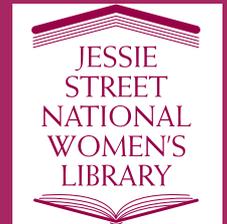


NEWSLETTER

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



Vale Susan Ryan: activist

Susan Ryan, the politician who achieved equal rights legislation for women in Australia in 1984, died in September aged 77, still fighting for equality and women's rights. Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard mourned her: 'I am shocked and saddened that we have lost feminist hero and Labor giant, Susan Ryan. Every Australian's life has been improved by her leadership on gender equality. She blazed the trail for Labor women, including me.'

Susan studied education at the University of Sydney, and then began an MA in English Literature at the Australian National University. She moved overseas with her diplomat partner, finding herself in New York at the heart of second-wave feminism. Returning to Canberra in 1971 with two children, Susan threw herself into the women's movement, being a founding member of the ACT Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) in 1972. She was also an ALP activist, working for the election of the Whitlam Government the same year. She completed her MA and was employed as head of the Australian Council of State School Organisations. In 1975 she was elected a Labor senator for the ACT: WEL campaigned for her election with T-shirts emblazoned with the message: A Woman's Place is in the Senate.

The election of the Hawke Government in 1983 saw Susan become the first woman Cabinet Minister in a Labor Government, as Minister for Education and Youth Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women. Within a few months she introduced the Sex Discrimination Bill which outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status and pregnancy. It was controversial and heatedly opposed by the Opposition, but Susan steered it



through in 1984. She later reflected on it as 'probably the most useful thing I've done in my life'. She followed this with the Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act 1986. She initiated the development of a National Policy for the Education of Girls, released in 1987 by the Commonwealth Schools Commission.

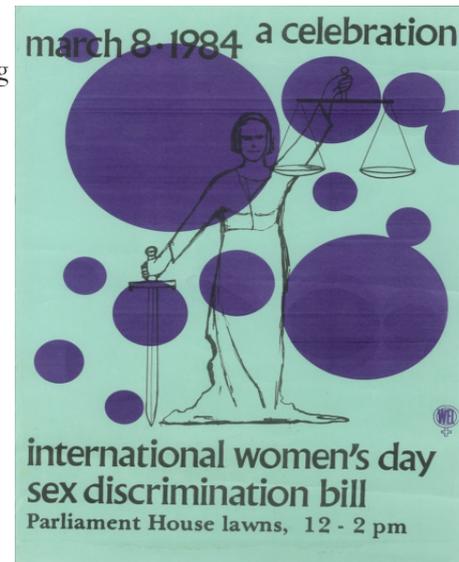
Susan's work as a spearhead for progressive policy in government took its toll and she left politics in 1988. She continued to be involved in progressive



rights for the aged, especially for older women. In 2011, she became Australia's first Age Discrimination Commissioner, and to this role was added that of Disability Discrimination Commissioner when the two roles were merged in 2014.

Susan was a member of Jessie Street National Women's Library, and was our guest speaker at the Annual Luncheon in 2005 (see page 6). Active in women's organisations and media commentary until the last month of her life, Susan never ceased to push for equality for women. She remains an inspiration for so many of us: a feminist, a trailblazer, a mentor, a fierce advocate for equality.

Jan Burnswoods



causes in her post-political life, including as deputy chair of the Australian Republican Movement from 2000 to 2003, and as president of the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees from 2000 to 2007. She was also an advocate of an Australian bill of rights.

She campaigned on superannuation policy and

Wishing all our readers a very happy Christmas.

The Library will be closed from Friday 11 December and reopen on Monday 18 January 2021.



2020 Fundraising Raffle prize winners

1st prize winner: Kathleen Lamoureux (pictured above), Connie Dimas sterling silver brooch donated by Connie Dimas Jewellery

2nd prize winner: Zephie Comino-Cerny, EFTPOS Gift Cards donated in memory of Marie Muir

3rd prize winner: Rosalind Wall, Sparkling High Tea donated by NSW Parliamentary Catering

4th prize winner: Jan Wood, Art Gallery of NSW Shop gift card donated by Gail Hewison

5th prize winner: Barbara Guthrie, One dozen bottles of Kurri Kurri TAFE wine donated by NSW Teachers Federation

Our raffle was drawn at the Board Meeting on 12 October and witnessed by members via Zoom. This year we have sold an unprecedented number of raffle tickets. Our members and supporters have been very generous with their contributions and we are proud to say that they have helped to tide us over in this very difficult year.

The Barbara Jefferis Award

Congratulations to the winner of the 2020 Barbara Jefferis Award, Lucy Treloar, for her novel *Wolfe Island*.

This biennial award is offered for ‘the best novel written by an Australian author that depicts women and girls in a positive way or otherwise empowers the status of women and girls in society’. It has been criticised by some writers and critics for having a *social agenda*. Recent winners have been *The Trapeze Act*, Libby Angel, in 2018, and *Hope Farm*, Peggy Frew, in 2016.

Barbara Jefferis was a feminist and a founding member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA), becoming its first woman President. In the words of Thomas Keneally, she ‘was a professional and internationally published writer long before most of us dreamed of such things.’ She published eight novels between 1953 and 1977 but there are none in the Library collection. As is often the case with female writers, her books were more widely known abroad than in Australia. We hold only one non-fiction work by Jefferis – *Three of a Kind*, a biography of a woman named Susan Brown (1819–1887). Does anyone have any books written by Barbara Jefferis to donate?

The Award is supported by the Barbara Jefferis Literary Fund, established through a \$1 million bequest from Barbara Jefferis’ husband, ABC film critic John Hinde who died in 2006. It is one of Australia’s richest awards.

Barbara Henery

Lunch Hour Talks in 2021

As with many organisations, Covid-19 has thrown us all into unknown territory. At the present time, the meeting rooms at Customs House are still closed and we await information about the reopening. This makes the organisation of a Lunch Hour Talks program challenging. In 2021 we hope to be able to hear from some of our planned 2020 speakers, such as Natalie Conyer, winner of a Ned Kelly Award for Crime Fiction this year.

So... watch this space!!

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

Quentin Bryce AD CVO; Elizabeth Evatt AC;
Clover Moore Lord Mayor of Sydney; Professor Emerita Elizabeth Anne Webby AM

Board of Management

Jozefa Sobski, Chair; Suzanne Marks, Vice Chair;
Jean Burns, Treasurer; Sherri Hilario, Secretary;
Wendy Chester, Michele Ginswick, Robyn Harriott, Barbara Henery, Beverley Kingston,
Susan Price, Janet Ramsay, Beverley Sodbinow

Editorial Team

Kris Clarke, Jessica Stewart, Editors;
Tinderspark, Graphic Design

Our thanks

Charities and not-for-profit organisations which rely on volunteers, their major asset, have faced huge challenges this year. Fund-raising events have had to be cancelled with many venues closed. Our Library Board meetings were conducted via Zoom and our Annual Luncheon and Lunch Hour Talks were cancelled. The Ultimo Community Centre has been closed and is only now taking limited bookings.

Several of our volunteers – our Secretary, Sherri Hilario, our Treasurer, Jean Burns, Lynne Morton, Hanne Marks, and myself have continuously staffed the Library. Special thanks to Sherri. While the Centre's closure has presented us with some issues, now that our Covid-19 Safety Plan is in place, we can provide a limited service safely since the lifting of the lockdown. Volunteers are gradually returning to resume our critical work.

What has kept us all going is the generosity and commitment of our members and supporters. We knew that holding a raffle might not yield a great deal, but we thought it would engage members and supporters. You have repaid us with an overwhelming response. Over 870 tickets were purchased, many accompanied by donations. Congratulations to all the winners and, in particular, to Kathleen Lamoureux, a Life member. She won the first prize – a Connie Dimas designed brooch. The response to the raffle heartened us all and validated our decision to go ahead. It matters that you all cared enough to support it.

Susan Ryan attended last year's Luncheon and spoke in high praise of the Library's work. We will continue this work to honour the feminist struggles of Jessie Street and women like Susan Ryan who have made outstanding public contributions to achieving women's equality. They devoted their lives to this cause and other human rights causes.

The Library pays tribute each day for these contributions. It is a reminder of their importance at this time.

I thank you all on behalf of our Board. I thank you for your faith in our work and the generosity with which you have expressed this faith.

*Jozefa Sobski AM
Board Chair*

The Library had nearly 180 responses to our call for members to purchase raffle tickets and consider making donations to ensure the Library had sufficient funds to continue operations during COVID-19. 61% of members made a donation to the Library along with purchasing raffle tickets. Many members generously donated \$100, the proposed cost of a ticket to the luncheon. Each donor has received a letter of thanks acknowledging their support.

Donors are too numerous to mention individually, however the following donors are particularly acknowledged: Gayle Tollifson; Jozefa Sobski; Mary Henderson; Elizabeth Webby; Elizabeth Evatt; Myra Keay, Jann Skinner; Hilary Taylor; Sue Comrie-Thomson.

A warm welcome to our new members

Leone Donges	Cristoforo Garigliano
Josephine Gillott	Leonne (Lee) Fitzgerald
Kaye Price	Stella Wailes

Capital Investment Fund

Since it was launched in September 2009, the Capital Investment Fund has reached \$470,414. 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/donation form on this page.

CIF donations since July 2020:

Linda Burney	Bridget McKern
Helen O'Sullivan	Rosalind Strong
Sally Tingle	

Donations of material

Alison Bartlett	Anne Lynch
Megan McCrae	Pat Richardson
Currency Press	Spinifex Press
Fellowship of Australian Writers Tasmania	



Womens' liberation papers

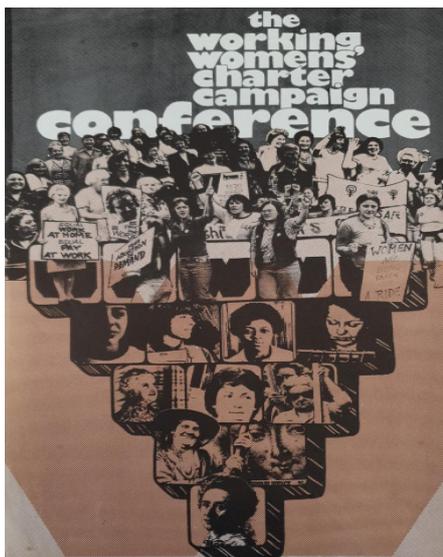
Dr Sue Wills recently offered the Library a large and valuable collection of papers which were used for research while writing the history of the Sydney Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s. Sue is well known as a political scientist, an activist in women's and gay movements and a university equal opportunity officer.

In 1999, 50 boxes of papers known as *The First Ten Years of Sydney Women's Liberation Movement Document Collection* were delivered to the NSW State Library. The task of collecting these papers began as a Women's Liberation History Project in 1978, when four women activists started to collect material and planned an activity timeline and a number of interviews. Sue Wills and Joyce Stevens, a prominent Sydney socialist feminist, writer and leading member of the Communist Party, delivered the completed collection to the State Library in 1999. The work of recording the history had been a self-funded labour of love by various women's groups, completed by Joyce and Sue in 2007 for publication in *Australian Feminist Studies* Nos 53, 54, 55 (2007/2008). By this time Joyce was suffering from dementia so the writing was completed by Sue.

This collection documents an important time in Australian women's history. It will be a very valuable asset to researchers. It includes all the publications of Sydney Women's Liberation, and the papers used to help illustrate what Sydney Women's Liberation did. It shows their campaigns, goals and issues of concern, and demonstrates that Women's Liberation was essentially a 'middle class movement'. Whilst amassing this wonderful collection Sue made copies of most of the material for her own records.

These treasured documents will have many uses. The publications have added to the Library's serials collection, filling gaps in our 1970s feminist papers. Lynne Morton has been processing these during the year, despite the COVID-19 restrictions. Sherri Hilario has worked on the 200-plus posters received from Sue, and was thrilled to receive some real gems including posters 3 and 4 of the Women's Domestic Needlework Group series of ten posters for The D'Oyley Show exhibition in 1979, completing our holdings. Sherri says the poster shown here, from 1977, highlights the lineage of feminist activism since the 1940s.

The Working Women's Charter Campaign first emerged in Britain in 1974. The Charter was inspired by the Australian Women's Charter, 1943, which was drawn up from resolutions passed at the Australian Women's Conference for Victory in War and Peace, chaired by Jessie Street. The



program of reforms was wide ranging, from women's right to paid work and childcare to the particular needs of rural women and removal of all discrimination against Aboriginal people.

In Australia, the Working Women's Charter Campaign was started around 1976 by women from the ACTU Working Women's Centre, 1973-1993, in Melbourne. Initially independent, the Centre was absorbed into the ACTU. By the mid-nineties the Charter and other action plans had been folded into ACTU policy. New Zealand

activists were introduced to the Charter at a conference in 1976. They adapted the Charter and it became the focus of activism there into the early 1980s.

The Sue Wills papers will make an important addition to the Library's archives as well as the serials and posters. The whole collection captures the changes of the era and will help to bring the Sydney Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s to life for writers, historians, students and anyone who appreciates good stories.

Bev Sodbinow

Our volunteers

I first came across the name Jessie Street on a sign next to a small patch of grass near my house. This was the 'Jessie Street Reserve' on Belgrave Street in Bronte. With no accompanying information, my curiosity immediately piqued. Who was Jessie Street?

I began to answer this question in my Year 12 history extension work. Focusing on the limitations of the wave metaphor, my research concentrated on Australian feminists and women's organisations active during the supposed 'lull' between the first and second feminist waves. Before long Jessie became a major focus of my project. I came across the Library's website. Interested in understanding more about the Library's collection, I began volunteering, focusing on revitalising the Library's Instagram page. My hope is to curate regular posts that showcase the Library's collection and draw attention to Australian women's words, work, and history.

Look out for regular Instagram posts beginning early next year, starting with a collection that explores Jessie Street's activism.

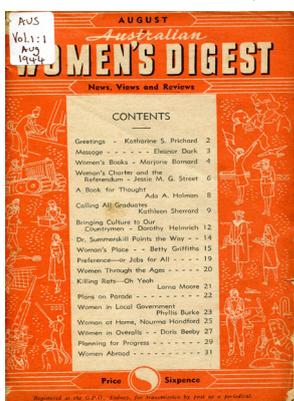
Stella Wailes

Digitisation project

Returning to volunteer at the Jessie Street Library after working as a Digitisation Officer at the National Archives of Australia. I began talking with other volunteers about the ways original materials will be made digital (a process we call digitisation), and making them available to all.

There has been excellent work done already in creating images of the Library's poster collection and making them accessible online through the catalogue and we saw an opportunity to formulate clear understandings about how to deal with digital materials in future, so we formed a team to write Library policy on digital activities.

The resultant policy is to digitise materials such as the Australian Women's Digest, pictured below, founded by Jessie Street. Digitisation will provide better access to researchers, preserve the original materials by creating consistently excellent digital copies, and create digital formats that are easy to access. But more than this, it recognises the importance of respecting the original materials by being considerate of their creators and the various people described through them to achieve the best outcomes for future generations of Australian women.



I have also been writing specifications for digitisation processes, with suggestions from the same wonderful team. I am documenting our decisions so that future Library volunteers will understand the nature of the digital copies we create and will have a firm foundation to make further decisions for the Library's digital future. I am also creating instructional documents of procedures so that any of our volunteers will be able to help digitise collection materials.

It's a special privilege for me to work at the Library with this kind and knowledgeable team on such an exciting project. Digitisation work at the Library location protects the materials when they are moved to different places and worked on by different teams.

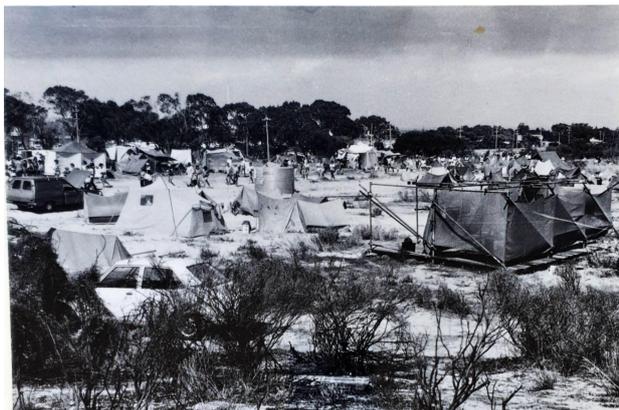
There are countless examples of materials in the collections that exist nowhere else in the world and which document history in ways that challenge more dominant or popularly received historical narratives. It is impossible to overestimate the work and passion it has taken to acquire the Library's collections and protect them so carefully to this point and I hope that our work will honour that commitment by keeping these collections available and accessible.

Marc Smith

Revisiting Cockburn Sound

In June this year I participated in a Zoom panel discussion hosted by Labor Environment Action Network on Labor's anti-nuclear heritage.

As a young activist, I became involved in anti-nuclear protests in Western Australia in the early 1980s, occupying the US warships docked at Fremantle Ports. I also attended the Cockburn Sound Women's Peace Camp in December 1984, organised by Women for Survival and held at Woodman Point, south of Perth.



In researching the background to the Peace Camp, we came across the article by Jan Burnswoods in the National Women's Library newsletter from May 2018. Jan and Sherri from the Library were so helpful in scanning and sending the images from the Library's collection on the 1984 Peace Camp so that they could be included in the slides for the Zoom discussion.

For me, these images particularly brought back memories of the harsh, barren coastal landscape that we women settled on over a number of weeks to meet, protest and support each other. My early involvement in these protests, and seeing women, such as WA Labor Senator Ruth Coleman, who were so committed to the cause, inspired me to join the labour movement, first as a union official and then as a senator myself.

Thank you to Jan and Sherri for your help, especially at a time when the Library was closed to the public during the pandemic. It is fantastic the Library holds such records which are hard to come by through other sources.

Sue Lines
Labor Senator for Western Australia



Facebook's European 'Reclaim the Night' poster received 1270 hits!

Annual Luncheon retrospective

The Library has held an Annual Luncheon at Parliament House every year since 1995 -- until this year, when COVID-19 forced us to cancel it. With inspiring speakers and an enthusiastic crowd, including students from a number of schools, it has been a very popular event as well as the major fundraiser for the Library.

Looking back at the list of speakers over the years is a reminder of the prestige and commitment of the women who have addressed us, and the issues of importance to women that the speakers have raised.

Last year's guest speaker was Deborah Cheetham, Yorta Yorta woman, opera singer, composer and educator, a leader in the Australian arts for more than 25 years. Deborah was the latest in a number of Aboriginal women who have spoken at the Luncheons, starting with Bronwyn Bancroft in 1997. Faith Bandler, whose father was a South Pacific islander 'blackbirded' to slave on Queensland sugar plantations, and who worked with Jessie Street on the 1967 referendum for Aboriginal rights, was the speaker in 2003.

Other notable speakers have included Library patron and first female Governor General, Quentin Bryce, speaking on the scourge of domestic violence in 2015; feminist activist, author and journalist Anne Summers in 2013, on the misogyny factor in Australian politics; and investigative journalist Kate McClymont in 2018 discussing her ongoing work in exposing corruption in NSW.

Several women active in politics have spoken at the Luncheons, including Susan Ryan in 2005; her death this year has taken a real trailblazer from us (see page 1). Her topic was women and university education, although her speech reflected the diversity of her political work and interests. She had been to the World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975 and the UN Decade for Women Conference in Copenhagen in 1980. Her international work led to a campaign to persuade the government to ratify the 1980 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

One of our most memorable Luncheons was in 2006, with Helen Reddy as the guest speaker. We mourn her death this year. Barbara Henery remembers the day vividly: 'In 2006 I was a new volunteer at the Library and attended my first Annual Luncheon. I knew Helen Reddy as a popular international entertainer but was not aware she was also an inspirational feminist speaker. Well known as the singer of the iconic song *I Am Woman*, she chose as her topic *Building a Better World towards a More Feminine Future*.

Helen talked about the future of the planet. She illustrated her point with a pertinent adage - "When you wanted to paddle a canoe straight downstream, you paddled to the left, then to the right. If you paddled just to the left or just to the right, you went round in circles." Helen said she believed that all paddling in 2006 was being done to the right and that to get back to the straight course, we needed a little *left* thinking.

At the conclusion, the words of her groundbreaking inspirational song resonated in our heads: *I am woman hear me roar / in numbers too big to ignore ... I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman.*

The experience has ensured that I have never missed an annual luncheon since that day!

Jan Burnswoods and Barbara Henery



Library members and guests at the Annual Luncheon in 2019

Lunch Hour Talk

19 November 2020, Suzanne Leal

Writing about the Holocaust

The Library's first Zoom Lunch Hour Talk commenced on time with 23 members and guests logging in and connecting with cameras and mics. Thanks to Michele Ginswick for such a successful event. Suzanne opened with thanking the Library for its support for her over the ten years since she published her first book. Organisations such as the Library were so important, she commented, noting that a Covid silver lining was in how we have all learnt to embed technology in the everyday, improving access for people living in remote areas and with mobility issues.

Suzanne has many roles in the literary world in Australia, including Chair of Fiction and Poetry Panel for Prime Minister's Literary Awards which released its shortlist recently for 2020. She is also a lawyer and member of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, making decisions about children's safety. She draws on her insights into different worlds in her writing. Her second book, *The Teacher's Secret*, drew on her experiences in child protection and this book, *The Deceptions*, came out of a story that particularly intrigued her during her research for her first book, *Border Street*. It was the story of a relationship between a woman imprisoned in the Jewish ghetto and her Czech guard, a local gendarme. Unable to find out sufficient detail to render this faithfully, Suzanne turned to fiction.

The setting is Prague 1943. Hana, daughter of a wealthy and hitherto protected doctor, is taken from her home and imprisoned in the Jewish ghetto. The novel turns on the relationship between a rural, uneducated man pushed into the ghetto in the trauma of war, and a woman he is guarding, a woman who is richer, educated, confident. The relationship will have ramifications for confidences they share or choose not to reveal. The books asks that the reader consider truth and whether deception can ever be for the greater good.

When asked about the challenges of writing a novel set in these harrowing circumstances, Suzanne described herself as an intimate observer. Provided that she was careful and fastidious in her research, though not a direct descendant, harmed directly by the events she describes, she felt that she had a story to tell and she could tell it well. I look forward to reading it.

Jessica Stewart

Membership/donation form

I wish to: join the library renew my membership make a donation

Date: __/__/__

Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr/other

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: (h) _____ (w) _____ (m) _____

Email: _____

Please send newsletters by email instead of hardcopy.

Membership Category

Full Member \$70 Life member \$1,000

Organisation \$140 Student \$25
(conditions apply)

Concession \$35
(Pensioner/Centrelink Concession Cardholders)

A membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December. Members joining after 1 October are financial until 31 December of the following year.

Donations (donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

I wish to make a donation of \$.....
 to the Library for general purposes
 to the Library's Capital Investment Fund

I am willing to have my name published in the Newsletter

I wish to remain anonymous

Payment Details

CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: Westpac Bank is no longer accepting manual vouchers for credit card payments. Therefore, payments will no longer be issued the yellow credit card receipt. Credit card payments can still be made in the usual way and will be processed electronically. Please contact Jean Burns at the library if you have any questions.

Enclosed is my cheque/money order for \$ _____
(payable to Jessie Street National Women's Library)

Please charge my MasterCard/Visa with \$ _____
Name of cardholder: _____
Card no. _____
Expiry date __/__/__ CCV ____

Signature: _____

Auto Debit Authorisation

I authorise JSNWL to charge this, and all future membership renewals as they fall due, to the credit card number above on this form.

I authorise JSNWL to charge \$ _____ annually to the above credit card as a donation to
 the Library for general purposes or to
 the Library's Capital Investment Fund.

Signature: _____

Become a volunteer

I would like to help the Library by becoming a volunteer. (You will be contacted for an interview.)

Please forward the completed form to:

Jessie Street National Women's Library
GPO Box 2656, Sydney NSW 2001

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Note: Please advise the Library if your contact details have changed.

Visit us:

523-525 Harris Street (cnr William Henry Street), Ultimo
Enter through the Ultimo Community Centre, Bulwara Rd
Please use the intercom for admittance

Opening times:

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

Borrowing policy:

The public can access items using the interlibrary loan system. The public cannot borrow items but may use them in their library of choice. A loan collection is available to financial members

How to reach the Library:

- * The Library is a 20 minute walk from Town Hall Station through Darling Harbour or from Central Station via the Goods Line walk or via Harris Street
- * Bus 501 (Railway Square to Ryde/West Ryde) at Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre stop
- * Bus 389 (Maritime Museum to North Bondi) at Harris and Allan Streets stop
- * Light rail from Central Station or Dulwich Hill to Exhibition stop
- * There is limited two hour street meter parking available

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