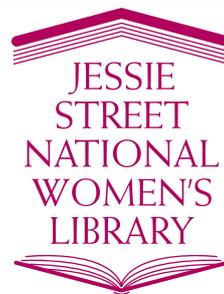


NEWSLETTER

To keep women's words. women's works, alive and powerful —Ursula LeGuin



LARISSA BEHRENDT: LUNCHEON SPEAKER 2012

Always mindful of Ursula Le Guin's stirring aphorism, *We are delighted* Professor Larissa Behrendt – novelist, activist, academic – will address Jessie Street National Women's Library Annual Luncheon on 17 September, her topic: *Strong Women; Strong Communities: Empowering Indigenous Women to Overcome Disadvantage*. Professor Behrendt believes that to overcome disadvantage in Aboriginal communities it is vital to empower Aboriginal women and that this is not just a feminist ideal: research backs this up. She will discuss findings from recent research in New South Wales Indigenous communities which points to the central role Indigenous women play in addressing disadvantage and social problems.

Her own upbringing seems to support this approach too. Her Aboriginal grandmother Lavinia Boney in western NSW married to German editor, Henry Behrendt, bore Larissa's father Paul in Lithgow in 1939 and eight other children. Lavinia died giving birth to the last child after which the surviving children grew up in a Sydney orphanage, Burnside Homes. For Paul this was a childhood in which, typically, the issue of Aboriginality was not addressed. Aged fifteen, Paul joined the Navy, training as an air traffic controller, and meeting and marrying Raema, a white woman from Fremantle, Western Australia in 1963. They left the Navy, and with two young children (Larissa born 1969, Jason 18 months later) spent five years on Norfolk Island where Paul controlled the airport, then moved to Gymea in southern Sydney. With the stress of his job and long-term Aboriginal identity issues welling up, Paul suffered a series of heart attacks; subsequently, supported by Raema he travelled about western NSW to find his Aboriginal family, and separated from Raema during his children's schooling in nearby Kirrawee High.

Larissa, speaking in 2010 to Malcolm Knox, *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist, said she herself was fortunate that her mother Raema 'allowed us never to feel embarrassed about our Aboriginality'. Raema supported their participation in Aboriginal meetings, rallies etc. While Larissa and Jason were doing Law at the University of New South Wales, their mother fostered family celebration with Paul, notwithstanding that their father, inaugural director of UNSW's indigenous education centre, was involved with Aboriginal activists and academics, especially his then partner, the feisty Roberta Sykes. Larissa as a young Aboriginal woman matured into a proud member of her grandmother Lavinia's Eualeyai/Kamillaroi nations of northwest New South Wales.



She finished Law in 1992, already writing on law reform issues. On scholarship at Harvard Law School from 1993, she completed a masters and then a doctorate on how Aboriginal ideas of sovereignty and British law differ, work published in 2003 as *Achieving Social Justice (Aboriginal Dispute Resolution had appeared in 1995)*. Since 1998 she has been a member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Studies and on the AIATSIS Research Advisory Council, and from 2000, Professor of Law at the University of Technology Sydney and Director of UTS' Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning. She is a Board member of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Bangarra Dance Theatre Chair, a (federal) Land and Environment Court Land Commissioner, and NSW Serious Offenders Review Board Alternate Chair. She was 2009 Indigenous Person and 2011 NSW Australian of the year.

She is also an established novelist. As she told Malcolm Knox in 2010, she had 'been writing fiction since high school. It was always the outlet for the things I couldn't say in my other work.' *Home* (2004) in manuscript won the national 2002 David Unaipon Award for Indigenous Writers and then in 2005 the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book (South-East Asia/Pacific Region). *Home*, semi-autobiographical, covers three generations of Lavinia's family, drawing on Eualeyai stories Larissa knew, perhaps from her father. Melbourne Age journalist Claire Scobie reports Larissa said *Home* was inspired by the Howard government's 'callous indifference' to the 1997 Bringing Them Home report. The SMH commented, 'This novel's greatest strength is its insight into the pain and inherited shame of being Aboriginal in a racist society.' *Legacy* (2009) is also semi-autobiographical, with main character Simone an Aboriginal lawyer straddling two lives and two cultures while studying at Harvard. Simone's complex family life back in Sydney is defined by her relationship with father Tony, a prominent Aboriginal activist. Simone juggles the challenges of a modern woman's life, as her father confronts uncomfortable truths and his secret double life implodes. *Legacy* won the 2010 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Indigenous Writing.

Our Annual Luncheon 2012 promises to be both stimulating and rewarding.

**Annual Luncheon at Parliament House Sydney
Monday 17 September 2012
See enclosed Booking Form**

Contents

- 1 Larissa Behrendt: Luncheon Speaker 2012
- 2 Annual General Meeting 2012
- 3 Film shoot at the Library
Posters a hit in Newcastle
Sydney Lunch Hour Talks program
- 4 Posters under the microscope
- 5 Recently received
Accessing *The Dawn*
- 6 Lunch Hour Talk - Margaret Renaud
- 7 Lunch Hour Talk - Heather Saville
- 8 Book Review: *Waiting Room*
- 9 ABC women reflect
- 10 Farewell Margaret Whitlam
- 11 Capital Investment Fund; Donations

Jessie Street National Women's Library

Australia's National Women's Library is a specialist library, its focus being the collection and preservation of the literary and cultural heritage of women from all ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Aims

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

Patrons

Elizabeth Evatt AC: Sir Laurence Street AC KCMG;
Dr Evelyn Scott AO; Clover Moore MP Lord Mayor of Sydney



Back Row (L to R) Robyn Harriott, Christine Lees, Beverley Sodbinow, Marie Muir, Diane Hague, Michele Ginswick.
Front Row (L to R) Jean Burns, Jozefa Sobski, Jan Burnswoods

Board of Management

Jozefa Sobski	Chair
Michele Ginswick	Vice Chair
Jan Burnswoods	Secretary/Public Officer
Jean Burns	Treasurer

Board Members

Diane Hague, Robyn Harriott, Beverley Kingston, Christine Lees, Marie Muir, Katharine Stevenson, Beverley Sodbinow

Editorial Team

Kris Clarke and Margot Simington, Co-editors
Katharine Stevenson, graphic design advice



Morning tea after the AGM:

Christine Smith, Beverley Sodbinow, Jan Burnswoods, Diane Hague

Annual General Meeting 2012

The Library's Annual General Meeting, Saturday 21 April, began absolutely on time, 10.30am, and proved a model of efficient meeting management. Chair Marie Muir opened the meeting and led us through her report. Then the Library and audited Treasurer reports were presented. The meeting noted that the organisation is in a healthy financial position with the Capital Investment Fund still growing though at a much lower rate than when first launched, and that income from Lunch Hour Talks, nearly \$600 from the most recent one, is a regular and useful income stream. The Chair made special mention of the new level of expertise represented by the work of Katharine Stevenson and Diane Hague in translating design to publicity materials and the professionalism of the redesigned *Newsletter*, and thanked the Auditor.

The Returning Officer conducted the election of the new Board. No positions were contested; results are set out in the column adjacent. The incoming Chair, Jozefa Sobski, thanked the former Board, and farewelled members who had retired from the Board - Chris Burvill, Judy King, and Sybil Jack who deserves an accolade for her many years on the Board and valuable contribution. Jozefa affirmed she herself was very happy to be back in the Chair. The meeting was followed by morning tea and lots of conversation.



Under Jessie's watchful eye: Barbara Henery, Michele Ginswick, Marie de Lepervanche, Lyn Eggins



Rehearsing the Library film shoot. Above: Bronwyn Thorncraft and students. Left: Marie Muir (right) and students

Film shoot at the Library

Board members and supporters have for a long time been keen to advertise JSNWL more widely with film – a daunting aim as the Library’s funds do not permit the hiring of a professional film maker. Armed with a rough script, Jozefa Sobski, then Board Member, approached Bronwyn Thorncraft, amateur filmmaker and retired Special Education teacher, with a volunteer job offer! The aim was the making of a fun and exciting advertisement to publicise the Library, its collections and facilities.

The video focuses on the availability of JSNWL to young students, a demographic which would hugely benefit from the extensive range of feminist and women’s literature in the collection and a quiet place to research it.

One hot Saturday, Marie Muir, then Chair, Bronwyn and I arrived at the Library to start an intensive three hour filming session for the advertisement. We had a fantastic show of faces hailing from the University of Sydney, University of Technology, Sydney and Year 12 Riverside Girls High School students. All arrived fresh-faced and willing to be an enthusiastic part of the project. Interspersed with footage of volunteers, the editing has reached its final stage and the finished product will be a celebration of women’s achievements, of the Library and of Jessie herself. The aim is not only to paint the Library with youthful exuberance, but to educate and inform a broad audience on the achievements, struggles and strength of women united in Jessie’s time and now.

Julia Readett, University of Sydney Women’s Collective

Posters a hit in Newcastle

A diverse group of booklovers attended a talk in Newcastle NSW in March given by Jan Burnswoods, Secretary/Public Officer. Jan spoke mainly about the Library’s Archives collections. The audience was particularly interested in posters dating from the Pine Gap Women’s Camp November 1983 near the US/Australian ground control station southwest of Alice Springs, Northern Territory, where some 800 Australian women led by Indigenous women joined in anti-nuclear protest. One woman attending the talk had been involved in creating Pine Gap banners JSNWL displayed at Parliament House NSW in 2009 (the Rembering Pine Gap exhibition).

A novel item held in JSNWL Archives which aroused great interest was a menstrual calendar covering the decade 1980-1990: the donor had made entries for each day, documenting ‘headache’, ‘depression’ etc.

The occasion was organised by Jude Conway, long a friend of the Library, which holds the papers of her mother Josie Conway (described in 2001 as ‘the driving force behind the women’s movement in Newcastle, the feminist face of the city’) and also posters, including several Newcastle NSW International Women’s Day posters. Jude will be Lunch Hour Talk speaker in August, talking about her book *Step by Step: Women of East Timor, Stories of Resistance and Survival* (2010). See more detail below.

SYDNEY LUNCH HOUR TALKS – third Thursday of the month

17 May: Rosemary Arnold
First females above Australia
 Rosemary, Australia’s first woman helicopter pilot, flew a Hughes 500 across the US in 1969, founded the Helicopter Association Australia in 1977, and lectured at university level in aviation history. Her book of 100 short biographies salutes 100 years of Australia’s female flying firsts.

21 June: Ronni Kahn
From business entrepreneur to social entrepreneur
 In 2004 Ronni Kahn founded OzHarvest, which collects and delivers surplus food to charities. She began by driving leftover food to a hostel rather than letting it go to waste. She is championed as Australia’s Local Hero in the Australian of the Year Awards in 2010.

19 July: Fran Bodkin
The six seasons of Sydney and other climate cycles
 Fran, a Bidjigal woman of the Dharawal people, discusses the seasons and how climate affects us: the Dharawal people’s six yearly seasons; the Mudong Cycle of drought and flood; the Garuwanga Cycle, where extremes are indicated by the height of the sea level.

16 August: Jude Conway
Brave Women of East Timor
 Not much is known about Timor-Leste women. Jude, who worked there before, during the 1999 independence referendum and afterwards helping establish the new nation, published thirteen women’s oral histories, in *Step by Step* (2010). She raises money for Timorese girls and women’s education.

Venue/Time: 12.00-1.30pm. Southern Function Room, 4th Floor, Town Hall House, 456 Kent St Sydney.

Cost: \$16 (members) \$22 (non-members) including light lunch. Pay at the door. **Book by noon Monday before the talk.** Ph (02) 9571 5359

Posters under the microscope

In its collection, the Library is privileged to hold almost 2,000 political posters from the women's movement in Australia over the last 40 years or more. This collection is unique and has been described as a national treasure. The posters in JSNWL's collection document in striking visual form the myriad campaigns fought by feminists for justice and equity in Australia: access to childcare, protection from violence, free and safe abortion, non-sexist education, pay equity, social justice for minority groups, affordable housing, and many more. Since producing their posters, many of the artists in our collection have made a name for themselves in the arts – as photographers, print makers, book illustrators, gallery directors, textile artists and academics in fine arts.

The Library is keen to make better use of its poster collection by including the posters in exhibitions, in publications on the history of the women's movement, and on the website. We have approached the poster artists whose names appear on their work to seek copyright licence agreements. The bulk of our collection is made up of 'orphan works' ie works with no identifying features of either the artist or the printer. One artist who granted the Library permission to use her work, Marie McMahon, has provided fascinating background to the creation of her poster, 'You are on Aboriginal land':

The first version of the screen print was a limited edition of 30 copies, hand printed by the artist in 1981 at Redback Graphix, Wollongong NSW. It carried the text, 'PAY THE RENT - YOU ARE ON ABORIGINAL LAND', a slogan borrowed from a bumper sticker seen by the artist while in Townsville, North Queensland. It had oblique black lines over yellow and red vertical stripes on both sides of the pictorial image. The 2nd edition of 'PAY THE RENT' was 150 copies, hand printed by the artist in 1982 at Tin Sheds (Art Workshop, University of Sydney).

The 3rd edition was a commercial run of 1,000 copies, printed in 1984 at Snap Ads, a commercial screen printing business in Sydney. This 3rd edition carried a banner, 'You are on Aboriginal Land' and a line 'Poster production in support of Mimi Aboriginal Arts and Crafts, Katherine NT.' Later editions of approximately 1,000 copies each were printed and distributed by Redback Graphix in Annandale, Sydney. The 4th edition 1987 and 5th edition 1988 both bear a Redback Graphix logo and an artist credit. The words 'Pay the Rent' were deleted from the 3rd edition because my impression was that the slogan didn't mean much to the people I'd had in mind when I created the work. The first two editions could be best described as artist's prints with words, whereas the 3rd edition has been shaped into the more conventional form of a political poster. The people I'd had in mind still spoke their own language. Some spoke 'creole' and some spoke English but there were still many among them who spoke only their tribal language. The slogan didn't reflect their world view while the statement, 'You are on Aboriginal land', was a matter of fact.

The figure of a woman was taken from a black and white photograph of a group of Tiwi on a beach at Cape Fourcroy, on the southwest coast of Bathurst Island (Tiwi Islands, north of Darwin NT). The photograph, by the artist, was taken on a camping trip in 1980. The woman standing with hand on hip was Phillipa Pupangamirri, the mother of Gordon Pupangamirri, who worked at



© Marie McMahon 1984

Tiwi Pima Art at Nguiu. The hunting party included, among others, Piparo (Winnie Munkara), Geraldine Tungatalum, Inez Kerinaia, John Baptist Pupangamirri, his wife Phillipa and their daughter, Annunciata.

'Tikilaru' is the name of the tribal country where the photograph was taken and where the idea for the poster was conceived. Piparo (Winnie Munkara) was a custodian of Tikilaru and lived with a group of men and women in a bush camp at Cape Fourcroy. The group lived a relatively traditional life, notwithstanding hunting rifles, tea, sugar, flour and vehicles, they hunted for bush tucker and conducted and performed ceremonies. During a bush trip in 1980 to Tikilaru, our party encountered a Toyota 4WD on a narrow bush track. In the 4WD were two businessmen from Darwin who had been driving through Tikilaru with a view to developing a tourist resort near a beach. Our vehicles came head to head on the narrow bush track and Winnie confronted the Darwin businessmen in theatrical Tiwi style, with dramatic stick waving and cracking on the ground and shouting, 'Tikilaru is not your country.'

That event remained in my mind as a demonstration of land ownership from an Aboriginal perspective. The experience of being on Aboriginal land, in Tikilaru country, also gave me a greater understanding of the significance of landscape, and of Australian landscape. There is a large lake at Mungatuwu at Cape Fourcroy that in 1980 was still avoided because it was a sacred site. Lake Mungatuwu is a resting place for Ampiji, the Rainbow Serpent. In a quintessentially Australian scene, the woman in the poster, based on the image of Phillipa and the memory of Piparo, stands on a beach, where land, sea and sky intersect. As another Tiwi, Valerian Munkara remarked, the poster image 'gives me memories, it reminds us of our mothers'.

Marie McMahon

Marie McMahon was born in Melbourne VIC in 1953 and grew up on air force bases in Darwin NT (Northern Territory), at Richmond near Sydney, and at HMAS Albatross, the naval base on the NSW South Coast. The family settled in Sydney, where she studied painting at the National Art School at East Sydney Technical College.

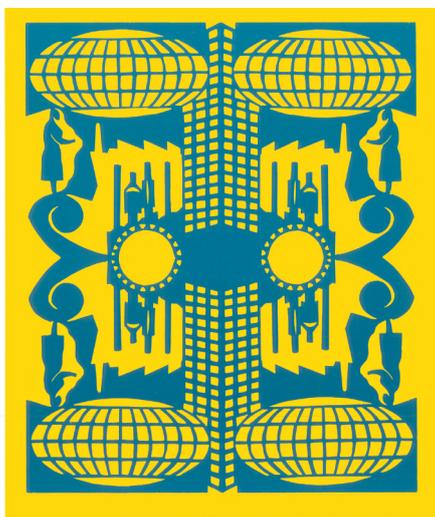
At the Tin Sheds art workshop at Sydney University, where alternative housing and permaculture existed alongside experimental film, post-objective art and propaganda, she joined Earthworks Poster Collective in 1976 and contributed to a catalogue of iconoclastic posters that were sometimes didactic and often provocative. Screen printers from the Tin Sheds had been recruited by the Aboriginal Arts Board to work at Tiwi Designs in NT and in 1980 she went to the Tiwi Islands and to Arnhem Land.

During the 1980s McMahon worked as a designer at Redback Graphix in Wollongong and Sydney on a number of collaborative and cross-cultural print projects, including the Australian Government's health promotions, 'Beat the Grog' and the 'Condoman' AIDS awareness campaign. From 1988 to 1996 she lived and worked in NT.

From 2000 to 2001 she lived at Gunbalanya, Arnhem Land, the home of X-ray bark painting and rock art. In the NT she found a familiarity and closeness to classical bark painting and sculpture through interaction with working artists on Aboriginal lands.

Marie McMahon has exhibited widely and her work is held in national and state public collections. She was approved in 1999 to value Aboriginal Australian art for the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program. In 2001 she was awarded a Master of Arts (Hons) by the University of Western Sydney. She lives and works in Sydney.

ANESBWA



This design depicts the working lives of migrant women in Australia © Marie McMahon 1994

UN World Conference on Women
Beijing 1995



Association of Non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia

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This poster was produced with financial assistance from the following organisations: printed by George Graphics (02) 835 2144
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Immigrant Women's Speeches Association of NSW (02) 637 1167

© Marie McMahon.

The poster prepared for
the UN World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995

Are you up to date?

Please check whether you have paid your membership for 2012 by referring to the address label of your *Newsletter*. If the year is before 2012 (sorry about the American date format) you will find a renewal form on the inside of the *Newsletter* back page for your convenience.

We do appreciate your support and look forward to sending you further copies of the *Newsletter* in the future.

Recently received

Works crossing my desk since early this year include:

- from Peter Griffin, of Wagga Wagga NSW, an (unpublished) copy entitled 'Some of My Memoirs', transcribed oral history tapes and diaries of his mother Doreen Griffin, a high school teacher born in 1902
- from Judith Clark of Erowal Bay NSW, three books: Jane Caro & Catherine Fox, *The F Word: how we learned to swear by feminism* (2008); B Pocock, *The Work Life Collision* (2003); Emily Maguire, *Princesses and Porn Stars* (2008)
- from Member Sue Comrie-Thomson, a second copy of Thea Astley, *Reaching Tin River* (1990)
- from former Burnside Homes resident Kate Shayler of Hazlebrook NSW, who, after her own story, *The Long Way Home* (2001) was published had been overwhelmed by the reponse from ex-Burnside people who want to tell their stories, a copy of *Burnished: Burnside Life Stories* (2011) which she had compiled
- from Monique Reiker of Berala NSW, an unpublished selection of poetry, parables, life recollections and stories by Dorothy Moffitt entitled, *Life As A Patchwork Quilt* (2007)

Barbara Henery, Acquisitions Team

Accessing The Dawn

Thanks to online technology, we now have greater access to women's voices of the past. A spirited campaign to raise money for digitisation of a pioneering journal was announced by Donna Benjamin in *Australian Feminist Studies* 31 May 2011. Donna, Executive Director of Creative Contingencies, an information services and technology company based in Melbourne VIC, and her friends and colleagues in the software industry raised over \$8000 to finance digitisation by the National Library of Australia of *The Dawn: A Journal for Australian Women* (Sydney) across its full date range, 1888 to 1905. The NLA used State Library of NSW records for this purpose, with the result that in March 2012 *The Dawn* was added to the NLA's TROVE collection of on-line newspapers.

A feminist journal, seen by some as the first in Australia and 'arguably the most famous', *The Dawn* had been published by Louisa Lawson assisted by an all-female workforce. Louisa's editorials focused on issues of concern to women, especially the campaign for women's suffrage, and related issues of women's entitlements to work and to fair pay. The journal included short stories (including by her famous son Henry), fashion notes, sewing patterns and reports on women's activities in Australia and overseas. The views presented differed markedly from those of its contemporary, the influential *Bulletin*. *The Dawn* ceased publication in 1905 shortly after Louisa's withdrawal from this publishing venture.

LEGAL REASONING IN THE MIDST OF EMOTION

A former Family Court judge, Margaret Renaud reflects on the practice of family law with wit, wisdom – and reference to Tolstoy.

My focus is family law. But first – an introduction. I'd always thought of becoming a barrister. By 1971, divorced with a three year old daughter in preschool, I needed an alternative to annual renewal of a philosophy tutorship. I took a Sydney University accelerated three year evening course, working fulltime at Macquarie University, and then for a year at the NSW Crown Solicitor's Office, as a legal clerk in industrial law. Lucky to get a Readership (and senior barrister as mentor) in Wentworth Chambers, Sydney, in 1974 I was admitted to the NSW Bar (comprising c.20 women, 600 men). I bought chambers in the same supportive area or 'floor', whose exceptional barristers included William Deane (later Sir). Work comprised my family law practice, State Crown briefs in industrial matters, and appearing for defendants in criminal trials. Appointed a Crown Prosecutor in early 1983, I was offered appointment to the Family Court Parramatta (Sydney) Registry late that same year. Overall, I'd been fortunate. Many women had difficulty obtaining chambers: Mary Gaudron, later Australia's first female High Court judge, found one floor sold only to men; Margaret Beazley, now a NSW Court of Appeal judge, was told the floor 'already had a woman'. Actually getting work was far more difficult than getting chambers: men usually exchanged briefs, excluding female floor members. This culture, now less visible (Women Barristers' Forum website), still hinders women: 60% of NSW law graduates are women, but only 46% of solicitors and 18% of barristers; only 5.8% of women barristers are senior counsel (SCs) against 19.4% men.

Some women avoided family law. Jane Mathews, first NSW female Supreme Court judge, Priscilla Flemming, first NSW female SC in private practice, and Mary Gaudron succeeded perhaps partly because they shone elsewhere. Typically, family law was seen as 'emotional', lacking intellectual rigour, 'social work' – not 'law'. Some male lawyers unable to handle the inherent emotion derided family law to disguise ineptitude. One male colleague told me women's brains unlike men's 'don't reason well', and 'for at least one week a month you're all totally irrational.' Certainly, marriage breakup can be traumatic – twice divorced myself, I know. Family lawyers often need to engage in a quite personal way with clients who frequently seek advice not strictly legal. With Mrs Edwards – late 50s, looking years older, dowdy brown dress, depressed, desperate to keep the family home of 35 years, we went through reasons why she'd be unlikely to get the house – then tea, tears, tissues. She said she might move near her sister on the coast; I said, 'Look, go and stay with your sister, see what you can buy for the top amount you could get from settlement. He'll probably agree, if you're losing the house. You could paint your own place the colour you want, have your own flower pots.' The case settled, Mrs Edwards – flowery dress, fluffy hair, full of her coast house, the pots of geraniums – hugged me saying, 'thank you so much, I hope I never see you again.' I treasure her gratitude.



When the 'no fault' *Family Law Act 1976* mandated a single ground for divorce – irretrievable breakdown of marriage – many men could not understand that desertion was no longer a 'fault': women could leave unhappy marriages. Men's support groups and others including churches often considered the Family Court administering the Act favoured women, leaving men with less property and limited access to children (albeit 1980s research showed the Court awarded child custody to 79% of fathers seeking it, while under parental agreement only c. 10% of men gained custody). Horrific incidents targeted the Parramatta Registry: in 1980 a judge shot; in 1984, a judge's wife killed and bombings of the Court and a judge's home. Someone told me, 'I understand why you people get bombed'. The media spewed criticism. Notably, Michael Kirby, then a Federal Court judge, publicly deplored the violence. Those of us privileged to work with the Hon Elizabeth Evatt AC, a JSNWL patron, remember her quiet strength and dignity as Chief Justice leading our fledgling Court through difficult times.

Legal amendment as social attitudes change usually leaves some people unhappy. The *De Facto Relationships Act 1984* protected women in de facto relationships whose partners owned the family home by recognising the contribution of homemakers, but created a problem for some de facto couples who did not marry; others felt their decision to marry devalued. The *Family Law Act* now provides that a lesbian couple's child conceived by sperm donation is a child of the couple, not the sperm donor; recently a mother, coupled with the birth mother at the time of the birth, obtained a District Court order to replace the father's name on the child's birth certificate with hers as second parent – devastating the father, and perhaps hindering access to paternal genetic data. Some people will be unhappy if the Act covers same-sex marriage.

Leo Tolstoy's famous first line of *Anna Karenina*, 'All happy families are alike but every unhappy family is unhappy

Continued on page 10

FRIENDS IN DEED: ARE WE HELPING THE PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP MOST?

Heather was born in Ireland and grew up in Kenya, Uganda and South Africa. She lived in Canada in the 1960s and five years later moved to Australia. She joined the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in 1975. Her aid and development work extended over the last 40 years in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Cambodia, and gave rise to her book Friends in Deed (2009). She lives in Coaldale, south of Sydney.

The idea for writing the book came from that dreaded experience called 'accreditation' for AusAID, required every five years to be eligible for Australian Federal Government funding. In 2006-7, as convenor of Quaker Service Australia's (QSA) management committee, I was helping the one paid staff member prepare our accreditation documentation. Since QSA would celebrate 50 years' work in 2009, we decided to commemorate it by putting together a history of the organisation, to educate the public about the work of QSA. We would have the advantage that many people who had been involved with the organisation were still alive. I completed the NSW State Library's oral history training course, and interviewed about 30 people involved with QSA over the years. This came to 530 pages! Much of this material became the stories in the book. The first chapter tells how QSA came into being, and how Quakers have worked in development aid. The last chapter is my attempt at a theory of development and in between are our stories.

QSA now has three major program areas - Cambodia, Tamil Nadu in India and Uganda - and these are the countries in which we've worked over the fifty years, in short term and long term programs. QSA has existed since 1959, for the first few years in conjunction with what was then our sister body in the UK. The British Quaker agency has worked for many years in India, and in 1967 QSA decided to send Pat Hewitt, a nurse, to a Friends Rural Training Centre in central India. She spent four and a half years there, and provided wonderful stories for the second chapter of the book.. One of the first things she had to do was learn Hindi. Together with an English doctor, Dorothy Rule, they were placed in a health centre serving a population of about 200,000. Pat says, 'It was strange when patients came. They had often never seen a white person and it obviously made them apprehensive. So when I'd say to them in Hindi, "What is the matter and how can I help you?" they'd say, "I don't understand English." Then I'd say, "Put your sari over your face and just listen." When I repeated what I'd said, they would understand!'

One of Pat's stories shows how important it is in Hindi to position the tongue correctly. A patient was brought in who had been gored by a bull and it was too late to stitch the wound, which stretched from the knee to the top of the thigh. I had her up on the table, talking about cleaning the wound, and those waiting outside the clinic were looking through the open grill. I was telling her that when she went home, she must change the bandage every day. Suddenly everyone roared with laughter. I had just told the woman that she must change her husband every day!

Another story Pat tells is when she and Dorothy were asked to check a suspected pregnancy in an elephant. In India elephants are working animals, and unlike women in India, there is maternity leave for elephants! So if the elephant was pregnant, they wanted to make sure she got suitable time off;



after all, Pat was a maternity nurse. They realised along the way that trying to do normal checks on an elephant might be a bit tricky! For some weeks the only way they could determine whether the elephant was pregnant was by observing if she was getting bigger, so they measured her!

Then there was the introduction of the Well Baby Clinic. A lot of Indian women were using breastfeeding as a form of contraception, which wasn't always successful and meant that frequently babies needed to be weaned abruptly when there was another one on the way. So they instituted a Well Baby Clinic to change the culture of the place; babies that were not sick could come and get help, from immunisation to education about baby food preparation.

In southern India QSA has worked for a long time with Pitchandikulam Bio Resource Centre in Tamil Nadu, near Chennai. The first thing we did was to provide funds for a windmill, to bring water to the surface for watering the seedlings in the traditional medicinal nursery followed by solar electricity panels. We work with our partners by providing funding for their staff to go into the villages as educators, and for the things that women's groups in the villages specifically ask for, such as women's toilets - much safer than having to go into the bush. QSA has worked with local schools and women's groups on projects such as poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability and ecological regeneration. The Nadukuppam Environmental Education Centre was built, using QSA funding, in the grounds of the town's high school. The pond (in the slide) with what looks like blue green algae is actually spirulina, which when dried becomes a high protein drink. In January this year there was a cyclone in that area, a local one lasting a day and a half. Our more recent collaborations - solar panels, a water filtration system, an attempt to use local facilities and materials to provide better water and electricity in the villages - were all wrecked in the cyclone.

Continued on page 9

BOOK REVIEW

Gabrielle Carey *Waiting Room – a memoir*

Scribe Publications, 2009

ISBN: 9871921372629

Gabrielle Carey (1959-) will forever be known as the co-author of *Puberty Blues*. Published in 1979 when she and Kathy Lette were teenagers, this book scandalised readers with its expose of the behaviour of 'surfie chicks' and their indulgence in sex and drugs. However, since those days Carey, who left school at 15, has earned an MA and has become a university lecturer, novelist, essayist, editor and biographer.

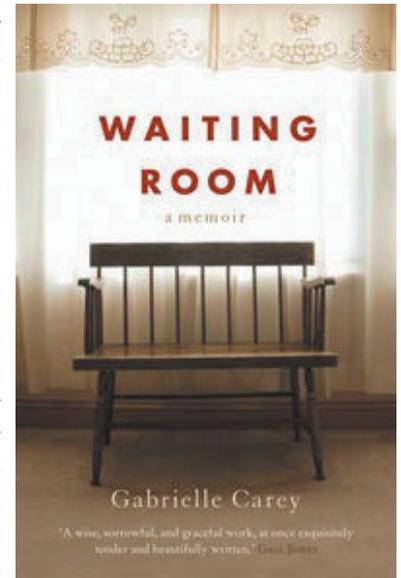
Waiting Room – a memoir, was published when Carey was 50. This has been described as 'A moving tribute to a mother's life...' (Debra Adelaide), but it is so much more than that. While it recounts Carey's response to her mother's illness and the belated attempt to know and understand her mother's life, this crisis also leads to self-examination and on to a fresh understanding of her own fifteen year old daughter, Brigid. The writing is deceptively spare and elegant, slowly working on the reader's emotions, especially any that identify with the duties involved in caring for an aged parent, or dealing with a sullen, uncooperative teenager.

The book's opening sentence immediately captures the tone: 'It all started with her bare feet. I'd never seen them like that before, from that angle, looking so vulnerable'. The mother, Joan, is about to undergo a brain scan that she believes is 'a wicked waste' of money as her brain is perfectly fine. But actually it is not fine and, at 80 years of age, she requires surgery to remove a large and growing benign tumour that has been causing memory loss and uncharacteristic behaviour. The vulnerability that Carey recognises from that glimpse of her mother's bare feet is at the heart of this book. As most of us do, Carey had always accepted her mother's version of herself, but now she begins to question that and seek the truth of her mother's life. In doing so she comes to a better understanding of her own life and her relationship with her children.

Joan Carey had been a nurse and in later years scheduled her week to include volunteering with 'every organisation that she thought might do some good' as that was how one earned their place in a civil society. She gave away her money to anyone who asked for it, 'as if it might contaminate her if she held on to it for too long'. Her marriage cannot have been a happy one and there were numerous separations before her husband, a university lecturer, committed suicide in 1987. In the months leading up to the diagnosis of the tumour, Gabrielle Carey thought her mother, who was never ill, was becoming senile, and disappearing in a fog of amnesia and irrational behaviour. It was almost a relief when the scan revealed the cause of Joan's distressing symptoms.

During these months and the following weeks before the surgery, Carey juggled caring for her mother and trying to 'maintain the household as normally as possible' while continuing her teaching and writing. Her seven year old son, Jimmy, was easy to deal with compared to fifteen year old Brigid who was refusing to eat, complaining about every meal placed before her. Carey understood Brigid's real need was for her mother's full attention. 'It seemed, though, that being a good mother and a good daughter simultaneously was just about impossible'

Joan Carey's surgery was urgent and scheduled only three weeks after diagnosis. Then her family had to prevent her threatened suicide. She declared the cost to be 'immoral' and the health dollars better spent on someone younger. She was a member of the Euthanasia Society so this was no empty threat. The hours spent on suicide watch did, however, produce a notable benefit: an opportunity to get her



mother to talk about her family background. Carey had never understood why her mother had so little money when family members in Western Australia were wealthy. Her mother said it happened because her grandparents, of Houghton Wine Estate, had four daughters. Joan was the eldest but it was her sister, Margaret, who married into the adjacent Sandalford wine family. The grandfather left his estate to Margaret in order to consolidate the two wineries. Joan and the other two daughters received a small sum in compensation but Joan lost her money in a poorly advised investment.

Learning about this, Carey reflects on other bad news that has littered her mother's life: the flooded house; her father's dementia; her mother's sudden death by stroke; her sister's diagnosis of Parkinson's disease; her daughter dropping out of school; her husband's suicide; the massive meningioma requiring surgery. In a beautifully written passage, following her mother's brain scan, Carey wonders what would be the result if a psychological scan was possible. '...I wonder what brain patterns would emerge. Would I be able to examine the exact dimensions of my mother's restrained and restricted childhood?...Would the years of a tense, unhappy marriage manifest as a blot, or a set of squiggly lines?'

Carey feels she has totally rejected her mother's influence and lifestyle. She rebelled with risk-taking behaviour from the age of thirteen; denied her Protestant inheritance and converted to Catholicism while living in Ireland, indulged in fiestas and alcohol in Mexico where Brigid was born. She has two children by two different husbands and is on her third marriage. She feels that, in spite of her solitary career as a writer, she is open and communicative. This view is shattered during a violent row with her daughter. Brigid screams accusingly at her mother: 'You never talk. You only ever write things down...You've got to learn to talk, Mum! Why can't you just say things out loud, like a normal person?' Dissolving in tears, Carey realises that perhaps she and her mother are two of a kind. The frustrations Carey has always felt about her mother's secrecy and her reluctance to reveal any personal details, are the same frustrations Brigid now feels about her. The operation was successful but the neurological interference caused a period when Joan's brain sparked and fired erratically causing confusion but also 'a kind of openness' when her usual restraint and reserve was temporarily relaxed. Carey thus heard more of her parents' marriage difficulties, including that the Careys thought their son had married

beneath him. In the 1930s any decent women of Protestant stock belonged to the Temperance Union and wine was for 'wogs'; Australian men drank beer. It was another of Joan's misfortunes that the change from wine being a 'poor man's plonk to ... a powerful status symbol' was too late to help her.

Waiting Room is an open and very honest look at the deeply complex relationships between mothers and daughters. It acknowledges love can take many forms from preparing a meal to providing 'silent spaciousness' – a freedom to develop without moral instruction or judgement. The book ends on a surprising and happy note that readers will have to discover for themselves.

Jane Pollard

Heather Saville *continued from page 7*

Since 1979 QSA has worked in Cambodia and collaborated with the American Friends Service Committee for a number of years. In the early '80s (at a time when government-to-government aid was not possible due to the Khmer Rouge being the ruling government) QSA as an accredited NGO was funded to establish an English language training program with Federal government money. The program ran for about eight years under the auspices of QSA and was gradually handed over to the University of Phnom Penh, in 1993 becoming the English language program of teacher training. I acted as the monitor to our HIV Aids education program over several years with all the training being done by local Cambodian staff. In 2001 QSA was able to hand the program over to these staff who have continued and expanded the work under the name of CHEC (Cambodian HIV/AIDS Education and Care.) CHEC now works in five provinces, with about 25 staff and is recognised within Cambodia and internationally as a highly successfully model for HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

The most recent project in Cambodia is in Permaculture. QSA has worked in four provinces with the Departments of Women's Affairs, where the staff grow their own gardens, then educate villagers, using that role to deal with other issues, eg domestic violence. For the villagers it is subsistence agriculture, but if they grow more than needed, they can sell it and improve their lives.

In Uganda we have encouraged organic gardening over a long term. Josephine Kizza, a primary school teacher, established a rural training centre, St. Jude's, now an intensive residential education centre. QSA provided funds for two dormitory-style hostels to accommodate visitors. The Australian Government insisted on recognition that it was paid for by Australian money: Josephine's solution was to call them the Barbara and the Martin Hostel, after the two Australians who helped set them up. We're not sure if the Australian Government thought these names adequate! A few years ago, Josephine came and stayed with me in the Illawarra NSW, where permaculture gardens are established in primary schools. On seeing these schools, Josephine said, 'I can do this!', went home and, using QSA funding, four years later works in twenty schools.

Over the years, QSA learned to recognise political realities, and to ensure that knowledge and skills are shared, that any education program includes at least 40% women.

To sum up in the words of Nelson Mandela, 'Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is people who have made and tolerated poverty and it is people who will overcome it. Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity, it is an act of justice.'

Transcription by Helen Ruby, edited by Kris Clarke

ABC women reflect

ABC Radio's Coming Out Show which ran for 23 years 1975-1998 proved a worthy International Women's Day topic on 8 March at the ABC's Ultimo Centre, Sydney. A panel of six women who worked on the Show, chaired by Julie Rigg (now ABC Radio National Senior Film Critic), teased out how this iconic program drove cultural change, and the lessons learnt.

As International Women's Year 1975 approached, within the ABC, across TV and radio, women came together in the Australian Women's Broadcasting Cooperative ('collective' deemed too radical for ABC management). There were few women broadcasters in those days: ABC practice channelled most women employees, many of them graduates, into clerical and typing positions. In its drive against discrimination, the AWBC lobbied successfully to open a handful of program-making positions for ABC women employees to produce a weekly radio program made by and about women, and initiated an extraordinary ongoing cycle of workshops and out-of-hours *training and mentoring* of novices by experienced women. So Coming Out Show programs began as planned – on IWD. Each program was produced by a different woman or women's group. The door was open for new people: staff were turned over every two years; ABC public service recruitment processes enabled outsiders to apply; and community involvement extended to regional and rural areas. Country women guided and trained by experienced women developed one month's programs and won a federal Department of Agriculture award. Panel members had fond memories of supportive mentoring and prodigious team effort. This AWBC model was a far cry from the 'women's misogyny towards other women' deplored by Germaine Greer in another IWD forum several days earlier.

The Show thrived, despite small budgets and some hostility or indifference among male colleagues. Women changed the *sound* of the ABC and program *content*. Topics new to the ABC included abortion, women as objects of sexual commentary (now called sexual harassment), contraception, childcare, menopause, handicapped children. Some issues – contraception, abortion – 'took off', others like support for women caring for disabled children needed over 30 years to progress. Trained women moved from the Show elsewhere within or outside the ABC, becoming executive producers and broadcasters. One of the last 'closed shop' areas in ABC Radio was sport. TV proved tougher for women to penetrate than radio, its bulky equipment and technology even less familiar: digitalisation and size and weight reduction mean women can now be embedded in war zones viz Sally Sara, former ABC correspondent in Afghanistan.

Forum and audience expressed some of that despondency heard of late: 'sliding backwards'. When Panel member Nicola Joseph cited poor ethnic representation on the Show, and the ABC's overall record of no Indigenous program coordinator, Julie Rigg said management was trying to address this. However, the ABC's gender balance and access have been transformed; the world has actually changed; and young women do look to the future (as Julia Readett would agree: see page 3). Speakers and audience members dedicated to the Show across the years knew that passion and sheer hard work paid off. And they warmly applauded AWBC's training and mentoring model as one which should be revisited. Gone but not forgotten. Thank you ABC, Julie Rigg and all involved.

Margot Simington

Note: The ABC has donated a CD of the Coming Out Show panel discussion to JSNWL.

Margaret Renaud *continued from page 6*

in its own way' could serve as a *Family Law Act* epigraph, recognising each case is unique: the Act requires judgements be tailor-made. Contested Family Court cases (inherently recalcitrant) deal usually with property settlement or parenting (custody and access). The Act says property settlement should be 'just and equitable' – vague, value-laden terms. Decision must take account of each party's financial contribution and contribution to the family welfare, 'contribution' and 'welfare' also value-laden words. In children's matters, the child's 'best interests' are paramount – again, a vague, value-laden formula with possibly inconsistent objectives: of maintaining relationships with both parents, and of protecting the child.

A judge may never be able to decide some 'facts' – in property cases, each party's contributions, in children's cases, the quality of parent/child relationships. Judges have no better in-built lie detectors than than anyone else: there are confident convincing liars, hesitant fumbling truth tellers. Consistency – how well a witness's version fits with other evidence – is not infallible. Plausibility depends on one's own experience: Judge Judy's 'common sense'. 'Facts' are filtered by a storyteller's perspective, particularly in an emotional context, or if benefited by a particular version. I often found neither party lied, but each remembered his or her contribution, forgetting the other's. Almost invariably, without becoming entangled in details I could find that each party made a 'substantial contribution', no doubt annoying both parties. In children's cases, a vague finding could be inappropriate when child abuse or child neglect was alleged, or there was disagreement about a child's attachment/s. I sometimes became cross: a mother saying, 'he doesn't want to see his father; I won't make him go'. But do you let a three year old dictate to you? Once, my stepdaughter about to go home cried, 'I want to stay with you'. Knowing police may have to collect children after access visits, the wisdom of Solomon descending upon me, I said, 'They'll be so disappointed if you're not on the plane.' She went home quite happily. Lessons learnt from others can help with your own family.

Determining a child's 'best interests' can be at the judge's unexaminable discretion ie the judge need not reveal/explain why one competing interest is 'better' than another. One of my cases involved a talented 13 year old basketballer offered a three month basketball skills clinic in California. His father wanted him to go, he did too, but not his mother: basketball was detrimental to school work. I had recently (despite stepfather disapproval) agreed my daughter attend ballet school fulltime albeit a dancing career was unlikely, but focussed on ballet, she was unlikely to excel in Year 12 and, with her mind likely to outlast her dancing body, academic work later on would be an option. In Court, I revealed how I ranked the 'best interests' (fostering basketball talent, improving school results): fostering a gifted child's talents is important, particularly when optimum development is likely early in life. Another judge may have reasoned differently. The 'best interests' principle is like democracy – the world's worst system, apart from all the others.

I chose family law because human relationships are endlessly fascinating. And the law involved is complex and interesting. In Justice Michael Kirby's words (2004), family law requires 'a good command of ... federal statutory law ... of the law affecting real and personal property, trusts, equitable principles and the law governing children. Increasingly ... international law has become important'. Family law, which

establishes future rights, seems to demand judges have a crystal ball – not standard issue. It's often emotional, takes time, pays less than other areas. But rewards cannot be measured in financial terms. I thought I could make a difference. In 15 years on the Bench, my goal was that every litigant felt listened to; that even if they did not get the orders they wanted, they would understand how I reached my decisions and leave my court accepting the result, even if not happy.

Edited by Margot Simington

Farewell Margaret Whitlam



Margaret Whitlam celebrating JSNWL's new premises at Town Hall House, 1999

National Living Treasure, Margaret Whitlam AO, who passed away on 17 March, is recognised fondly not only as wife of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam but also as a woman in her own right. Library members recall her long association with JSNWL, and in particular her remarks at a City of Sydney function in 1999 celebrating relocation of the Library (and relocation of the City of Sydney Archives relocation and of City of Sydney Library refurbishment).

As reported in the 1999 May *Newsletter*, following Sydney Lord Mayor Frank Sartor's welcome of JSNWL to a 'new home' in Town Hall House, Margaret talked about Jessie Street whom she had known personally through friendship with Jessie's two daughters. She paid tribute to Jessie's tireless efforts to raise the status of women, adding that in the late 1940s and early 1950s Jessie had been banned from using the Town Hall by the then Lord Mayor and City Councillors. Margaret said she thought Jessie would enjoy the irony of the new situation in which a library bearing her name was being housed in Council premises to which she herself had earlier been denied access.

Vale Margaret Whitlam.

Note: City of Sydney support, for which JSNWL is ever grateful, now provides subsidised Library premises in the inner city suburb, Ultimo, but Lunch Hour Talks continue to be held in Town Hall House.

Capital Investment Fund

Since its launch in September 2009, the Capital Investment Fund has now reached almost \$85,000. Our target is \$500,000, the interest from which will provide essential support for Library operations. If you would like to contribute, please indicate on the membership/renewal/donation form on this page.

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Farewell

Cathy Machin, a familiar face at Lunch Hour Talks, sadly passed away on 24 March 2012. Her company at LHTs will be missed.

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