' to add to our growing collection of Pine Gap material.

Laila Ellmoos from the Sydney Foreshore Authority donated an interesting photograph, taken by Fred Bareham in June 1949, of a deputation from the Women's Charter. The photo includes Jessie Street. Laila also donated an album containing 58 black-and-white photos taken in Japan by an Australian Women's Peace Group after WW II.

#### Archives Work Experience

Katie Bird, who is now doing a Graduate Diploma of Science (Information Services) course by correspondence through Edith Cowan University in Perth, is doing her 75 hours' work experience for this course with JSNWL archives, working on papers from the Canberra Women's Archive. I am showing Katie exactly what happens to archival records from time of receipt to the time they are made accessible to the public.

Katie, an honours history graduate from Macquarie University, has donated a copy of her recently completed thesis on Australian women war correspondents in WWII to the Library.

*Beverly Sodbrown*  
*Archivist*

#### Vale JOAN WALKER

We are saddened to report the death late last year of Joan Walker, who gave unstintingly of her time over many years. As a qualified library technician, Joan was a valuable team member who did most of the accessioning in the Library. She was unfailingly reliable and will be greatly missed.

## NOVEMBER 2001 LUNCH-HOUR TALK

**SPEAKER: DOROTHY MAKASA**

*“Shifting the Focus: Women’s Groups in an African Village”*

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*On 15 November, at our last lunch-hour talk of the year, an extremely interested audience listened to Dorothy Makasa from Zambia talk to us about the village women working for change.*

What I want to do today is share with you my journey in the field of poverty and development in Zambia, my country. I worked for the Government from 1979 to 1987 then with the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), until 1997. Later I worked for the Non-Governmental Organisation Coordinating Committee (NGOCC), an apex body of over 50 women’s NGOs, formed to implement strategies coming out of the 1985 Nairobi Women’s World Conference. The NGOCC is today one of the most powerful voices in Zambia, advocating for women’s and human rights.

In 1991 I joined the Finnish Volunteer Service (FVS), now the Finnish Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA), where I worked as a Program Officer until 1997. The organisation placed volunteers in Zambian institutions in the areas of health, education, agriculture, forestry and women’s programs. The longer I worked there the more I realised that the Finnish volunteers and the Zambians were having problems working with each other. In 1996, following an evaluation of the organisation in Finland and the countries of operation, major changes were recommended. The new objectives included supporting the civil society through the partnership approach.

Here I want to take you back to the earlier days of the FVS. In 1987 the Ministry of Community Development requested KEPA to place volunteers in women’s programs in the Eastern Provinces Districts to assist staff build women’s networks in the villages. Each district had 70 - 200 women’s clubs and each club consisted of 10 - 30 women.

They engaged in ‘dead-end’ activities such as sewing, knitting and gardening. The Government wanted the clubs formed into Area Associations, District Associations and eventually into a Provincial Association to promote networking. This was impossible to achieve because of lack of training and resources and also because orders were coming from the top rather than being initiated by the women.

Three things happened which enabled the women to create their own developmental processes to meet their own situation. Firstly, ‘Training for Transformation’, started in 1992 in one District and later spread to other Districts, gave the women the tools to analyse their own situations and gave them the confidence to negotiate partnerships. Secondly, the formation of District Women’s Associations facilitated networking and communication, and thirdly the change in policy in KEPA-Zambia, which now enabled organisations to forge partnerships with individual District Women’s Associations.

When the women registered their district community associations as NGOs, I could go and actually discuss matters with them. They said to me ‘Just help us to form ourselves into a proper NGO. Help us with the constitution and paperwork. And when the volunteer’s term of office finishes we might not need another one.’ Now that the women were an NGO they had set up their own timetable. They had sheets of paper showing their plans. This was something that even I had never thought they would do because I had seen them as illiterate women. The women said ‘Now you’ve got to give us your time.’ So I sat with them and said ‘This is what the Finnish taxpayer expects and this is your budget and this is the objective.’ They didn’t know that the volunteer had to follow policies and couldn’t just give them money. We talked about their weaknesses, among them the fact that they hadn’t been trained to account for money. They had found a house to rent for \$5 and asked the organisation to rent it for them; one of their ladies was qualified enough to be executive secretary so they asked that her salary be paid and for some money for

administrative fees. Instead of a vehicle for the volunteer’ they said ‘we just want a secondhand motorcycle and we need a fee to maintain it.’ When I added up their needs for a whole year, it came to a fraction of the cost of just the ticket to bring a volunteer from Europe. I was able to go back to my office in Finland and say ‘this is what the women really want.’

So this was one example of ‘training for transformation’ and it also transformed me. It gave me the vigour and energy to face the Finnish people and say ‘This partnership is now working.’ All these women, who were just village women, had formed themselves into associations and were now not only equipped to represent themselves but were also able to train women in other districts. After this training for transformation program what was the role of government officers? They had no vehicle and didn’t even have a volunteer to take to these programs. That to me was empowerment and it also empowered me. Now people were coming to me saying ‘we’ve heard about these women. Can we please link up with them?’

Some specific successes included two village women who, in 1998, travelled to Germany to receive an award for the successful implementation of a credit scheme and in the same year two women travelled to Finland to exchange information with the Finnish public about issues of development. In 1997 the women collaborated on an agro-forestry program aimed at improving soil fertility through the women’s grassroots structure with useful results. They have also been linked to the seed multiplication program and many other programs suited to their particular districts.

The example of the Eastern Province women is an example of the resilience of the grassroots women to effect change within their communities through participation. This change can only be achieved through mutual collaboration and partnership.

*Transcription Shirley Jones  
Summary Cathy Sanderson*

*To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful — Ursula Le Guin*

## FEBRUARY 2002 LUNCH-HOUR TALK

**SPEAKER: DEIRDRE MASON**

**“Sydney — Too Big or Too Small?”**

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*On Thursday, 21 February, Deirdre Mason, Chief Executive Officer of The Committee for Sydney, gave a most thought-provoking talk, which aroused much discussion. Here is a summary.*

In Australia the primary city has shifted over the past 30 years from Melbourne to Sydney. Sydney's strengths lie in its location in the time zone straddling the US and Europe and means that it offers a highly competitive base from which to do business in the world's fastest growing region. NSW relies on manufacturing services, mining, finance, tourism and sophisticated information technology, which makes for robust economic diversity. Our large and multicultural population provides a strong domestic market which provides resilience in the event of downturns in the global economy. Recognised as an international financial centre, Sydney is also Australia's international gateway. The airport handles more than half the business and tourist arrivals from overseas, 50% of Australia's airfreight, and generates 33,000 jobs.

Australia still has a high level of ambiguity about immigration policy. The Department of Immigration website lists the ten press releases for July 20 in response to the Birrell report on Australia's recent 'brain gain' — all of them about the benefits of skilled migration to the states, territories and regional areas, but there is no mention of NSW. Doesn't Sydney benefit from skilled migration? Or doesn't it matter? Professor Birrell confirms that one in two migrants ends up in our city, and that the prospect of attracting migrants to the regions is unlikely.

I think the reason for the lack of debate on Sydney is that the issues it raises are too big to grapple with. Take transport. Sydney's rail transport network — planned back in the 1930s for a much smaller city — was never completed. The massive growth in Sydney's west requires a new heavy rail network to connect its commercial centres other than via the CBD. Several parts of the current network — the Illawarra and Western lines and the harbour rail crossing — are already used to full capacity and constitute big budget constraints that planners fear to tackle.

The Federal Government has invested in roads; the latest is the Western Orbital which will allow traffic to bypass much of the Sydney urban area. This will remove some through-traffic, but will not substantially assist the movement of workers, shoppers and students around the metropolis other than in private cars and buses.

A complementary issue is that of low-cost housing and housing diversity. Access to housing in Sydney's pumped-up market is increasingly prohibitive, leading to vocational imbalances across the metropolis. Lower skilled workers live in more affordable housing at the city's fringes and are forced to travel to work in private cars in the absence of adequate public transport. Sydney's unique climatic conditions (smog created in the inner city area is trapped and inverted in Sydney's west), poor public transport, and the separation of unskilled workers from their places of work, contribute substantially to Sydney's deteriorating air quality.

Ageing infrastructure is also becoming a problem. Last financial year several inner city councils applied for more than the capped rate increase in order to address the problems of replacing utilities and drainage systems.

Congestion is a major problem. Around 30,000 people commute to Sydney each day from the rapidly growing Gosford/Wyong area on the NSW Central Coast and from Sydney's south. The freeways and railways servicing these areas operate at near capacity and require further upgrading. Western Sydney is also growing and will add 500,000 people over the next 20 years, regardless of urban consolidation. This area is already critically underprovided with basic transport infrastructure and is not self-contained in terms of employment, especially in higher order jobs.

Sydney suffers significantly from not having a unified tier of government with a single focus on the wellbeing of the city. No political party appears to want to change this.

State and Federal governments in different ways have to balance the contrasting and conflicting demands of

their wider electorates when considering Sydney's needs. Even before the election campaign, Federal and State politicians were targeting policy decisions firmly towards the bush and regional Australia to redress the imbalance of amenities and opportunities for wealth creation that exist outside the major towns. Unfortunately, there is no research into what services and what assistance should be provided to rural Australia.

The Federal system currently embraces transfers both from wealthy citizens to needy citizens and from wealthy states to less wealthy states. These transfers are not the same thing and this is the paradox. Big cities like Sydney and Melbourne can best help the less wealthy part of regional Australia by themselves growing and prospering, even though in the process they become less like the other parts of Australia that they labour to support.

The big cities are the key drivers of Australia's economic wealth and justify proper attention and resourcing. Our attention is too often directed to the perceived deficiencies of regional Australia, sometimes to the actual detriment of our cities. For example, the vast majority of information-poor young Australians live in Sydney and Melbourne, consistent with the general distribution of the Australian population. In May 2001, an enquiry into young people's access to IT in Australia found that, while information poverty was more prevalent in big cities, the government was disproportionately targeting skills-training to rural young people. The main Commonwealth funding scheme, *Networking the Nation*, is exclusively f

*continued on page 10*

## MARCH LUNCH-HOUR TALK

**SPEAKERS: AUDREY MARSHALL & MARGARET McDONALD**

*“The Many-Sided Triangle: Adoption in Australia”*

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*Audrey Marshall and Margaret McDonald on 21 March, gave an extremely interesting and informative talk to an appreciative audience, many of whom were part of the adoption triangle the authors have written about.*

*[Margaret introduced the talk]*

While there are three major sides to the adoption triangle — those of adoptee, birthparents and adoptive parents — others, such as grandparents, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, all have their lives affected by an adoption. We have tried in the book to describe the way in which law and practice have developed to address these multiple interests. Here are three brief examples of the way in which adoption practice interacts with the law.

- The first concerns the child’s right to know of its adoption. Until 1977 it was felt that adoptive parents had the right to make this decision. In a legal case in the NSW Supreme Court the Judge decided that the person assessing a case for adoption has to be satisfied that the applicants intend to tell, and when a child is placed, the parents must sign an undertaking to that effect.
- A legal case in 1980 overturned the assumption that an adoption necessarily involved the total severance of past relationships. Now it is generally accepted that possible relationships of value to the child should be preserved. The possibility of ongoing contact at some level between the birth family and the adoptive family is now the rule rather than the exception.
- Another important case was the 1983 judgement which supported the right of the father to gain custody of his ex-nuptial child against the mother’s wish that the child be adopted. For the adoption of an ex-nuptial child the consent of both parents is now required.

These three cases are true milestones in the changing understanding of adoption and of changed social attitudes to issues such as ex-nuptial birth. The law can become an instrument to be used responsibly, not a rigid structure confining practice.

*[Audrey now took over to speak about ‘The Mothers’]*

I want to mention three factors which are relevant to the background to the chapter on ‘The Mothers’.

The first point is how profoundly society’s attitudes can influence how mothers regard their infants. The book *Single Mothers and Their Children* makes the startling observation that at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, ‘[the] moral code ... saw infanticide as a lesser crime than bearing a child out of wedlock.’ In Australia, some mothers farmed their child out to a person willing to undertake its care for a fee. There were widespread abuses, with mothers virtually abandoning their children and even cases of baby farmers murdering their charges.

The second factor is that, in the period 1958-1975, the majority of unwed mothers kept their babies. Those who did so had the support of their families. From 1959-1976, data from a major Sydney obstetric hospital show that 40% of unwed mothers kept their babies. They fell into four groups:

- Aboriginal women from La Perouse (an Aboriginal settlement in Sydney) who took their babies back with them into the family
- women in stable relationships who had the support and protection of a partner
- young teenage mothers from the Parramatta Training School (a correctional institution)
- mothers whose working-class families accepted the baby into the family.

The third factor is the neglect of the needs of the surrendering mothers. It was generally held that, once the young woman had time to recover, she would get over the adoption and put the incident behind her — a particularly shallow response to what was a major trauma for the young women. As women began to tell their stories in more recent years it is clear that, far from getting over it, many women have continued to grieve for many years. Mothers who relinquished their children were, predominantly, the unmarried 15-19 year olds, then the 20 - 24 year-olds. Many young women fell pregnant in these days of strict social taboos about sex outside marriage. No sex education and a conspiracy of silence. No easily available contraception and great public shame if you ‘got into trouble’.

With women are now writing their own stories, mothers tell of the cruel practice of having a sheet or pillow placed over their face during the birth to prevent them seeing the child. Others mothers claim they were drugged or over-medicated and their consent to adoption was not given freely. However, in some hospitals, professionals were encouraged to see these young women as needing support and assistance in resuming their normal lives, whether or not they decided to surrender their babies. Some women claim they had so little choice and were given so little help that their children were virtually stolen from them. Others acknowledge it was the only decision they could responsibly make at the time. Others express gratitude to adoptive parents for offering what was hoped would be a loving and stable home for the child.

In the early 70s, the change in social attitudes towards ex-nuptial pregnancy led to a dramatic decline in the number of babies for adoption. The chances now are that young women thinking of adoption may well encounter an anti-adoption attitude among workers. Adoption itself is now being challenged, with individuals and groups pressing for it to be done away with altogether.

*Margaret talked on ‘Reunions’ and read excerpts from the book to illustrate the points she was making. She said:*

The idea that a clean break in adoption best served the needs of all parties, is contradicted in the story of a woman whose birth father finally met her, after searching for many years. Her birth mother was dead, but he introduced her to her mother’s sisters and she said that, in knowing her other family, her life had changed forever. In contrast, Margaret told the story of a man who, meeting his birth mother, found it hard to forgive her for not being all he had hoped.

*continued on page 10*

*To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful – Ursula Le Guin*

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## BOOK REVIEW

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### *NO PLACE FOR A WOMAN*

#### *The Autobiography of Outback Publican, Mayse Young*

Mayse Young, with Gabrielle Dalton

Sun Edition by Pan Macmillan, Melbourne, 1998, 176 pp

Reviewed by Jane Pollard

Two years ago my husband and I travelled the outback for six months. Crossing the Barkly Tableland from Mt. Isa, Queensland, to Katherine in the Northern Territory took three leisurely days. We towed our caravan on a sealed road in airconditioned comfort. In 1927, Mayse Young and her family— seven people, food, fuel, dog, chooks and pet cockatoo — took three weeks to cover that distance. There was no road, just a dusty stock route punctuated by windmills indicating bores.

Mayse was born in north Queensland in 1913 and in 1991, when this book was first published, was still actively engaged with family and business concerns in the Northern Territory. The years between are filled to the brim with stories of pioneering adventures, of hardships endured with good humour and resilience, of tragedy overcome, and the slow flowering of better times bringing comfort and prosperity. Not since I read Mary Durack's *Kings in Grass Castles* have I been so drawn into a story of northern Australia's history and development.

Mayse's father was a railway worker and that meant constantly moving to a new construction area. The family lived in a couple of canvas tents and Mayse's mother cooked, and washed the clothes, on an open fire. When the railway work ended in Mt. Isa in 1927 and the father decided to try his luck in the Northern Territory, an old Ford truck and Dodge car replaced the wagon and horses.

Although Mayse's formal schooling was always haphazard and finally ended when she was twelve, she kept a diary and from age thirteen sent stories, letters and poetry to a weekly newspaper, the *North Queensland Register*. Her ability to observe and record is very evident in this work, especially her love of the bush. Describing the magnificent Tully Falls in the rainforest of northern Queensland, she writes of 'ginger and wild plums...running streams and the damp and musty smell of bracken'. She has a lively turn of phrase too. Of her mother learning to drive the Dodge: 'A snake would have broken its back

following the wheel tracks'; and being angry with her sister she 'could have cut her legs off at the shoulders'.

In 1929, the family took eight months holiday, travelling down through the Centre then across to Western Australia. They dug themselves out of countless bogs, floundered over sandhills while trying to follow the overland telegraph line, saw Aboriginal shepherds on camels, read the history of the pioneers on many a lonely grave. At Broome, in August, Mayse recorded: 'Today we passed a trooper with a string of Aboriginal prisoners, chained together, working on the road. It turned my stomach to think this sort of thing still happens.'

Back in Katherine the parents bought the only the pub at Pine Creek, a gold-mining town past its boom days, and the family's itinerant lifestyle came to an end. Their mother had a stove to cook on, the family slept in real beds, and Mayse was able to make permanent friends and feel part of a community. Over the following sixty years the family's involvement in hotels increased to include Darwin and Katherine. The youngest of Mayse's seven children, Susanne, still owns the Pine Creek Hotel that Mayse inherited from her mother.

Outback pubs are more than just places to get a beer. They are social centres for the community and scattered station workers, tourist and local information centres, job exchanges, hostels, counselling centres, and more. A colourful cast of characters fills the story through these years. There were stockmen drinking their wages through the idle months of The Wet; lonely nurses and teachers wanting a chat with Mayse and her mother; miners in from their bush camps for a bit of company and fresh stores; buffalo shooters en route to Arnhem Land.

In 1933 Mayse married Joe Young, a miner, and for a time lived very much as her mother had done, camping in the bush in an iron hut until pregnancy and the impending Wet sent her south, by boat, to Melbourne to have her first baby.

In 1941 the threat of Japanese attack forced the family's evacuation to Adelaide. On their return in 1945 they found the Pine Creek Hotel ruined and their Darwin home destroyed. In 1974 they were refugees again after Cyclone Tracy wrecked Darwin. Such setbacks appeared to strengthen their spirits rather than daunt them.

Gabrielle Dalton encouraged Mayse Young to write her story, and for this the reader must be most grateful. This book should be required reading for Higher School Certificate history students; it deserves that wider audience.

*No Place for a Woman* was donated by Pan Macmillan



### NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to our new members

Fiona Archer  
Katie Bird  
Fay Crampton  
Claire Eden  
Everald Garner  
Barbara Lawson  
Valerie Muir  
Cath O'Shannassy  
Beverley Pavey  
Marianne Rajkovic  
Gabrielle Ritchie  
Margaret Stapleton  
Heather Stevens  
Grace Vlach  
Joanne Windeyer  
Anne Wright

And a special welcome to **Strathfield Girls High School SRC**. Between them, members of the SRC raised a \$100 and joined as an organisational member. We are thrilled by this demonstration of support for JSNWL's aims and objectives.



## MONETARY DONATIONS

We are very grateful to the following members for their generous donations.

Patricia Bellamy  
Joan Bielski  
Ruth Callaghan  
Marie Cavanagh  
Anne Conway  
Joyce Dodds  
Una Gault  
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Barbara Klavikovsky  
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Jan Roberts  
Diana Temple  
Helen Tuckey  
Gill Watson  
Rosalind Wallis  
Maureen Ward  
Valwyn Wishart  
Margaret Whitlam  
Women's Action and Information  
Group, Lane Cove

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2002

The AGM was held on 2 March in the Sydney Mechanics' School of the Arts in Pitt Street, Sydney. Several members of the Board breakfasted beforehand with two prospective Board members. The one amendment to the constitution, extending the period a member of the executive could serve from three years to five years, was passed without discussion. There being only 12 nominations for the 13 positions, all nominees were duly declared elected.

### Incoming Board Executive

Chair — Victoria Rubensohn  
Vice Chair — Jane Waddell  
Secretary — Christine Lees  
Treasurer — Sybil Jack

### Board Members

Suzanne Davies (Vic)  
Virginia Gordon  
Shirley Jones  
Beverley Perel (Qld)  
Marianne Rajkovic  
Cathy Sanderson  
Sandra Sherwood (Vic)  
Penny Street

## Welcome to Our New Secretary and Treasurer

We welcome on board **Christine Lees**, who joined us in January and was elected to the position of Secretary at the AGM. Christine has been involved in Adult Education and in helping migrants learn English. She was Sydney Regional Co-ordinator of Language and Literacy programs in Adult and Community Education. For a number of years she has been president of the committee for the Lilian Fraser Garden in Pennant Hills. Christine brings to the position of Secretary motivation and a high degree of organisational skill.

**Robyn Harriott** joined the Board as Treasurer in May, replacing Sybil Jack who has had to go overseas for several months. Robyn has a long background in all aspects of accounting and computer accounting programs, and runs her own small company. She has always been involved in volunteer work, received an enthusiastic welcome from the JSNWL team and is finding her work with the Library very rewarding.

## Notes and Requests from Members

### From Margaret Knowlden

I was interested to read of Valwyn Wishart's *Adventurous Spirits and Roving Natures* and it stirred many memories. As an ex-pat East African (from Uganda) living in London during 1951-52, I was introduced by a South African friend to the Dominion Fellowship Trust (DFT). This was a meeting place for young visitors from the dominions and colonies at the back of Sloane Square in London. It was run by a kindly lady called Eileen, who became a substitute mum for many homesick people from the antipodes. With her band of volunteer helpers, Eileen provided a drop-in centre with tea and cakes every afternoon. At weekends there were socials where free supper was available (bliss in those days of rationing) and in very congenial company, we played ping pong or sedately danced the foxtrot or quickstep to pre-pop music. Another bonus was free tickets to the Albert Hall, often to the Royal Box! The free heating too was heaven after shilling-in-the-slot meters in digs. I met many Australians,

New Zealanders and South Africans, made friends and my social life soared. I wonder if anyone else remembers the DFT or knows the history of the Trust and whether it exists today.

*Margaret Knowlden (nee Boase)*  
Ph: (02) 9449 7275

### From Robyn Hanstock

For my honours thesis for the University of Sydney on Private Venture Girls' Schools in the Blue Mountains of NSW I would appreciate information on the following schools, all of which had closed by about mid-twentieth century, the last being Stratford in 1961:

- Branksome Church of England School for Girls, Leura
- Osborne Ladies' College, Blackheath
- Springwood Ladies' College, (principals were Madame and Mademoiselle Durand)
- Stratford Church of England School for Girls, Lawson.

*Robyn Hanstock* Ph: (02) 9623 5989  
Email: rhan2570@mail.usyd.edu.au



Utilising fashion — the bustle may be indefinitely extended as the family increases.

From Catherine Helen Spence's book *A Week in the Future— 1888-1988*. This is an early feminist science fiction novel, originally serialised in *The Centennial Magazine* in 1888-89. In the book Emily Bethel is supernaturally transported from Adelaide of 1888 to London of 1988. The author's forecasts of the future make fascinating reading.

## TEN-YEAR MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATES

Congratulations to the following people who will soon be receiving certificates for attaining ten years' continuous membership of Jessie Street National Women's Library. These members have paid subscriptions regularly from 1992 to 2002.

Nancye Armour  
Margaret Bettison  
Anne Conway  
Hilda Fairley  
Julie Harris  
Wendy Kerr  
Ellen Lintjens  
Leila Loveday  
Sheila McClellan  
Hilary McPhee  
Verna Morgan  
Rosa Needham  
Zula Nittim  
Ros Pesman  
Gretchen Poiner  
Zorica Rapaich  
Michele Sacco  
Betty Searle

Marie Tulip  
Rosalind Wallis  
Joan Webb  
Suzanne Wynyard



Cartoon from *Australia's Constitution: Time to Update*  
September 1987

### NOTES & QUOTES

Of course I can sell — anyone who's persuaded a two-year-old to eat spinach can make a sale.

*Sandra Yates*

### ADVERTISE THROUGH THE NEWSLETTER

Send your advertisements in writing to our GPO address or email or fax them.

Or you can discuss your requirements with the editor by phoning her on (02) 9876 3927.

#### Space Charges

Members/friends: 6 x 3 cm = \$15  
6 x 4 cm = \$20 6 x 5 cm \$25.

Special rates for corporate advertising

## DONATIONS OF MATERIAL

We thank the following people, organisations and publishing companies for donating material to the Library.

Margaret Bettison  
Deborah Brennan  
Lenore Coltheart  
Una Ellis  
Hon Elizabeth Evatt  
Kathleen Hector  
Mary Hutchison  
Shirley Jones  
Brenda Lewis  
Mary Mina Mathews  
Robyn Mathison  
Jane Pollard  
Michael and Jean Michaelides  
Monique Reiher  
Pat Richardson  
Alison Storey  
Joyce Thurgood  
Barbara West

Domestic Violence Resource Centre  
University of Sydney Women's Group

Blubber Head Press  
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Fremantle Arts Centre Press  
Finch Publishing  
Magabala Books  
Mulini Press  
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Random House  
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Individually tailored investment advice, discrete service and direct access to the knowledge and experience of a global investment bank and securities house has earned us the confidence of the world's wealthiest people. Has your investment adviser earned yours? Contact the world's foremost manager of private wealth on 1300 888 888. Membership is limited to private investors with more than \$500,000 to invest. **Invest In Confidence.**

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Private Clients

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## OUR ARCHIVIST VISITS OVERSEAS WOMEN'S LIBRARIES

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*Beverley Sodbinow, who recently visited women's libraries overseas, writes:*

During my four week's annual leave, I visited the Women's Library in London and the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement (IIAV) in Amsterdam. The Women's Library (previously the Millicent Fawcett Library) has recently moved from basement premises at the London Guildhall University to the site of the Whitechapel Wash Houses. The new library is a functional, custom-built five-storey building, made possible through a grant of £4.2 million from the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund. The library contains over 60,000 books, 2500 pamphlets and three special collections of published material, some of which dates back to pre-1850. You can see most of the library's collection of published material on Millennium, the university's on-line catalogue. The archives consist of over 400 collections, listed on the library's website, as well as a diverse range of photographs, prints, textiles, paintings and other items, which mirror the concerns of women over the past 100 years.

I saw an exhibition entitled 'Cooks & Campaigners' which gives a good overview of the collection. The exhibition space is 'to die for', large and airy, with wonderful lighting. The Library's crown jewel, its suffrage collection, was on display along with other categories such as work, health, fashion and lifestyle, cookery and travel. The exhibition highlighted what has changed and what has remained the same in women's lives. There was an amazing collection of banners, designed to be objects of beauty, and also to be the right weight to carry in parades. Posters, magazines and other campaigning paraphernalia showed many aspects of women's lives in Britain and the causes they espoused. To say the library overwhelmed me with this wonderful exhibition is an understatement.

In Amsterdam, I spent a morning with Annette Mevis, the head archivist at the IIAV. She made me most welcome and gave me the grand tour of the library and archives. The library, established in 1935, is fully funded by the Dutch government and employs 20 people. A former church has been converted into a wonderful space to hold the collection. Annette told me that the current focus of the collection policy is on contemporary theories on women's studies and information concerning refugee women, migrant women and black women. Australia is well represented in the collection. Annette showed me a letter in the archives from Bessie Rischbieth when she was a government-appointed delegate to the League of Nations in 1935. Those who attended Professor Jill Roe's lunch-hour talk in June last year, will know quite a bit about Bessie and her relationship with Jessie Street. There is no photograph of Jessie in the IIAV, but I have sent Annette a copy of Heather Radi's short biography. I came back to JSNWL green with envy, but inspired. I am so proud of our Library which, although small, is thoroughly professional and has enormous potential.

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### DID YOU KNOW

that Oriel Gray won first prize in the 1955 Playwrights' Advisory Board competition for her play *The Torrents*? Ray Lawler's *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* shared equal first prize. Lawler's play was an enormous success both here and in the UK and he was hailed as 'the saviour of the Australian theatre'. Gray, on the other hand, has disappeared from histories of Australian theatre.

'Why has Oriel Gray been sidelined? Why was her prize-winning play marginalised, then erased from our popular culture?' asks an article in *Good Weekend* in December 1995. 'Is it because *The Torrents* is as radical in its

acceptance of female independence and employment in a male domain as *The Doll* is conservative in its nostalgia for youthful national virility and bush masculinity?'

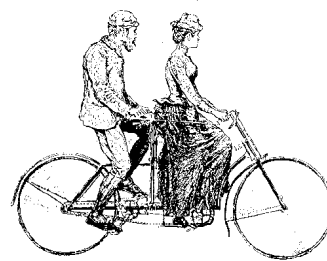
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*Deirdre Mason's talk - ctd from page 5*

for projects in rural, regional and remote areas.

Politicians must pay attention to the sustainability of Australia's big cities; neglect is neither benign nor an effective substitute for leadership and good government. The size and infrastructure requirements that will assure our big cities a continued quality of life must be planned for now.

*Summary by Shirley Jones*



*Adoption talk - ctd from page 6*

An American adoption authority, herself adopted, states that 'any reunion that happens is a success.' However the initial contact may lead into a period of almost obsessional emotional engagement between parent and child. It may, on the other hand, be a one-off meeting reluctantly agreed to by the person who has been found. One of the stories in the book is of a mother who agrees to a meeting with her daughter on just this basis. In the meeting, which lasts several hours, the daughter gets answers to many of the questions that have been troubling her, but not the promise of the ongoing relationship she had hoped for.

Reunions are almost always a threatening experience for the adoptive parents. They are relegated (if only temporarily) to the sidelines and feel helpless to protect the child from possible rejection.

One of the questions that most concerned those advising on changes to the law was the harm that could result for adult adoptees learning from a reunion request of their adoption. Some feel shocked and betrayed. Others, although welcoming a reunion, may take years to come to terms with their adoption.

The majority of those who experience reunion felt the best thing about it was the gaining of knowledge about themselves and their family background. The last word however must be given to the birthmother who, speaking of the reunion with her 17-year old son recognises that 'what I wanted was the baby I gave for adoption and this I can never have! I also knew that what you give away you can never have back.' The possibility of reunion, and the experience for most of those who seek it, humanises the institution of adoption. It cannot however disguise the truth that loss for all the parties is an intrinsic part of adoption.

*Summary by Shirley Jones*

