NEWSLETTER





Dr Bev Kingston honoured

Bev Kingston was a member of the Library Board from 2006 to 2022. When she was forced into Zoom mode by the Covid pandemic, and then by increasing physical challenges, she did not renominate for the Board. She did request, however, corresponding membership. She also assented to becoming a Library patron though in her usual self-deprecatory way she did not feel that she could be in the company of a former Governor-General. Board members, however, saw her as meriting very august company and enthusiastically approved her joining our other patrons.

On 28 November another organisation with which she has had a long association awarded her its medal for long and distinguished service. Our Board Chair and Secretary attended the ceremony at the State Library.

The Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB) held the ceremony to award Bev its medal. Professor Stephen Garton spoke warmly of her unique contribution to social history and the art of biography. He regarded her as one of the most innovative and original historians of the last fifty years. Her 31 entries in the ADB were masterpieces of the biographical art. Professor Garton instanced her recent entry on Russel Ward as providing a fascinating insight into the man.

Tom Griffiths, Chair of the Editorial Board of the ADB, spoke of Bev's

scholarship and editorial skills praising her for her wisdom and her generosity in mentoring emerging scholars. Her contribution represented an extraordinary record of public service.

The General Editor of the ADB, Professor Melanie Nolan commented on her skill, wisdom and diligence. The citation with the medal outlined her long association with the ADB

Find the same tides of the sam

commencing in 1970, when, as she told it, Professor

Frank Crowley at the University of NSW (UNSW) handed her the task of attending one of the early meetings of the ADB. But she had written entries from the 1960s. She remained a member of the Editorial Board from 1996 to 2021. For a quarter of a century she was the section editor for NSW, reviewing hundreds of entries.

Bev had a distinguished academic career at UNSW where she taught for 30 years. Her publications include one of the classic works of 1970s feminism, *MyWife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann:Women and Work in Australia* (1975). She worked on a supplementary volume of the ADB with nearly 30 per cent of the 'missing people' being women. Almost half of her own entries have been about women.

At our Library, Bev has been consistent in her quiet interventions in Board meetings where she often knitted her way through passionate arguments. She always entered these debates purposefully with a suggestion that became a solution. Her generosity with her time extended to making presentations in topic areas which were

her forte, including some fascinating History Week presentations.

The citation for the medal fittingly rates as 'outstanding' her contribution to the ADB and to the study and teaching of history in NSW. It adds that her longevity and the key roles she has filled with distinction for the ADB make her a worthy

recipient of the award of the ADB Medal.

We congratulate Bev on this recognition of her prodigious dedication.

Jozefa Sobski AM

Recent acquisition: Unfettered and Alive: a memoir

Anne Summers has been prominent in Australian media, politics and feminist activism for the past four decades. She has advised governments, been an award-winning journalist, founded and edited magazines — in Australia and in New York, led the international environmental organisation Greenpeace and even had her image on a postage stamp!

She is the author of eight books and this 2018 publication is a very readable memoir by this extraordinary Australian. The writing is honest, straightforward and engaging. Readers immediately identify with the emotional journey from pinnacles to troughs and she is frank at admitting shortcomings and mistakes.

Her revealing stories about encounters with famous and powerful people both in Australia and overseas are fascinating and we marvel at her stamina. Her refusal to give in has seen her succeed as a trail-blazing outsider and also as a gifted storyteller. An inspiring read.

Barbara Henery

2023 Book Club dates

22 March: *Moving Among Strangers*, Gabrielle Carey

26 April: Modern Love: the lives of John and Sunday Reed, Kendrah Morgan and Lesley Harding

Wish list

Maybe you might pass on secondhand copies to the Library if you found them in your Christmas stocking?

Fiction, poetry and essays

- * Salonica Burning, Gail Jones
- * Love and Virtue, Diana Reid
- * The Sun Walks Down, Fiona McFarlane
- * Wandering With Intent, Kim Mahood
- * An Afterlife for Rosemary Lamb, Louise Wolhuter

Biography and Memoir

- * Shirley Hazzard: a writing life, Brigitta Olubas
- * The Ninth Life of a Diamond Miner, Grace
 Tame
- Nothing Bad Ever Happens Here Heather Rose
- * Chasing Wrongs and Rights Elaine Pearson
- * Under Her Skin: the life and work of Professor Fiona Wood, Sue Williams
- * Ten Steps to Nanette, Hannah Gadsby
- * Tell Me Again, Amy Thunig
- * Those Dashing McDonagh Sisters, Mandy Sayer

History, politics and cultural studies

- * Femina, Janina Ramirez
- * Bold Types, Patricia Clarke
- * How Many More Women, Jennifer Robinson &

Annual General Meeting 2023

The Library's **Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 11 April 2023** starting at 12 noon*.

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

The agenda, draft minutes of the 2022 AGM, Annual Report 2022 and the Audited Annual Financial Report 2022 will be available the week before the meeting.

Nominations are called for the following positions: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer plus no fewer than five ordinary members of the Board. Nomination forms can be sent in an email attachment or are available from the Library. Nominations must be received by Friday 31 March 2023.

Please consider nominating for the Board yourself or suggesting it to a friend.

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 28 March 2023 for catering purposes to the Secretary at:

info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au.

*Subject to the timing of the airconditioning upgrade.

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

Editorial Team

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

Book review: Mandy Beaumont The Furies and Amy Remeikis On Reckoning

Two recently released books recount women's trauma and silencing by men, and their rage. In *On Reckoning*, an essay in Hachette's 'On' series, *Guardian* journalist Amy Remeikis documents the rising tide of women's anger that led to thousands marching in last year's March4Justice. In *The Furies*, novelist Mandy Beaumont carries that anger in a compelling story of trauma, both inherited and present.

The Furies opens with Cynthia, just 16 and abandoned. Cynthia's young sister Mallory is dead, her mother has been taken away by the police, and her father has left them. This is Australian pastoral noir. Cynthia's parents started out with hope but this is gradually replaced by screaming, desperation, and madness.

Some chapters are written from her mother's point of view, showing her plans and young love whittled away by poverty, fear and stasis. Cynthia's mother wants to leave the farm, but she and Cynthia are stuck because of her husband's neglect and abdication of responsibility.

When her mother becomes pregnant, her depression and displacement is cemented. Mallory cries constantly, and it is Cynthia who cares for her. Her father leaves them alone for longer and longer periods. He roams the property and works in town, where he sees other women. Her mother, starved of company, isolated, hears voices as she descends into madness. With both

parents gone, Cynthia takes a job at the local abattoir.

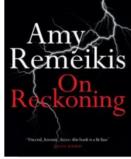
Beaumont writes long paragraphs, her sentences ending abruptly. The next starting where it left off. They discomfort. Disjointed, as are the carcasses of the slaughtered beasts.

Cynthia daydreams of her mother coming to look for her. She is constantly aware of the men surrounding her, men whose power allows them to take what they want. Men who gather into a circle, who grab their crotches when she walks past, who call out 'slut'. When Cynthia is thrown into a huge bucket of blood, her boyfriend comes after her 'with a grin on his face. Oh Cyn, love, it was all just a bit of fun.'

On Reckoning mirrors this sentiment. Remeikis writes: 'It's the men who tell you to smile as you walk down the street, like they own and deserve your pleasant countenance. The men who sit too close on public transport, who spread their limbs like conquering forces into your space. It's the men who follow too closely as you walk down the street, hurling abuse because you looked at them wrong, were wearing something wrong, responded to them wrong.'

On Reckoning is a call for change and what we need to do to effect that change. Recognise it is men who assault. Turn the language around to indicate how many men will assault rather than how many women will be assaulted.





Understand that to only see women through the prism of

being someone else's daughter or mother or sister robs them of their own story, 'wearing another's face as you tell it.'

She hears the Furies in the bush 'the vengeful female divinities ... who ascended from the underworld to pursue and punish the wicked on Earth.' She hears the voices of women who have died, all the women who have suffered violence by men.

'They are a reckoning. For. Your hand on the back of her throat. ... The 'hilarious' rape joke you tell your mates. It's. You telling a woman to be quiet. It's. Touching her lightly on her breasts to confuse her into thinking that it didn't really happen. It's. Walking too close to her at night when she is nearly home.

Remeikis asks: 'Who knows where rage lives while it's dormant? Rage, once sparked, doesn't dissipate. It transforms, it leaks, it transcends and it builds. But it doesn't disappear. '

Beaumont answers: 'I want you to know, I really want you to know, that we are ready to start this.'

Jessica Stewart

First published in Newtown Review of Books.

Upcoming Lunch Hour Talk

16 March: Isobelle Barrett Meyering: Feminism and the Making of a Child Rights Revolution 1969–1979

In a new study of the women's liberation movement, Dr Isobelle Barrett-Meyerling places children at the centre of the feminist campaign. In challenging expectations of female domesticity, Australian women's liberationists were accused of being anti-mother and anti-child. Isobelle's talk will provide a much-needed reassessment of this stereotype.

Isobelle Barrett Meyering is a historian of Australian feminism, childhood and the family. She is currently a Macquarie University Research Fellow. She completed her PhD at UNSW, where she also taught in gender studies and history, and previously worked at the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse. This is her first book.

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 (nonmembers) including light lunch. Pay at
the door. Book by noon Monday before
the talk. Ph (02) 9571 5359

LHT dates for your 2023 diary

25 May 22 June 24 August 19 October

Lunch Hour Talk: Digital Archive of Women's Songs

24 November 2022

Dale Dengate and Kerith Power shared their exhilaration at the Lunch Hour Talk after the successful launch of the First Australian Women's Songbook, an undertaking of many years.

Their meeting in the 1980s at the National Folk Festival in Queensland was the beginning of a long partnership

that culminated in the launch of the Songbook at last year's National Folk Festival. Dale and Kerith thanked the Library volunteers for their help in digitising the songbook, in particular Sherri Hilario and Lynne Morton.

In the 1990s, Kerith had requested women send in their songs from the 70s to the 90s. They came in their hundreds, many handwritten or on old cassettes, and the intermittent, painstaking work of selecting and collating songs began. Pre-internet, this was not an easy task. The criteria for selecting the songs included that they had to be written by women and contain themes of interest to women: there are not many conventional love songs included. The result is a unique online digital archive preserving 50 women's songs (firstaustralianlwomenssongbook.com). Read more about the Songbook launch in the July 2022 Newsletter.

One of the challenges was attempting to contact the intellectual property owners for permission to reproduce the songs. Responses were sparse due to difficulty in making contact; some of the songwriters were deceased. Indigenous songwriters included Lucy Cox from the Dampier Peninsula WA. Another song by Vi Lewin is on the subject of nostalgia for home in the Pilbara. Margaret Kitamura's *Whose Hand/Whose Land* is a protest against the burning of an Aboriginal settlement at Mapoon.

Kerith spoke of her growing political awareness as a young woman. In 1968, not long married, her husband was conscripted to war in Vietnam. When he returned two years later, they both became involved in the Moratorium/conscientious objector movement. It prompted their move out of Sydney to a rural area in northern NSW, and led to a developing political consciousness. With the birth of her first child, her politics became more women-centred.

Kerith and Dale enlivened the talk with a presentation of some of the songs. The first was Chrissy Shaw's *Beryl*, *oh Beryl* from the musical *At the Crossroads*, celebrating the passing of a beloved CWA president, delivered with feeling and gusto. This was followed by a rendition by Jo Belford, *Reclaim the Night* — a theme that has captured the imagination of campaigners calling for women to be able to walk alone at night without fear of harassment or attack.

As well as listing the songwriters and their songs, the



website contains links to several women's peace associations. Another theme is environmental: 'women singing for the earth', as in Deb Dare's For the Earth and Carmel de Franchi's We are all one, sung by Kerith and Dale.

There were snatches of other songs, the talk concluding on a high note with Judy Small's rousing tribute to *Jessie Street*, A Heroine of Mine, with the audience enthusiastically joining in — 'She was an inspiration for the women of her time/And Jessie Street, you'll always be a heroine of mine!'

Kris Clarke

Vale Jennifer Furness

Jennifer and I shared many conversations as she trained me to be assistant membership officer at the Library.

She had introduced a computerised system as payroll manager at a large company before she retired. and brought this expertise to the Library, with membership data moving from paper to the current system. Trying to work out exactly how many members and associations had paid for the Newsletter was a challenge, and for a while Jennifer was the only person who could do it.

Jennifer served as membership officer for over a decade until cancer attacked her body again; she had overcome it twice, in 1990 and 2014. Speaking with her on the phone last year, Jennifer didn't complain, she just felt it 'weird' that her body was attacking her.

Jennifer took on various positions in her two Probus Clubs and was involved in Inner Wheel, where she served in several Club positions as well as at District level. While the District A51 Chairman, she addressed an International Inner Wheel Conference to much acclaim.

In 2015, Jennifer was amazed to find that a box of six medals she had in her wardrobe belonged to her great-aunt, Matron Alice Cashin. Cashin was aboard the Australian hospital ship *Gloucester Castle* when it was torpedoed in 1917. She made sure that 399 injured soldiers and 33 nurses were rescued before she clambered onto a lifeboat. Together with the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, Jennifer set about ensuring that Cashin's grave became a fitting memorial, with its life size bronze statue, in recognition of her heroic efforts (see Jennifer's article in the November 2016 Newsletter for the full story).

I enjoyed the stories she told of travel to many countries with Ron. When a bus was wrecked by young Muslims in Amman and passengers were being escorted by the military to safety, some panicked. 'They have a lot to be angry about', was Jennifer's gentle comment.

Jennifer was one of many Library volunteers who brought their strong commitment to ensuring recognition of women's contribution to society, but are often overlooked because of their gracious and quiet way of dealing with life.

Volunteers party 2022

The Library's end-of-year gathering took place at Haba Ocean, a Chinese restaurant in Haberfield, with volunteers coming together to celebrate the close of another challenging year at the Library. It was a welcoming atmosphere as festively dressed volunteers greeted each other and seated themselves, with Jean Burns doing the rounds serving drinks.



We enjoyed prawn dumplings — formerly only served at Chinese New Year and believed to bring prosperity — followed by platters of sliced meat and green vegetables and bowls of fried and steamed rice, everyone helping themselves from the lazy Susan. Conversation and wine flowed in abundance, the meal concluding with fortune cookies.





In her address, Jozefa thanked the many volunteers who returned to work in the Library this year after Covid lockdowns and, in particular, Jean Burns and Sherri Hilario for their indefatigable work throughout the year; she presented them both with a gift. What could be more appropriate than contemplating well-known Australian feminists when one is drying the dishes (see picture!)? Another stalwart joining these tireless volunteers is Hanne Marks, whose cheerful voice is likely to greet you if you phone the Library on a Friday.

Jozefa assured us that the Library is holding steady on a secure financial basis, and will soon receive a boost from a generous bequest left by recently deceased Sue Wills (see article in the November Newsletter).

Kris Clarke



Myra Willard, forgotten historian and teacher

One hundred years ago, in 1923, the very first book to be published by the new Melbourne University Press was written by a woman, Myra Willard. Who was she?

Born in 1887, Myra became a pupil teacher at Greta Public School in the Hunter Valley in 1904. In 1908, she was awarded a scholarship to Sydney Teachers' College. Allowed by the Education Department to enrol at the University of Sydney, she studied under George Arnold Wood, the first Challis Professor of History. Willard graduated with First Class Honours in 1917 and won several prizes.

In 1920, the University of Sydney awarded Willard a postgraduate scholarship in history. Wood supervised Willard's study of migration to Australia. Her essay earned her a prize from the University of Melbourne, awarded to cover publication costs. Willard took

full advantage of it, paying the new Melbourne University Press to publish *The History of theWhite Australia Policy to 1920*—its first publication. Published women historians were to be rare for many decades thereafter.

Willard returned to teaching, first at Fort Street Girls High School, then as assistant examiner for the Education Department, but wrote no more history. She died in 1971.

There is a fascinating discussion of Willard's and other books in a chapter entitled 'Colour' in the book *Making Australian History* by Anna Clark, published in 2022. As Clark explains, in its objectivity and empiricism, reflecting the prevailing views of the historical discipline at the time, Willard's book recounts the policy's development without any contingency or critique.

In presenting White Australia as an

unproblematic aspiration and ideology, the book is revealed as a product of its time, implicated in the endurance of the policy, despite its efforts to be an unbiased historical account of it.

Willard's book became the standard work on the legislation and operation of the White Australia Policy and was republished in 1967 with minor corrections by the author, and again in 1974. However, its failure to address the policy's underlying racism rendered it out of step with the reality of Australia's post-war immigration and the 'new history' driven by feminist, labour and indigenous activists.

For anyone interested in Australian history and the writing about it, Clark's book is illuminating. There are chapters on contact, protest, gender, the history wars and much more, all timely and perceptive.

Jan Burnswoods

From Art courses to Zoom: new interests

If your working life is behind you and you are interested in keeping your mind and body active, u3a (University of the Third Age) is sure to have something to offer. With an extensive range of face-to-face and Zoom learning as well as social and physical activities, it's a great way to pursue your interests with other active minds in a collaborative and welcoming environment, free from the stress and expense of formal education.

Sydney u3a holds courses and events for retirees or semi-retirees across the entire Sydney region within local community spaces for an annual fee of \$85, giving you access to over 250 courses and lectures, discussion and social groups, events and tours, as well as sporting and recreational activities.

- Learn a language, bridge, calligraphy, or a musical instrument
- Join a walking, dancing or lunch group, or play croquet or pickleball, visit an art gallery or take a behindthe-scenes tour of some of Sydney's

most historic sites

- Sharpen your writing or artistic skills
- Discuss current affairs, politics, history, philosophy, books or movies
- * Attend literary festivals and regional holidays.



Sydney u3a, like other u3as Australia and worldwide, is a not-for-profit organisation run entirely by volunteers and also welcomes anyone who would be interested in coordinating a group, teaching a course or providing administrative support.

The Semester 1 January – June 2023 Course Book is available online – visit sydneyu3a.org to see what's on offer or click on the Zoom tab or the events tab. You can also keep up to date via Sydney u3a Facebook.

Equality Rights Alliance (ERA)

In the ERA Newsletter in December 2022, Convenor Helen Dalley-Fisher wrote, 'What a year this has been! Exhausting, frustrating, exhilarating and ultimately productive.'

There were strong but not very hopeful submissions on behalf of the 65 ERA member women's organisations, including the Library, in the early months of the year. For example, one was to a Senate Committee on the proposed Religious Discrimination Bill. arguing that it would wind back protections for women under the Sex Discrimination Act while failing to protect vulnerable women of minority faiths. and another to a Review of the Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Now ERA is again. in the words of the Convenor, 'running to keep up with a government which is not only prepared to talk constructively about women's rights but is prepared to enact legislation'.

At each step of this exciting if demanding new world, the views of women are being sought by government through ERA and the member organisations, and ERA is gathering those views through wide-ranging consultations. I have taken part in several of those on behalf of the Library. Member organisations are also briefed on, and support invited for policy submissions made by ERA on our behalf, examples below.

- * In August, the Convenor took part in and spoke at the Jobs and Skills Summit after a consultation with member representatives, a round table with the Office for Women and the five specialist policy subject and population group women's alliances, and briefings to senior officials.
- * Also in August, member representatives were consulted on input to the government's proposed National Strategy to Advance Gender Equality.
- In October, ERA was represented in the Budget 'lock-down' and later provided a briefing on the Budget to member representatives. The new government is committed to principles of Gender Responsive Budgeting, for which ERA has long advocated.
- * ERA has made a submission to the Commonwealth Treasury in relation to the Employment White Paper.
- * A member survey was recently conducted to prepare a pre-Budget submission and a submission to a Senate Poverty Inquiry.
- * Preparations are under way for ERA's role in providing civil society input to the 2023 67th meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, including a community survey on the Commission's theme of Gender in a Digital World.

To quote the Convenor again, 'It's an exciting time to be working on women's rights in Australia.'

Janet Ramsay Library representative to ERA

Capital Investment Fund

Since it was launched in September 2009, the Capital Investment Fund has reached \$605,260.00. Our target is \$1,000,000, which will provide essential support for Library operations. If you would like to contribute, please indicate on the membership/donation form.

CIF donations since November 2022

Carolyn Bloch Julie James Bailey Sue Comrie-Thomson Daphne Degotardi Rosalind Wallis Anne Sgro

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Membership/donation form					
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Please send Newsletters by email instead of hardcopy.					
Membership category Full member \$70 Organisation \$140 Student (conditions apply) \$25 Concession (Pensioner/Centrelink cardholders) \$35					
A membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December. Members joining after 1 October are financial until 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 happy to have my name published in the Newsletter. I wish to remain anonymous.					
Payment details Enclosed is my cheque/money order for \$					
Auto debit authorisation I authorise JSNWL:					
to charge this, and all future membership renewals as they fall due to this credit car number. to charge \$ annually to this credit card as a donation to:					
the Library for general purposes the Library's Capital Investment Fund					
Signature					

Become a volunteer

The Library runs on volunteer labour. Join us! We'd love to have you. Forward us this form and we will contact you:

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

Postal Address:

GPO Box 2656 Sydney, NSW 2001 Telephone: (02) 9571 5359 Email: info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au Visit our website:

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