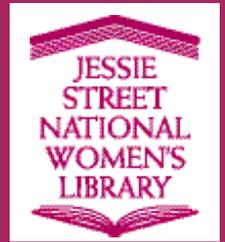




Vol 33 , No.1 — February 2022

# NEWSLETTER

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



## Progress on the Library Collections in 2021–22

While the coronavirus pandemic has limited the attendance of our volunteers at the Library, it has not stopped our thinking and planning, nor indeed our work. Important tasks are progressing on the poster collection and the archives.

The archives team has a number of collections ready to add to the Library catalogue. A major task for 2022 is to finalise the physical and intellectual control of our collection of banners. Special shelving was acquired some time ago so the banners could be rolled with appropriate archival fabric. Most of the banners have been photographed – a daunting task given the size of some of them – with editing now needed so the images can be uploaded to the online catalogue, making them publicly available.

The oldest banner was carried in the International Women's Day march in Sydney in 1972. The first large IWD march, it was organised by a Women's Liberation collective. Around 4000 women and some men made their way through the streets, causing traffic chaos, ending with women's theatre in Hyde Park. Several other IWD banners are in the collection.

An important group of banners came from the former Canberra Women's Archive in 1993. It was amongst a large collection of papers and photographs relating to the Anzac Day protest marches in Canberra in the early 1980s. An enormous banner, 'In memory of all women of all countries raped in all wars', was carried at the front of the march in 1981. The Library was glad to be able to lend this banner to the Canberra Museum and Gallery in 2019 for an exhibition on activism. Another banner, 'Lest they recall', made a pointed comment on Anzac Day rhetoric.

The Library's biggest collection of banners came from the Women's Peace Camp at the secretive American-Australian base at Pine Gap. Organised by Women for Survival, the protest drew 800 women to the desert in November 1983. The feminist artist Frances Phoenix was in Alice Springs in 1982 during preparations for the camp, and initiated the *Double our Numbers* project, calling on women around Australia to contribute self-portrait banners as symbolic participants in the protest. Hundreds of banners were painted and sent to Alice Springs to be stitched together and attached to poles. They made a huge impression when carried in procession to the base, then laid against the fences. Wonderful photographs remain, but many of the banners were afterwards lost.

In 2002 Frances organised for three banners, including one she designed herself, plus 100 slides and photographs she had taken of most of the

banners, to be donated to the Library. They were featured in our Pine Gap exhibition at Parliament House in 2009. Women who had participated in the protest donated a range of material to the Library for the exhibition, including three huge banners painted in the mall in Armidale, where scores of women and children lay on the calico and members of Armidale-Uralla Women for Survival drew around them. (*See our short piece later in this issue on The Women's Library in Newtown which received Phoenix's book collection after her death.*)

*Jan Burnswoods*

One of the few benefits of the Library's operating with only a handful of volunteers during the pandemic has been the space and time for me to embark on a major re-organisation of the posters. This project was prompted by the recent donations of two cabinets, as well as substantial poster donations over the past couple of years.

Contemporary artist and political poster maker Wendy Murray has given the Library 40 posters and two books. Issues covered in Murray's posters include social housing, women's equality, Aboriginal rights and the environment. We are looking forward to a collaboration with Wendy, later this year, on a poster for the Library based on her equality series and incorporating an image of Jessie Street standing in front of the Equal Rights Campaign Headquarters, Geneva in 1931/32.

In December, Barbara Henery and I were interviewed by academics from Charles Sturt University for their program on Independent Australian Libraries and Archives, Part 2. Over the past year they have been making a series covering a range of topics including the relationship between libraries and under-served communities and social justice and information. We talked about the history of the Library and why it was established, the range and depth of our holdings, how it is funded and who our users are. We also talked about how we have built relationships with institutional archives and libraries as well as with TAFE and Charles Sturt University. We even tried to tackle the question 'why a library in the 21st century?'

We felt privileged to be included in this series.

*Link to Part 1: <https://2mce.org/podcast/sics-radio-independent-australian-libraries-and-archives-part-1/>*

*Link to Part 2: <https://2mce.org/podcastfilter/sics-radio/>.*

*Sherri Hilario*



Volunteer Pat Francis with 1st prize winner Kari Klevje, Connie Dimas jewellery prize

### Annual Raffle 2021 prize winners

- 1st Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour package, Kari Klevje
- 2nd Connie Dimas Jewellery, Rosemary Pynor
- 3rd Visa Cash gift card, Diane Deane
- 4th High Tea, Altitude Restaurant, Shangri-La Hotel, Zephie Cerny
- 5th Captain Cook Top Deck Lunch cruise for two, Lyndsay Connors
- 6th Roaring Stories Bookshop Balmain gift voucher, Penny Carosi
- 7th Signed books *Radicals and Green Bans*, *Red Union* plus a bottle of wine, Jane Pollard
- 8th Signed books *Present Tense*, and *Her Kind of Luck*, plus a bottle of wine, Marie Breen
- 9th Two bottles of wine from Kurri Kurri TAFE, Chris Kirby
- 10th Two bottles of wine from Kurri Kurri TAFE, Rosalind Dey

## Library Book Club

The next Book Club Meeting will be held at the Library on Wednesday 23 February 2022.

We will be discussing *Leaping Into Waterfalls*, Bernadette Brennan's biography of Gillian Mears, author of novels *Foals Bread*, *The Mint Lawn*, *Fineflour* and many short stories. Mears died in 2016 after a long battle with MS.

## Notice of Annual General Meeting 2022

The Library's **Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 12 April** starting at 11am. Due to current uncertainty, the location, whether physical or virtual, will be advised at a later date.

A minimum of ten members is required to constitute a quorum for the AGM. All current members are welcome.

The agenda, draft minutes of the 2021 AGM, Annual Report 2021 and the Audited Annual Financial Report, 2021 will be available the week before the meeting.

Nominations are called for the following positions: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer plus no fewer than 5 ordinary members of the Board. Nominations close on Tuesday 5 April 2022. Please consider nominating for the Board yourself or suggesting it to a friend. Nomination forms can be sent in an email attachment or are available from the Library.

Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Ultimo Community Centre. There are no Board meetings in January, April or September.

**Please RSVP by Friday 1 April 2022.**

## 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, Suzie Forell, Michele Ginswick, Robyn Harriott, Barbara Henery, Beverley Kingston, Susan Price, Janet Ramsay, Beverley Sodbinow, Christine Yeats

## Editorial Team

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

# Shoulder to shoulder through the pandemic

The Library was not fully functional all year as COVID disruptions continued but we managed in our Zoom environment to hold Board meetings. The public highlights were the *Brazen Hussies* screening in the Palace Cinema in Leichhardt, Lunch Hour Talks, the Annual Luncheon video address by Professor Lesley Hughes on women's activism around climate change and the Annual Raffle via Zoom. We have ended the year with the signing of a new five year lease with the generous subsidy from the City of Sydney.

During the year, there were issues we protested and some events we celebrated. We protested the under-funding of the National Archives to Attorney-General, Michaelia Cash, joining a huge cross-section of the community in support of fully implementing the recommendations of the Tune Review.

A contingent of Library members joined the thousands in the March for Justice rallies across Australia which marked a turning point for women's rights. Grace Tame was Australian of the Year and the Women's Safety summit was the Federal Government's somewhat belated response to the protests and their aftermath.

We mourned the loss of some cherished members. Their contribution will be remembered through our continued work to keep women's words and work alive.

*Jozefa Sobski AM. Board Chair*



*Volunteers at Papardelle enjoy a convivial lunch after a difficult year.*

## Christmas party

On 14 December Library volunteers gathered at Pappardelle Ristorante to celebrate the end of another year at our Christmas lunch. We were honoured to have among us Grey Fingleton, grandson of Jessie Street.

Having welcomed guests, Jozefa extended a special tribute of thanks to Jean Burns and Sherri Hilario for keeping the Library functioning in 2021 through the lockdown, from attending to enquiries at the front desk to preparing posters for exhibition. Jozefa herself and a small band of dedicated volunteers deserve our thanks too.

Food was abundant as was the wine, and entertainment. Kerith Power strummed her guitar and sang the folk songs that brought back memories of earlier days, the afternoon passing very amicably as members of the audience joined in. *The First Australian Women's Songbook*, a project to which Kerith has committed years of time and energy, has finally been published. Some of the songs, including *Jessie Street: A heroine of mine*, will be featured at the National Folk Festival in Canberra around Easter this year.

We also remembered those volunteers who left us in 2021, and raised our glasses in a toast to our much loved founder, Shirley Jones.

*Kris Clarke*

### Capital Investment Fund

The Capital Investment Fund was launched in September 2009 and supports essential Library operations. Your generous donations have taken it to \$515,637.

With interest rates so low, it has not been sufficient to employ an administrator and the Library now aims to reach a target of \$1,000,000. If you would like to contribute, please indicate on the membership/donation form.

### CIF donations since November 2021

Julie James Bailey    Cathy Bloch    Anne Giles  
Riana King            Sue Comrie-Thomson

# November Lunch Hour Talk

25 November 2021

Amanda Tattersall

Powerful movements for change

A thought-provoking Lunch Hour Talk was held at the Customs House Library as eased restrictions enabled audiences to attend in person, after many months of lockdown to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in New South Wales.

The speaker was Dr Amanda Tattersall from the Faculty of Science and Social Policy Lab at the University of Sydney. She outlined her recent post-doctoral fellowship – Building Powerful Movements, which examines people power around the world. Examples of popular activism which have succeeded outside government bureaucratic processes include addressing housing shortages in Barcelona and Cape Town. Examining past successes in Australia, Tattersall cited the founding of the Elsie Women's Refuge as a successful result of people power.

Popular activism is a growing trend in many countries as democracies around the world falter under challenges such as climate change, the Covid pandemic and refugees.

Tattersall is best known as the co-founder of GetUp, Australia's most successful digital advocacy organisation with over one million members. She is also a recent recipient of the University of Sydney Vice Chancellor's Award in the field of Outstanding Mentorship and Leadership. The awards, a whole-of-university, peer-nominated program, were established in 2016 to celebrate exceptional staff performance.

For some years, she has been observing powerful social movements, both in Australia and overseas, trying to understand how and why they happen, why some work whilst others do not. Applying the results of her findings, she has incorporated new techniques

into training for small groups entitled ChangeMakers Organising School - How Small Groups Make Big Change.

Tattersall reflected that her early family life was apolitical, though her grandmother migrated from England seeking a more egalitarian lifestyle in Australia. Once at university, however, she became actively involved in the student movement and then joined the Labor Party, later seeking work in the union movement. But her ongoing observations of the methodology of activism – what it takes to make social change – found many of the traditional ways of activism no longer bring about much needed social change. The 'Play



By The Rules' method often fails. Letter writing frequently elicits no response.

Joining political parties often encounters factional obstacles. 'Organising' and 'mobilising' have achieved much media attention in recent times with walks and strikes attended by many thousands if not millions, including Walk Against Iraq Invasion (a record turnout but the decision to invade was not revoked), Women's Walk For Justice (PM failed to meet protestors), Hong Kong Pro-Democracy protests (Chinese Government suppressed and imprisoned leaders). These methods, though popular, Tattersall said, are hard to sustain and have limited success. Also they tend to attract 'like minded' believers rather than converting 'fence-sitters'.

In 2001, attempts within the Labor Party to address the Tampa refugee crisis did not succeed. In response, Tattersall took a different tack and formed Labor for Refugees, a movement that opposed mandatory detention. Importantly this internal group worked across Labor's factional divides and achieved the necessary backing to oppose conservative views, though it was not a permanent solution, both major parties reverting to hardline policies despite strong opposition.

Might success flow from working across boundaries to achieve change? In 2007, Tattersall initiated the Sydney Alliance to look at ways to achieve 'the common good' by bringing diverse cultural, religious and community leaders together to build collective power in coalitions. These teams then take local collective action to put pressure on decision makers. One of their successes, Voices for Power, focuses on a range of affordable energy solutions for communities in Western Sydney, whilst International Student Hub is tackling social isolation and welfare support.

Other problems being tackled by this method include housing shortages and asylum seekers. The success of Sydney Alliance is founded on the principle of building relationships and avoiding being overtly critical of those with differing viewpoints. The emphasis must be on taking action not just wishing or praying. Tattersall firmly believes leadership is critical to success and that leaders are made not born. Thus targeted training is an important tool for the success of Sydney Alliance projects.

Concluding her talk, Tattersall answered audience questions. One of the most important conclusions to arise from the discussion was that people power can grow from building sincere relationships with organisations rather than individuals. This in turn should create opportunities for individual involvement in the processes of change.

For further information see ChangeMakers website or the Sydney Alliance website.

*Report by Barbara Henery*

# The other women's library

Volunteering at the Sydney Writers' Festival in 2021, I met another long-time festival volunteer, Amelia Meaney (right). We were stationed together at the hotel where the visiting writers stay, assisting with transport to the precinct, or the airport, or just to chat about the Festival's offerings, where to get lunch, coffee or a cocktail, or Sydney and environs. It's a great job!

A digital and social media specialist, Amelia works with the Seymour Centre in arts marketing and when she told me that she volunteered at The Women's Library in Newtown, my ears pricked up. I had noticed it before, nestled in beside the Brown Street City of Sydney library where I used to take my small children for story hour.

We meant to get together after the Festival to talk feminist literature but Covid ended all that. The Library was closed when I met with Amelia in early January 2022 in this third Covid wave, so we finally caught up in Victoria Park.

In 2016 while studying at UTS, and in despair about the rise of Trump, she wanted to contribute to a feminist cause. She did a project on The Women's Library and was happy to raise her hand when it called for new volunteers. Like our Library, it operates with a core set of volunteers and it is the friendly community vibe which keeps her coming back.



She works there once a month, on a Sunday, cataloguing, doing day-to-day membership administration and generally keeping it running. The Women's Library holds many extraordinary books, including those from the personal collection of Zula Nittim, a founding member of WEL. It includes a collection of rare art books, formerly owned by Frances Phoenix, feminist artist (1950–2017).

The Women's Library received the collection three years ago when her sister, Sally, contacted them after her death. They are catalogued with 'Frances Phoenix collection' in the Notes field, so people can easily find them on the shelves.

An article by Dr Louise Mayhew about the collection and its significance in feminist art history is on the Women's Library website ([thewomenslibrary.org.au](http://thewomenslibrary.org.au)), and our Newsletter featured a substantial article on Phoenix's work in the November 2017 issue. The Library holds one of her banners and other materials (see this issue's front page). Making further connections and sharing resources between our feminist libraries is something I look forward to in 2022 and beyond.

*Jessica Stewart*

# Remembering Marion Shaw

In November Trish Doyle, MP for Blue Mountains, invited six Library volunteers who had worked with our former Board member Marion Shaw to lunch at Parliament House to celebrate Marion. Trish knew her well as a local ALP member and activist. We were joined by MPs Yasmin Catley and Jodi McKay. That afternoon Jodi gave her valedictory speech in the House, which we watched on the television monitor - Covid restrictions prevented our viewing from the public gallery.

We shared what Marion had meant to each of us, and expressed our admiration for Marion's qualities of loyalty, trust, and lifelong commitment to human rights and justice. Our three MPs spoke of what shaped their aspirations, which took them into politics. Both Trish and Yasmin kicked against family expectations to conform to traditional roles of wife and mother. Influenced by the changing values of their generation they forged their own paths into higher education, political activism and Parliament.

In her valedictory speech Jodi shared a story that demonstrates the barriers facing women aspiring to enter politics and, conversely, how far we have come. In her preselection bid for the seat of Newcastle

for the 2007 election, she was attacked by the ALP stalwart and former MP Arthur Wade who said, 'Nobody wants the girl'. She won the seat, went on to hold several shadow portfolios and retired from politics as Opposition Leader. How wrong Arthur was.

Jodie's story exemplifies what Marion fought for throughout her life, women's right to participate equally in every sphere of life. She is greatly missed.

*Suzanne Marks*



# Equality Rights Alliance News – 2021

‘Respect, dignity, choice, equality of opportunity and justice are fundamental to the safety, economic security and status of women in Australia.’

That is how the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) started its recent Pre-Budget Submission towards preparation of the forthcoming Budget.

The ERA brings together 66 non-government organisations, including the Jessie Street National Women’s Library, with a focus on the impact of policy and service delivery on women.

ERA is one of the six National Women’s Alliances funded by the Commonwealth Office for Women to provide women’s organisations with means of connecting with each other and providing information to government about women’s concerns.

ERA is responsible for work on the economic security of women and women’s leadership, linkage between the Alliances and supporting non-government Australian women in an international voice through the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These were exactly the roles Jessie Street had in mind when she played a leading role in ensuring that CSW was one of the foundation Commissions of the United Nations and insisted that community voices must be represented internationally.

A big piece of news in 2021 was the long-awaited continued funding of the Women’s Alliances for a period of 3 years. This means that ERA is once again fully staffed with three excellent part time workers.

Among major pieces of work by ERA during 2021, each of them endorsed by the Library, have been provision of information about the 65th session of the UN CSW in March and the international Gender Equality Forum, a continuation of the earlier World Women’s Conferences, in June; a submission before and analysis after the April Federal Budget; a submission to and participation in the National Summit on Women’s Safety in September; a submission to the Australian Government’s Review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012; and a Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights on the gender implications of the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021.

*Janet Ramsay, Library representative to ERA*

## Lunch Hour Talks

Venue/Time: 12.00-1.30pm. Customs House Library, 31 Alfred St, Sydney — on Circular Quay, enter via front of Customs House Cost: \$16 (members) \$22 (non-members) including light lunch. Pay at the door. Book by noon Monday before the talk. Ph (02) 9571 5359

**21 April 2022: Janet Ramsay**

***Australia’s first woman animator: Anne Comrie Jolliffe***

Anne Jolliffe was a pioneer and the first Australian woman to become a professional animator, in the days of a strictly sex segregated animation industry. Her career began when she got a job with the CSIRO Film Unit making educational and scientific animated films, but it was at the GTV studios in Melbourne with an American company, Fanfare Films, where her real work in animation began. Janet tells Anne’s fascinating story.

**21 July 2022 (postponed from February): Meredith Burgmann and Nadia Wheatley, *Radicals***

Meredith Burgmann and Nadia Wheatley share their own memories of 1960s campaigns against the Vietnam War and Apartheid, and in support of Aboriginal Land Rights, Women’s Liberation, Gay Liberation, and workers’ control. They bring to life the stories of other ‘radicals’ who rejected the political views and values of their family, school, church and class. Jozefa Sobski was one, and will join them at the talk

## Farewell Judy, Lyn and Pat

Sadly, the Covid scourge prevented the Lunch Hour Talk team from farewelling and thanking three of our longest serving volunteers in person this week. Nevertheless, Lyn Mealey, Judy Watts and Pat Sutton deserve our heartfelt thanks for their many years of devoted service to the Library, via their unstinting volunteering as Lunch Hour Talk helpers.



Most people are unaware of the many tasks which have to be dealt with on the day of a talk. These take a well oiled, willing group of women to ensure everyone who comes enjoys their day out. Where would we be without Lyn’s financial acumen and great tact as the collector of monies, without Judy’s sandwich skills and general overseeing of the catering, and without Pat’s willingness to be everything from meeter and greeter to sandwich collector.

This group of women began with the Lunch Hour Talks back when we were in Town Hall House and were organising 10 talks per year! As the Covid pandemic spread Lunch Hour Talks resorted to Zoom but all came back in person as soon as possible, with Covid Safety Rules in place.

Thank you Lyn. Thank you Judy. Thank you Pat. We will miss you as helpers, but please come back to be part of the audience when you can!

*Michele Ginswick, on behalf of the Lunch Hour Talks Team*



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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 Mon to Fri 10am to 3pm

#### 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 (Pyrmont to Bondi Junction) at Harris & Allan Sts. stop.
- \* Light rail: Central/Dulwich Hill to Exhibition; Randwick Junction/Circular Quay to Chinatown; or Kingsford/Circular Quay to Chinatown.
- \* There is limited two hour street meter parking available.

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