



**ANNUAL REPORT  
2020**

*Jessie Street National Women's Library serves to:*

- *Highlight the contribution of Australian women to this country's development*
- *Highlight awareness of women's issues*
- *Ensure that documents relating to Australian women's lives and activities are collected and made accessible*
- *Support the fields of women's history and women's studies*

*To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful*

*Ursula K. Le Guin*

## CHAIR

We opened 2020 on an optimistic note announcing a program of Lunch Hour Talks and securing Professor Lesley Hughes as our Annual Luncheon speaker focusing on the existential world crisis of climate change. But, like many organisations, institutions, business and government agencies, our plans were placed on hold or abandoned due to COVID-19 restrictions. The pandemic ruled all of us for some months.

So, it was an unusual year for the Library. Board members, volunteers and supporters had to adapt to meetings on Zoom. These were facilitated by Susan Price, Board member. We closed the Library when the Ultimo Community Centre closed. We did offer some restricted services and continued to respond to email and other requests as well as processing membership applications and renewals.

We prepared a COVID-19 Safety Plan and lodged this with the relevant authorities. Sherri Hilario, Secretary and our chief administrator, Jean Burns, Treasurer, Lynne Morton, Librarian, Hanne Marks, research and admin, and the Chair continued to staff the Library within the limitations and requirements of the COVID-19 Safety Plan. From afar, Diane Hague kept our online community engaged via our website and Facebook page. This team kept it all going and was outstanding.

Barbara Henery, Board member and Book Club convenor, a woman of many talents, whose portrait of Jill Roe AO hangs in the Library, composed a poem, **2020 Pandemonium**, which appeared in the May 2020 edition of the newsletter, reminding us that poetry could capture the essence of our anxieties as well as the routine of lives in lockdown.

Support for the Library continued with the donation of **Kulpitjata Walpa**, a painting by young Indigenous artist, Lucinda James of Maruka Arts. It has taken pride of place on the wall high above the reception desk. It has added a significant Indigenous element to the portraits and posters which are displayed on the walls of the Library. Lucinda created the work at a bush camp immersion. She is an Anangu woman who grew up in Mutitjulu within a family of Maruka Arts founders absorbing strong artistic practices while growing up. The Library was thrilled with the donation.

In September, we lost a strong supporter and outstanding contributor to women's rights when Susan Ryan AO, feminist, ALP Minister, activist for a Charter of Human Rights, an Australian republic and aged care, as Commissioner, died suddenly after a swim. Her loss has left a gap in the lives of many women (and men) who knew her, loved her respected her and had worked closely with her on numerous feminist projects in education and other spheres. Her autobiography – **Catching the Waves** is held by the Library.

The Library had fewer visitors than previous years as was expected. On the days volunteers were present, we continued offering and providing material and online assistance to individuals and to institutions such as the Museum of Australian Democracy, the ABC, NSW Parliament and Charles Sturt University. Two student

placements were supported despite restrictions. There was a substantial donation of books, posters and archival material from Dr Sue Wills, as well as duplicate copies of papers from the **First Ten Years of Sydney Women's Liberation** collection.

Future proofing of the Library continued with a detailed policy and strategy developed by volunteer Marc Samuel Smith on digitisation and its implementation. Marc has produced specifications to assist the Library with organising digitisation of textually- based materials. This work was prompted by the approach from GALE Primary Sources, an offshoot of Cengage, a multi-national company, with an offer to digitise some of the Library's archival and serial collection. Assessing that there was merit in first having a Library position on digitisation, Marc, assisted by Lynne Morton, commenced work which would guide the Library on what and how to digitise materials within a strategic framework and what criteria to consider in establishing what materials should take priority.

During the year, we enjoyed the support of 46 volunteers in various capacities, many of whom were not able to come into the Library due to COVID-19 restrictions. They all maintained their commitment and support, however, so that we held a Xmas luncheon to thank them and enable them to reconnect after some months of absence from duty! Some volunteers were not able to attend. We extend to them our heartfelt thanks for their continuing support. At the luncheon we farewelled Christine Lees by honouring her over 20 years' service with Life Membership.

The Board was diminished by the loss of Vallie Rigg and Marion Shaw to illness. Marion has been an active Board member and we all extend our best wishes to her and her family. Vallie continued with archival work at home. Jean Burns continued as Treasurer and worked under constrained circumstances with her usual efficiency and good humour. Janet Ramsay, newer Board member, became our invaluable link to the Equality Rights Alliance – National Women's Alliance. Robyn Harriott has taken over membership processing from Jennifer Furness. All Board members play a role.

Our strength, as a not for profit, self-funding women's organisation, has remained with our altruistic and committed volunteers, our members, supporters and very generous donors. There was also a strength in our ability to adapt to circumstances and respond appropriately ensuring the organisation remained robust and flexible in the face of an unprecedented health threat. Technology assisted us, but we were adopters of new ways of meeting with good humour and a positive spirit. May I extend to all Board members my warmest thanks! It is a pleasure to enjoy your company and watch our progress together.

**Jozefa Sobski AM**  
Chair of the Board

## TREASURER

As a result of restrictions placed on the Library due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Library operated with minimum service for most of 2020 and fundraising activities were largely cancelled.

Through the **City of Sydney's** Accommodation Grants Program, the Council provides a significant rent subsidy for the premises occupied by the Library in the Ultimo Community Centre. In 2020 the Council expanded this support by providing a special rent abatement from 1 March to 31 December 2020. This was a significant factor in the Library maintaining financial viability during this difficult time. In 2020 the rental subsidy was in excess of \$68,000 and the additional rent abatement was \$7,400. The ongoing financial support of the Council is acknowledged with gratitude.

The Library's major fundraising event is the **Annual Luncheon** usually held at NSW Parliament House in September. However, due to COVID-19 this event was cancelled. In order to raise much needed finances, the Board approved of a raffle being conducted with members being asked to purchase tickets for a smaller number of prizes than would usually be the case at the luncheon. With grateful thanks to our generous members, this activity resulted in revenue of \$4,355 together with donations of \$13,555.

Of the five **Lunch Hour Talks (LHT)** scheduled for 2020, one was held prior to COVID-19 restrictions, three were cancelled and one was held via Zoom. The profit from the February LHT was \$497.40.

The Library's annual budget is prepared on an accrual basis, after the Auditor has prepared the annual financial statements. Therefore, the 2020 budget was prepared during COVID-19 and took into account anticipated reductions in revenue and expenditure due to the limited operations of the Library and cancellation of fundraising events.

Overall **Income** in 2020 was around \$14,000 in excess of budget. Donations to support the day-to-day operations of the Library were \$5,000, which is \$500 less than the approved budget. Donations to the Library's **Capital Investment Fund** totalled \$34,420 or \$7,420 in excess of budget. The balance of the fund at the end of 2020 was \$472,201.29, moving ever closer to the target of \$500,000.

The Library welcomed 12 new members in 2020, and one Life Member. **Membership revenue** was \$14,273 which was \$1,200 in excess of budget.

Overall, **expenditure** in 2020 was \$3,500 less than the approved budget.

At the end of 2020, the Library's Westpac **Term Deposit** was valued at \$117,011.78 with a maturity date of 5 December 2021 at 0.37% interest. The Library finished 2020 with a **cash position** of \$178,060.73 plus \$472,201.29 in the **Capital Investment Fund**, a total of \$650,262.02.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Jann Skinner for her continued role as Honorary Auditor and for providing assistance and support to me throughout the year.

**Jean Burns**  
Treasurer

## SECRETARY

Despite the disruption and uncertainty of the corona virus pandemic and resulting COVID-19 restrictions, membership remained steady. Indeed, the continued commitment and support of our members was heartening. As membership renewals started coming in later in the year, the majority also included donations. The generosity of our members and their belief in the Library and its work is deeply appreciated.

Except for the City of Sydney's childcare programs, Ultimo Community Centre remained closed for the year. The Library continued to be available to the public and researchers by appointment.

There were 9 Board Meetings in 2020. The attendance record was:

Chair	Jozefa Sobski AM	9
Vice Chair	Suzanne Marks	9
Secretary	Sherri Hilario	9
Treasurer	Jean Burns	8
Members	Wendy Chester (From 2020 AGM)	7
	Michele Ginswick	8
	Robyn Harriott	7
	Barbara Henery	7
	Beverley Kingston	5
	Susan Price	5
	Janet Ramsay PSM (From 2020 AGM)	7
	Beverley Sodbinow	5

All quarterly surveys and the Annual Self-Assessment required by the City of Sydney's Accommodation Grants program were completed.

The 2019 Annual Information Statement required by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) was submitted.

A COVID-19 Safety Plan was prepared and implemented.

## LIBRARY OPERATIONS

Throughout a year of restrictions, disruption and uncertainty and unable to attend the Library for several months, connection and discussions between and amongst the Archivists and Librarians was maintained via email and phone. With their support, the team who continued to staff the Library were able to respond to a diverse range of inquiries, requests and a record number of donations of materials.

Several researchers were able to attend the Library, by appointment, to access primary resources from our Serials and Archives collections. There was an interesting convergence of topics around women's refuges and rape crisis centres. On a different note, there was also a request to consult the *Diaries of Virginia Woolf* for background research for a future performance of a song cycle based on the diaries.

The Museum of Democracy (MoAD) is developing an exhibition project, "Democracy DNA", which will open sometime in 2021 in a dedicated space of the central section of the Parliamentary Library. The first group to be the focus in this space will be women as leaders and agents of change at all levels of democratic and community life. The Library is thrilled to be asked to contribute items to this important exhibition. Discussions with the Curator and our Archivists and Librarians are underway, and it is hoped a meeting can be arranged early next year.

The Library was also approached by Academic researchers from the University of Newcastle working in the field of women and religion, particularly Christian women, in Australia. They have identified that the Library has unique holdings in this area and would like to propose a funding project to make these resources more widely accessible. They anticipate securing funding in 2021 and guided by our Digitisation Policy and Strategy, we look forward to this terrific opportunity.

Through inter-library loan, we were able to provide books and AV resources to the ABC Research Library for their research support for a program in development on the history of women in Parliament.

Our wonderful poster collection continues to grow, fast approaching 1800 unique posters. Again, we provided poster images for a documentary, *Brazen Hussies*, a film documenting the Women's Liberation Movement in Australia between 1965-1975. The second donation of a map cabinet (the other late last year) was in good time. The poster collection is now undergoing a complete re-organisation and survey.

In addition to the substantial donation of materials from Dr Sue Wills, mentioned in the Chair's report, the Library received a significant donation of books, serials and archives from Elizabeth Windschuttle. Also, we received a donation of books from the estate of Beatrice Faust. Smaller donations were also gratefully received.

We continued to provide information, updates and social media engagement throughout the year through the Library's website and Facebook page.

After several months of restrictions, volunteers slowly and cautiously started to return to work in the Library from late September. There was a celebratory atmosphere and joy to be working together again. Projects and tasks, ongoing and new, to get on with.

The serials librarians returned to their mammoth and complex project reviewing and re-ordering the serials collection according to the Dewey Decimal Classification system and catalogue records. The acquisitions and cataloguing librarians with hundreds of additional books, posters and ephemera to process. The archivists continued with their painstaking documentation and cataloguing process of archival controls and description records. They too have been undertaking an identification and survey of holdings, re-boxing and location updating.

Undaunted, all settled back in and the work of the Library continues.

**Sherri Hilario**

Secretary

## **ANNUAL LUNCHEON**

Due to the uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the decision was made to cancel the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Fundraising Luncheon which was due to be held on 14 September 2020. With the possibility of lockdowns occurring at any time it seemed unlikely that our Luncheon could proceed. The Board Chair, Jozefa Sobski, advised members of the cancellation.

Members were asked to consider making a donation in lieu of the Luncheon and this elicited an overwhelming response of generosity in donations. One Library volunteer gathered friends together and held a lunch at her home on the designated Annual Luncheon day. These guests made a very generous donation to the Library. Many of our members expressed their regret at not having the chance to gather together in 2020 and look forward to attending the 2021 Annual Luncheon if possible.

The committee decided, with the approval of the Board, to conduct our annual raffle to help raise funds for the Library's ongoing costs. The raffle was well supported by our members and assisted in the Library maintaining a connection with our members. The Library appreciates the support given by those who donated prizes – Connie Dimas, Gail Hewison, Teachers' Federation and Parliamentary Catering Services. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the raffle was drawn at the Library and broadcast using Zoom.

It was a difficult and somewhat uncertain year, and we must acknowledge the work of the committee who managed to maintain their enthusiasm and dedication throughout, meeting via Zoom and connecting through email. It is hoped that the Library will be able to hold the Annual Luncheon in 2021.

**Kate Beringer**

Convenor

## LUNCH HOUR TALKS

In 2020 we achieved two Lunch Hour Talks, only one live and the other on Zoom. Little did we know that the February Talk would be the last with us all together in one room!

By November we were all well enough versed in the technology needed to meet via Zoom.

Our core volunteer team has kept in touch via email and we all await the news to say we are allowed into the Meeting Room at Customs House so that we can welcome everyone back in person in 2021.

The speakers in 2020 were:

**Thursday 27 February: Dr Tjanara Goreng Goreng -*A Long Way from No Go***

Tjanara is a WakkaWakka/Wulli Wulli Traditional Owner and clan Elder from Central Queensland. Her remarkable 40-year career is impossible to sum up in a few lines.

A Songwoman, Tjanara began with clapping sticks and song. In yarning style, she told aspects of her life from childhood abuse by priests to the challenge of establishing Indigenous Policy in both State and Federal Public Services, facing many obstacles and frustrations. She has taken her message of Indigenous Law, Culture and Spirituality to Europe and the Americas and continues to educate through many Australian Universities as a lecturer and researcher.

**Thursday 19 November: Suzanne Leal – *The Deceptions***

**This was our first Zoom Lunch Hour Talk.**

Suzanne is the chair of the fiction and poetry panel for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards and a senior member of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. She told of how a friendship with her refugee landlady inspired the novel, the story of a woman kept captive in the Jewish ghetto of Theresienstadt and the Czech soldier who becomes her prison guard. Suzanne discussed the nature of deception and betrayal and the place of truth in families whose secrets have long been guarded. She also spoke about the challenges of creating fiction based on truth and the moral issues that arise when writing about the Holocaust.

**Michele Ginswick**

Convenor

## EQUALITY RIGHTS ALLIANCE (ERA)

ERA is one of six Women's Alliances funded by the Commonwealth Government to (1) bring together women's organisations and individuals from across Australia to share information, identify issues that affect them and identify solutions; and (2) engage actively with the Government on policy issues as part of a better, more informed and representative dialogue between women and government. ERA is the 'overarching' member of the Women's Alliance network, providing and facilitating connections between the other Alliances as well as linking the 65 women's organisations connected directly with ERA. One of its important contributions is facilitating and advising Australian women's organisations about participation in international deliberations on women, in particular the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

ERA connects with the member organisations, including the Jessie Street National Women's Library, through nominated member representatives. I am the member representative for JSNWL.

The other five Alliances are currently: Australian Women Against Violence (AWAVA); Economic Security for Women (eS4w); the Harmony Alliance, representing migrant and refugee women and their organisations; the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alliance (NATSIWA); and the National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC). After considerable lobbying, the Government has agreed to include an Alliance representing Women Living with Disability. Simultaneously, the Government has advised that, given the economic challenges of COVID-19, it cannot afford to fund an additional Alliance and so has invited competitive tenders for ongoing funding from the existing Alliances and from outside organisations for a continuing set of only six Alliances. The tender period has closed; outcomes are expected in May or June.

During the past year ERA joined us all in operating on ZOOM and was rewarded by even fuller attendance at organised events.

During 2020-21 ERA has made, among others, the following contributions:

- Position Statement on Reimagining Child Care, following a Round Table on Child Care policy and following the earlier issue of a Policy Statement on Housing for Women.
- Submission to Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Homelessness.
- Submission to Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 Inquiry into Australian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Pre-Budget submission and Post-Budget analysis of the October National Budget, stressing that, 'It is imperative that Australia's Federal Budget is responsive to the gendered nature of the COVID-19 crisis and is designed to optimize the role gender equity can play in Australia's economic recovery.'

- A ZOOM webinar, together with YWCA, on Breaking Down the #Bloke Based Budget.
- A ZOOM min-summit followed by issue of a position paper on the importance of Gender Related Budgeting (GRB).
- ZOOM Members Meeting in February 2021, to replace the cancelled annual Members' Meeting in May 2020, at which it was agreed that ERA's most important values are: diversity and inclusivity; solidarity; human rights; and intersectionality.
- Support for the March4Justice actions on 15 March 2021 and endorsement on behalf of member organisations of the concurrent open letter to the Prime Minister.

In the international arena ERA has:

Provided a webinar on International Engagement on Women's Human Rights and Gender Inequality.

Played the lead role in drafting the gender section of the NGO Coalition Shadow Report in the context of the Australian Universal Periodic Review (AUPR) to the UN Human Rights Commission.

Endorsed a letter to International Labour Organisation (ILO) member states from the NGO Coalition to End Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, asking them to ratify the ILO Convention 190 on Harassment in the Workplace. Australia has not yet ratified the Convention.

Coordinated, together with NATSIA and the Harmony Alliance, the NGO report in response to recommendations made to Australia by the CEDAW Committee following submission of Australia's National Report in July 2018.

In support of the UN CSW65 being held in New York from 15-26 March 2021, ERA: Together with the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation, University of Canberra and the ANU Gender Institute is running a virtual and in-person CSW Conference from 21 to 24 March, including a training day on CSW and international engagement and sessions focusing on the CSW themes.

Together with the National Rural Women's Network, the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), and the NGO Women's Rights and Gender Equality Network, and working with the Federal Office for Women and the Department of foreign Affairs and Trade, has set up and publicised daily online briefings open to women during CSW.

Has provided a link to the CSW NGO Side Events schedule.

Has provided a link to the official program for CSW, and to UN TV on which parts of CSW may be made available.

Any of the reports and links I have mentioned can be followed up on the ERA website at [www.equalityrightsalliance.org.au](http://www.equalityrightsalliance.org.au).

**Janet Ramsay PSM**

JSNWL Member Representative

## NEWSLETTER

Despite the 2020 restrictions imposed by COVID-19, through the dedication of our editors Kris Clarke and Jessica Stewart, proof-reader Jan Burnswoods, Lynne Morton and Library volunteers, the Newsletter continued to thrive and meet all its deadlines. Four eight-page issues were produced in February, May, July and November.

Barbara Henery and Lynne Morton commenced work on updating our database of Australian publishers and International women's Libraries with a view to offering a digital copy of our Newsletter rather than a hard copy. Jessica Stewart has greatly facilitated the Newsletter production by downloading the Indesign software on her home computer.

Content reflected the richness of the Library's activities and diversity of our volunteers' expertise and interests. Following are some highlights.

Lynne Morton's February edition article on the valuable contribution the diverse holdings of our many donors make to filling the gaps in our collections. These include the Working Women's Centre, Newcastle and the Women's Studies Resource Centre, Adelaide.

The May edition front page usually profiles our Annual Luncheon speaker, 2020 being climate scientist Professor Lesley Hughes. COVID-19 changed this and it was replaced by an article, *Testing Our Humanity*, by Board Chair, Jozefa Sobski in which she reflected on how Jessie Street would have responded to the pandemic as a 'feminist and humanitarian.'

The July/August edition front page featured a piece by Saha Jones, Next Generation Development Manager, Art Gallery of NSW, on how the painting by young artist Lucinda James, donated to our Library was inspired by the 2017 Uluru First Nations National Constitutional Convention.

The November issue front page farewelled Susan Ryan, activist and long-term Library member. Jan Burnswoods' article paid tribute to Susan's effective and lasting contribution to advancing Australian women's rights as both a politician and an activist. The usual article on the Annual Luncheon was replaced with members reminiscing over outstanding Luncheon speakers from the past including Helen Reddy, Quentin Bryce AO and Anne Summers.

The Newsletter Committee remains committed to its key remit of keeping our membership informed and engaged in our Library's activities.

We look forward to 2021 being yet another year of reporting on and sharing with our members/readers how the Library is functioning and bringing to light inspiring stories of interest to our members.

**Suzanne Marks**  
Convenor

**BOARD 2020**

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

Public Officer: Sherri Hilario

Hon. Auditor: Jann Skinner

**VOLUNTEERS 2020**

Sue Baker, Kathryn Berenger, Jean Burns, Jan Burnswoods, Wendy Chester, Kris Clarke, Rima D'Arcy, Dale Dengate, Amy Denmeade, Isobel Dewar, Gina Dolphin, Lyn Eggins, Lee Fitzgerald, Pat Francis, Jennifer Furness, Michele Ginswick, Diane Hague, Robyn Harriott, Barbara Henery, Sherri Hilario, Howard Houliston, Beverley Kingston, Jane Lander, Roslyn Leal, Christine Lees, Hanne Marks, Suzanne Marks, Anne McNabb, Lyn Mealey, Lynne Morton, Julianne Patterson, Lorna Paviour, Kerith Power, Susan Price, Janet Ramsay PSM, Vallie Rigg, Marion Shaw, Christine Smith, Marc Samuel Smith, Jozefa Sobski AM, Beverley Sodbinow, Jessica Stewart, Pat Sutton, Stella Wailes, Judy Watts, Aleit-Marei Woodward.

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